# Executive Summary

Birmingham Homelessness Strategy 2008 +









A plain backdrop was used to allow the people in the photographs to be seen without being stereotyped by their surroundings. The subjects used a long shutter release so that they had control of when the picture was taken. The digital camera was connected to a computer and a fast photo-printer, so that people could quickly see their image, and choose which one they liked so that they could get a get a copy of the print. The photographs were taken at Midland Heart's Snow Hill Hostel and at the St Basils Project.

The sessions were organised by Brian Homer of Homer Creative. We would like to thank everyone at Snow Hill and St Basils for their support and participation. We would like to extend an extra thanks to those who agreed to let us use their images in this publication.











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### Introduction

The 2008+ strategy focuses on reducing the numbers of people who are threatened with homelessness; and helping homeless individuals on a journey towards a settled future; which will ensure that they do not become homeless again.

Over the lifetime of the 2008+ strategy we will encourage people to seek help from Birmingham City Council and our partners at the earliest possible point; so that we can invest more time and effort in early primary prevention and change our focus from the prevention of homelessness to the promotion of settled homes and lifestyles.

This strategy is aligned with goals set out in the Be Birmingham Community Strategy. For people vulnerable to homelessness, our interpretation of these goals can be summarised as follows:

We're engaging with people who are at at risk of becoming homeless and providing them with information that will help them to secure and sustain their current accommodation or find alternative settled accommodation.

- If people have to move it occurs in a planned way which provides housing options and choices.
- Anyone who is already homeless or has recently become homeless will receive support so that they can avoid homelessness again; and find settled accommodation.
- People will be linked to support services that will help them to sustain their accommodation and build networks that will allow them to access work or training, reform family groups and sustain a home.
- The accommodation they live in will be affordable, meet their social, cultural and personal aspirations and it will not limit their future life choices.



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## A picture of Birmingham

#### These are some key facts about Birmingham and homelessness in the city:

- After a decade of very slow population growth,
  Birmingham now needs to prepare for a significant
  increase in its population up to an additional
  100,000 people over the next 20 years on top of our
  existing one million.
- As well as growing, the population of the city is becoming increasingly diverse – by 2026 no single ethnic group will form more than half of the total.
- Birmingham's economy has not grown as fast as the national average, and employment growth has been slow at less than a third of the UK average rate, so worklessness remains a significant problem for many people in the city, and our employment rate remains well below the regional average.
- According to the most recent figures, in the third quarter of 2007, 1.1 homeless applications were accepted per 1000 households in the region, making homelessness in the West Midlands above the national average of 0.8 per 1000. The equivalent figure for Birmingham was 2.6,

- demonstrating that the city is a particular hotspot within the region.
- Birmingham has nevertheless made real progress in reducing the worst forms of homelessness and homelessness acceptances during recent years.

