

scottish borders homelessness strategy

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Executive summary

Introduction

Scottish Borders Council and its partners produced a homelessness strategy to assist them in addressing the serious problems of homelessness experienced in the area. It should be seen as road map for reducing homelessness throughout the Scottish Borders, placing far greater emphasis on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place while at the same time ensuring that those people who do become homeless get excellent help and assistance so that they are able to both tackle the problems underlying their homelessness and also secure a home that meets their reasonable aspirations.

The strategy is based on in-depth and wide ranging consultation with customers and service providers, examination of relevant operational practice by the Council and its partners and review of relevant documentation.

Nature of homelessness in the Scottish Borders

The rate of homeless applications in the Scottish Borders has risen continuously since 2003 rising to 2.18% of households in 2007/08, close to the Scottish average. While the homeless office is located in Jedburgh, only a small percentage of applicants come from that area, the largest percentage come from Hawick and Galashiels. The main increases are in applications from single people, young people aged 16-17 years and people over 60 years of age and the main reasons for homelessness where parents or other family or friends were no longer willing to accommodate the applicant; non-violent and violent relationship breakdown; and loss of private tenancies. Just over one third of applicants have support needs.

The information on the outcomes of homelessness assessments identifies need for action in relation to:

- Recognising when homelessness can be prevented
- Reducing the number of priority need assessments by 50% in 2009 and completely abolishing the qualification by 2012
- Providing temporary accommodation in what is a very rural area and reducing the use of bed and breakfast establishments.

It demonstrates that while access to permanent housing remains a serious issue, services have not suffered as a result the Council transferring its housing stock to a local housing association in 2003.

The context

The strategy was developed at a time when the economic outlook for Scotland (and the rest of the UK) was pessimistic but still uncertain. It appeared likely to have implications for people's ability to buy a house, increasing the pressure on rented housing, and for household debt. At the same time homelessness legislation, and in particular, the removal of the priority need qualification by 2012 will increase the pressure for housing (an anticipated 700 homeless households entitled to permanent housing by 2009 and at least

800 by 2012). The level of available affordable housing is decreasing and the Council's plans for 100 units of new affordable housing over the five years from 2007 are unlikely to meet the additional demand. In addition, it is anticipated that an increasing proportion of relets of housing association properties will go to homeless households. This suggests the need for a more preventative approach relying on a review of all housing options available to applicants, good quality information and advice, and housing support to help tenants deal with their homelessness and sustain their tenancies.

Communities Scotland (now the Scottish Housing Regulator) inspected the Council's homeless service in 2007 and found it to be 'fair'. Subsequent research for this strategy has assisted the Council to understand in detail how the service can be improved and this is described in detail within the full report. The Council and its partners are now determined to achieve those improvements through this strategy.

The homelessness strategy

The objectives of the strategy are to:

Provide a service that takes all reasonable steps to prevent people becoming actually homeless by revising policy, procedure and use of resources; taking a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and agreeing protocols for discharge from institutions.

Provide services to homeless households that will be accessible, of the highest quality and tailored wherever possible to their specific needs by extending priority need status to all single households up to 25 and over 50 years as a first step in meeting the 2009 and 2012 targets; adopting an assessment approach that considers all available housing options to assist people to avoid homelessness; improving case handling and management; reviewing issues of access such as the current location of the homeless office and addressing the gaps and management issues relating to temporary accommodation.

Seek to maximise the access to and range of support and assistance offered to help people achieve or maintain independence by improving the communication between the homeless, housing and support agencies working with homeless people and improving the resettlement process, particularly the involvement with and handover to housing association housing management staff.

Operate a fair, accessible and responsive system for finding homeless households settled accommodation by working with housing association partners to make the Section 5 referral system work effectively and to plan how to meet the likely increased demand for housing arising from the phased removal of the priority need criteria; broadening the range of housing options available; introducing preparation for those about to take on a first tenancy and reviewing in the longer term the need for two separate local housing registers and allocation systems within the Scottish Borders.

Put in place well publicised housing and related advice services that tackle the particular problems facing Scottish Borders' residents by raising the profile of housing advice as an important mainstream activity; considering the need to move to a housing options approach for helping housing applicants secure housing; and focusing development on a number of services where need and demand has been established or where circumstances suggest these will be necessary in future.

Put in place an excellent management and delivery system to ensure delivery on the homeless strategy's objectives by introducing a comprehensive performance management system that clearly demonstrates progress against the aims and objectives in the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy; developing high standards of customer service and using a robust system of financial management so that services delivered as part of the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy will be expected to demonstrate that they are value for money.

Managing the strategy

The Borders Health and Homeless Strategic Partnership will oversee the homeless strategy's delivery and will report annually on its progress. If you wish further information about this strategy and homelessness in Scottish Borders or wish to comment please contact Cathie Fancy, Group Manager, Housing Strategy and Services (cfancy@scotborders.gov.uk).

Section one: introduction

1.1 Why produce a homelessness strategy?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 required local authorities to develop a strategy to prevent and alleviate homelessness and Scottish Borders published its first in 2003. That strategy demonstrated there was a high incidence of homelessness and a shortfall in resources to deal effectively with the problem. It sought to raise awareness that homelessness was one of the more urgent problems facing the area and that to resolve the problems would require co-ordinated responses from organisations across Scottish Borders.

During the period covered by the last strategy (2003-08) there has been considerable change in the political, policy and economic landscapes at the UK, Scottish and Council levels. While many of the problems identified in 2003 remain (the lack of affordable housing in particular) new challenges have also emerged – not least the ‘2012 target’ that by 2012 all unintentionally homeless people will be entitled to permanent accommodation.

It is therefore time to consider both the achievements and shortcomings of the last strategy and to set out how the vision for the next five years will be realised. While the Scottish government no longer requires local authorities to develop a homelessness strategy in Scottish Borders it is believed that the scale of the problem demands a clear action plan to achieve the vision.

1.2 The legislative and policy context

The Council has a duty to prevent and alleviate homelessness as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Further responsibilities were set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Code of Guidance on Homelessness 2005. The 2001 Act placed a duty on local authorities to develop and deliver an ‘enhanced’ service of advice and assistance and ‘enhanced’ support as part of the homelessness response and to work with housing associations to ensure that they complied with requests to house homeless applicants. Under the legislation, applicants not deemed to be in ‘priority need’ were given increased rights to temporary accommodation and free housing information and advice.

With the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, homelessness services were also subject to regulation by Communities Scotland, since replaced by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The standards the homelessness services were expected to meet were contained within performance standards. For local authorities, these were divided into nine sections covering strategy; partnership working; access; prevention; the assessment process; information and advice; appeals; quality of accommodation; and contract compliance. Scottish Borders Council was inspected by Communities Scotland in 2007 and given a C (fair) grade. Section 5 referrals were also introduced in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placing a statutory duty on housing associations to provide accommodation for homeless people.

The Homelessness, etc, (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced a phasing out of the distinction between priority and non-priority applications, and the suspension of the test of local connection. The ultimate aim of the Act was to ensure that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless would be entitled to permanent accommodation by 2012. In addition it also changed the rules in respect of former asylum-seekers (people

accommodated under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999), defined what constituted suitable accommodation for homeless persons and clarified obligations concerning the allocation of housing to people at risk of domestic abuse.

From December 2004, local authorities were required to ensure homeless households had interim (temporary) accommodation once a positive homelessness decision had been made, whilst they waited for permanent accommodation to become available. The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 came into force in December 2004, and was intended to prevent the routine use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for households with family commitments. Unsuitable accommodation was defined in the Order as accommodation which did not meet standards relating to the property condition (the physical standard), its proximity to health and education services (the proximity standard) and its suitability for use by children (the safety standard). This test of suitability was extended to young people under-18 during 2007.

In the Ministerial Statement 2005, the government made clear their intention to focus on prevention as a priority, seeing this as 'more cost effective than responding at a time of crisis and far better for the quality of life of the individuals concerned'.

Local authorities had a legislative duty to provide advice and information regarding homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge to anyone in their area who required it. Guidance made clear that these services should meet the HomePoint National Standards as developed and promoted by the team which was then located within Communities Scotland.

The government was keen to ensure that solutions to homelessness were sustainable and appropriate for the individual household. The government emphasised the importance of considering the full range of options available to all households in housing need, and discussing with the households the best solution to their problems.

Some local authorities developed this approach through the provision of a 'housing options' service, which was predicated on the view that in a number of circumstances, homelessness can be prevented if tackled early enough.

1.3 How the strategy was produced

The Scottish Borders homelessness strategy 2008-2012 aims to cement the achievements of the first homelessness strategy published in 2003. The first homelessness strategy was successful in raising the profile of homelessness amongst the agencies and organisations working in the Scottish Borders and in expanding significantly the resources available to tackle the problem.

This new strategy should be seen as road map for reducing homelessness throughout the Scottish Borders, placing far greater emphasis on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place while at the same time ensuring that those people who do become homeless get excellent help and assistance so that they are able to both tackle the problems underlying their homelessness and also secure a home that meets their reasonable aspirations.

In Scottish Borders the availability of affordable housing is declining while homelessness is increasing. The latest housing needs study (HNS) identified a demand for a further 1,505

new affordable homes throughout the Scottish Borders between 2007 and 2012. The investment required to meet this target (to finance the purchase of land and to construct the homes) is beyond what is presently available and today the strategic housing investment plan (SHIP) can only set out plans to build 100 units each year during this period – around a third of the total number needed. There are simply not enough homes to cope with growing homelessness.

At the same time this strategy is being developed when so much else is uncertain. A relatively new Scottish government is still formulating its overall approach to housing and a Bill is anticipated sometime in the next one to two years, which could make significant changes to the housing policy agenda. The global financial crisis which has affected housing development, the availability of mortgages and driven up food, transport and fuel costs will have far reaching consequences not all of which are clear. It means the homelessness strategy will have to be flexible enough to accommodate additions and adjustments, as the situation (and what is needed to meet it) become clearer.

This strategy has been developed by the Borders Health and Homeless Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) in consultation with a wide range of services, and people who have been or were homeless.

The BHHSP has evolved from the health and homeless partnership that drove the original homelessness strategy. Its members include Scottish Borders Council (SBC), the social landlords working in the Borders, representatives from the NHS, voluntary groups working with homeless people and other housing providers in the private rented sector.

Because of its statutory responsibilities towards those who are homeless the strategy will be led by the Scottish Borders Council. However it is jointly owned by BHHSP and its members are all fully committed to its success.

The strategy's development has involved interviews with over 50 individuals representing organisations and services working in Scottish Borders about their experiences and views on how to tackle homelessness. Information and records have been interrogated to understand the circumstances in which homelessness occurs and just how well present services respond. Other research commissioned by Scottish Borders and its partners has been used to inform particular parts of the strategy and to help propose solutions.

The result is a homelessness strategy that seeks to tackle the root of the problem – the lack of affordable homes – by a combined approach of preventing homelessness, providing high quality advice and assistance about housing options, and doing the best possible to maximise the housing options open to people in Scottish Borders.

1.4 The vision and objectives

The overall vision for the future of homelessness in Scottish Borders is that by 2012 the number of people who present as homeless will have been halved from the 1,094 who were helped during 2007-08. To secure this ambitious target the strategy has six overarching objectives, the achievement of which are the tasks and actions set out in the plan at the end of this document. The six main objectives are as follows:

- Provide a service that takes all reasonable steps to prevent people becoming actually homeless
- Provide services to homeless households that will be accessible, of the highest quality and tailored wherever possible to their specific needs
- Seek to maximise the access to and range of support and assistance offered to help people achieve or maintain independence
- Operate a fair, accessible and responsive system for finding homeless households settled accommodation
- Put in place well publicised housing and related advice services that tackle the particular problems facing Scottish Borders residents
- Put in place an excellent management and delivery system to ensure delivery on the homeless strategy's objectives.

The sixth objective is critical to the overall success of the strategy and much emphasis will be placed by BHHSP on getting this right.

This homelessness strategy does not contain all the work with which the partners will be involved in tackling homelessness. Other plans and strategies will be (or are already being) used to drive improvements or new developments where the responsibility for implementation lies with another partnership or organisation. Examples include the Scottish Borders local housing strategy (LHS) and SHIP which 'lead' on meeting affordable housing, the Lothian & Borders community justice authority plans, and in the drug and alcohol action (DAAT) plans.

The local health plan that shows the investment plans for health services across the region and individual registered social landlords (housing association) business plans. Also of importance is the Scottish Borders, Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). This agreement reflects the new relationship between the Scottish Government and Local Government and one that Scottish Borders Council is committed to developing. The current SOA considers that one of its current challenges is to ensure 'that there is a significant increase in the provision of affordable housing for rent and sale particularly for younger people and the low paid' and one of the outcomes to be secured is 'Homelessness will be reduced through effective prevention and significant action'.

This homelessness strategy will both influence and has been influenced by these other plans.

1.5 What the document contains

The rest of this document explains how the challenge will be met. The homelessness service received a reasonable inspection rating but Scottish Borders are not complacent about what still remains to be put in place. The strategy does not shrink from naming and confronting the difficult challenges revealed by the research underpinning this strategy. Where shortcomings have been identified these are made clear.

In section two the nature of homelessness in Scottish Borders has been analysed and the issues that need to be addressed are described. A small number of examples are used to illustrate the types of homelessness problems people are facing and the current responses being made. Not all are positive examples but they illustrate well the issues the strategy needs to address.

In section three the wider context affecting homelessness in the Borders has been considered. This includes both national and local issues ranging from the economic background to the legislative agenda and supply and demand for housing.

Section four outlines how the current homelessness strategy has been developed, explains the main objectives, introduces the action plan (the most important part of this document) and explains how the strategy will be delivered.

The action plan is included as an appendix to this document along with a glossary of the 'jargon type' terms used.

The strategy has drawn on a number of existing documents and strategies as well as original research conducted specifically for this strategy. Where documents referred to are in the public domain these can be made available.

Further information about this strategy and homelessness in Scottish Borders and comments you wish to make should be made to Cathie Fancy, Group Manager, Housing Strategy and Services (cfancy@scotborders.gov.uk).

Section two: 2003-2008 – homelessness in Scottish Borders

2.1 The Scottish Borders homelessness strategy 2003-08

The first Scottish Borders homelessness strategy was written at the time of significant organisational change within the Council. The Council's housing stock had recently been transferred to a newly established housing association, Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) and the homelessness service (which had been retained by the Council) had become a separate team placed in the Lifelong Care Portfolio in the Community Care Service). The strategy recognised that homelessness services had been 'minimalist' in nature and under resourced given the extent of the problems. Particular challenges for the homeless strategy would be to increase the profile of homelessness and harness additional resources to reduce its incidence and to ensure that the lack of direct control over housing allocations did not impede the Council's ability to secure accommodation enabling it to discharge its statutory homelessness duties.

At the same time the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 had just come into force with the intention of strengthening obligations towards homeless people in particular by phasing out the qualification criteria of 'priority need' and by requiring Councils to make available temporary accommodation to any applicant requiring this. The strategy had therefore to show how these new obligations would be met.

Homelessness presentations had been rising from 1998/99 when 471 people made an application under the Act to 584 in 2001/02. Repeat presentations were high with almost 10% of applicants having made more than one application during this period, raising concerns that the underlying reasons for homelessness were not always being resolved. However overall the number of applications expressed as a percentage of the total households was at 1.26% well below the Scottish average of 2.1%.

Nearly a third of applications were being received from young single people (30% being under 24) and 25% from single parent households. Applications from young people under-18 had risen by 10% between 1996/97 and 1999/00 and this was particularly troubling.

The main reasons given for homelessness were that friends or relatives were no longer willing to provide a home for the applicant (31% of applications between March 1998 and January 2003) followed by marital breakdown (29% during the same period). Clearly a significant proportion of homeless applications involved the 'creation' of additional households, placing pressure on the limited housing supply in the Scottish Borders.

Other significant reasons for homelessness were action by the landlords (8%) and court orders (7%). However, housing debt was only directly attributable to homelessness for 4% of cases.

Vulnerability was recognised amongst 40% of applicants between 1998 and 2003. 530 applicants were reported to have (or had) a drink or drug related problem, 119 were under-18, and 81 had a mental health problem.

Other concerns that the strategy was designed to address were indications that a significant number of people staying in the Council's temporary accommodation were abandoning it or being asked to leave for poor behaviour.

To meet the homelessness challenge an action plan was drawn up by a partnership comprising the main statutory and voluntary organisations with a homelessness remit. It had a number of key objectives:

- To provide accessible, affordable and appropriate housing to all in the Borders
- To provide housing information and advice free of charge to all citizens of the Borders
- To prevent homelessness in the Borders
- To reduce the likelihood of people leaving institutional care becoming homeless
- Develop employment and training opportunities for those excluded as a result of homelessness

- To promote our vision of ‘making a difference’ to those who are either at risk of, or are experiencing homelessness within the Borders
- To involve users of homelessness services in developing and monitoring the effectiveness of homelessness services.

The 2003-08 homelessness strategy was ambitious in its scope and has realised a number of its promises, notably by putting in place new services and increasing the size of the homelessness team. The partnerships with health and the other local landlords had also led to better services and although further improvements (particularly in respect of allocations to homeless households) could be made, services have not suffered because the Council no longer controls its own stock.

One difficulty in assessing the effect the strategy has had on the problem of homelessness in Scottish Borders was the absence of sufficient baseline data or targets for achievement. This new strategy recognises this shortcoming in its own action plan. Another is that subsequent events have changed what needs to be tackled. A Communities Scotland inspection, further statutory guidance on homelessness, changes to the housing support funding regime and the recent financial crisis have all had an impact as has the changing homelessness profile. The review process for the 2003-08 strategy did not allow for updating of the action plan to accommodate the changes necessary and thus some of the original proposals became redundant.

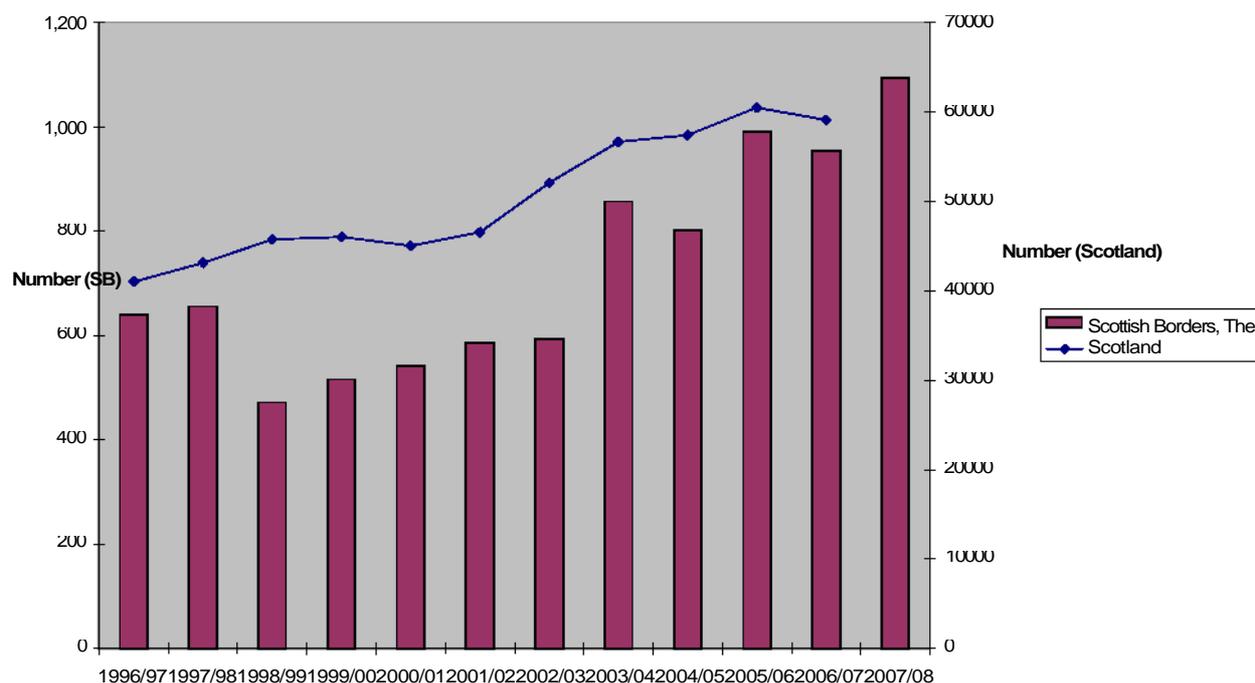
In the following pages, the changing nature of homelessness in the Scottish Borders is considered and the main challenges for 2008 summarised. The position in terms of what has been achieved, what is in development and what remains to be programmed is then set out, drawing on the research work that has underpinned the strategy’s development.

2.2 The changing nature of homelessness in Scottish Borders 2003-08

2.2.1 The application process

Between 2003 to 2006/07 the homelessness applications numbers in the Scottish Borders had closely followed the national trend, mirroring the general overall rise albeit with occasional annual reductions as illustrated in figure 2.1. Strikingly, since the publication of the last homelessness strategy applications had almost doubled to 1,094 in 2007/08. The proportion of the Scottish Borders households who applied as homeless had therefore risen to 2.18%, much nearer the Scottish average (for 2006/07 at least) of 2.4% and considerably above the 2005 total of 1.26%. While the 2003-08 strategy did not itself predict a decrease in homelessness, the subsequently published Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy (LHS) did in objective five aim to reduce homelessness by 50% by 2009. Assuming the baseline used was the application total in 2003/04 (857), this would mean a reduction to 424 from current levels, clearly now an unrealistic target.

