

APPENDIX 1

HOWZTALK PERFORMANCE FIGURES

	2005/06	April 06 to July 06
Referrals received	72	22
Homeless Preventions	21	7
Mediation	9	4
Main Issues of Client:		
Sexual Abuse	3	
Mental Health	15	5
Domestic Abuse	12	1
Drugs/alcohol	7	4
No. with 2 problems	3	
No. with 3 problems	3	

APPENDIX 2

A. Average Length of Stay in Temporary Accommodation for Household Type

Young Singles (16/17 year olds)

This group will generally spend just over 7 weeks in a B&B before being rehoused in a council hostel.

Older Singles

This group will generally be housed in a Cascade property in Leeds, spending on average 35 weeks there before either being rehoused in a hostel, or into permanent accommodation.

Families

Depending on the age of the child, families will either spend approximately 2.25 weeks in a B&B and then be re-housed into a hostel; or they will be initially housed in a Cascade property in Leeds for 35 weeks.

B. Net Cost of Temporary Accommodation for Household Type

Costs to the General Fund vary for each of the different types of temporary accommodation. Based on average lengths of stay for each household type,

below is a summary of the average net cost to the General Fund for each household. These figures have been calculated using the cost to the Council and subtracting the amount that will be met by housing benefit, as most residents will be eligible for full allowances.

	B&B	Cascade
Singles	£112 - £629 (7.32 weeks)	No net cost to GF
Single & pregnant	£112 - £629 (7.32 weeks)	No net cost to GF
Couple (& pregnant)	£815 (2.25 weeks)	£3,360 (35 weeks)

There is a large difference in net temporary accommodation costs between singles and couples. This is primarily because of what costs the Council can charge the tenant based on maximum housing benefit allowance levels, and the subsequent shortfalls that result.

B&B accommodation

The B&B used by the Council charges:

- 1 person households – between £20 and £40 per night depending on whether there are any single rooms available (or average £210 per week).
- 2 – 3 person households – between £75-£85 per night (£560 per week).

The Council charges the tenant:

- 1 person households – £194.75 per week, maximum Housing Benefit allowance is £184.03. The tenant pays a minimum of £10.92 per week.
- 2 person households – £197.40 per week, maximum Housing Benefit is £184.03. The tenant pays a minimum payment of £13.37 per week.

Cascade Properties

Cascade Properties Ltd charges the Council:

- 1 person households - £25 per person per night (i.e. £175 per week)
- 2 person households - £40 per couple per night (i.e. £280 per week).

The Council charge is based on a per room basis and is set at £184.03 per week.

Shortfalls

As can be seen above, there are shortfalls between what the Council is charged by the temporary accommodation providers and what the Council

charges the tenant. In the case of B&B accommodation, the Council is unable to increase the charge to the tenant as part of the current charge contains an element that is not covered by Housing Benefit allowance.

In some cases, tenants may not be eligible for full housing benefit allowance and so they will be expected to make a larger contribution.

C. Calculation of Direct Costs

It is estimated that HowzTalk will prevent 25 young people from becoming homeless in 2007/08.

Savings will be minimum $£112 \times 25 = £2,800$ & maximum $£629 \times 25 = £15,725$.

D. Calculation of Indirect Costs

These 25 young people will not need to be housed by the Council, which would allow the Council to house other people with one bedroom needs instead.

Based on the makeup of 2005/06 homeless duty acceptances, we can assume that out of the 25 'free spaces', 50% will be filled by older singles, 25% will be filled by single and pregnant women, and 25% will be filled by couples.

On this basis the following savings could be made:

12 older singles (i.e. 18+) B&B costs	= £1,344
6 single pregnant women in B&B	= £672
7 number of couples in Cascade	= £23,520
Total	= £25,536



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

**APPENDIX THREE (see page 11 regarding
HowzTalk)**

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Dear Carol

10th April 2006

Further to our meeting in February, I thought that you may find some formal feedback useful. Firstly may I say that we were really pleased to hear that you now have more staff preventing homelessness than processing applications and that your front line now offers an enhanced service at the point of contact.