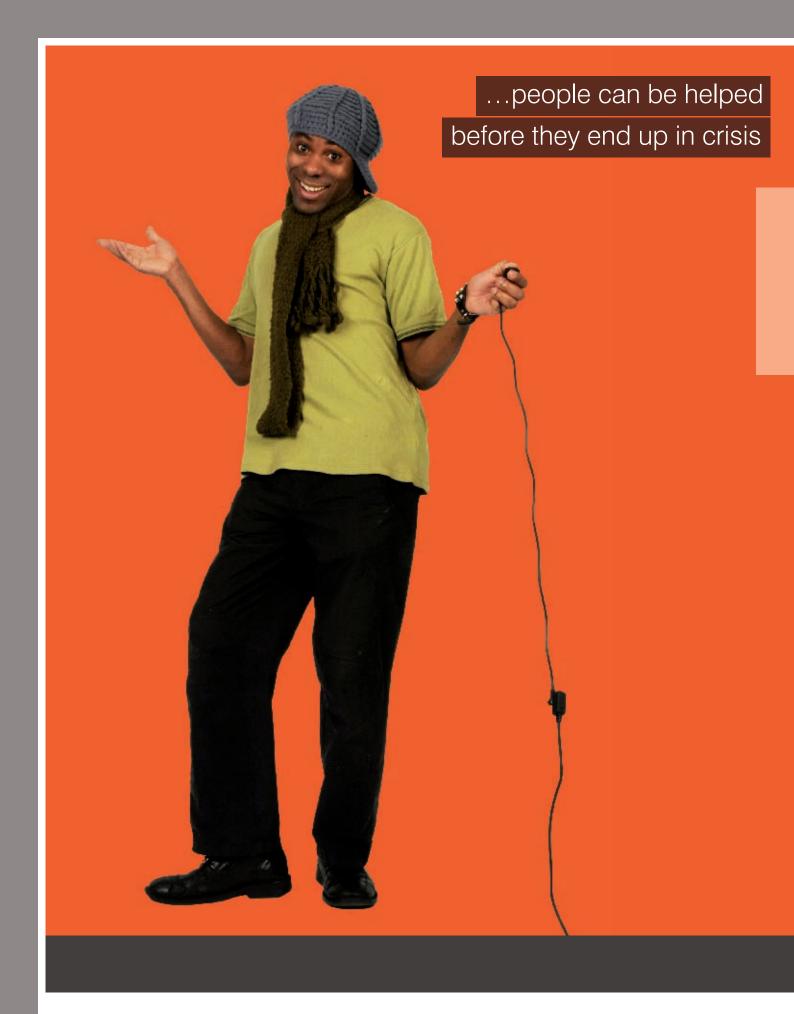


## Key messages from the needs analysis and review

The needs analysis which underpins this strategy sets out a number of key challenges which we need to focus our attention on between 2008 – 2011.

- Data suggests the we need to continue to have a focus on the needs of young people and women fleeing domestic violence.
- We need to increase the amount of work and investment in early prevention work with a broad range of groups in moderate housing need.
- We need to be successful in working to help people sustain their current accommodation and networks.
- We need to support more people to plan their housing options long before their housing issues become a crisis.
- We need to continue to develop the way in which services are delivered so that we create an integrated journey for people through and between services.

- We need to encourage people to access services much earlier.
- We need to reduce our use of temporary accommodation.
- We need to improve our knowledge and understanding of the needs of all Birmingham's communities and respond appropriately to this.



## **Principles for intervention**

Prevention – Homelessness is most often the end stage in a process of social exclusion. Causes can include family breakdown, domestic violence, unemployment, debt, drug abuse, mental ill health and care leaving. In many situations people can be helped before they end up in crisis.