Figure 2.1: homeless applications 1996/97 to 2007/08



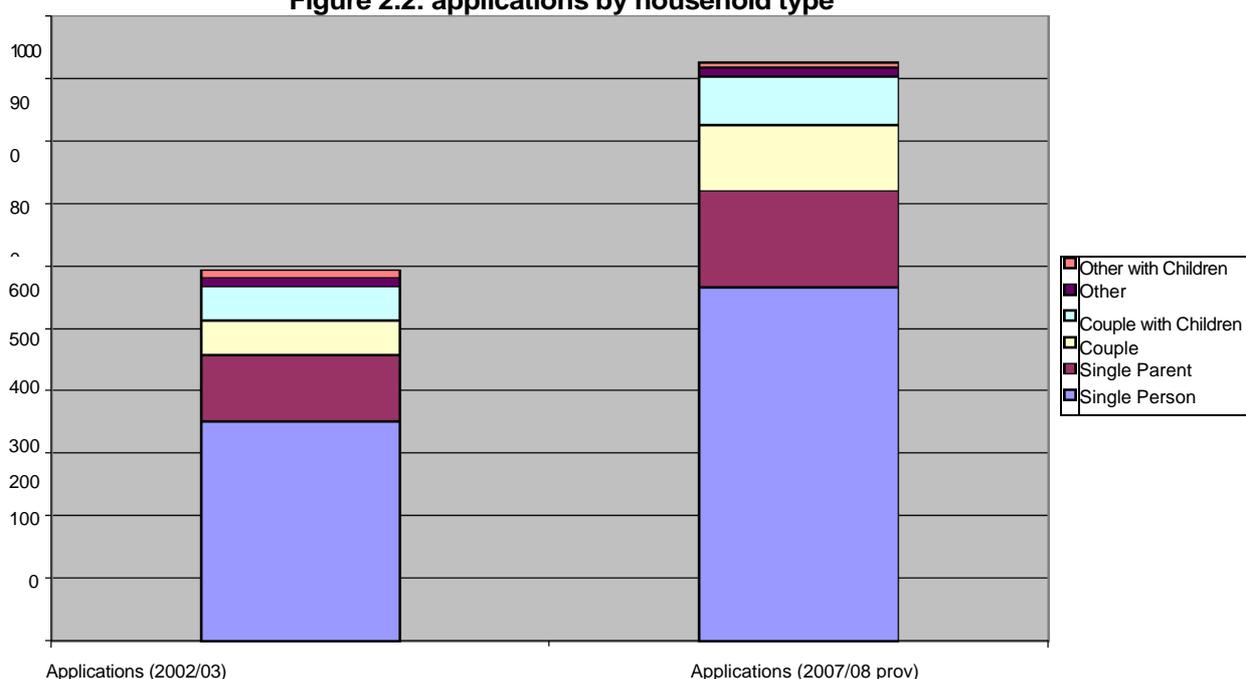
Data collected for each homeless applications dealt with by Scottish Borders in 2007/08¹ showed that the types of household applying were similar **to across** suggest this bit is reworted the rest of Scotland. Slight variations were apparent for single women (slightly higher than the national average), single parents (slightly lower for both male and female-headed households), and for couples with and without children (these being higher).

The household profile shared similar characteristics to neighbouring predominantly rural areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, but was quite different to places such as Glasgow (with its much higher proportion of single men) and North Lanarkshire (with a much higher proportion of singe parents).

Comparing the position with that in 2002/03 (when the last strategy was written) there had been a marked reduction in the proportion of single parents applying (a reduction from 25% to 17%, although the numbers of applications had increased) and a corresponding increase in applications from single people. The comparative breakdowns for 2002/03 and 2007/08 (provisional outturn) are illustrated in figure 2.2.

¹ Note that the breakdown available at the time the strategy was written included 925 applications (not the total of 1094). It has been assumed that the characteristics of the additional cases are proportionally similar to those analysed.

Figure 2.2: applications by household type



Encouragingly there had been a steady drop in the proportion of applications from households aged between 18 and 25, but, at the same time an increase from those aged under-18, an increase of 32% over the last two years to 82 representing a significant failure for the last strategy. Reversing this trend will be one of the priorities for the homelessness strategy as it seeks to put in place a better pathway into independent housing for young people, particularly for those leaving the care system, and to further develop preventative work with this age group.

Although the largest number of applications continued to be received from the 25 to 60 age group, there had been an increase in applications from the over 60s in the last year, which has been examined in more detail below.

Whilst white British applicants predominated, over the last three years (2005/06 to 2007/08) there had been a large increase in applications from people recorded as 'other' white. In 2002/03 only five such applications were made, the provisional out turn for 2007/08 recorded 35 applications (but with over 50 being received in the previous two years).

The March 2008 report: 'Assessing the Housing Needs of Minority Ethnic Communities in Scottish Borders' did not uncover much information about homeless applicants but the migrant worker project based with Eildon Housing Association (EHA) who were interviewed during the strategy development recorded 16% of its enquiries over two years as being from people threatened with homelessness. Most were from the A8 countries (notably Polish) but also a significant number from Portugal. This finding was supported by the case review carried out. Of the 36 cases examined three concerned applicants who could be classified as migrant workers. They had all been employed in a variety of occupations, mainly in the agricultural sector. The downturn in the UK economy might conceivably lead to reductions in new migration perhaps already evidenced by the lower numbers of applications from these communities during 2007/08. However the large

existing population which according to information from the migrant worker project were often living in poor quality housing, frequently without tenancy agreements, and often with occupation tied to a job, will probably lead to continued (if at a lower rate) presentations.

Applications had been received from people living throughout Scottish Borders but with significant concentrations originating in Hawick (20%) and Galashiels (24%), as illustrated in figure 2.10). Presentations from Jedburgh, where the homeless service and support team were based were amongst the lowest at 7% and suggested that the future location of the service should be reviewed to increase its accessibility to residents and to also minimise journey times for homeless officers. Interviews with service users confirmed that getting to Jedburgh could be difficult and expensive.

'I had to come from Galashiels to have an interview – cost about £6, but I was not told how I could claim this back'.

Applications were seldom received from households living outside the Scottish Borders area and showed no signs of increasing. The widely held perception that there are large numbers of 'outsiders' making applications may have been fuelled by an increase in presentations from applicants recorded as non-British (though the case review suggested that these applicants had usually been living and working in Scottish Borders for some time before making an application). Another potential explanation was revealed by the case review where 15% of the applicants had moved away from the Borders for employment reasons – most frequently to North East England or London. However in all but one case they had been deemed to have a local connection with Scottish Borders. What these findings did suggest was that the removal of the local connection 'qualifying' criteria for acceptance of a homeless application was unlikely to have much effect on applications in the Borders.

Applicants who had slept rough on the night previous to making an application had reduced from previous years and the numbers were extremely small. However around 45 people (5% of total applications) in 2007/08 reported having slept rough on at least one occasion in the three months preceding their application. There were two applications which were reviewed where the person had slept rough but details about where and for what reason this had occurred was not recorded on the application form. Both individuals were single men with a pattern of short term insecure tenancies.

The case review revealed one other interesting aspect about applicants' circumstances – the number in employment. In the sample, over a third were working in low paid jobs (mainly in the service or agricultural sector) in Scottish Borders. A number seemed to be holding down two jobs. On occasions the homelessness application had been motivated by a change in job circumstances either because the applicant could no longer afford their present housing or because of poor transport links needed to be nearer their place of work.

Priorities for the strategy

- Preventing wherever possible youth homelessness
- That migrant workers are treated fairly, by making sure staff are familiar with the needs and aspirations of this group and that advice and information is readily available to them
- Understanding more about accommodation used by migrant workers and working to improve property standards and tenancy management
- Examining how the homeless service could be made more accessible to all Scottish Borders residents
- Establishing links with LAs and agencies operating in North East England where movement across the Border seems common
- Enquiring more deeply into incidences of rough sleeping
- Ensuring that service options are open to those in employment:
 - Are temporary accommodation options affordable
 - Is there scope for more mid market rented accommodation
 - Do people need more advice on money matters?

The information about wage rates was patchy and possibly inaccurate but it suggested that for some people the housing options could include mid market rented accommodation.

2.2.2 Assessments

In 2007/08, 71% (115) of all applicants actually assessed by the service were considered to be homeless. Of the remaining 29%, 11% were not considered to be either homeless or potentially homeless. This was a significant increase from the 5% reported in 2002/03. Over the period there was a steady increase until 2005/06, when the figure had remained static. This was a quite different trend from the rest of Scotland where applicants who were neither homeless nor potentially homeless accounted for around 8% of the total, an amount that had changed little over the period 2002-07. The case review indicated two typical circumstances in which 'not homeless' decisions were being made:

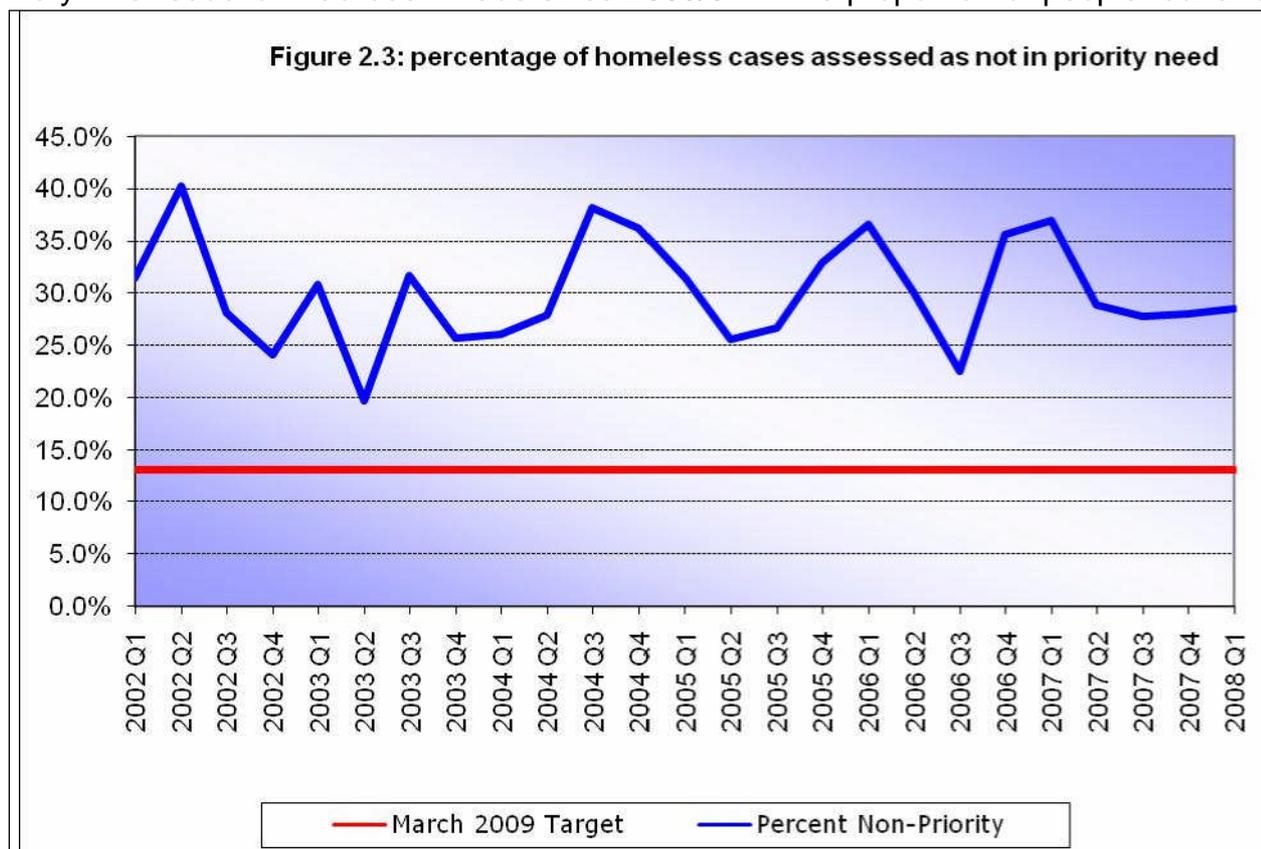
- Where the housing environment was poor or unsatisfactory but the applicant was not under any immediate threat of losing their home, eg, a young woman living with her elderly grandparent being considered for residential care. Typically housing options advice was seldom offered or provided. It was also unclear whether applicants were being encouraged to register with the two (main) social housing registers operating in Borders. The risk of repeat home applications appeared high
- An applicant was actually threatened with homelessness (eg, for rent arrears) and arguably should have been recorded as potentially homeless. In one case the threat was removed by preventative action led by the Shelter housing advice project.

A very low proportion of applications (as in the past) had been assessed as potentially homeless. In 2006-07, this was 3% compared to 14% nationally and the proportion had further reduced to only a fraction over 2% in 2007/08. It suggested that despite the previous strategy seeking to emphasise a preventative approach this had not been translated into operational practice and/or that residents of the Scottish Borders area did not routinely seek (or receive) housing advice until too late to prevent them becoming homeless.

The Council had lost contact with just under 6% before a homeless decision was reached, a significant reduction (50%) from previous years which suggested the homelessness service was either maintaining contact more proactively or that applicants were more aware of their entitlement to advice and assistance. However the case review process did not support this. As a larger proportion of non-priority homeless decisions were being completed more quickly (a number within one week) it might simply be explained by their being less 'opportunity' to lose touch.

The homeless problem was resolved before the assessment decision was made in around 7% of cases, a reduction after a steady rise from 9% in 2003/04 to 13% in 2006/07. Ideally, this last figure should be rising year on year if prevention was becoming more effective.

Very little reduction had been made since 2003/04 in the proportion of people found to be



not in priority need as figure 2.3 clearly illustrated. For 2007-08, 18% of assessments (205) were for non-priority cases, which has immense implications for both 2009 by which time the Council should have reduced by 50% the cases assessed as non priority and, ultimately, for 2012 when the concept of priority need is abolished. 70% of households considered as homeless were considered to be in priority need considerably less than the Scottish average of 77% in 2006/07.

Vulnerability reasons for 2007/08 (figure 2.4 below) were typically given for families with dependent children, people with a mental health problem or personality disorder or other chronic ill health, under-18s, and people fleeing domestic abuse.

Figure 2.4: vulnerability types for homeless applicants – comparison between 2003/04 and 2007/08

Type of vulnerability	2003/04	2007 – 08 (provisional) ²
Household with dependent children	154	177
Household member pregnant	20	29
Household member vulnerable because of old age	23	38
Household member vulnerable because of mental illness or personality disorder	48	91
Household member vulnerable because of learning disability	5	12
Household member vulnerable because of physical disability	9	30
Household member vulnerable because of chronic ill health	58 ³	65
Young person(s) under the age of 21 previously looked after	6	19
Young person(s) aged 16-17 years old	51	56
Young person(s) under the age of 21 and at risk	5	17
Household fleeing domestic violence or abuse	28	50
Household fleeing non-domestic violence (violence from person(s) outside the household)	13	10
Household fleeing discriminatory harassment	0	2
Household contains a woman who has had a miscarriage, or an abortion	2	2
Household member discharged from armed forces, hospital or prison	14	26
Homeless as a result of an emergency (fire, flood, storm, etc)	1	5
Household (member) vulnerable for other special reasons	11	62
According to local policy	-	9

The table also contained comparative data from the year the last strategy was prepared to illustrate the trends. Caution needs to be exercised when making comparisons as firstly the categories have been amended from 2007 and secondly recording practices as revealed by the case reviews were sometimes inaccurate. The most frequent problem was under recording because the vulnerability was seen as ‘secondary’ to the main reason for acceptance as priority need. This was most apparent where dependent children were part of the household. Also apparent were occasions where the vulnerability had been revealed by evidence supplied later on in the assessment process, often by a doctor’s letter, and had not been recorded. In both these examples drug and alcohol related and mental

² Multiple responses allowed

³ Note that categories of vulnerability were amended during 2007. for italicised figures the data is estimated

health issues were the most commonly 'missed' vulnerabilities, although again in most cases the applicant had received a favourable priority need assessment for other reasons. Nevertheless in a small number of cases potential vulnerability had been overlooked in the assessment process. Examples included:

- A young person under-18
- A person suffering from domestic violence
- Someone with a severe medical condition.

Significant changes from the last homeless strategy were found in the number of people recorded as having a mental health illness, those fleeing domestic abuse and people considered vulnerable for 'other special reason'. However this latter category (introduced in 2007/08) included households previously recorded as including someone with an alcohol or drug dependency. Evidence from the interviews and the case reviews suggested that alcohol and drug use were common and possibly increasing amongst those presenting as homeless. Doctor's assessment letters provided more evidence that both conditions were contributing to homelessness – interestingly sometimes because an applicant was 'forced' to leave a home where other family members' addictions contributed to family breakdowns or disputes.

There was also evidence from the files that homelessness (and insecurity of tenure) had exacerbated existing addiction problems. In all it was estimated that of the homeless assessment case checks carried out, a third had either (or both) alcohol and drug related elements.

Ex-offenders were a small but significant number of applicants (it being recorded in 15% cases), though only in one case was the applicant directly homeless from prison. In this case there was no prior notification of release and no apparent preplanning while the applicant was in prison. Criminal justice professionals interviewed were eager to become involved in accommodation planning before release and believed that homeless presentations could be avoided.

Although the numbers were small, vulnerability due to old age was also higher than in the past and was consistent with the apparent rising trend in applications from over 60 year olds.

Notable were two types of circumstances in which older people were applying:

- Where households had been living in a succession of insecure private rented homes. The pattern of moves were similar to those more often associated with younger single people and suggested that some households may continue to live a semi 'itinerant' lifestyle where job security was low and income irregular
- Where mental health or addiction problems contributed to family breakdown.

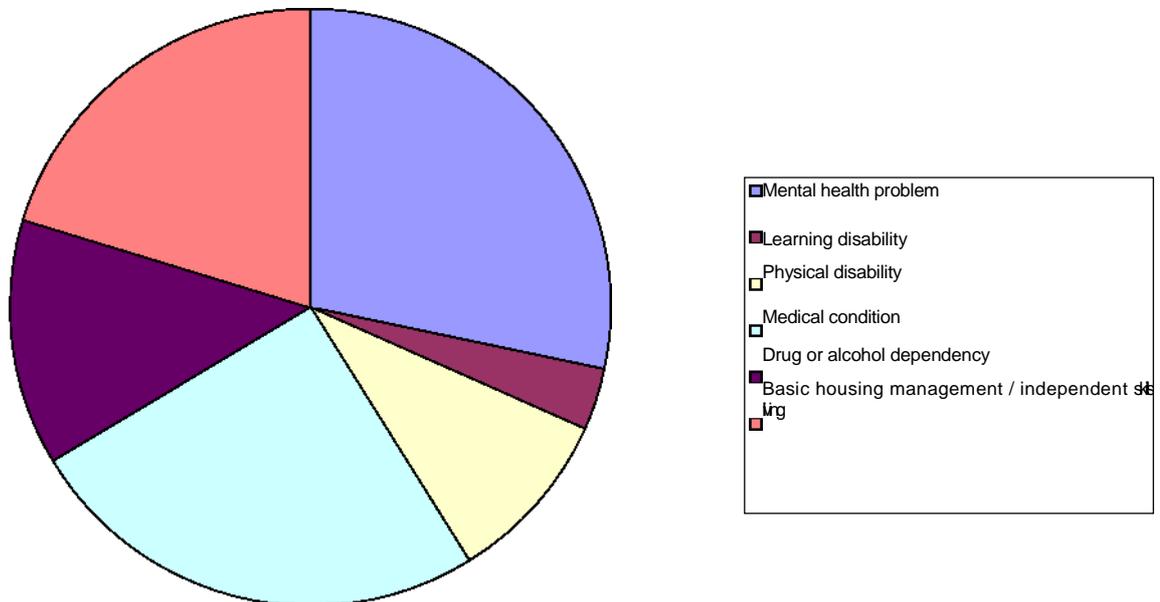
Specific information about applicants' support needs had only been collected through the HL1 process since 2007. For 2007/08 the provisional outturn figures are set out in figure 2.5 below showed that just over a third of applicants had been found to have support needs with a substantial number having had more than one support need identified.

Figure 2.5: homeless applicants support needs

	2007 – 08 (provisional out turn)
No support needs	577
1 support need identified	211
2 support needs identified	78
3+ support need identified	32
All	898

Further analysis of support needs (figure 2.6) showed that high numbers of people required support for dealing with mental health illness (132 people), other medical condition (118) drug or alcohol dependency (62). Independent living skills were considered necessary for almost 100 applicants.

Figure 2.6: breakdown of homeless applicants support needs (2007-08)



The HL1 record was supported by the findings from the interviews and case reviews. Significantly a high proportion of the applicants with health related support needs (including mental health) appeared from the case files to have had services already in place with named care or health workers recorded. This raised the possibility that better communication and joint working between health, social work and housing professionals could lead to homelessness being avoided.

The record of support assessment during and provision made as part of the homelessness process was patchy. The Scottish Borders community support services reported that over a nine month period up to February 2008, they had received 189 referrals from the homeless service for assistance, representing they believed between 15-20% of total presentations. However the case file reviews showed that not all applicants responded to the offer of assistance and in around a third of cases assistance sought by the applicant was for furniture grants, although the file suggested that the applicant could benefit from other housing support. Interviewees from the main housing associations believed that more applicants would have benefited from both short and medium term support, or by an extension of resettlement support, which was usually limited to around six weeks from the tenancy start date. Across the board there was strong backing for an enforceable package of options for pre-tenancy training and preparation for independent living to prevent tenancy failure.

Priorities for the strategy

- Ensuring that thorough investigations of a person's homelessness are made
- Providing insecure tenants with good quality housing options advice
- Embedding homelessness prevention in the service
- Reducing presentations from prisoners by planning accommodation before release
- Raising the profile of elderly homeless applicants and ensuring that the service responds
- Extending the priority need categories to meet 2009 and 2012 obligations
- Improving joint working between agencies supporting homeless people and involving care and support workers (where the applicant is happy) in resolving homelessness

2.2.3 Why are people becoming homeless?

The main causes of homelessness from the HL1 forms completed in 2007/08 (shown in figure 2.7 below) were where parents or other family or friends were no longer willing to accommodate the applicant; non-violent and violent relationship breakdown; and loss of private tenancies. These reasons were common across Scotland and as in 2003 showed that homelessness was contributing to rising household formation.

From 2007-08, the reasons for loss of the home had been recorded differently on HL1 returns and comparisons were therefore hard to make. It was also no longer possible to separate the figures for loss of home arising from mortgage default from those for rent arrears, or, to easily relate these to the tenure type. The table does show, however, that crises within families still accounted for the largest number of homeless presentations, but that loss of an independent home (arguably more likely to be preventable) represented a significant proportion (around a quarter) of all homeless applications. This finding was supported from both the interviews and case file reviews carried out.