In going over the action plan we discussed a number of areas of improvement that you have already implemented, as well as identifying a number of areas where improvements could still be made. We are certainly confident that you and your team are committed to and could meet the target; however we did have a few concerns that are largely out of your control which may impact on the Councils' ability to meet it.

We are sure that members and senior managers will be aware that homelessness is now a key performance area that will be assessed by the Audit Commission when they look at CPA assessments. You may wish to reinforce the message that a poor homelessness service will impact on any overall final score and of course the star rating of your housing service.

Spend to Save

Whilst there has been £1.1m set aside by members for bed and breakfast accommodation you at present do not have a spend to save budget that will enable you to not only save money but to end the use of B&B as temporary accommodation.

A number of authorities have now put in place a spend to save budget and are able to prevent even more cases of homelessness by using the budget to fund additional officers or projects, such as a prevention fund for home visiting and rent deposit schemes.

Prevention fund

Whilst you currently do not operate a prevention fund we noted that you are preparing a report to go to cabinet in the summer, I have therefore attached further details of schemes and case studies which show of how this kind of fund can be used to help prevent homelessness, that you may find useful.

Home Visits

We were pleased to note that 100% home visits for young people being excluded from the family home (where a return home is safe) are now being carried out and I am sure that you will begin to see the benefits of this in due course. You may also wish to consider implementing visits to tenants and landlords for those being evicted from the private sector as a way to further reduce or prevent homelessness.

Visiting is a really useful way of helping people to avoid becoming homelessness and can often help with a positive and planned move at a later date that may also reduce your repeat homeless cases.

Reports from other Councils are that home visits work best where officers have direct access to a prevention fund to enable them to make quick decisions and make direct payments, which will secure the tenancy. Again I have attached a couple of case studies where an innovative and inexpensive approach has worked.

You were unable to provide us with robust figures on how many cases of homelessness your home visits have prevented. Homelessness prevention as a result of visits should be counted towards the BVP213 which was introduced in April 2005, so you should have robust monitoring systems in place to measure how successful your approach is.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

Harrogate are aware of and make use of DHP but our figures showed that not all of it had previously been spent, and there may well be other ways in which you could use this discretionary payment to help prevent homelessness. At the meeting I advised you to speak to Kim Brear at Kirklees who has used DHP to its full potential. You may also wish to contact Stephen Richards at Blackburn who can provide you with more information on how DHP can help with prevention stephen.richards@blackburn.gov.uk

Scarborough Council has also used DHP to prevent homelessness; again you may wish to speak to Andrew Rowe or Beatrice Farley on what they have done.

Homelessness directly prevented by using DHP can be counted under the new BVPI 213.

Allocations policies

We discussed your allocations policy, which has not been reviewed since 2003. You agreed that homelessness applicants still receive the highest priority and we suggested that this could in fact be adding unnecessary pressures to homelessness in the region. We suggested that you look more closely at it to see whether it was

possible to introduce changes to make it more balanced and avoid encouraging people to present as homeless if they felt that this was the only options to secure social housing.

In particular, by not allowing 16/17 year olds to apply through the general waiting list, you could inadvertently be sending out the wrong message and this could have a sever impact on your homelessness numbers. Presentations from this group are the highest number in Harrogate.

The Council should make sure that it is doing all it can to reduce homelessness and ensure that its own policies are not contributing it.

Conversion of TA to permanent in your own stock

One of the key things that we discussed in order to meet the TA target was the conversion of your own stock. At present over a third (58 as of October 2005) of all households in temporary accommodation in Harrogate are in the council's own stock by converting existing TA into full tenancies – where the household are already settled and happy – you could easily meet the target by the deadline of 2010, if not earlier. You would then need only to concentrate on sustaining that target.

Given that your TA figures as of 17th October 2005 (143) were higher than that of the baseline in December 2004 (137) we suggest that you give serious consideration to this course of action.

We do of course recognise there may be some political issues which exist in this ara and the potential difficulties that could be raised by elected members. The following authorities have recently achieved large reductions in the use of temporary accommodation in their own stock and are happy to talk you about the changes they made to achieve this.