Figure 2.7: the main reasons given for homelessness

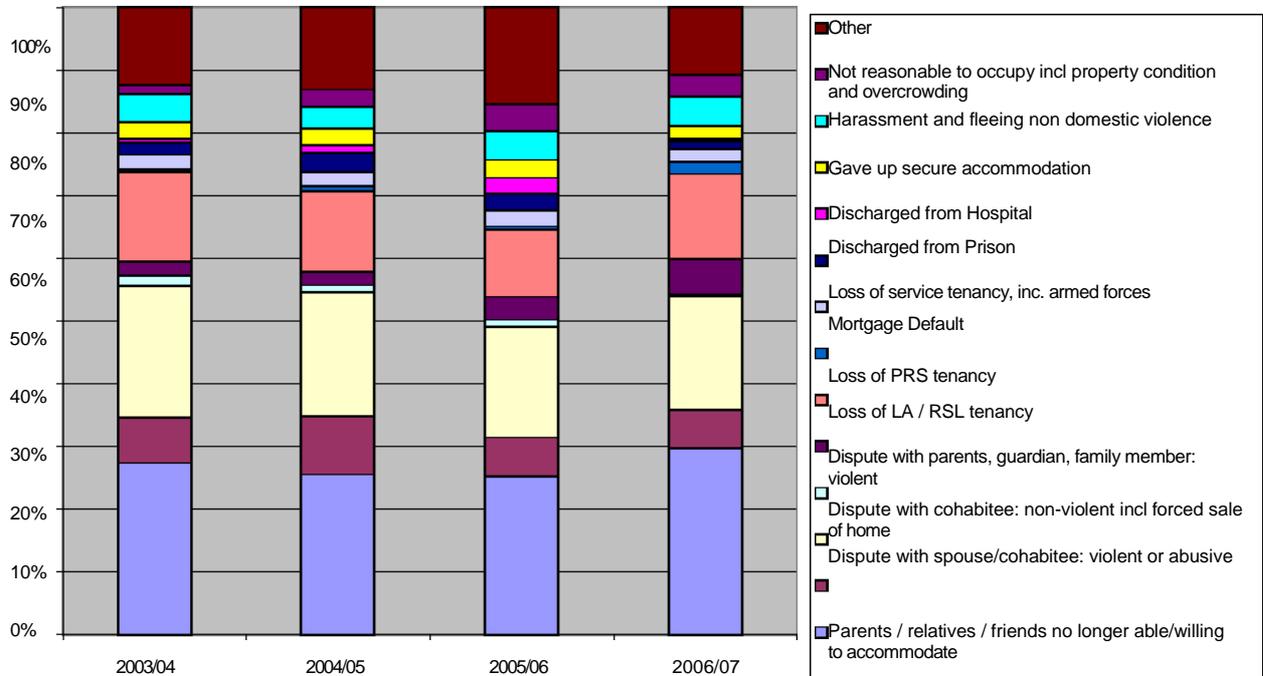
Reason for homelessness (Source: HL1 data)	2007 – 08 (provisional)
Termination of tenancy/mortgage due to rent arrears/default on payments	64
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	86
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	16
Loss of service/tied accommodation	27
Discharge from prison/hospital/care/other institution	33
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health, etc)	14
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	18
Other reason for loss of accommodation	60
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	78
Dispute within household/relationship breakdown: non-violent	201
Fleeing non-domestic violence	10
Harassment	21
Overcrowding	39
Asked to leave	120
Other reason for leaving accommodation/household	138
All	925

Examining the trends since the last homelessness strategy as displayed in figure 2.8 below indicated that there had been a marked increase in the loss of both LA/housing association and private tenancies between 2003/04 and 2006/07, for both rent arrears and for other (unspecified) reasons. This was explored further in the interviews and case review work carried out. Both the Shelter housing advice project and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in the Scottish Borders confirmed that they had received many enquiries from people threatened with homelessness because of rent arrears in both the social and private rented sector. Shelter estimated that 40% of cases being dealt with in 2008 were housing association tenants threatened with homelessness for this reason.

Figures for mortgage default had also risen during the period. The CABs recorded 440 cases (almost 25% of their 2007/08 total housing case load) where housing debt was the primary reason for housing advice being sought. However this probably understated the

true level of problems 'other' housing costs were categorised separately I which could conceivably lead to problems for households meeting mortgage and rent payments in circumstances where prices are rising.

Figure 2.8: primary reason for homelessness application (2003-07)



As noted earlier, family dispute and breakdown and situations where friends were no longer willing to accommodate had consistently been the main reasons given for homelessness. Typical were cases where young people left home after a dispute with the parents or carers. Frequently the underlying reason for the dispute was not being uncovered and in a significant number of cases it appeared (and was supported by many of those being interviewed) that the dispute was minor, short lived, or otherwise resolvable (eg, in two cases examined the parent had indicated some willingness to take back the young person).

Another common reason for homelessness revealed by the case reviews but somewhat 'hidden' in the official categories were occasions where (mainly) single people between 20 and 35 had moved frequently between addresses (in the case review 60% of the applicants had had three or more addresses over the last five years and 20% over four) often voluntarily in response to relation changes and job offers. Sometimes this had involved relinquishing secure tenancies, perhaps without them fully realising the consequences.

Although not numerically large, cases where homelessness had arisen because of discharge from prison or hospital, where a young person had left local authority care, or had left or retired from a job with a tied tenancy were identified by interviewees as being generally avoidable as the need to move was known about and could be planned in advance.

Figure 2.8 also showed that for over 10% of cases the reason for homelessness was recorded as 'other'. The two examples seen in the case reviews suggested this category

was being used where medical/support needs were not being met. In one case an applicant's care needs could no longer be provided in the family home, and in the other mental health and depression had led to a person being temporarily hospitalised. If this was representative of the other cases it implied that by working together social work, health and housing services could prevent the homelessness from occurring or arranging a move in a more planned way.

Understanding the reasons behind homelessness is critical in designing services and responses to both prevent homelessness arising or reoccurring on subsequent occasions. This analysis suggested there was significant scope to reduce the numbers of people who seek housing via the homelessness route. There were a number of the causes of homelessness which could, with proper advice and support, be within the control of the applicant. Top of the list were financial difficulties (noted in 50% of the case reviews), followed by mental health problems and a lack of practical home making skills.

Priorities for the strategy

- Reducing the number of people becoming homeless from secure tenancies
- Ensuring that a preventative approach to rent arrears recovery is followed by all housing associations
- Taking a more proactive approach to helping people with debt problems
- Ensuring that housing management practice recognises vulnerability and that links with more specialist services allow issues of tenancy failure to be resolved
- Ensuring that planned moves from tied tenancies can be made

2.2.4 Temporary accommodation (TA)

Information on the trends for TA use was incomplete – with data for 2005/06 on bed and breakfast (B&B) usage unavailable. However, prior to 2005/06 Scottish Borders had not placed any applicants in B&B accommodation. By 2006/07 it was placing 17% (94 applicants) and in 2007/08 there was a further dramatic increase to 188 B&B placements (55% of all placements). Average stays had also increased from 40 to 56 days. The position is summarised in figure 2.9 below.

Figure 2.9 – temporary accommodation usage

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Number placed in B&B	0	0	N/A	94	188
Percentage of the total placed in TA	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	55
Average length of stay (days)	N/A	N/A	N/A	40	56
Number placed in self contained furnished accommodation	204	191	201	207	151
Percentage of the total placed in TA	100	100	N/A	83	45
Average length of stay (days)	53	68	70	89	79

Use was made of TA across the Scottish Borders as illustrated in figure 2.10 below, though with concentrations again in Hawick and Galashiels reflecting the number of presentations from these areas. The case review tended to suggest that placements (particularly of B&B) were usually but not always made in the vicinity of the presenting address.

'I was offered TA in a hotel in Selkirk but could not take it as I had two jobs in Jedburgh, and son I need to see.'

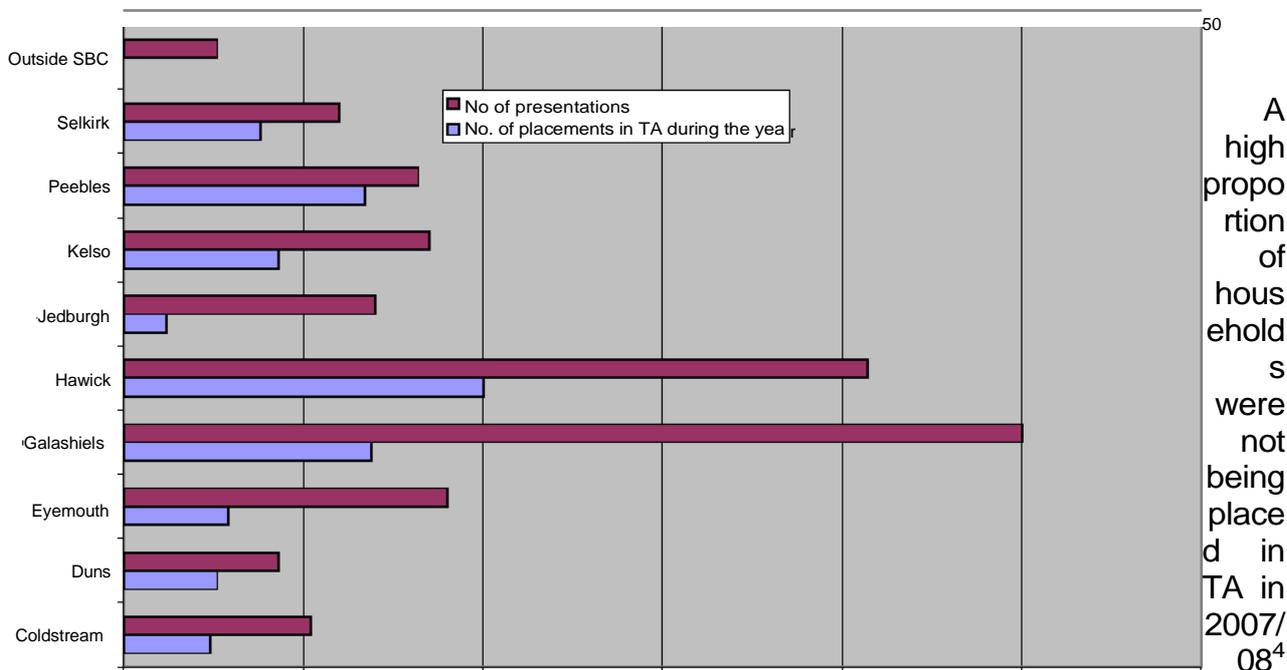
What was less clear was the reason for the rise in B&B usage. The interviews and case record checks carried out did not reveal the reasons although there was some suggestion that it was a combination of a late response to the additional statutory responsibilities to provide TA to all homeless applicants who required this and 'silting up' of TA because of the lack of move on accommodation.

Despite the rise in B&B usage, breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order were rare, with just two instances (for households with dependent children) reported for 2007/08. However the case reviews revealed that considerably more people were being placed in B&B who for reason of their vulnerability (youth, addiction history or mental health) this type of accommodation was unsuitable.

Although it was acknowledged that there were few supported TA options in Borders, there were examples where more vulnerable people could be more safely housed amongst the guest houses and B&B. Risk or needs assessments were not being carried out before

placements were made and allocations were usually determined by vacancies and not an applicant's needs.

Figure 2.10: presentations and placements in TA by settlement area



but were either remaining at the address from which the application was made (40% of all placements), staying with friends or relatives (28%) or making their own arrangements (4%). Understanding why this was the case will be extremely important. If the arrangements were not being made with the applicants' agreement and/or the applicant was unaware of their entitlement to an offer of TA, it could lead in the future to a more than doubling of demand for the limited TA available in the Scottish Borders.

However the case reviews did not suggest that applicants were either being refused TA or coerced into these three options. The overwhelming impression from the case history was that many applicants were being allowed to remain 'at home' on the understanding that alternative housing would be made available sometime in the near future, this easing the tensions that had originally motivated the application. The absence of subsequent requests for TA from either applicants residing 'at home' or with friends supported this impression. Where changes in TA placement were being made (and these were few in number), half were for applicants moving out of B&B back to the family home.

Nevertheless the information on the case files was patchy and very little was recorded about TA requirements – if the applicant was asked, if it was needed, what options were considered, and whether the applicant turned down offers because of the type or location, etc. Some interviewees (though not those working on homeless assessments) believed that some applicants might be dissuaded from taking up TA because of its poor reputation (one unit in Kelso, Maxwell Park being mentioned by a number of people), cost (both furnished units and B&B were considered prohibitively expensive for those who were

⁴ Figures provisional for 2007/08

working – and as noted a significant number of applicants were in employment) or because the location was at some distance from schools or other regularly used community facilities. It was noted that no system was in place to help homeless children continue to attend their original school.

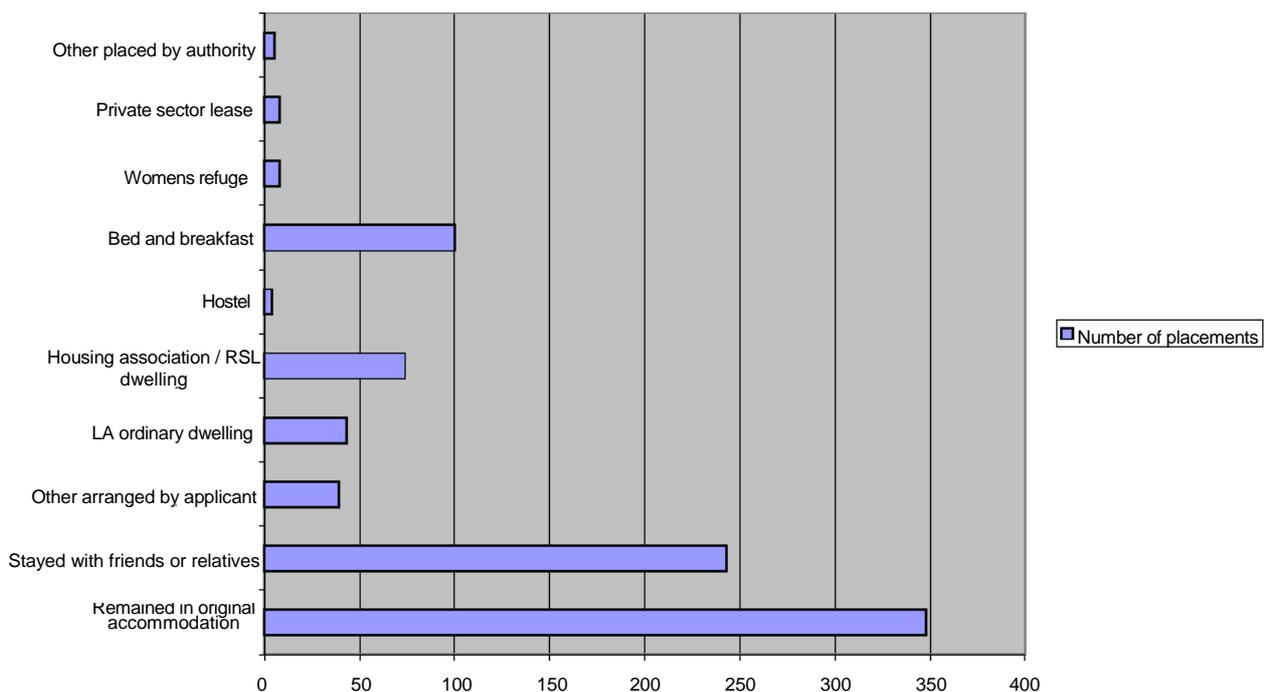
Property standards had not been published and while furnished accommodation was considered good, the quality of B&B was more variable as evidenced by service users' comments.

'It's brilliant, owner of guest house is very nice, and I have a double room and hot breakfasts, have no cooking facilities, but I don't mind.'

'In the guest house, I had no information about who else was staying there; there was no control over who was there, with other people sleeping in the room of residents. People ran riot, there was lots of drink/drugs, and loud music.'

Figure 2.11 below summarises the TA used during 2007/08.

Figure 2.11: number of placements in TA 2007/08



During 2007/08 a private sector leasing scheme had been set up and early indications were already positive. Its expansion was to be funded by savings made on reductions in B&B usage.

Priorities for the strategy

- Finalise the draft TA strategy
- Prioritise development of supported accommodation for young people
- Prepare policy and guidance for placing people in TA

Set standards for all TA and regularly inspect the standards are being met

- Ensure that the needs of children in TA are understood and being met
- Consider regular visits to people who are 'homeless at home' to provide feedback and check circumstances have not altered

2.2.5 Housing outcomes

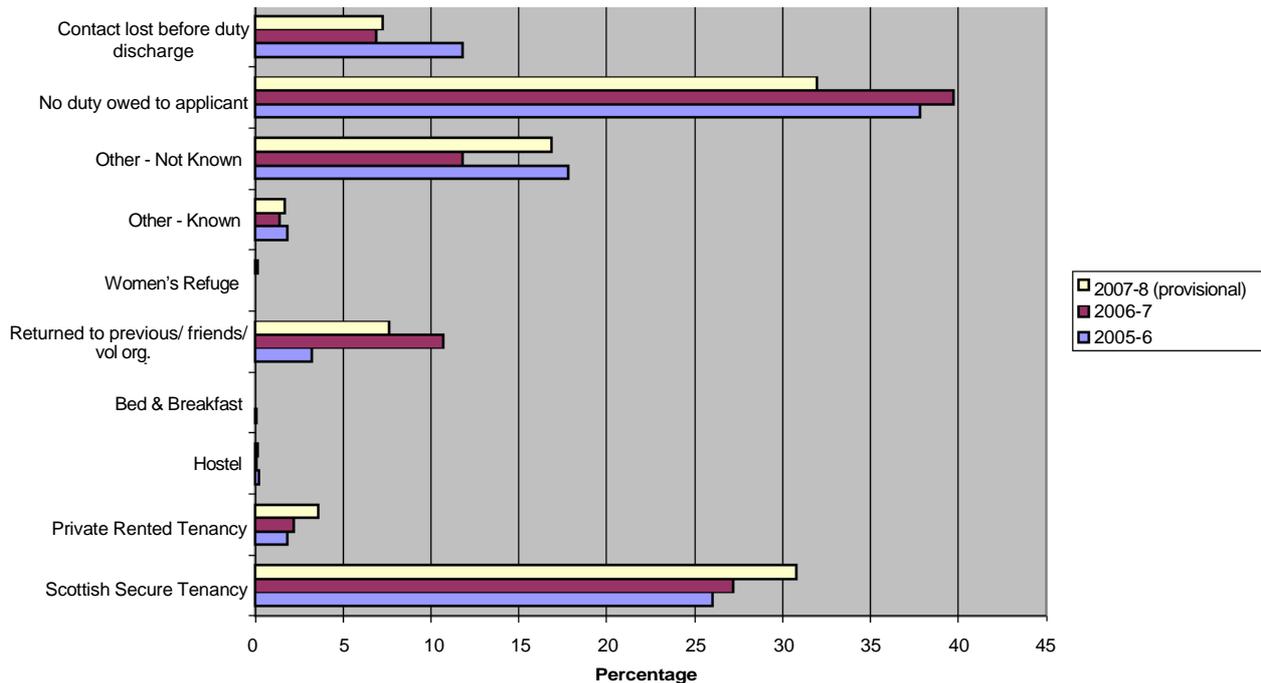
Information from the HL1s was used in figure 2.12 to illustrate the known outcomes for applicants who cases were completed during 2006-08. It showed a small but steady increase in the proportion of households achieving settled housing. There were increases in the number (and proportion of) households in priority need being offered and accepting a secure housing association tenancy – up from 26% to 31% of the total, equating to 317 tenancies. There was also a notable increase, albeit in a small figure, in those obtaining a private rented tenancy. The number returning home had reduced in 2007/08 and whilst this could have indicated successful preventative action, the case reviews did not support this. In all but two cases the decision to return home was in fact a decision to 'remain' in the family home following an adverse homelessness assessment.

Most significant were the high numbers (17%) where the housing outcome was unknown. It was consistent with the evidence from both the case reviews and interviews that the advice and assistance offered to applicants where no priority was awarded was extremely limited and usually confined to a letter listing housing associations without any contact details. There was no evidence that applicants were being offered assistance or contacted to find out whether they had secured accommodation.

'I have not been offered any help – I do want some help but was advised by someone else that it would not be forthcoming so I have not asked. I have been offered the TA as a permanent let but I can't afford it.'

Although HL1 data indicated that a higher proportion of priority households were being offered permanent accommodation than the national average, there were still considerable (and larger) numbers of applicants for whom currently no duty was owed. This amounted to 32% of the total in 2007/08 and represented a potential massive increase in demand for permanent accommodation in the housing association sector.

Figure 2.12: housing outcomes for completed homelessness cases 2006-08



Further analysis examined the housing outcomes for particular vulnerable households and revealed that a significant number were not moving into secure tenancies. Around 66 households (the year end figures had not been finalised) representing almost 25% of the total with a vulnerability fell into this category, a similar proportion to 2006/07. The groups most at risk were those being discharged from institutions (50%) and those with a drug or alcohol problems (also 50%). The case reviews suggested in the two cases seen the applicant had lost contact after the homelessness decision had been made, a risk that could be anticipated given that many people in group may lead chaotic lifestyles

The operation of the Section 5 referral process was examined in some detail (more so for Border Choice Homes because data protection issues could not be resolved with SBHA) and the main findings showed that:

- There was scope for SBC to improve both their support needs assessment and design of support packages. In two cases examined not all support needs affecting tenancy sustainability were identified
- In some cases it was unclear whether support (identified as needed) was actually put in place before the household was rehoused
- There was no structured handover between the community (tenancy) support workers and housing association staff
- There was inconsistent practice to support bidding through the Borders Choice Homes (BCH) CBL system.

However the BCH system operated relatively swiftly and efficiently in that 'gold' priority passes were awarded within one week and notification to both SBC and the applicant was immediate. There were indications that applicants might be better advised about the

options available to them, some being unrealistically restrictive. Refusals to accept bids by the housing associations participating in the CBL were relatively rare.

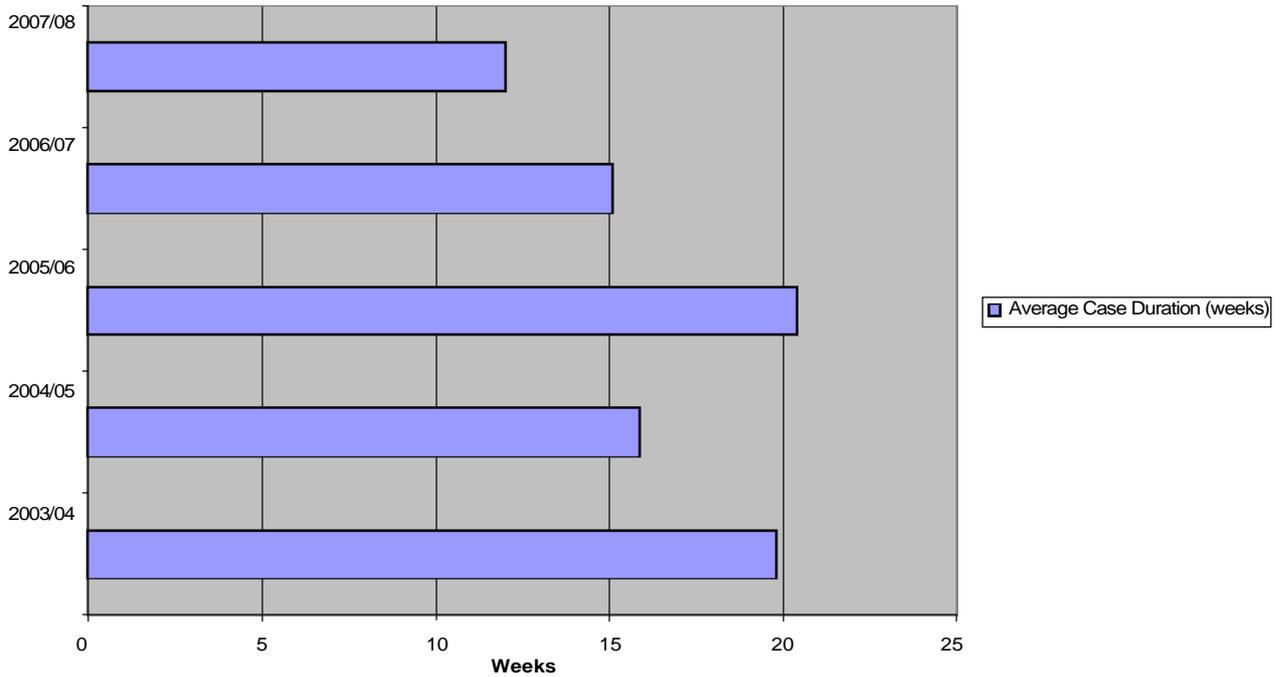
Priorities for the strategy

- Improve the section five referral process
- Work with housing associations to plan for increased demand anticipated from 2012 obligations
- Recognise those applicants where there is a high risk that contact might be lost post decision and be more pro-active about maintaining contact
- Set standards for advice and assistance on housing options
- Improve the co-ordination between support assessment and housing allocation decisions
- Develop and implement case handover
- Ensure housing management staff are comfortable and have the skills to manage m o r e c h a l l e n g i n g t e n a n c i e s

2.2.6 Decision making, case duration and case handling

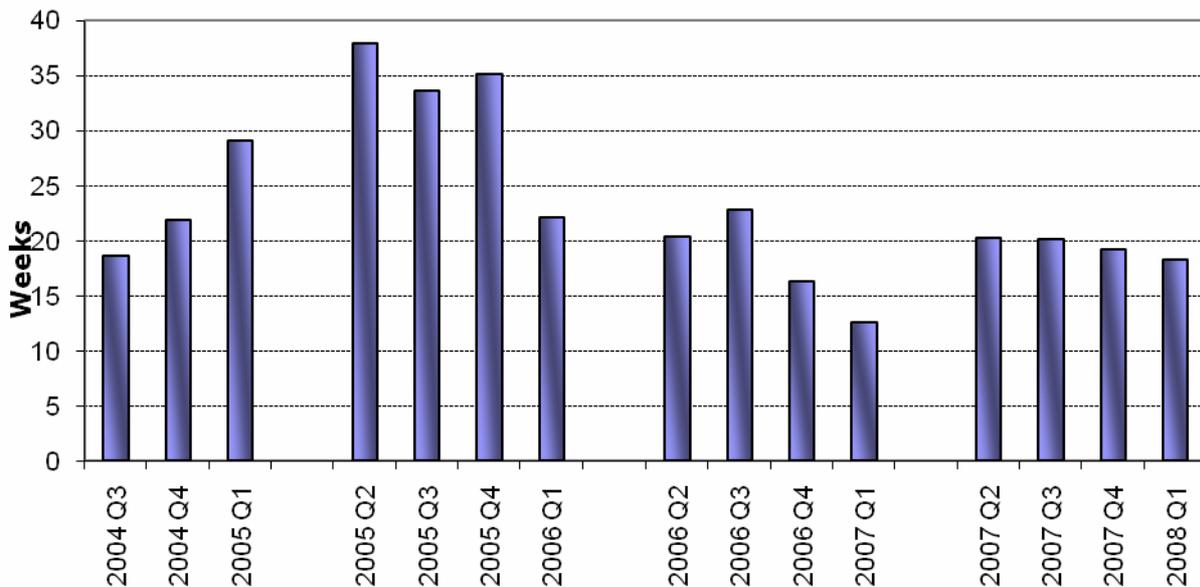
Information from the HL1 on case duration, ie, the time from presentation to case completion is illustrated in figure 2.13 below. Some caution was required in interpreting duration as the case reviews had shown that recording of presentation dates was often inaccurate. Presentation dates were being recorded as the date of first interview regardless of when the applicant first made contact. The time that elapsed between initial contact and first interview could be considerable (up to two to three weeks) where the applicant requested an interview in a town other than Jedburgh where the homeless team were based.

Figure 2.13: average case duration (weeks)



Nevertheless the data indicated an improvement over the last few years for average durations, although further analysis by decision type revealed that duration marginally increased from 18.5 to 19.5 weeks between 2006/07 and 2007/08 for households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Figure 2.14 illustrates the recent trend.

Figure 2.14: average case duration by quarter of case closure - unintentionally homeless households in priority need



The time taken to make a decision on homeless applications during 2007/08⁵ is illustrated in figure 2.15 below. The 28 day target was being met for 59% of cases but with a significant number taking considerably longer. The case reviews showed that there was no obvious link between case complexity and length. While cases involving non priority need or not homeless decisions were generally reached more quickly, the reasons why other cases took longer was unclear. Investigations were nearly always limited to requests in writing for supporting evidence. With the files usually containing contact telephone numbers scope existed to speed up decision making and at the same time possibly help reduce applicants' unsettled circumstances and in some cases stays in TA.

Figure 2.15: time taken to make a decision

Decision time	Number	Percentage of cases
0 days	85	8
1-10 days	229	23
11-20 days	155	15
21-28 days	111	11
Less than 28 days	599	59
1-2 months	234	23
Over 2 months	84	8
Over 4 months	9	0.9

Information about the period between decision and final outcome was not available in a format capable of accurate analysis. The case reviews showed that decision and outcome dates were usually the same where a non priority decision was made which suggested that advice and assistance was being limited to the content of the decision letter. Where applicants were nominated through the Section 5 process for housing (12 cases) the time elapsed between decision and outcome (a tenancy start date) varied between four to 130 days. There appeared to be longer timescales where applicants were referred to SBHA (66 days) as opposed to 29 days for Borders Choice Homes (BCH).

Case handling, how homeless applicants were treated was considered by service users as very poor. Interviewees confirmed that feedback on case progress was limited and that existing standards about visiting people in temporary accommodation were rarely being met.

'We were told that letters had been sent but they did not arrive, have not been able to get copies.'

'They took little account of my poor health.'

⁵ To early March 08

'I don't like to speak to the homeless officers, I would lose my temper. How they treat you depends on how they feel that day.'

'I felt they were "pushy" – they made me feel that I had to change the area I wanted to live in, even though the support I need is in a different area.'

'I have had no letters or information for two months. I was placed in a guest house and not told to come for a homeless interview, until the guest house manager told me I could do this.'

Priorities for the strategy

- Set and monitor clear service standards for the assessment process
- Pro-actively seek feedback from homeless applicants on how their case was handled
- Put in place robust case management to speed up decision making and link to p l a n n e d r e d u c t i o n s i n T A s t a y s

2.2.7 Sustainability

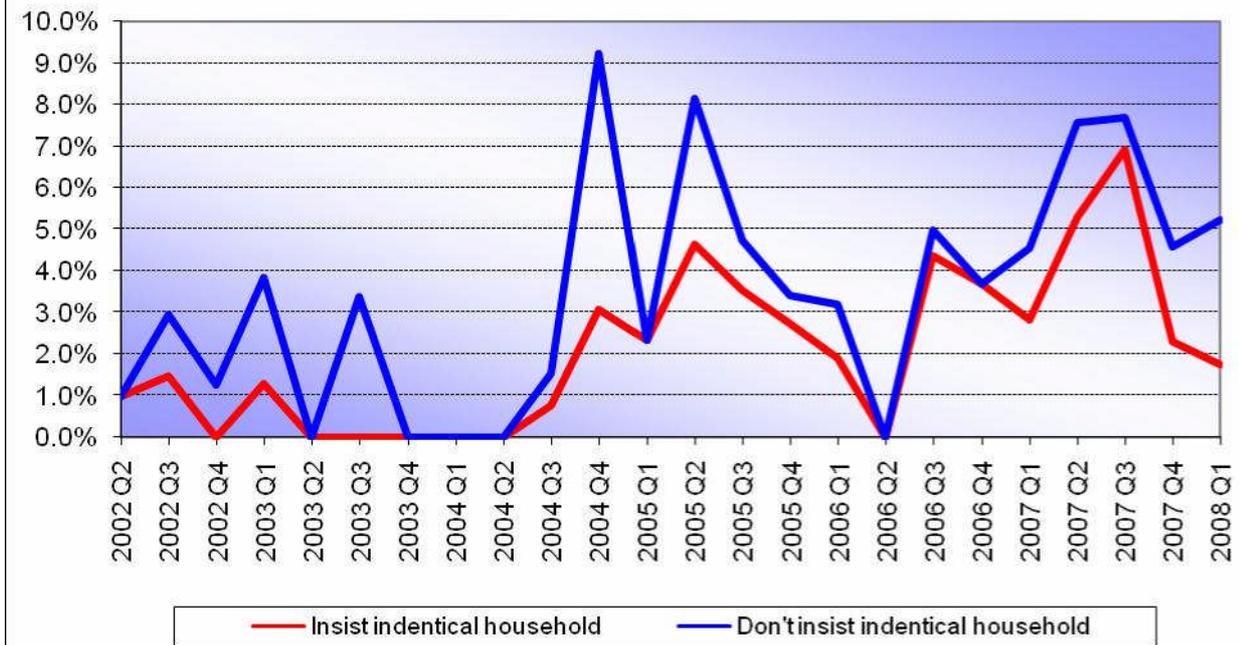
Very little information was being collected to assess what happened to homeless people after their cases had been completed. To understand how effective the homelessness process was would have required information about:

- The success and sustainability of tenancies secured for those applicants in priority need
- The outcomes for people for who only advice and assistance was offered
- The outcomes for people who had received support packages
- The longer term success of preventative action
- The views of service users.

While some of this data could conceivably be collated, it was not being collected and reported, and in other cases such as service user satisfaction, feedback was not being sought. Significantly preventative action taken and advice and assistance offered was not being accurately recorded.

Using the information available on repeat presentations, the picture (in figure 2.16) showed considerable variation and probably some inaccurate recording.

Figure 2.16: repeat homelessness



The definition of repeat homelessness in any case only included households presenting within 12 months of the original application and as the case files showed and many interviewees mentioned, repeated instances of homelessness were more common.

Priorities for the strategy

Set up mechanisms to evaluate the outcomes from the homelessness service

Section three: current context and challenges

The homelessness strategy will influence and be influenced by developments at a national and local level. In this section a number of the key areas are highlighted together with their particular relevance for the strategy.

3.1 The national economic outlook

The Scottish Borders Homelessness Strategy was being prepared at a time when the economic outlook for Scotland (and the rest of the UK) was pessimistic and with many commentators believing a recession was inevitable given the toxic combination of low growth and rising inflation.

The housing market was a particular casualty of the economic downturn, with some saying that rising house prices had directly contributed to the financial crisis. Although the position in Scotland was considered by some commentators to be less threatening than in the rest of the UK, there was little denying that many households were likely to feel the negative affects.

In Scottish Borders there were already signs that house prices were falling. After an 8.4% rise in the average house price to £167,000 in 2007, the first quarter of 2008 saw a fall of

1.8%⁶ and given the drop in transactions reported across the country, it seemed inevitable that further falls would follow. The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) reported a drop of 34% in the number of loans granted in Scotland in April to June 2008, compared to the same period in the previous year and first time buyers had declined by 31% over the same period.

At the same time housing and living costs were rising. Mortgage interest rates had increased, fuel costs were rocketing with most gas and electricity suppliers having raised their prices. Household energy bills had risen by up to 46%⁷ from costs in January 2008 and food costs were also shooting up.

While it was too early to be clear what affects the economic downturn might have on Scottish Borders and how therefore the homelessness strategy should respond, some predictions could be made:

- Households were less likely to move into home ownership, both for affordability and aspirational reasons and therefore might look increasingly to the social housing sector to meet their needs, or indeed remain in the sector thus reducing turnover and the number of lets available
- Housing debt might increase, and as shown this was already a major reason for people seeking housing advice
- Other rising costs (principally energy) will affect household's ability to pay housing rent (in all sectors) or mortgage costs. The energy saving trusts fuel poverty map for the Scottish Borders (2005) identified Kelso, the southernmost part of the Borders and some smaller pockets in the north as 'high risk' fuel poverty areas. Once again the analysis in the previous section showed that many homeless households already had considerable 'other' debt. Furthermore many were in low paid employment with probably little scope to easily afford rising prices. Other groups who could be expected to suffer were those households who spend most of their day at home – families with young children and the elderly, both well represented in the social housing sector.

The Council had established a commission to investigate the impact of poverty and exclusion in the Scottish Borders, building on the work of a multi-agency anti-poverty group. This group had been instrumental in first examining poverty in the Borders and had identified that in its 2006 report 'Evidence of poverty in Scottish Borders' that earnings in Borders were on average the lowest in Scotland and that above (Scottish) average numbers of people were fuel poor. The Commission's purpose would be to raise the profile of poverty in the Borders and to 'consider and recommend how an effective response could be developed and implemented across Scottish Borders'. The findings from the Commission which were published in autumn 2008 have influenced the final homelessness strategy action plan and possibly the investment in services such as money and debt advice which will have a positive impact on for example preventing homelessness.

⁶ Source: of Scottish Executive Agency

⁷ Source: U SWITCH.COM

3.2 National housing policy and its impact in Scottish Borders

The SNP government published its housing consultation paper *Firm Foundations* in 2007 and was expected to publish a Housing Bill setting out its intentions in the medium term.

In June 2008, the Scottish government issued new guidance on the production of Local Housing Strategies (LHS). The new guidance set out key changes to the status, focus, format and content of LHS, consistent with changes in national policy direction and in accordance with the new relationship between central and local government established through the Concordat. Local Housing Strategies are still seen as a critical part of the new framework, particularly in terms of their influence on housing land supply in development plans and their role in influencing future housing investment. The new arrangements, set out in the guidance, enable local authorities to play a greater strategic role in shaping the housing systems in their areas through their Local Housing Strategies. As such, Local Housing Strategies now have a clearly enhanced status and are expected to be a key corporate planning activity for local authorities.

Consistent with the commitments within the Concordat to streamline government systems the new guidance reduced the requirement for a number of related housing and support strategies. LHS are therefore now the sole strategic document on housing, homelessness, housing support services and fuel poverty required by the government. The purpose was to strengthen the integration of these areas into mainstream strategic planning for housing and to enhance their corporate profile. Nevertheless, in Scottish Borders although the LHS does recognize the importance of dealing with homelessness, (objective five is a commitment to halve homelessness) it was considered equally important to produce and publish a more detailed strategy setting out precisely how homelessness will be tackled.

Since the publication of *Firm Foundations* further consultation (investing in social housing) has been published on possibly far reaching changes to the way in which affordable housing is procured. The consultation introduced the concept of lead developers (initially just housing associations) across regions comprising multiple local authority areas. The consultation proposed that Scottish Borders would be part of a wider region including Lothian (excluding Edinburgh) and Falkirk, although the boundaries of these regions was open to review.

Under the proposed new system the LHS and its associated Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs) which set out specifically how investment in affordable housing will be directed in terms of the type of housing needed, where it is needed and what priority should be given to developments will play a significant role. Each region will need to produce a prospectus that will need to reflect the combined SHIPs and available resources for each of the authorities concerned. In effect, the Prospectuses would act as invitations to RSLs to bid for subsidy. At the time of this strategy's publication the proposals had not been finalised.

Scottish Borders Council will be updating its first LHS which covered the period 2006-09 once the policy outlook becomes clearer. The current LHS as noted earlier already emphasised reducing homelessness and sought to accomplish this through a series of specific actions including supporting private landlords, preventing homelessness from ASB and introducing the rent deposit scheme. In addition measures to increase the supply of

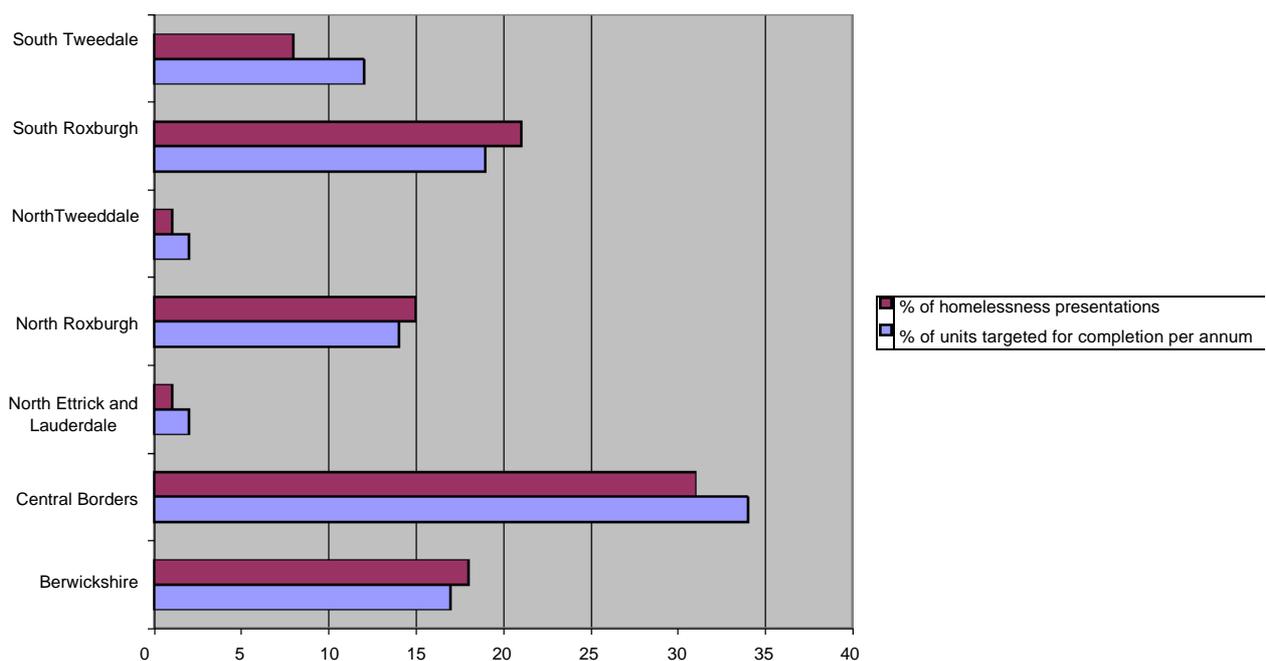
affordable housing were in part designed to provide more opportunities for households to meet their housing needs in a planned way.

3.3 Housing development

Initially the government’s focus had been on looking at ways to meet the demand for affordable housing through reforms to the RTB system (possibly by removing the right from new tenants as well as for newly built property), getting better value for money from social housing grant used to part fund social housing construction, encouraging local authorities to build new homes and reforming planning policy to bring forward more land for housing development. Resources from the government (the affordable housing investment programme) were not forecast to increase over the period 2008/11 although some of the investment has been brought forward in response to the economic downturn. It therefore seemed unlikely that Scottish Borders could expect any significant additional resources to build the new affordable homes its housing needs assessment had considered necessary. Whether and what impact the proposals outlined in 3.2 would have were uncertain.

As already noted in the strategy introduction, the Scottish Borders’s SHIP had had to take a conservative approach to delivering affordable housing units given constraints on funding and land availability. For a five year period running from 2007 onwards a total of 100 units were targeted for completion, divided between housing market areas according to the need identified by the Council’s housing needs assessment. As far as demand generated by homeless people was concerned little information was available on locational (or other) preferences although the case reviews suggested that many applicants might prefer housing nearby to their last settled home. Using presentation address therefore as a guide to where households might want to be rehoused indicated a reasonable correlation with the planned housing development area targets as illustrated in figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Comparison between location of homelessness presentations and targeted affordable housing completions

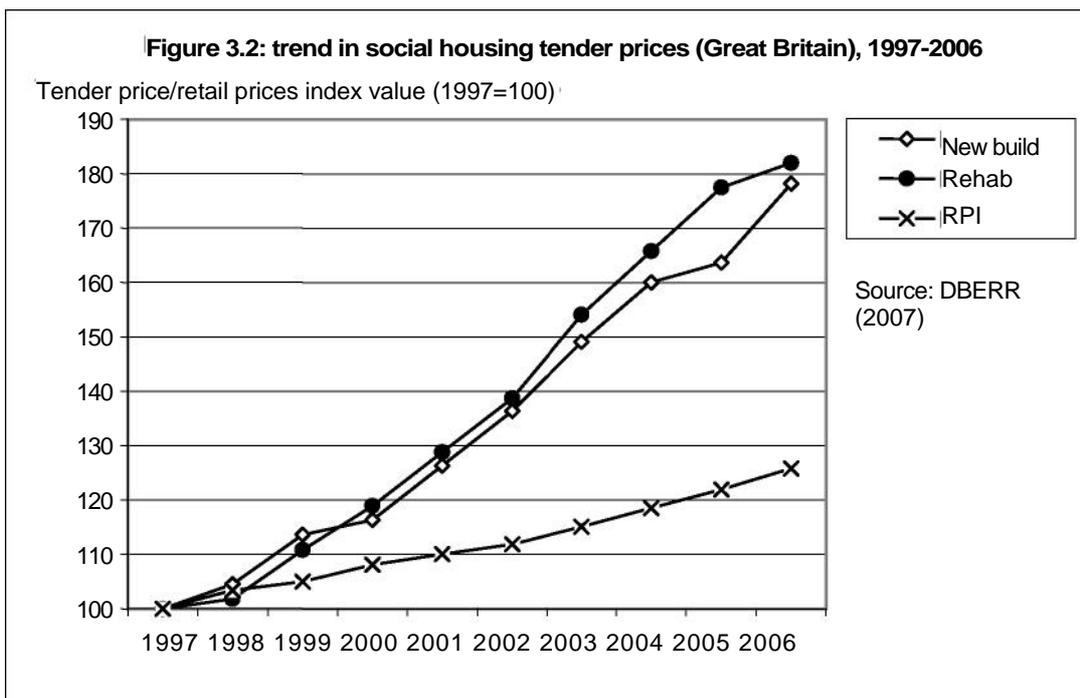


However while the pattern of proposed development appeared consistent with demand, the 100 unit target was likely to fall short of the additional demand placed by homeless households as priority need as a qualifying criteria was abolished in 2012 (see below). Whether the type and size of units constructed would meet demand from homeless households was also unclear.