Milton Keynes

Roland Payne 01908 691 691

Broxtowe Borough Council

Gary Smithurst, 0115 9177777 – gary.smithurst@broxtowe .gov.uk

You may also wish to consider looking at under occupancy of family homes to see whether larger stock could be released back into circulation.

Working with RSLs

As with your own stock, over a third (50 as of October 2005) of all households in TA are already in social housing owned by RSLs in your district and we would suggest that you work with them to find similar solutions to convert temporary tenancies into full and settled tenancies.

You highlighted a number of barriers in place with RSL policies, particularly around families with children and age restrictions resulting in evictions for breach of contract. This sounded rather worrying and it would be useful to provide us with more in-depth detail in writing.

Social landlords play an important role in preventing homelessness and helping to reduce the number of people in TA and it is vital that you form effective partnerships to resolve problems and find solutions to these pressures. As with your own policies it is important to ensure that RSL policies are not inadvertently contributing to homelessness or high numbers of households in temporary accommodation.

Accessing the private rented sector

Of course you have already recognised the potential of the local private rented sector, but are currently facing problems around the lack of available stock in the area; you also suggested that your largest private landlord is unwilling to work with you at present as you are reducing the number of referrals for temporary accommodation.

We suggested that you speak to Bridget Emery at Leeds City Council to see whether there they can offer any solutions as they have a very good relationship and use the same landlord.

We also suggested that you see whether they would be willing to do qualifying offers to tenants already in their accommodation, providing of course the tenants themselves would be willing to accept this offer.

I have enclosed an excellent good practice guide on 'settled housing solutions in the private rented sector' which you may find helpful.

Training

We were really pleased to hear that staff have received training around homelessness and legislation, especially as you reported that this is ongoing. You may wish to furnish all staff with their own copies of the homelessness Act and the Code of Guidance, as well as ensuring they are aware of recent cases that may effect your decisions.

Team meetings are a good place to update staff of recent cases and can also be a good way of discussing your own decisions and any reviews that you have dealt with.

Sanctuary Scheme

We discussed Sanctuary Schemes which now form part of the new BVPIs for community safety, and all local authorities should have some kind of Sanctuary scheme in place by 2010.

You advised us that North Yorkshire, as a County wide group are looking to implement a scheme and this is currently being looked at by both Ryedale and Scarborough.

I promised to send you a couple of examples of Sanctuary type schemes and these are attached. In addition you received a DVD on best practice at the recent Yorkshire and Humber homelessness forum, this as two examples on how Sanctuary works which also gives contact details.

Finally, it is worth pointing out here that you have made some real progress with your action plan and implementing a number of prevention initiatives such as:

- **Mediation and outreach work for family exclusions and private sector landlords – this is provided at arms length through the “How 2 talk” programme and so far you have done 60 referrals which as prevented 18 and delayed 4 households from becoming homeless.**
- Further outreach work is being provided by Stoneham (since 2005) but you were unable to provide us with figures from this
- Rent deposit/bond scheme is due to be in place by 2007
- Prevention through CAB money advice is in place but again you could not provide figures on the success of this work
- Tenancy support for prevention has been provided by Stoneham since 2003 but you estimate that no cases of homelessness through this work has been prevented
- Tenancy support on resettlement has been provided by Foundation since 2003 but only 5 success cases were reported.

We suggest that you put in place effective and robust monitoring systems for all your initiatives and programme's to ensure that you are receiving value for money and what you are buying in is actually working. Only when these systems are in place can you actually measure prevention of homelessness and report these under the BVPI213.

In addition there are still a number of initiatives in the questionnaire that you submitted to ODPM that you may wish to consider implementing in the future.

Future visits from ODPM

We agreed that a two day visit/training day from the team in the near future would be useful and could help to identify further solutions to some of the issues you have yet to tackle.

We also offered to help in promoting the prevention agenda as well as highlight the importance of the TA target to tenants and residents as well as other key stakeholders and partners if you would find that useful and we suggested attending some kind of “open day”.

Please can you contact us to arrange dates for a 2 day visit and a discussion around where our focus would best be placed, which is likely to include meetings with your front line officer, portfolio holders and key stakeholders.

Regards

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