Still there could be some more positive developments in the medium to long term that will increase the number of new affordable units built. First, the correction in house prices should be beneficial to first time buyers and perhaps with proper housing options advice, more people could be helped into home ownership. Second, during the interviews carried out for this strategy concerns had been raised about how feasible the SHIP targets might be given the shortage of affordable land available for social housing. However there were already signs that prices might fall or that housing developers might be willing to sell on developments where sales were anticipated to be sluggish. Construction costs might also be anticipated to reduce.

Figure 3.2 below illustrated the phenomenal increase in tender costs for social housing development across the UK (and which are replicated in the Borders and where average development costs were reported in the SHIP to be £131,895). In the current climate it is inconceivable that tender costs will remain as high (even for the smaller sites probably more common in the Borders) and therefore there may be an opportunity to increase the units actually constructed. Already some local authorities and housing association development consortia were exploring whether more assertive and joint procurement practice could realise better value for money. Working with local housing associations and possibly neighbouring LAs Scottish Borders Council will be updating its LHS and SHIP in response to the changing environment.

Nevertheless it would require an expansion in social housing construction beyond what is currently conceivable to eradicate homelessness and meet demand on its own. More focus on a personalised housing options approach to help people secure a home will be required if real reductions in homelessness are to be realised.



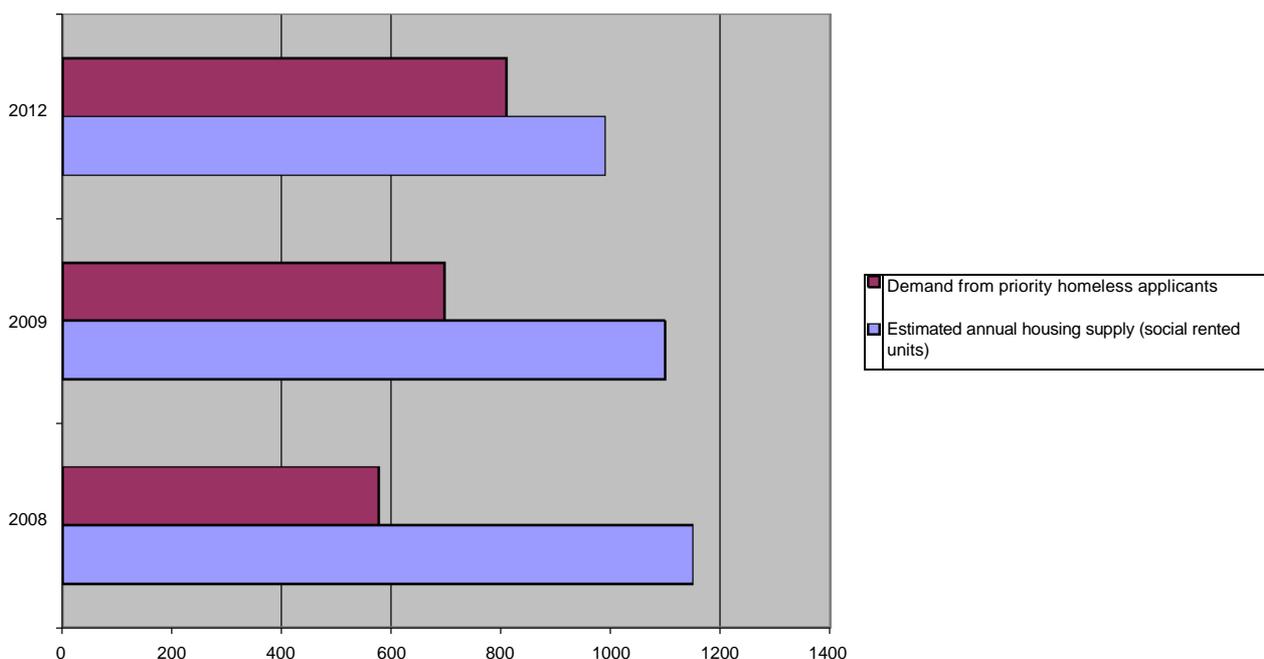
3.4 Homelessness

The government's response to homelessness looked to be similar to the previous administration's, though possibly with a more flexible approach to the use of the private rented sector. The Ministerial Statement *Helping Homeless People* sets a target for all local authorities to reduce the level of non-priority assessments by 50% by 2009 and to abolish priority need completely by 2012.

Working towards 2012 will place significant additional pressures on the Scottish Borders Council to fulfill its duties to people who are homeless and in housing need.

In 2007/08 Scottish Borders had a duty to find permanent accommodation for 578 households. The changes to legislation mean that by 2009 Scottish Borders will have a duty to rehouse (assuming similar rates of presentation) almost 700 households and by 2012, a total of 800 plus families, an increase of nearly 40%. In figure 3.3 below the demand from this group was plotted against the estimated annual supply of social rented housing. The supply estimate was derived from the annual turnover of properties reported by the four main housing associations operating in the Scottish Borders in 2005-07 and added on the new units becoming available through development. It clearly showed the potential pressures building up in the system. Undisputed figures were not available for the percentage of housing association lets currently being made to homeless households but it was said by representatives from Borders Choice Homes this could be around 45% of current lets in March 2008, compared to the 50% that demand from homeless applicants suggested was necessary. By 2009 this demand could have increased to over 60% of turnover and by 2012, over 80% unless preventative action and housing options work is mainstreamed.

Figure 3.3: Estimated demand from potentially homeless households compared to annual social rented supply



Close monitoring of the priority need figures by the Council and its housing association partners (who will need to be kept fully informed given the rehousing obligations that

follow) will be essential if the 2009 and 2012 targets are to be met. More than that there will need to be a much greater focus on preventing homelessness occurring to ensure that wherever possible the numbers presenting are reduced.

3.5 Housing support

In November 2007 the Scottish government announced that in line with the new single outcome arrangements set out in the concordat between it and local authorities, the Supporting People grant would be terminated and the amounts subsumed within the total block allocation to Councils. Although decisions about how this funding was allocated were being devolved to local authorities (and thus the possibility that spending on these services could be cut) the government indicated it did expect that housing support should continue to be provided. This was emphasised by the inclusion in the concordat of a number national outcomes that could only be realistically achieved through significant investment in housing support. In the Scottish Borders SOA, there is a commitment to ensure 'People live independently, with support, wherever necessary'.

Housing support is a critical part of the overall homelessness service. The services funded in the past from Supporting People have been important in helping people deal with their homelessness and make a success of their tenancies. Importantly gaps in services have been identified particularly for young people but also for those with mental health needs, chaotic lifestyles and people with physical disabilities.

Rather than cuts in this type of funding, additional resources (or a reallocation of existing) will be required. This has been recognised by the Council and a strategic review of support service provision and requirements across all vulnerable groups was being carried out prior to decisions on future expenditure being made. The gaps in services identified in the homelessness strategy will feed into this process and influence the final decisions made.

3.6 Housing advice

Advice and information provision had not received a high national profile in comparison with other housing policy areas in recent years. However as already demonstrated the provision of good quality housing options advice and information and assistance about financial matters, fuel costs, support services and tenancy rights and obligations were all going to be critical if Scottish Borders was to successfully tackle its homelessness problem.

The standards developed for housing advice and information by the (then) Communities Scotland HomePoint team remain the benchmark against which the social housing regulator (SHR) assesses services. Scottish Borders Council was committed to developing advice and information services consistent with these standards. A draft housing advice and information strategy had been prepared by the Council in 2003 and funding secured from HomePoint to develop a multi-agency (Scottish Housing Forum) web-based advice resource. However progress had stalled because other more pressing priorities had intervened and although advice services had grown this had tended to be in response to particular initiatives or funding opportunities rather than out of an overall strategy. Furthermore the website itself is now out of date and indeed contains some misleading information.

Inevitably this had led to advice services primarily being provided by a few specialist providers (the CABs, welfare rights and more recently the Shelter housing advice project), not all of which were well integrated into mainstream housing management and homelessness services and not always used when they could be of assistance to service users.

Advice provision was not being sufficiently recognised as a mainstream function by either homelessness or housing management professionals, critical if prevention and housing options work was to be promoted. Scottish Borders Council also had a duty to provide free advice and assistance to all homeless households who were not accepted as priority homeless. In 2007/08 advice and assistance should have been made available to at least 355 applicants found to be not homeless, not in priority need or intentionally homeless. While the total could reduce as those in priority need are accepted for permanent housing this should be counterbalanced by increased demand resulting from more preventative and housing options work with applicants.

The proportion of these applicants receiving good quality advice and assistance was probably extremely low as the case reviews and interviews revealed that this function was limited in nature relying predominantly on some very limited standardised information about alternative landlords and the Scottish Borders rent deposit scheme, contained in the decision letter.

In 2007, Scottish Borders Council had carried out a survey of organisations to establish which were providing housing advice and information as a prelude to reinvigorating the housing advice strategy. The survey was limited (because it was a postal survey) in the questions it asked being unable to uncover precise details about for example:

- Service provision – hours of opening, outreach services offered, case loads, client groups and eligibility for assistance, what information they had
- Quality issues – staff qualifications, advice outcomes
- Perceptions of unmet demand and future plans.

However despite its shortcomings it had established a reasonable baseline for current provision. Seventy-six responses were received from the 208 sent out, with around half those responding claiming to provide some form of housing advice. However most advice was in the form of 'signposting', ie, the organisation would give out information and direct people to other agencies rather than provide direct assistance. As the information about services was limited and much of it out of date (for the homelessness service in particular) it raised questions about the quality and relevance of what might be being offered.

The analysis of the homelessness problem in section two suggested that advice on housing options, private sector housing rights, housing costs, (rent and running costs) and financial assistance (benefits and debt related) were all in demand. Private sector housing was highlighted by both the CAB and Shelter Housing Advice as a particular source of enquiries. In addition to advice about rights, the CAB in particular identified a large number of non registered landlords. Although Scottish Borders Council estimated that of the private landlords identified 95% had been registered, possibly as many as 2,000 other houses were also let out. Identifying these properties will be a priority for this strategy.

Less recognised (by the applicant as much as the staff working with them) was assistance to resolve family disputes, eg, mediation and training and support to run a home.

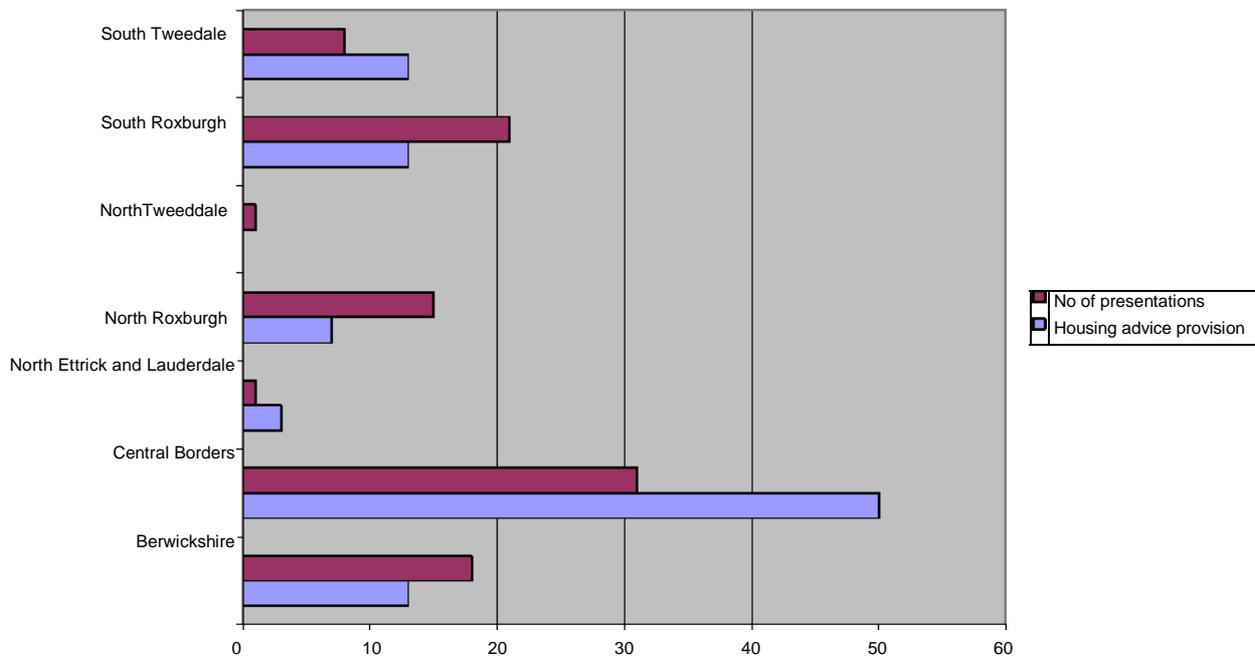
Housing staff themselves also needed access to better advice and information to advise those they worked with about support and care services (what was available for what purpose and the eligibility and assessment process). It was clear from the interviews that housing, support and social work professionals sometimes misunderstood each other's roles and responsibilities and the nature of the services each delivered leading to problems such as:

- Delays in organising permanent accommodation because of difficulties in arranging support
- Differences in opinion about whether applicants required (or it was essential for them to have) care or support services.

Other areas where interviewees suggested that advice and assistance provision was under pressure included marital breakdown, legal assistance for clients facing court action for debt and domestic abuse.

Accessibility to advice services was considered a problem by a number of interviewees. For homeless applicants figure 3.4 below plots the provision of services (note that these did not include Council offices, nor do they distinguish between those providing case work and those that signpost) against the presentation addresses.

Figure 3.4: Housing Advice Provision Location - compared to Homelessness Presentation Address (2007/08)



As might be expected the majority of provision was in the Central Borders area which includes Galashiels, Selkirk and Melrose. North and South Roxburgh areas seemed less well provided but the CAB and youth housing project were located in Hawick and the homelessness service in Jedburgh, both important sources of advice and information.

Recently the Waverley Housing Project – a joint initiative between Waverley Housing and the CAB has been launched to provide housing and debt related advice to the RSLs own tenants.

Scottish Borders Council remained committed to producing a comprehensive advice and information strategy, possibly linked to the development of the Council's proposed 'customer first' strategy it had been agreed that the homelessness strategy would be used to initially drive forward improvements in advice and assistance. The reasons for this were two fold. First solving the homelessness problem will be impossible without better advice and assistance and second it was strongly felt that delivery would be better guaranteed with one plan. Not only would this ensure that advice was seen as integral to mainstream services but it would not be put at risk by being seen as a secondary and therefore less of a priority.

3.7 Other challenges

3.7.1 Health

The first Scottish Borders housing strategy was produced alongside a multi-agency led health and homelessness strategy and the partnership that developed this had continued to work together to resolve homelessness issues. The needs identified in the research underpinning the health and homelessness plan were still found to exist during the production of the current homelessness strategy:

- The psychological impact of homelessness – boredom, depression and low self esteem and a lack of services to tackle these
- The frequency of complex needs – drug problems being combined with mental and physical health problems
- The adverse impact of frequent changes of address on existing medical conditions
- The lack of suitable temporary accommodation for the physically disabled (but now also including young people, people with mental health problems and those with drug and/or alcohol misuse issues)
- The lack of any accurate data about the general health of the Borders population and homeless people in particular.

The case reviews revealed that two thirds had some form of medical problem that had either being a direct cause of their homelessness or had been made worse by their housing situation. In most cases there was medical evidence on the file to support the claim. Stress and depression were mentioned in over half these cases, and the serious nature of a number (emphasised by medical evidence) described the stress and depression as severe.

On the positive side many applicants were already receiving help (or had in the past received assistance) from the health service or through Borders community action team (BCAT) or Penumbra. All applicants (even those from the migrant worker community) had registered with a GP. There was also no evidence that common complaints associated with sleeping rough were prevalent amongst homeless applicants in the Borders.

Other issues highlighted by the interviewees were the gaps in psychological services (not it should be noted just for homeless people) and sufficient awareness about the adverse health impacts on children experiencing homelessness.

Not so frequently acknowledged but clearly of increasing concern was the growing number of older people and what appeared to be indications both that older people were becoming more at risk of homelessness but also that medical problems associated with old age were responsible for some people becoming homeless.

The recently introduced project where a community nurse was working with homeless people in the Jedburgh and Duns area should provide more information about health needs that could be used to inform this and any future health and homeless plan.

3.7.2 The rural nature of Scottish Borders

Throughout the strategy's development, those being interviewed had emphasised the importance of appreciating how the geography of Scottish Borders influenced service provision and demand. There were three particular aspects that the strategy needed to address:

- 1 Transport links between many settlements were poor or infrequent. This was the case not just for the smaller villages but also between some of the main towns. Almost all those interviewed mentioned that Jedburgh where the homelessness service was located was difficult to reach from many parts of the Borders. Interestingly in the case reviews carried out well over a third of applicants were interviewed in places other than the Jedburgh office.
- 2 People in the Borders were considered to be strongly attached to place and many would only consider housing within narrowly defined boundaries. This was supported by the case reviews where even those applicants who had had many changes of address had frequently moved only short distances. There was a surprising lack of movement between towns in the Borders and in fact in some areas (notably Berwickshire) moves might be equally likely to be made across the border to Northumberland.
- 3 A few interviewees felt that the conservative nature of small rural communities discouraged people from seeking help from homelessness or social work services and that there could be a problem with hidden homelessness. Some housing association staff believed that they were picking up some people falling into this category but that since the launch of Borders Choice Homes and the removal of insecurity of tenure as a priority for rehousing these applicants might not be getting the help they needed.

Section four: development of the strategy

In this section the production of the homeless strategy action plan, the most important part of the document is explained. It gives details about the material used to produce the document, sets out the main objectives for the strategy, briefly describes the current approach and identifies both its particular strengths and those elements where

improvements need to be made. The action plan is designed to deliver the necessary improvements. This section also describes how the strategy will be managed.

4.1 The information underpinning the strategy

The new homelessness strategy is the product of an in-depth and wide ranging consultation process where the views of customers and service providers have been drawn upon. In addition there has been an examination of operational practice – homelessness assessments, the Section 5 process and, rent arrears recovery practice within the four largest housing associations in Scottish Borders. Relevant documentation including research reports, policy and practice guidance and statistical information has also been used.

The strategy has also been influenced by the Communities Scotland inspection of the Council's homelessness service during 2007. Overall the Council was awarded a 'C' grade in this inspection, described as 'fair' and meaning that 'there are some strengths but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses'.

4.2 The strategy objectives

The strategy has six objectives which have been derived from the major themes emerging from the analysis, interviews and documentation review. These six objectives are:

- Provide a service that takes all reasonable steps to prevent people becoming actually homeless
- Provide services to homeless households that will be accessible, of the highest quality and tailored wherever possible to their specific needs
- Seek to maximise the access to and range of support and assistance offered to help people achieve or maintain independence
- Operate a fair, accessible and responsive system for finding homeless households settled accommodation
- Put in place well publicised housing and related advice services that tackle the particular problems facing Scottish Borders residents
- Put in place an excellent management and delivery system to ensure delivery on the homeless strategy's objectives.

4.3 How the services perform against the objectives

4.3.1 Provide a service that takes all reasonable steps to prevent people becoming actually homeless

Preventing homelessness is necessary in the Scottish Borders both to help people avoid the disruption and stress homelessness brings and to ensure that the Council can meet the 2012 target.

Progress has been made to refocus the homelessness service from one concerned primarily with investigation and assessment towards one where strenuous efforts were made to prevent homelessness or to ensure that homelessness was not repeated. New policy and practice had been designed to promote this approach, supported by a training programme for homeless staff to help them make what was accepted as a fundamental cultural shift in the service ethos.

Specialist services to support staff prevent homelessness had been or were anticipated, including:

- The mediation service designed to overcome family disputes, which evolved from well respected model used to tackle neighbour disputes
- The Shelter Housing Advice service which opened in 2007 and offered advice both to service users and their case workers
- The community support workers (recently renamed tenancy support workers) who worked with homeless people to address problems underlying their homelessness and help them settle into new tenancies
- A welfare rights officer assigned to the homeless section.

Further it had sought to expand the range of housing options open to housing applicants through its rent deposit scheme, by developing better links with the private rented sector and as articulated in its SHIP, supporting the delivery of more affordable housing.

However at this stage there was little evidence that the prevention approach was becoming embedded in mainstream practice and concern that some practice (not confined to the homelessness service itself) was inimical to good prevention.

From the analysis carried out and described in section two it was already apparent that few homeless applicants were being considered as potentially homeless and that the service was still very much geared towards the assessment process. The consultation and interviews carried out confirmed the position. The homeless strategy action plan will address the shortcomings in present practice. It prioritises:

- Updating and implementing the new policy and practice, reviewing job descriptions and management responsibilities to ensure these meet the revised expectations of the service at the same time as working through with homeless assessment staff perceived barriers to delivery
- Taking a proactive approach to preventing homelessness by setting out the action that could be taken and supporting the applicant to or advocating on their behalf to resolve problems. This will include increasing the use made of the Shelter housing advice service (in its first year of operation the homelessness service made just three referrals and five requests for consultancy support). The evidence from both service users and the case reviews confirmed that it was having positive results by for example preventing eviction for rent arrears
- Negotiating and implementing protocols and procedures to prevent (and in the medium term eliminate) the homelessness route being used where planned

interventions could be made. Included will be people being discharged from prisons, young people leaving care, and people retiring from jobs with a tied tenancy. Although a discharge protocol was in place with NHS Borders some interviewees believed that this was not as effective as it could be and this will be examined too

Improving communication and joint working with housing associations and the private rented sector about tenants at risk of becoming homeless. Housing associations will incorporate best practice in preventing rent arrears and the Scottish Borders Housing Benefit service will contribute by working with landlords to streamline and make the application and review process more efficient, considering in particular HB verification training for housing association officers. SBC will work with housing associations to ensure that tenants have equitable access to welfare benefits and money/debt advice.

The quality of information about the services and housing options will be updated and more widely distributed in a wider range of formats. Particularly important will be producing information for households such as the elderly who had previously been seen as less at risk of becoming homeless.

Measures to assess how successful prevention action is will be introduced.

4.3.2 Provide services to homeless households that will be accessible, of the highest quality and tailored wherever possible to their specific needs

4.3.2.1 The assessment service

The Council's homelessness service was delivered by a six strong homelessness assessment team based at Jedburgh with administrative support and managed by a senior officer. Scheduled visits were made to offices in Hawick, Duns, Galashiels, Eyemouth, Kelso and Peebles to carry out assessment interviews. The team had been expanded in recent years in recognition of new challenges and compared to similar local authorities (based on presentation rates) was just below average in its staffing complement.⁸

It operated an emergency out-of-hours service through its emergency duty team which was currently under review.

The Communities Scotland inspection had concluded that service accessibility was poor, highlighting information provision, standby service operation and publicity as their main concerns.

The assessment process was found to be reasonably sound with incorrect decisions seldom being made and vulnerability being usually recognised if not always then responded to. Nevertheless the homeless strategy action plan has included a range of tasks to address other service and planning failures.

⁸ Information was used from the SHBVN benchmarking exercise 2007/08 but caution needs to be exercised because of different interpretations of homeless staff, the range of in-house services and the complexity of the problem being faced. Nevertheless Scottish Borders did not appear to be under resourced.

Chief amongst these are:

- A timetable for meeting the 2009 and 2012 obligations by extending the households considered to be in priority need. This will be achieved by accepting all single households up to 25 and over 50 as in priority need. The rehousing consequences will be considered and planned for with local landlords
- More robust investigation into homelessness to be assured that wherever possible it can be avoided. As part of this, housing options interviews will be offered to all applicants, home visits will be conducted (except in exceptional circumstances) and other routes into housing will be considered and developed. This could mean revising qualifying criteria for the rent deposit scheme and exploring whether additional priority for housing can be awarded to people at risk of homelessness but not within the statutory 42 day period
- Case handling and management will be improved by ensuring that the underlying causes of homelessness are understood and dealt with, existing support and care workers are contacted (where the applicant is in agreement) and housing, advice and support decisions are designed to meet the applicant's reasonable aspirations. Applicants will be kept aware about their case progress
- Improving service accessibility by considering the location of the homelessness service, where and by whom the initial homeless interview is conducted, advertising the service (and housing options in general) in locations where all groups can access. This will include places of employment, schools, and community facilities. Staff working with hard to reach groups will be encouraged to help in the design of the communications plan.

4.3.2.2 Temporary accommodation

Scottish Borders Council provided temporary accommodation for homeless people in 14 units owned by the Council in Kelso and around over 50 furnished flats owned by housing associations. It had also recently introduced a private sector leasing scheme managed by Orchard and Shipman. It also made extensive use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Considerable numbers of people were also classified as homeless at home.

A draft temporary accommodation strategy had been prepared but did not set out a clear plan for meeting demand, which could conceivably mushroom if more households exercised their right to TA.

TA property standards for the furnished sector were considered by Communities Scotland to be acceptable. Standards in B&B were variable and confirmed as such by service users interviewed.

Discussions and negotiations had been or were taking place about meeting gaps in provision although it remained unclear which options could or would be pursued. Options being considered included supported accommodation for young people to help them prepare for successful independent living, direct access accommodation, possibly a night stop with the Churches Scotland Group, refurbishment or replacement of the Council's Maxwell park unit with supported accommodation and a bail hostel.

The homelessness action plan seeks to address the gaps in TA but also management issues which would also improve the service. These issues include:

- Developing and implementing policy and guidance for assessing TA requirements and making suitable placements and therefore avoiding using inappropriate TA for vulnerable people
- Setting and monitoring TA standards that encompass property, facilities, and management
- Ensuring that regular contact is kept with people in TA and that they are encouraged or supported to resolve issues underlying their homelessness and prepare for their rehousing
- Finalising the TA strategy and ensuring that it meets both predicted as well as existing demand. This will mean acknowledging the potential increased demand from older people with medical or physical disabilities. It also means acknowledging that demand could decrease if prevention action is successful and therefore designing provision that can be easily converted for permanent accommodation. It also will consider charging policy given the proportion of homeless households who are working and unable to afford the high rents (even with partial HB) for the properties currently on offer.

4.3.3 Seek to maximise the access to and range of support and assistance offered to help people achieve or maintain independence

Scottish Borders Council had extended the range of support available for homeless people and this now included:

- A community (tenancy) support team located in the homelessness service and providing a range of services from advice about furniture grants, practical help with setting up a tenancy and a short term resettlement service
- A designated welfare rights officer – as well as a larger team
- A community nurse working in Duns and Kelso to help people access GP services.

In addition EHA had a (previously SP) funded housing support service and SBA its own more benefits/welfare right support post. Penumbra ran a support service primarily for people with mental health problems. Discussion about supported lodgings for young people and the successful Fabpad model were also taking place.

Social work and health services were being used by homeless people, with applicants frequently having already in contact with services before they became homeless. At times certain of types of support and care provision, eg, mental health and drug services were said to be difficult to procure either because of unsatisfactory referral arrangements or connections between services were limited. In other instances services were very limited, eg, psychological services.

The role of the mainstream housing managers in helping people sustain tenancies also needs to be made clear. While there is scope to reallocate some funds towards those

areas such as support for young people it is unlikely that all aspirations for growth will be met. One important response will therefore be to agree standards for housing management that support tenancy sustainability. Each housing association has particular strengths in its approach to tenancy sign up, settling in visits for new tenants and recovering rent arrears and practice could be easily developed that incorporated the best aspects of each.

Services already established and to set out priorities which will need to be in part addressed through a revised housing support strategy to replace the Supporting People Plan. Chief amongst the issues the homeless strategy will address are:

- Improving the communication between the homeless, housing and support agencies working with homeless people. This includes implementing the single shared assessment process, better co-ordination of services, improved understanding about each others services and more preplanning of support packages
- Reviewing the operation of community (tenancy) support service to learn what has worked and how key problems such as lack of engagement could be tackled
- Providing supported accommodation (and preparation for independent living) for young people, particularly for young people leaving care but for other vulnerable individuals
- Examining options to increase the range of services – including extending floating support provision so that a service is available 24 hours and for people with complex or more than one need
- Improving the resettlement process particularly the involvement with and handover to housing association housing management staff. As part of this agreeing with and providing support to housing association housing management staff so that they are confident about managing these tenancies
- Putting in place a system to measure the effectiveness of support services.

4.3.4 Operate a fair, accessible and responsive system for finding homeless households settled accommodation

Since the last strategy was produced whilst no common housing register has been introduced across Scottish Borders, fragmentation has been reduced with three of the four largest housing associations launching a joint housing register.

The majority of homeless households in priority need are found permanent accommodation through section five referrals to one of two housing systems operating in Scottish Borders, either Borders Choice Homes, the choice-based lettings system operated by BHA, EHA and Waverley Housing or SBHA's own system which will be replaced by a separate CBL scheme during 2008/09. For the medium term at least these two systems will coexist.

The Communities Scotland inspection had found the Section 5 process to be managed ineffectively because:

Staff had no procedures to assist them in making referrals

- Staff had no details on housing association stock and turnover to help them make appropriate referrals
- The Council does not monitor the progress of referrals or always know when an applicant accepts a tenancy
- The Council does not consistently record, monitor and report on section five outcomes.

While communication had improved the position remained essentially the same and the homelessness strategy plan acknowledges what needs to be done to improve the process at the time when the potential demand from homeless households is likely to rise.

The homeless strategy action plan emphasises the need to make the Section 5 process work efficiently. It commits the Council and housing associations to work together to respond to demand pressures which are likely to increase with the phased removal of priority needs qualifying criteria.

Broadening the range of housing options open to homeless people or those with insecure homes is also an important focus for the strategy. The plan seeks to build on the relationship with the private rented sector to increase the opportunities to move to good quality and secure accommodation in this sector. As part of this the rent deposit qualifying criteria scheme will be reviewed to explore whether it can be extended to include people on low incomes.

Preparation for applicants taking on first tenancies is also tackled in the action plan in response to the sizeable number of people who are seen to lose secure tenancies in both the social and private rented sector.

The partners also recognise that in the longer term the existence of two separate local housing registers and allocations systems should be reconsidered if the operation is found to be failing service user expectations or impeding progress and performance.

4.3.5 Put in place well publicised housing and related advice services that tackle the particular problems facing Scottish Borders residents

Originally Scottish Borders Council was to introduce a separate if linked housing advice strategy but have instead incorporated the housing advice objective within the homelessness strategy to increase its profile. A separate Council wide advice plan is likely to be taken forward as part of the customer first initiative and this will include housing advice alongside other services which while important in the housing and homelessness context are broader in scope. The provision of advice on benefits, debt, relationships and employment and training are examples of where a broader strategy will focus.

Advice and assistance to homeless households was found to be limited and unlikely (with no records being kept to measure its effectiveness) to help them secure housing. The provision was rated poor by Communities Scotland in their inspection.

The demand for good quality housing and housing related advice in Scottish Borders is unquestionable given the shortage of good quality affordable homes, the low wage economy and high and probably in the current economic climate incident of personal debt. The homeless strategy action plan focuses on the following:

- Raising the profile of housing advice as an important mainstream activity by encouraging organisations to incorporate it into policy and guidance and job descriptions and to operate to established standards, specifically those developed by HomePoint
- To consider moving to a housing options approach for helping housing applicants secure housing. In the short term it will be important to ensure that attention remains focused on improving the statutory homeless service but in the longer term once preventative approaches have become embedded and the relaxation of qualifying criteria reduced the time required to carry out homelessness assessments a move towards a more options based service may be compelling
- Focusing development on a number of services where need and demand has been established or where circumstances suggest these will be necessary in future. Examples are financial inclusion services, advice for young people, and measures to help people in mortgage arrears.

4.3.6 Put in place an excellent management and delivery system to ensure delivery on the homeless strategy's objectives

The final strategy objective has been included to ensure that the first five are successfully met. In the past Scottish Borders have recognised that implementation has not been as strong as strategy development.

Performance management systems, service user feedback and responding to and managing changing circumstances have been areas of weakness. The Scottish Borders Council has committed funding to the homelessness and support services for 2008-10 (that includes the amounts previously ring fenced by the Scottish government), and any future review of arrangements will be made following consideration of progress against this strategy and future needs. A designated financial management officer has been appointed to help control budgets within the Council.

Already Scottish Borders Council has introduced improved IT systems and statistical information is more readily available. Recently established services such as Shelter housing advice are also producing reports showing service inputs and outputs.

The strategy action plan builds on this work and includes commitments to:

- Introduce a comprehensive performance management system that clearly demonstrates progress against the aims and objectives in the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy
- High standards of customer service – through for example improving the visibility of the complaints and appeals process, publicising service standards, and proactively requesting feedback
- Using a robust system of financial management so that services delivered as part of the Scottish Borders homeless strategy will be expected to demonstrate that they are value for money.

4.4 How will the strategy be managed?

The Borders Health and Homeless Strategic Partnership will oversee the homeless strategy's delivery and will report annually on its progress. This multi-agency partnership's purpose is set out in its remit which provides it with the powers and responsibilities to discharge this task:

- To provide information on and increase the quality and diversity of operational practice in tackling health and homelessness related issues through access to existing research, benchmarking and identifying best practice
- To embed continuing professional development of the health and homelessness services workforce through the provision of joint procurement of training, staff development
- To provide guidance on homelessness legislation and related legislation
- To review the nature and extent of the contributory factors that lead to homelessness such as health, poverty, anti-social behaviour and others
- To commission research for the purpose of building on existing knowledge to ensure that strategies are up to date and 'fit for purpose'
- To act as a 'steering group' in research and other projects
- To establish robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of health and homelessness strategies across the Scottish Borders
- To develop, monitor and ensure the delivery of the health and homelessness action plan
- Where appropriate to, share bids and resources for project funding.

It has a management group with up to 14 members drawn from the local authority, the housing association sector, NHS Borders, the voluntary sector and the private sector landlord forum. Its current membership is shown in appendix one.

Each organisation within the partnership will manage its own homelessness responsibilities and report back through a named homelessness 'champion' to the BHHSP.

Delivering the strategy will be a challenge but one in which all the BHHSP are fully committed to achieving.

Appendices

- 1 Membership of the HHSG.
- 2 Glossary of terms.
- 3 Action plan.

Appendix one: membership of the BHHSP

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Appendix two: glossary of terms

AHP	Affordable housing policy
B&B	Bed and breakfast
BCAT	Borders Community Addiction Team
BCH	Borders Choice Homes
BHA	Berwickshire Housing Association
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CBL	Choice-based lettings – a method by which housing is allocated involving applicants registering their interest for advertised houses. The decision on successful ‘bidder’ is generally determined by some form of prioritisation process based on a combination of need and waiting time
CHR	Common Housing Register
Communities Scotland	Was the Scottish Government’s housing and regeneration agency until abolished by the Scottish government
EHA	Eildon Housing Association
Fuel poverty	A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to heat itself. Those in the lower income brackets are more susceptible to fuel poverty
HNS	Housing Needs Study
HomePoint	A department of originally in Communities Scotland that works to improve the standard of housing advice and information provision
Priority Need	At a homeless assessment some people will be considered more vulnerable due to certain criteria and are therefore entitled to further assistance
Private Sector Leasing (PSL)	PSL properties are owned by private landlords. These properties are leased by the Council who sublet them to customers in housing need

Resettlement	<p>Resettlement is a way of providing support over time to help a person change their life so that they feel and are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically and emotionally secure • In control of their life and their home • Actively involved in a network of supportive social relationships • In possession of a sense of purpose • Working to achieve dreams and aspirations
Housing Association	Registered Social Landlords, such as a Housing Association or Co-operative
SBC	Scottish Borders Council
SBHA	Scottish Borders Housing Association
Shelter	Housing Advice Service and charity working with homeless people
SHIP	Strategic housing investment plan – showing how affordable housing requirements will be delivered
Social networks	Personal networks made up of people who can be called on for help, pass the time of day with or seek advice from
Supporting People	The Supporting People programme offered vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence by delivering high quality and strategically planned housing-related services which are cost effective and reliable, and complement existing care services. Supporting People was a working partnership of local government, service users and support agencies
WH	Waverley Housing

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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Appendix three: action plan

Key Theme	Provide a service that takes all reasonable steps to avoid people becoming actually homeless						
Overall Outcomes	(1) Reduce the number of people who make more than one homelessness application from 9% to 5% of total applications received in a year, by 2012 and (2) Maximise the number of people whose homelessness is prevented from actually occurring, achieving 15% of applications by march 2009 an rising to 30% in 2012						
Improve homeless assessment practice so that the prevention of homelessness is prioritised	Improve the recording of presentation dates and increase the proportion of people presenting as emergencies who are seen within 24 hours	Homeless Team	Year 1 immediate	Year 1	Modification HL1 and Officer time	(1) % of applicants presenting who receive home visit. (2) % of those presenting who are seen within 24 hours and (3) % of applicants under 21 whose homelessness is prevented	(1) No home visits. and (3) baselines have to be established
	Where appropriate, carry out home visits to all those presenting direct from their 'last' settled address	Homeless Team	Year 1	Year 3	Financial resources, Officer time, ongoing		
	Develop and introduce customised practice to prevent homelessness from young people (under 21) that seeks to encourage a	Homeless Team	Year 2	Year 3	Homelessness Officer time (Family Liaison/Transitions Team)		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	planned move to independence						
Reduce the number of repeat homelessness applications	Record (code reasons), monitor and report 6 monthly on all repeat homelessness applications and produce reports	Homeless team	Year 1	Year 1 ongoing	Computer system	Number losing homes from PRS and RSL sector reduces	16% of presentations in 2007/08 (Source HL1)
	Identify which households are at risk of losing their homes once rehoused as homeless and ensure assessment process provides targeted help	Homeless team with housing support team	Year 1	Year 2 ongoing	Guidance on which households might be seen as vulnerable to repeat homelessness/addition Support Resources		
Reduce the number of repeat homelessness applications	Before making allocation of settled housing, offer suitable support to and maximise take up by all households who are considered at risk of losing their	Housing support team leader, SW and RSL leads (may want to split)	Year 1	Year 2	Hsg Support Officer time/RSL Officer Time	Number losing homes from PRS and RSL sector reduces	16% of presentations in 2007/08 (Source HL1)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	home						
	Offer and maximise take up of support and advice to existing tenants in RSL and private sector tenancies who are at risk of losing their homes	Housing support team leader, SW and RSL leads (may want to split)	Year 2	Year 2	PRS training, protocols with support and advice providers /review SP funding		
Increase the number of homeless people accessing advice services	Provide better information about housing options - written, web-based, and poster-based - pending full review of housing options service	Homeless team	Year 1	Update six monthly	Funding for printing costs, and web-page development	Number of households presenting for whom Shelter, welfare Benefits or CAB prevent homelessness	Shelter - 16% (9) of 57 closed cases (Source: final Q 07/08 monitoring report)
	Increase the accessibility and take up of existing advice services amongst homeless households	Homeless manager	Year 1	Year 1	Marketing, training, enhancement of procedures, tel service/Service Re-design		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Review and promote the advocacy service to support people particularly vulnerable to make homeless applications or seeking housing advice	SBC/WB and Shelter, CAB and BIAS	Year 2	Year 3	Additional Officer Resource/Housing Options Training		
Reduce evictions from Housing Association stock	Using the analysis of rent practice carried out during the strategy production, identify the improvements needed to help prevent homelessness. This should include a consistent and proactive approach to prevention in the early stages of the tenancy, and a consistent standard of good practice in responding to arrears, by emphasising	RSL Lead	Year 1	Year 1	None	% of evictions from RSL stock	0.32% of total RSL stock (Source: APSR 06/07)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	sustainable repayment plans						
	Improve the management of Housing Benefit by putting in place a verification framework between SBC and RSLs and by training RSL staff to a consistent standard to offer assertive advice and assistance with HB claims	RSL and SBC Revs and Bens	Year 1	Year 2	Training resources and staffing resources within RSLs		
	Develop and agree with all RSLs a protocol for identifying which households are vulnerable from the start of all tenancies, and	RSL and SBC	Year 1	Year 2	None		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	working together to prevent the loss of homes. Ensure a consistent level of tenancy support provision across all RSLs						
	Investigate the feasibility of a flag system for vulnerability with all housing providers, and a monitoring system and process	RSL and SBC	Year 1	Year 2	Computer system		
Reduce evictions from Housing Association stock	Build on existing good practice to agree and implement a common standard of joint working with external support agencies on the needs of vulnerable tenants to prevent loss of tenancy	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	Officer resources	% of evictions from RSL stock	0.32% of total RSL stock (Source: APSR 06/07)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Before making allocation of settled housing, offer financial advice to all households who already have debt or may be at risk of accumulating it. Take a pro-active approach by checking that this advice is used	RSLs and SBC	Year 1	Year 1	May require additional resources as debt advice Officer		
	Review the arrgts for notifying SBC of legal action to repossess tenancies, ensuring standard approach to notifying at each key stage and standard set of information to highlight vulnerability	RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	None		

	Review the response to notification of legal action to provide an assertive and proactive response to the	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Prioritising use of existing resources and look to develop jointly funded arrears prevention Officer		
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	threat of homelessness. Ensure that joint homeless officer / housing management visit takes place as part of recovery process						
	Carry out a 'homeless impact assessment on allocations policies for Border Choice Homes and SBHA and identify any improvements needed to help to prevent homelessness	SBC and RSL	Year 1	Year 1	Review of BCH planned		
Prevent homelessness from the private rented sector	Provide training for homeless staff on landlord/tenancy	Homeless Service Manager	Year 1	Annual updates	Existing resources	(1) Number becoming homeless from PRS (2)	(1)21% presenting from PRS (Source:

	law and monitor through case checks impact on practice. Ensure at least one member designated as expert (with specific remit)					Additional landlords added to register	HL1 data for 07/08)
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Provide regular (annual) training for private landlords on landlord / tenant law - target subject on queries dealing with	Shelter/ SBC Landlord Forum	Year 1	Annual updates	training design and delivery		
	With key providers negotiate code of practice to guide landlords management of their tenancies to avoid / minimise homelessness	SBC	Year 2	Year 3	Existing resources		

	Encourage registration of 'hidden' landlords through (1) publicity campaign, (2) confidential hot line, (3) case workers checking landlords against register	SBC	Year 1	Year 1 ongoing	Existing resources		
	Identify 'rogue' landlords and take action to improve their practice	SBC	year 1	Ongoing	Existing resources		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Investigate a mechanism for providing tenancy support to private tenants (x refer to objective 3)	SBC	Year 3	Year 4	Service cost		
Prevent homelessness amongst people leaving institutions	Develop and implement a protocol for preventing homelessness amongst people leaving hospital	Homeless Service Manager with health colleagues	Year 2	Year 3	No additional resources	Number presenting as homeless from prison or hospital	3% presenting from prison or hospital (Source: HL1 data for 07/08)

	Develop and implement a protocol for preventing homelessness amongst people leaving prison, to include agreement for Criminal Justice staff to carry out housing options assessments in prison	Homeless services manager with Criminal Justice manager/SOLO	Year 2	Year 3	No additional resources		
Improve planning for young people leaving care	Identify potential housing needs and appropriate solutions for all young people in care 6 months before their 16th	Throughcare team with Homeless Services Manager	Year 1	Year 2	Practice and policy development	Numbers presenting as homeless when leaving care system	7 (Source: 2007/08 HL1 data)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	birthday						

	Develop a policy with RSLs for housing young people between 16 and 18 (with support where needed), with priority for those leaving care and homeless young people	Homeless Service Manager with Throughcare team manager and RSLs	Year 1	Year 2	Support Resources		
	Agree the policy with all RSLs, implement, and monitor		Year 2	Year 2			
Extend mediation to prevent family breakdown and help resolve family disputes	Identify resources for extending the mediation service	Homeless team	Year	Apr-10		Number of households presenting with family dispute as reason for homelessness where prevention successful	No baseline on success as recording to be improved. Note 13% (120 cases) of households presenting have been asked to leave (Source: HL1 data)
	Investigate the potential usefulness for a service targeted at young people that avoids homelessness from breakdown. Consider establishing system of 'respite' TA	SBC	Year 2	Year 4	Cost of service		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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							07/08)
Increase the numbers of affordable housing stock available to meet housing demand	Modify the existing Borders affordable housing policy to increase units built.	SBC	year 3	Year 4	Consider how other rural areas have addressed small developments issue	Number of affordable housing units under management	Social rented stock - 11,551 units (Source: SHBVN annual return 07/08)
	With RSL partners explore the possibilities of increasing units available through e.g. acquisition of developer's surplus units	RSLs	Year 1		Gov grant may become available		
	Carry out an audit of all public and partner land and buildings to identify potential sites for development	SBC	Year 2	Year 3	Note that Church of Scotland was mentioned as potential landowner		
	Investigate the potential to improve the turnaround of existing social rented stock by such measures	RSLs	Year 2	Year 3	Incentives for downsizing		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	as addressing under occupation and promoting internal transfers						
	Investigate the potential to develop interim rented housing given	RSLs	Year 2	Year 3			
	Investigate whether potential to acquire property through purchase of buy to let units	RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	Possible partnership with CEC based RSL if demand from some applicants could be satisfied elsewhere		

Key Theme	Our services to homeless households will be accessible, of the highest quality and tailored wherever possible to their specific needs						
Overall Outcome	Have the overall quality of our emergency housing service recognised by being awarded an excellent grade by an independent assessor by 2012						
Implement revised policy and procedures and provide an excellent standard of service	Review agreed changes to ensure they are up to date	Homeless Service	Year 1 immediate	Year 1	None	(1) Number of case checks carried out with assessment grading (A-D) (2) Satisfaction	(1) Sample case check for 07/08 - 36 cases. 1=B, 20=C, 15=D (2) to be established in 08/09
	Specifically, ensure that practice fully meets obligations	Homeless Service	Year 1	Year 1	Resources needs to be identified/training		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	on diversity and equality incl. immigration law					with process - results of customer survey)	
	Implement policy, procedures and monitoring framework	Homeless Service	Year 1	Year 1			
	Identify and address gaps in policy and procedures, eg, risk assessment, vulnerable adults, lack of housing options advice, evidence gathering and post decision advice quality etc	Homeless Service	Year 1	Year 1			
	Develop guidance on local connection for migrant workers	Homeless service/Migrant Support Group	Year 1		Officer time		
	Review and report on attendance at recent training and assess requirement for meeting gaps	Homeless Service	Year 1 immediate	Year 1	Officer time		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Operations Manager (or equivalent) to check a random selection of final assessment decisions and proposed action until new procedures embedded	Homeless Service	Year 1 immediate	Until Homeless Service Manager satisfied that new procedures are being accurately implemented	Officer time		
	Monitor implementation of policy and procedures monthly	Homeless Service	Year 1	Ongoing	Officer time		
	Evaluate implementation and review policy and procedures	Homeless Service	Year 2	Year 2	Officer time		
Develop expertise to respond to key challenges arising from characteristics of Borders' homelessness problem	Develop staff within housing and support team specialism champions where face key challenges , eg, private sector, migrant workers, elderly homeless, DV, young people.	Homeless service	Year 2	Year 2	Existing Resources	(1) satisfaction with service (2) prevention of homelessness amongst key vulnerable groups (3) incidence of rough	

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Develop links with 'champions' in other organisations to respond effectively - at operations level	Homeless service	Year 2	Year 3	Existing Resources	sleeping	
	Record reasons and location of rough sleeping and review periodically	Homeless service	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Provide guidance on how staff handle cases of non violent marital breakdown - consider training with relate	Homeless service	Year 2	Year 2	Existing Resources		
Implement homeless assessment form	Complete form ensuring that it is compatible with the single shared assessment form, records critical information to enable a person's housing and other needs to be identified and encourages a pro-active approach to	Homeless Team	Year 1	Year 1	None	Number of cases where investigation quality is graded A-D in case checks	Sample case check for 07/08 - 36 cases. 2=B, 21=C, 13=D

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	meeting those needs						
	Train staff on use of form	Homeless Team	Year 1	Year 1	Staff time		
	Implement and, monitor by carrying out 10% case file checks	Homeless Team	Year 1	Year 1	Staff time		
	Evaluate and review		Year 2	Year 2	Staff time		
Provide improved publicity about the homeless service across the Scottish Borders	Identify local publicity outlets across the Scottish Borders and provide suitable information re homelessness and the homeless service	Homeless team	Year 1	Year 1	Implement Communication Strategy	(1) Number of respondents to Council survey who are aware of where to apply if require emergency housing (2) Number of homeless applicants who feel informed about homelessness	Baseline to be established in year 1
	Identify suitable media: leaflets, newspaper adverts, website, local radio	Homeless team	Year 1	Year 1	Advertisement costs		
	Ensure that leaflets accessible to all	With EHZ migrant support	Year 1	Year 1			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	members of the community incl migrant workers	worker				ss process	
	Make leaflets available in key outlets across The Scottish Borders	Homeless team	Year 1	Year 1			
	Monitor take up of leaflets	Homeless team	Year 1	Ongoing			
	Evaluate use of leaflets, including user feedback	Homeless team	Year 2	Year 2			
	Update and improve website information	Homeless team	Year 2	Year 2	Web site redesign and maintenance		
	Ensure invitation to translation is included in all appropriate media	Homeless team	Year 2	Year 2			
	Include publicity re Shelter Advice Service in all publicity	Homeless team	Year 1	Ongoing			
	Implement customer complaints process	Homeless team	Year 2	Ongoing			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Ensure that service is accessible to all parts of the Borders community (links to objs on advice and TA provision)	Ensure that RSLs record potentially homeless applicants who apply direct and agree response to establish potential hidden homelessness problem	RSL	Year 1	Ongoing		(1) Number of homeless applicants seen within 2 days of first contact (2) To be discussed on hidden homeless	(1) Set baseline - existing data inaccurate
	Develop consistent practice on assistance with travel expenses for interviews, viewings etc	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Set and maintain target for assessment visits	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Explore whether scope for more 'dispersed / locally ' multi agency teams to deliver services	SBC	Year 3		Resources needs to be identified		
	Explore whether initial homeless assessment can be carried out by other teams and agencies	SBC	Year 2		Identify resources		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Improve Standby Service	Implement procedures and standards of current standby service rigorously pending review (including whether TA provided and taken up)	Homeless Manager	Year 1 immediate	Ongoing	-	(1) Number of presentations handled effectively - as evidenced from management checks (2) Number of people seen day following contact with Standby service	Baseline to be established in year 1
	Operations Manager to check retrospectively all decision making and action by standby service pending review	Homeless Manager	Year 1 immediate	Until reviewed service embedded			
	Ensure current standby service complies with relevant legislation, regulation and LA policy & practice	Homeless Manager	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Ensure effective risk assessment for applicants and staff	Homeless Manager	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Review Standby Service Arrangements with statutory partners (SW, police etc) to	Homeless Manager	Year 2	Year 2	Existing Resources		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	ensure that it meets legal and good practice requirements						
	Implement agreed revised service	Homeless Manager	Year 3	Year 3	Existing Resources		
	Monitor delivery of revised service on a monthly basis	Homeless Manager	From Year 3		Existing Resources		
	Evaluate revised service after 6 months and after 1 year	Homeless Manager	Year 4	Year 4	Existing Resources		
Improve information sharing processes to inform homeless assessments	Agree information sharing protocol with key statutory (SW: Criminal Justice, Children and Families & Adult Care, police, health, and education) and voluntary (Women's Aid, CAB, Shelter) partners	Homeless Service, SW, CJ, Children and Families, Adult care, police, health, education, vole orgs	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources	(1) Number of cases where internal management case checks reveal effective joint working and (2) views of effectiveness of joint working of	(1) Sample case checks of homeless assessments show less than 10% demonstrate that existing support worker contacted by

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Review assessment questions to identify what is appropriate information to request and how best sourced	Homeless Service, SW, CJ, Children and Families, Adult care, police, health, education, vol orgs	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources	key agencies	homeless officer (2) Baseline to be established - suggest members of monitoring group are asked to rank A-D for joint working?)
	Implement agreement including Data Protection mandate and explanation for applicants	Homeless Service, SW, CJ, Children and Families, Adult care, police, health, education, vol orgs	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Monitor jointly with partners	Homeless Service, SW, CJ, Children and Families, Adult care, police, health, education, vol orgs	Year 2 commence	Ongoing	Existing Resources		
	Evaluate after agreed period		Year 3	Year 4			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Develop formal joint working arrgts with key statutory services for families with children, (ex) offenders, people with mental health problems and drug and alcohol misuse problems	Identify key partner agencies: education, health, SW, addiction teams	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 1	Year 1	None	Number of sample case checks where needs identified and met	Sample care checks on 07/08 cases (1) 5 cases with school aged children where education not involved and 3 cases where drug / alcohol problems identified and no support appeared to be in place
	Carry out ongoing awareness raising of homelessness in those services	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 2	Year 2	Resources need to be identified		
	Carry out mutual awareness raising of what services can provide	Homeless Services, SW, CJ drug action teams, health services	Year 2	Year 2	None		
	Identify named homelessness champions in services	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	year 1	Year 1	Officer time		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Develop formal joint working arrgts with key statutory services for families with children, people with mental health problems and drug and alcohol misuse problems	Agree services to be provided, referral arrgts, information to be shared and liaison arrgts	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 2	Year 4	Housing support service budget	Number of sample case checks where needs identified and met	Sample care checks on 07/08 cases (1) 5 cases with school aged children where education not involved and 3 cases where drug / alcohol problems identified and no support appeared to be in place
	Implement single shared assessment form in homelessness service - see homelessness form update objective	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 2	Year 2	Review Officer Time resource		
	Implement and monitor	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 3 commence	Ongoing	Identified above		
	Evaluate implementation	Homeless Services, SW, drug action teams, health services	Year 3	Year 3	none		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Increase proportion of applicants assessed priority need to meet 2012 target	Ensure that assessment of homelessness is robust and includes (a) proper assessment of whether homelessness can be prevented, (b) robust investigation including home visits to confirm homelessness and © thorough follow through of prevention advice	Homeless Service, Strategy section	Year 1 immediate	Year 1	Existing Resources	Reducing % of non-priority decisions	18% found to be not in priority need (HL1 data 07/08)
	Develop plan for staged removal of non-priority status from what are mainly single people currently being assessed up to end 2011	Homeless Service, Strategy section	Year 1 immediate	Year 1	to be identified		
	Remove non priority status from initially 18-25 and 50 plus by October 2009	Homeless Service, Strategy section	Year 1	Year 2	Resource Implications - to be identified		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Monitor impact year by year on % reduction of applicants found to be non-priority and on ability to provide service (assessment, temp acc.; perm acc)	Homeless Service, Strategy section	2009-2011		None		
	Report progress regularly to Council in performance reporting	Homeless Service, Strategy section	2009-2011		None		
Ensure provision of suitable temporary accommodation, including a range of options	Assess the circumstances in which homeless households are arranging own TA or remaining in present accommodation to understand the implications for both future TA demand and possibly assessment process - ensure that record reasons for arranging / not arranging TA	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources	(1) Number of breaches of unsuitable accommodation order, (2) Percent of households accommodated in B and B as proportion in TA and (3) Average time spent in B and B	(1) 2 breaches (2) 55% (3) 56 days (Source Annual return to SHBVN benchmarking)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Analyse volume and nature of out of hours calls over last 12 months to assess demand for direct access facility	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Map existing temporary accommodation, its standards and client group for whom it is appropriate	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Develop and implement guidance for TA placements - including risk assessment	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	identify the priorities for TA development based on findings from the assessment process	SBC	Year 1	Year 2			
	Develop and then implement an agreed strategic plan as part of the TA strategy for the future provision of	SBC	Year 2	Year 5	Development costs		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	temporary accommodation						
	Commission temporary acc service for young vulnerable people	SBC	Year 2	Year 4	Development and management - Housing support budget		
	Commission supported temporary accommodation for other vulnerable homeless people based on priorities identified. Strategy identified direct access, places for people with mental health and substance misuse issues and ex offenders as particular concerns	SBC	Year 3	Year 5	Development and management - Housing support budget		
Improve commissioning arrangements for temporary accommodation	Develop common lease for provision of temporary accommodation units by RSLs	Homeless Service, RSLs	Year 1	Year 1		Proportion of TA (1) furnished units (2) PRS	(1) 45%, (2) No data available (Source: SHBVN annual

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Increase the proportion of TA placements into private sector	Homeless service	Year 1	Ongoing	Resources to be scoped		benchmarking return)
Reduce B and B use (and use only within statutory guidelines)	Only use B and B within statutory guidelines	Homeless Service	Year 1 immediate			% use of B and B accommodation	55% (Source: annual SHBVN benchmarking return)
	Continue to reduce use of B and B	Homeless Service	Year commence	Year 5	Resources to be identified		
Improve physical and management standards of temporary accommodation	Agree, implement and regularly audit physical and management standards of temporary accommodation provided	Homeless service	Year 1	Ongoing	Senior Homelessness Officer (Operations)	(1) Number of temporary accommodation units complying with standards (2) Resident satisfaction (3) TA income and arrears	Baseline to be established in Year 1
	Assess all potential new temporary accommodation by these standards	Homeless service	Year 1	Ongoing	Existing Resources		
	Publicise standards of service to people entering temporary accommodation	Homeless service	Year 1	Ongoing	Existing Resources		
	Monitor implementation, including exit	Homeless service	Year 1	Ongoing	Existing Resources		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	surveys						
	Consider furnished tenancy management to assess if better value and likely to allow improved customer contact for RSL to play role / take on responsibility	Homeless service	Year 2	Year 3	Resource Implications - to be identified		
	Establish charging policy and practice for all TA	Homeless service	Year 1	Year 1	Resource Implications - to be identified		
	Evaluate	Homeless service	Year 3	Year 3	Existing Resources		
Ensure that duty to provide advice and assistance to those who for whom settled accommodation is not provided is met	Routinely assess a sample of cases to understand current practice, needs and outcomes	Homeless Manager	Year 1 immediate	Ongoing	Existing Resources (Jason McDonald)	(1) Quality assessment from internal case checks of advice. (2) Number of lost contacts post decision. (3) Number securing satisfactory Housing outcomes for those not accepted	(1) 7/8 ranked D and 1/8 C for post decision advice. Source: sample case checks) (2) 11% (SHBVN benchmarking return) (3) To be established in Year 1
	Use the result of the case checks to refine and adapt policy and practice (and this strategy) to meet identified needs	Homeless Manager	Year 1	Year 2	Existing Resources		
	Introduce robust performance management to satisfy that duty	Homeless Manager	Year 1	Year 2	James Chiles		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	being met						

Key Theme	Seek to maximise the access to and range of support and assistance offered to help people achieve or maintain independence						
Overall Outcome	Maximise the number of households who make a success of their tenancy as demonstrated by: (1) maximising the number of households who remain in their Scottish secure tenancy for more than one year and (2) three years						
Develop and agree a linked process of assessment of support needs	Implement the single shared assessment form (see Service objective)	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Resources to be identified	Number of sec 5 referrals unsuccessful because of unmet support needs	Agree current position
	Agree how this information will be shared and what process will be followed where a housing provider rejects an application for a household with support needs	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		

	Agree how assessment of support needs will take place within timescales for choice based letting systems to allow a planned approach to identification and addressing of support	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	Support resource issue to be resolved		
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	needs						
Develop a commissioning strategy to provide a range of options for people who need medium term or longer term supported accommodation, including young people, people with mental health problems, offenders, and people with drug or alcohol problems	Carry out a review of current deployment of support funding	SBC	Year 1	Year 2	Independent Consultant	(1) Range and numbers of units of accommodation available (2) No of vulnerable people accommodated in B/B	No specialist provision within Borders
	Incorporate findings from partners assessments eg DAAT mapping exercise	BC and partners	Year 1	Year 2	Funded by relevant commissioner		
	Discuss with housing support commissioners specifications for services which provide medium and longer term supported accommodation	SBC	Year 1	Year 2	Staff Time		

	Identify possible funding routes	Housing Support commissioners	Year 2	Year 2	Staff Time		
	Commission services	Housing Support commissioners	Year 3	Ongoing	Resource Implication		
Ensure that housing support and advice services provided meet actual needs and demand	Ensure that referrals to SBC homeless support service for grants and benefits advice is promptly	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources	Target to be agreed	

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	made						
	Improve the resettlement process for homeless households, including the handover to other landlord staff	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 2	Review resource implications		
	Periodically assess the contribution that services make to sustainability - consider peer review by members of the SB homeless partnership	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Staff Time		

Minimise the risk that children in homeless households suffer problems in school	Establish a protocol with education to cover issues of transport, attendance, notification and support	SBC	Year 1	Year 2	officer to be identified	Establish measure with education	Establish in Year 1
Develop housing support and advice initiatives that meet needs already identified	Take forward the FabPad proposal for YP	SBHA/EHA	Year 1	Year 2	Resources to be identified	Number and % of homeless households who remain tenants 1 year after tenancy	Info not available
	Develop the supported lodgings scheme	SBC CF	Year 1	Year 2			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Investigate the potential for developing a comprehensive financial assistance package including basic bank accounts, money advice, furniture assistance, benefits promotion and training / employment opportunities - link to financial inclusion objective	SBC/CAB	Year 1	Year 2	Examples available - many developed by RSLs in partnership	start date (SPI)	
	Agree package	SBC/CAB	Year 2	Year 2	Examples available - many developed by RSLs in partnership		
Ensure that new and existing tenancies are successfully maintained	Produce Scottish Border tenancy sustainment strategy	RSLs	Year 2	Year 3	Resource Implication	(1) Number and % of homeless households who remain tenants 1, 2 and 3 years after tenancy start date (SPI) (2) Number of RSL evictions	(1) Info to be collected (2) 0.32 % of total RSL stock (Source: APSR 06/07)
	Reform the tenancy sign up process, considering attendance ,eg, care / support /health worker, whether pre-tenancy meeting required, and info to be provided. Agree how resettlement will	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 2	none		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	be co-ordinated with housing management						
	Produce and implement effective settling in visits	RSLs	Year 1	Year 1			
	Produce and implement guidance for handover from support / care worker to housing manager	SBC led	Year 1	Year 1	Existing Resources		
	Produce and implement guidance for housing managers on role in tenancy sustainment / management of difficult tenancies	RSLs	Year 2	Year 2			
	Agree protocols for staff to access specialist support where tenancies at risk of failure ,eg, with Penumbra, health services and Eildon support	RSLs and support agencies	Year 2	Year 2			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Consider whether particular vulnerable homeless households might benefit from assistance in developing social networks ,eg, migrant workers, isolated single applicants or incomers	RSL	Year 3	Year 4			
Ensure the health needs of homeless households in Borders are met	Review the findings from the community nurse pilot in Kelso and Duns	SBC/NHS	Year 1	Year 2	none	(1) Households accessing services (2) Long term impact - longitudinal study?	
	Accurately record the health needs / characteristics of homeless applicants - including what is recorded on doctor's evidence to enable planning and policy responses	NHS(Nurse Liaison Officer)	Year 1	Year1	Review resource for continued service		
	On annual basis review health issues from evidence collected and assess progress / policy responses required in updated health and homeless strategy and replacement to Supporting People Plan	BHHSP	Year 2	Ongoing	None		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Provide guidance and training to housing management staff to respond to drug and alcohol misuse	BCAT/DAAT	Year 2	To be refreshed for new staff			
	In light of incidence of depression/ mental health issues amongst homeless applicants consider response required	NHS(Nurse Liaison Officer)	Year 2	Year 3	None		
	Consider commissioning longitudinal study into long term impacts of services on health?	NHS/BHHSP	Year 2	Year 4	Will be resource implication		

Key Theme	Operate a fair, accessible and responsive system for finding homeless households settled accommodation						
Overall Outcome	Increase the proportion of homeless households finding and keeping settled accommodation						
Identify lessons learned from 1st year of Rent deposit Guarantee Scheme with a view to increasing number of homeless/potentially homeless households and those at risk of	Review target group, ie, those with no support needs or previous tenancy problems	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	Review target group to consider those at risk of homelessness	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	Review nature of deposit incentive	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
homelessness who can be assisted	for landlords						
	Review level of support which can be provided (see 16 below)	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	Cost proposed service	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Resources to be identified		
	Prepare proposal	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	Implement and monitor	SBC	Year 2	Year 2			
	Evaluate and review	SBC	Year 3	Year 3			
Target those private landlords with most suitable stock and work jointly to increase the number of housing available to those households who are at risk of homelessness	Using existing landlord data, identify those landlords with most available and suitable stock	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 1			(1) Number presenting as homeless from private rented sector (2) Number of applicants for whom private sector tenancies secured	(1) 21% presenting from PRS (Source: HL1 data for 07/08) (2) To be established in 08/09
	Actively engage with these landlords	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 1				
	Raise their awareness and understanding of housing need	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 1	Year 2			
	Develop council's awareness of landlord's aspirations and concerns	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 1				

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Explore use of private tenancies as prevention of homelessness for those at risk of homelessness	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 2				
	identify mutually agreeable package, including indicators of success	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 2	2010			
	Implement package	SBC and private landlords forum	Year 2	Year 3			
	Monitor regularly	SBC and private landlords forum	Commence Year 3	Ongoing			
	Evaluate and review		Year 5	Year 5			
Explore the option of a local RSL providing factoring service for private landlords	Test market amongst smaller landlords (eg, buy to let market) of RSL providing factoring service	RSL	Year 3	Year 3		To be established	
	Feasibility study	RSL	Year 3	Year 3			
	Select preferred partner	RSL	Year 4				
	Pilot for defined period	RSL	Year 4				
	Evaluate and	RSL	Year 5	Year 5			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	review						
	Test market amongst smaller landlords (eg, buy to let market) of RSL providing tenancy support to vulnerable tenants/tenancies	SBC and RSL	Year 3	Year 3			
	Feasibility study	SBC and RSL	Year 3	Year 3			
	Select preferred partner	SBC and RSL	Year 4				
	Implement and monitor	SBC and RSL	Year 4	Year 4			
	Evaluate and review	SBC and RSL	Year 5	Year 5			
Improve the Section 5 referral process with RSLs	Agree with Link HA how CBL publicised to encourage homeless bids	SBC and Link	Year	Year1		(1) % of S5 referrals accepted and housed (2) Average time from referral and successful allocation (3) Average time between decision and tenancy start (RSL) (4) No of homeless	To be agreed (4) None in 1st Q 2008/09 from 9 lets
	Agree standards and training to ensure a consistent level of practice by all relevant staff of SBC and RSLs	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	None		
	Review the nature and quality of information provided on the S5 referral to	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1	None		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	agree provision of a standard of information which contributes directly to sustaining a tenancy					applicants rehoused by link	
	Review the recording of S5 referrals to produce a system which allows comparative review of the progress of referrals made, automatic tracking and alerts to lack of rehousing	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Requires IT system - may be able to adapt existing system		
	Agree arrangements for support to S5 referral clients in bidding within CBL systems	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 2	Has implications for prioritising use of existing staff time		
Improve the Section 5 referral process with RSLs	Ensure that discharge of duty guidance is developed	SBC	Year 1	Year 1		(1) % of S5 referrals accepted and housed Average time from referral and successful allocation	To be agreed (4) None in 1st Q 2008/09 from 9 lets
	Put in place rigorous monitoring arrrgts and data collection by both	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Year 1			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	SBC and RSLs					(3) Average time between decision and tenancy start (RSL) (4) No of homeless applicants rehoused by link	
	Regularly compare and reconcile outcome data	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing			
	Agree and implement arrgts for assessing, communicating and addressing support needs of S5 applicants - see <i>Support Theme</i>	SBC and RSLs	Year 1				
	Review S5 arrgts in light of outcomes of national research into S5 implementation and any resulting guidance from Scottish government	SBC	Year 2				
Explore feasibility of converting temporary to permanent accommodation	Agree criteria for selecting property and applicant	SBC and lead RSL	Year 1	Year 1	Resource Implications to be identified		
	Agree processes		Year 1	Year 1			
	Implement pilot with 1 RSL		Year 2				
	Monitor and review		Year 3				

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Develop a pre-tenancy training initiative for people moving into their own tenancies	Identify the training needs of people moving into their own tenancies in this area	SBC	Year 2	Year 2	Resources to be identified	% of young people (as defined by criteria for scheme) sustaining a tenancy (1) social rented and (2) PRS	Baselines to be established for current position in Year 1)
	Invite agencies and service users to come together to plan a course	SBC	Year 2	Year 2	Resources to be identified		
	Secure a trainer to provide training for trainers on independence skills, and carry out the training for trainers course	SBC	Year 4		Resources to be identified		
	Deliver the course	SBC	Year 3 commence	Ongoing	Resources to be identified		
	Monitor the outcomes (no. of sustained tenancies) and deliver further courses, based on this evidence		Year 3 commencing				

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Key Theme	Put in place well publicised housing and related advice services that tackle the particular problems facing Scottish Borders residents						
Overall Outcome	By 2012 have established housing and related advice services throughout Scottish Borders that are independently assessed as 'of a high standard'						
Set up a small sub group drawing representatives from key players to oversee the development the housing advice services	Develop a Scottish Borders wide set of advice categories to understand residents' requirements incorporating the results from the Scottish borders investigation into poverty	Shelter with SBC, RSL x 2 incl. EHA, CAB (incl YP advice)	Year 1	Year 2	Computer system	(1) Use by SB residents and (2) satisfaction with advice services (3) No of recognised housing advice services	Only partial information available and not directly comparable - use Year 1 to establish a baseline (3) Assume could compile initial list from survey
	Set up short life project to assess immediate outcomes from current (2008) financial crisis (particularly fuel and housing costs)	Shelter with SBC, RSL x 2 incl. EHA, CAB (incl YP advice)	Year 1	Year 1	staff time - group to assess poss further resources		
	Develop a Scottish Borders 'framework' satisfaction with advice questionnaire which includes key 'comparable'	Shelter with SBC, RSL x 2 incl. EHA, CAB (incl YP advice)	Year 1	Year 1	Computer system + written materials		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	questions that can be used to monitor and review advice provision						
	Recruit user focus group to assist development by testing out ideas (on publicity, location and type of services)	SBC	Year 1	Will continue as reference group	Expenses		
Set up a small sub group drawing representatives from key players to oversee the development of the housing advice services	Hold a one day event with key providers - using information already gathered from advice agency survey - to collect more information on current provision, publicise homeless strategy, and seek participation in proposals	Shelter with SBC, RSL x 2 incl. EHA, CAB (incl YP advice in Berwickshire)	Year 1	Year 1	Event expenses	(1) Use by SB residents and (2) satisfaction with advice services (3) No of recognised housing advice services	Only partial information available and not directly comparable - use Year 1 to establish a baseline (3) Assume could compile initial list from survey

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Identify key advice givers including 'informal' sources to ensure good local coverage and plan how can be supported to signpost effectively eg regular mailings, HomePoint 1 training, briefings, secondary support. Consider maintaining a quality assured register	SBC	Year 2	Year 3	Support		
Increase the number of people who needing assistance who use advice services	Provide good quality information about the availability of housing and related advice that reaches all residents when they need it including (a) agree a SB logo for housing advice to make instantly recognisable, (b) identify key locations where	SBC	Year 1	Year 2	Funding for design, printing and distribution costs	(1) Number of referrals to advice agencies from non housing organisations. (2) Number of successful referrals made by homeless service to Shelter, welfare rights and CAB (3) Number of key hard to reach groups	Limited accurate baseline information (1) Shelter received 33% referrals from / provided consultancy to organisations incl SW and health (Source: Final Q Shelter

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	material should be available including places of employment and (c) is especially targeted at key hard to reach groups					accessing advice (a) young people seeking first tenancy, (b) parents / carers of young people approaching independence, (c) people unused to seeking 'council' help, eg, those accumulating debt and (d) those with 'chaotic' lifestyles (4) Number of hits on Scottish Borders Housing Forum website (5) Number of	project monitoring report) (2) 8 cases of consultancy / referral made by homeless team to Shelter in 07/08 (Source: Final Q Shelter project monitoring report (5) None?
	Agree the management and review the content of the Scottish Borders Housing Forum web site to reflect current services. Ensure that site is interactive and can (a) make appointment for assistance or (b) ask question of an agency	SBC. Consider design project with local school / college	Year 1	Ongoing	Design of website. Suggest managed by SBC but with agencies able to provide updates that are easy to upload		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Provide key players with regular information about range and availability of advice including: (a) secondary school teachers from S54 (b) GP practices, (c) employers - include major farming establishments and (d) banks and estate and lettings agents. Identify key individuals with whom to liaise	SBC	Year 2	Will continue	Marketing, training, enhancement of procedures, tel service?	RSLs accredited with HomePoint and nos of individual staff with certificates	
Increase the number of people who needing assistance who use advice services	Ensure that social landlord staff providing front line housing services are trained to at least Level 2 HomePoint or equivalent standard and are aware of the advice services available in Scottish Borders	Lead RSL	Year 2	Year 3		(1) Number of referrals to advice agencies from non housing organisations. (2) Number of successful referrals made by homeless service to Shelter, welfare rights and CAB (3)	Limited accurate baseline information (1) Shelter received 33% referrals from / provided consultancy to organisations incl SW and health

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Ensure that social landlords provide full and accurate information on advice services in all key service literature e.g. rent arrears letters	Lead RSL	Year 1	Year 1	None - redesign of standard letters etc	Number of key hard to reach groups accessing advice (a) young people seeking first tenancy, (b) parents / carers of young people approaching independence, (c) people unused to seeking 'council' help, eg, those accumulating debt and (d) those with 'chaotic' lifestyles (4) Number of hits on Scottish Borders Housing Forum website (5) Number of RSLs accredited with	(Source: Final Q Shelter project monitoring report) (2) 8 cases of consultancy / referral made by homeless team to Shelter in 07/08 (Source: Final Q Shelter project monitoring report (5) None?
	Ensure a consistent level of Welfare Benefits and debt management advice to all tenants of RSLs in Scottish Borders	Lead RSL	Year 1	Year 2	Funding additional service if necessary. Could be more outreach work from existing service		
	Explore the feasibility of either a telephone and email based advice service or mobile bus (combining with other services) to reach more rural and less mobile population	Lead RSL	Year 3	Year 4			

						HomePoint and nos of individual staff	
Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
						with certificates	
Develop and establish a homelessness service that places greater emphasis on prevention in collaboration with our partners.	Enhance the homelessness service to place greater emphasis on homelessness prevention in partnership with all BHHSP partners that includes (a) emergency assistance (b) personal housing - and support - (c) planning, (d) assistance to access settled housing and (e) signposting to other advice and assistance services (f) Consultation with key partners (g) publicising enhanced service	SBC	Year 1	Year 3	Will have significant resource implications for SBC, RSLs and other partner organisations.	(1) Percentage of households where contact lost before decision (2) Presentations from key groups where pre-planning for housing possible - (a) young people wanting first home, (b) tied tenants (3) quality of advice on housing options given at homeless assessment - assessed from case checks (4) Successful housing	(1) 6% lost contact before decision (Source: HL1 07/08) (2) a, 7 young people b, 29 (Source: HL1 07/08) (3) Average rating for options advice at (1) assessment stage is D and (2) post decision is D (Sample case check findings for 07/08) (4) Baseline to be developed in year 1 -

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	Run publicity campaign within Scottish Borders to raise awareness about where housing options advice should be sought - regular feature in council and RSL newsletters, newspapers	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Repeat	Publicity costs f or SBC and RSLs	outcomes realised for those for whom advice provided	initially using HL1 data
	In interim before full scale development produce a checklist of key points to remember for homeless staff carrying out housing options interviews at both initial assessment and post decision stage	Homeless services manager	Year 1 - Immediate	Year 1			
	Ensure all members of Homelessness	Housing Services Manager	Year 1 - intermediate	Year 1			

	Services are fully involved in development and establishment of enhanced service and ongoing						
Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	continuous improvement of service via regular team briefings, consultation and training.						
	Introduce a priority category for 'insecure home' into existing allocations procedures	RSLs	Year 2	Year 3			
Introduce a housing options service in Scottish Borders	In negotiation with private rented sector develop a method of publicising (possibly through CBL systems) and facilitating access to private rented sector	SBC	Year 2	Year 3		(1) Percentage of households where contact lost before decision (2) Presentations from key groups where pre-planning	(1) 6% lost contact before decision (Source: HL1 07/08) (2) a, 7 young people b, 29 (Source: HL1 07/08) (3)

	Develop practice to tackle housing problems faced by migrant workers in Borders targeting (a) housing rights, (b) housing options and (c)	SBC with RSLs (with major employers?)	Year 1	Year 2			
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	homelessness					at homeless assessment - assessed from case checks (4) Successful housing outcomes realised for those for whom advice provided	findings for 07/08) (4) Baseline to be developed in year 1 - initially using HL1 data
	Develop an approach to marketing LIFT amongst appropriate households	Link Housing	Year 1	Year 1			
	Provide all front-line staff with information about the range of housing options in the area	SBC and RSLs	Year 1	Revise annually			

<p>With other teams and agencies (e.g. RSLs social work duty teams ,ASB, CAB) respective roles in housing options service</p>	<p>SBC</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	<p>Year 2</p>			
<p>Develop policy and practice for a housing options service, including personal housing planning and launch service</p>	<p>SBC</p>	<p>Year 3</p>	<p>Year 3</p>			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Develop advice services to meet the needs of Scottish Borders residents	Develop advice and assistance specifically targeted at agricultural workers in tied tenancies	SBC and key employers	Year 1	Year 1		Number of households presenting as homeless from tied tenancies	29 (Source HL1 data 07/08)
	Introduce a financial inclusion policy initially across social landlord residents and to be extended to other sectors. Consider including benefits and income maximisation, bank accounts, savings (eg, credit union) , fuel and help with furniture and setting up home	Welfare rights and RSLs (BHA?)	Year 2	Year 3	Set up and development costs	Number of people losing house through debts	64 (Source HL1 data 07/08)
	Liaise with main mortgage providers in Scottish Borders	SBC, RSL and other LA?	Year 1	Ongoing as gov policy may be		Number of people losing homes through	Would need to establish recording mechanism

	re approach and response to mortgage arrears. Consider joint approach with other neighbouring			reviewed		mortgage arrears	(19 cases in 06/07 - Source HL1 record)
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
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	local authorities						
	Review existing shelter services, including assessment of need for access to free legal advice, court workers on basis of advice enquiries	Shelter /SBC	Year 2	Year 2	dependant upon results of review		
	Develop practice to tackle housing problems faced by migrant workers in Borders targeting (a) housing rights, (b) housing options and (c) homelessness	SBC with RSLs (with major employers?)	Year 1	Year 2		Number of migrant workers who (1) have no tenancy agreement	17% of enquiries (no number available) - Source EHA Migrant worker statistics for 07/08

Develop advice services to meet the needs of Scottish Borders residents	Explore the possibility of offering employment and training type advice and assistance to	SBC / RSL pilot	Year 3	Year 4		Number of tenants gaining employment through scheme	Baseline would need to be established
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	those applying for and / or granted social tenancy						
	Using the contacts and framework established with the private rented sector through the rent deposit and temporary accommodation initiatives develop expertise and routes into successful private sector lets (see objective 4 settled housing)	SBC	Year 2	Year 2		Number securing PRS	25 cases (source HL1 07/08)
	Develop advice and assistance specifically targeted at young people wanting first home (see objective 2)	SBC	Year 2	Year 2		Number of young people applying for housing through homeless route	331 applications from 16-25 year olds (Source HL1 07/08)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
Key Theme	Put in place an excellent management and delivery system to ensure delivery on the homeless strategy's objectives						
Overall Outcome	To successfully implement all of the actions in the strategy by 2012						
The homelessness problems facing Scottish Borders will be given a high public profile. The partners to the Scottish Borders homeless strategy will regularly review the nature and extent of the homelessness problem facing Scottish Borders and report their findings and responses	The strategy will be formally launched through a series of 'events' eg, press releases, posters, leaflets, meetings and seminars	SBC	Year 1	Year 1	Publicity + must ensure that no adverse impact on front-line services + costs to assessed in advance in relation to other publicity, training etc	Completion of tasks by deadline	Baseline in year 1
	Regular progress reports will be produced for key audiences in a format that will interest and engage them. The BHHSP will oversee the production of a publicity plan and individual members will contribute towards particular tasks. Key audiences will include politicians, private landlords, government agencies, organisations providing services to potential clients, staff	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing	publicity materials + staff		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	delivering parts of the service and the general public						
	Every 6 months SBC will produce for the BHHSP a report analysing the characteristics of the homelessness presentations received and the outcomes achieved, including with regard accessing of permanent accommodation. The format will be agreed with the BHHSP and will include consideration of key trends and their likely impact on the strategy	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	On an annual basis the BHHSP will appoint a panel to review the strategy's progress and how it has been adapted to changing circumstances. The panel may include an independent member. A panel remit will be established.	BHHSP	Year 2	Annual			
	<i>(Is this needed now? Or should we refer specifically to LHS?)</i> The full strategy will be formally and independently reviewed and updated on a five year cycle	BHHSP	Year 4	Year 5			
The Borders Health and Homelessness Partnership will work together (and with other external partners) to successfully deliver the strategy's aims and objectives	The BHHSP will periodically review its Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that the BHHSP is continually best able to meet the challenges encountered in implementing the	BHHSP	Year 1	Year 1		(1) external facilitated self assessment against key partnership operational criteria including attendance, regularity of meetings	Baseline in year 1

Strategy.							
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	The BHHSP will oversee the development of an information sharing protocol between members. This will cover information required for both strategic planning and operational purposes	BHHSP	Year 1	Year 2			
	Each BHHSP member will appoint a 'homeless champion' to oversee the particular organisation's role in delivering the strategy	BHHSP	Year 1	Year 1			
	A comprehensive set of operational protocols and service agreements will be negotiated between partners (external and internal to the	BHHSP	Year 2	Year 2			

BHHSP) to ensure that overall the service delivered to homeless and potentially homeless households is effective. This includes the homelessness						
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	protocol between SBC and the RSLs						
	SBC homeless services will with its key partners develop an initial information form for households presenting as homeless that can be completed by any agency	SBC	Year 1	Year 2			
	Members of the BHHSP will consider joint procurement or delivery of services where this is the best option for achieving the strategy's aims and objectives	BHHSP	Year 1	Ongoing			
	The BHHSP will develop its own identity (eg, web site, logo etc) and members will consider its future role (eg, whether it should have access to resources, decision making	BHHSP	2010	2011			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	powers) and prepare an options report for consideration towards the completion of the 5 year strategy						
Introduce a comprehensive performance management system that clearly demonstrates progress against the aims and objectives in the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy	A small set of critical indicators will be developed to enable the BHHSP to quickly and clearly identify progress. The indicators will include RSL trends in legal action and evictions	SBC	Immediate Year 1	Year 1		Initial indicators contained in this strategy	
	Every task within the homelessness strategy will be 'owned' by specific organisation/s which will take full responsibility for driving and reporting on progress	BHHSP	Immediate Year 1	ongoing			
	The tasks within the homelessness strategy will be incorporated and expanded upon in the relevant organisations' own work plans. The 'golden' thread will be	BHHSP	Year 1	Year 1			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	clearly demonstrable						
	For every major new homelessness initiative, change of policy and practice or structural /organisational adjustment will be subject to robust implementation planning and task completion recorded only after results can be confirmed by an objective validation/certification	BHHSP	Year 1	Ongoing			
	Members of the BHHSP will set up effective internal management systems to take forward key strategy priorities. These will include ensuring recording systems are in place, data accuracy is verified and service quality is assessed	BHHSP	Year 1	Year 2			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	An approach to internal and external benchmarking of services and responses to homelessness (including peer review) will be developed to ensure that standards in the Scottish Borders compare with the best	BHHSP	Year 2	Year 3			
High standards of customer service will be at the heart of our services delivered to people who are or at risk of becoming homeless	SBC will further develop its case management approach to its handling of individual homeless presentations	SBC	Year 1	Year 2		(1) case handling quality, (2) % decisions made in 28 days(3) Average time to reach final outcome	(1) Sample case check for 07/08 - 36 cases. 2=B, 21=C, 13=D (2) 64% days (3) 12 weeks
	The aspirations, needs, and opinions of potential and present users will always be sought and then used to influence services delivered by the partners to the Scottish Borders homeless strategy	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing	SBC staff resource to do interviews, collate and respond to info.		

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	The BHHSP and individual partners will collect and use this information about the users and potential users of its services in order to shape their approach to meeting the diverse needs of different groups		Year 2	Ongoing			
	Each member of the BHHSP will commit to a high standard of customer care that will include clear information about services provided targeted at particular groups, regular feedback on case progress, and collecting and using information about users' experiences of services		Year 1	ongoing			

	SBC homelessness and support services will include within their performance management system measures to assess customer satisfaction, case handling, and longer	SBC	Year 2	Ongoing			
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Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	term outcomes, eg, tenancy sustainment. These will be analysed by different household groups						
	Develop and establish enhanced homelessness service to facilitate continuing improvement in policy and procedures.	SBC	Year 1	Year 2			
High standards of customer service will be at the heart of our services delivered to people who are or at risk of becoming homeless	SBC homelessness services will operate a well publicised and easily accessible appeals and feedback (complaints) process which where necessary is streamlined with those of key partners e.g. the housing associations. The outcomes from these two processes will be used to improve future service delivery	SBC	Year 1	Year 2		(1) Customer satisfaction with process, (2) number of and outcome from appeals to homeless service	(1) Baseline to be established as customer feedback introduced in Year 1 (2) 6 received of which 5 upheld (source: SHBVN benchmarking return 07/08)

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	<p>Members of the BHHSP will develop an approach to minimise service access problems caused by transport difficulties in Scottish Borders. This may include more telephone and web based services, training and empowering other agencies to carry out some functions, considering decentralisation of homelessness services, and developing an outreach service</p>	BHHSP	Year 2	Year 4	<p>potentially major resource implications of, eg, decentralisation</p>		
	<p>RSL members of the BHHSP will assess whether policy and practice on rent arrears and tenancy enforcement is contributing to homelessness and seek (if necessary) to adapt practice to reduce this</p>	RSLs	Year 1	Year 2			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
The staff employed by the partners to the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy will be supported and encouraged to achieve excellent service standards	The specific role of individual staff and their teams in delivering the SB homeless strategy will be made clear and information about progress will be shared with them and their views sought.	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing		(1) Number of staff trained to HomePoint standards and in receipt of certificate (2) Other indicators to be selected by organisations	(1) SBC staff, 0)
	The training and development needs of personnel will be regularly reviewed. Training (in a variety of formats) and information to enable staff to perform to the highest standards will be provided. Training attendance will be monitored. Training will be evaluated.	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing	Training budgets		
	All SBC Housing Strategy and Services front line staff will be trained to a minimum of HomePoint standard 2. All reception telephone staff will be trained to HomePoint level 1.	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing			

The team will work

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	towards full accreditation.						
	Systems to promote excellent operational working between teams and between different agencies will be developed. Joint targets will be used to encourage good joint working.	SBC	Year 1	Year 2			
The staff employed by the partners to the Scottish Borders homelessness strategy will be supported and encouraged to achieve excellent service standards	Front line / operational staff employed by BHHSP members will attend annual homelessness / housing advice / housing support workshops to promote harmonious and effective working relationships	SBC	Year 2	Ongoing		(1) Number of staff trained to HomePoint standards and in receipt of certificate (2) Other indicators to be selected by organisations	(1) SBC staff, 0)
	BHHSP agencies will review the management arrangements for delivering its homelessness and support services and adapt to ensure its	SBC/RSLs	Year 2	Year 5			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	future success. Consideration will be given to the allocation of responsibilities, location and skills and abilities required - see Homeless Options objective						
	BHHSP agencies will devolve responsibility for delivering specific aspects of the homelessness strategy to front line teams	SBC/RSLs	Year 2	Year 2			
	(Has this already been achieved re SWD?) SB homeless and support team will work towards achieving IIP status	SBC	Year 3	Year 4			
A robust system of financial management will be developed and services delivered as part of the Scottish Borders homeless strategy will be expected to demonstrate that they are value for money	BHHSP agencies will clearly identify the current resources available to deliver the services it directly provides or which it currently procures. A breakdown of how resources are currently spent will be prepared. This will show the costs of	SBC/RSLs	Year 1	Year 1		(1) expenditure against budget for service in SBC, (2) Develop key efficiency targets, eg, reduction in BB costs attributable to no shows for accommodation	No baseline information

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	typical tasks, eg, completing case assessment, providing housing support					or amount reallocated from B and B expenditure to private sector leasing (3)	
	<i>(is this appropriate in this document? rests with Council's corporate financial management processes)</i> SBC homeless and support services will examine costs and consider whether scope exists for achieving efficiency savings that could be used to fund service enhancements. An annual efficiency savings target will be incorporated in the team's work plan and routinely monitored	SBC	Year 1	Year 1		Proportion of time spent on housing options advice by homeless staff	
	Clear responsibility for managing homeless and support budgets will be allocated	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			

Objective	Task	Lead	Start Year	Completion	Resources	Measure	Baseline
	SBC homeless and support services will lead the production of a five year resource plan to accompany the homeless strategy identifying where proposed tasks are not (fully) resourced	SBC	Year 1	Year 1			
	Options for funding service gaps will be prepared to an agreed timetable	SBC	Year 1	Ongoing			
	All services procured by SBC homeless and support services will include value for money criteria	SBC	Year 2	Ongoing			
To consider how services for accessing and allocating affordable housing are delivered in Scottish Borders in the longer term	To review the value for money of and service user satisfaction with keeping two separate housing registers and allocations systems	SBC and RSLs	Year 2	Year 2			
	To debate and consult upon the introduction of the enhanced homelessness service (see objective 5 too)	SBC	Year 2	Year 2			

Further Information

You can get this document on tape, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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