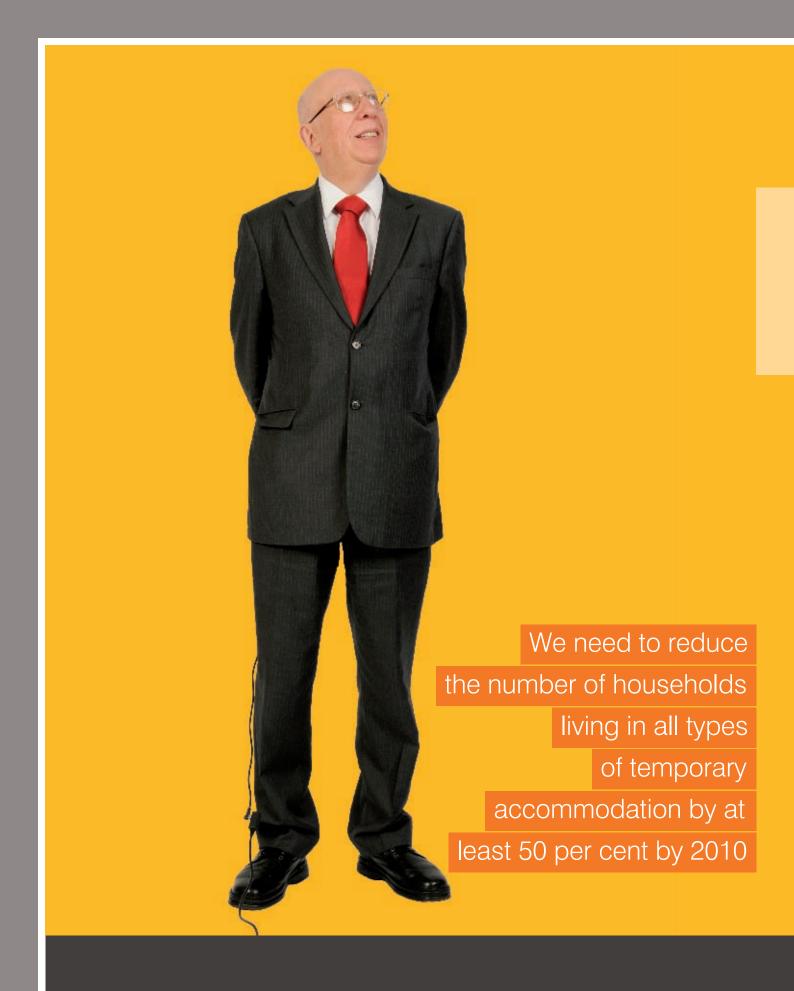
Integrated Service Delivery – A core theme of this strategy is the promotion of improved partnership working between agencies and the prevention of households 'falling between the gaps' of service delivery. Access to settled housing is a key issue that faces homeless people, but to sustain accommodation a wide range of services need to look beyond an individuals' immediate housing needs. Other services need to be part of the core strategy in order to make reality the aim of aligning and connecting various organisations and service delivery plans.

**Housing Pathways** – Vulnerable and homeless people need to be provided with clear pathways which find timely and effective routes out of homelessness.

Appropriate and Accessible Services – It is vital that in delivering homeless services, due regard is paid to ensuring that we meet the diverse needs of all who approach for support and assistance.

**Focused on Customer Need** – Central to the design and delivery of the 2008+ Homelessness Strategy is the involvement in a meaningful way, of those who are the customers of the services we design and commission.

Vulnerable and homeless people need to be provided with clear pathways which find timely and effective routes out of homelessness"



## **Outcomes**

The following priorities for action have been aligned with the five overall outcomes of Be Birmingham's Community Strategy 'Birmingham 2026 – A Global City with a Local Heart'.

#### Outcome 1: Succeed economically Outcome 2: Make a contribution

Tackle worklessness amongst homeless groups by:

- Embedding the places of change agenda in Birmingham's Homeless services.
- Using data from current activity to build a clear picture of the barriers affecting homeless people in making an economic contribution to the city.
- Ensuring the employment and training needs of homeless people are fully recognised and appropriately prioritised.

#### Outcome 3: Stay safe in a clean, green city

Reduce numbers in, and increase rate of move on from, temporary accommodation by:

- Reducing the number of households living in all types of temporary accommodation by at least
   50 per cent by 2010 through implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy.
- Improving the quality and accessibility of temporary accommodation by ensuring all accommodation exceeds minimum established standards.
- Developing a model of respite provision for different client groups as an alternative to temporary accommodation.

#### **Outcome 4: Be healthy**

Promote health and well being groups by:

- Ensuring access to healthcare temporary accommodation.
- Working in partnership to increase access to primary health care for homeless people.
- Ensuring substance misuse services for homeless people the overall approach.

#### Outcome 5: Enjoy a high quality of life

Increase the rate of successful and sustainable move-on from temporary and supported accommodation by:

- Undertaking a strategic review of current supported housing for homeless people to identify forward need for Direct Access, Intermediate Support and Floating support.
- A 50 per cent reduction in long-term residency in supported housing schemes through implementation of the 'Move On Plans Protocol' (MOPP). Making sure that people in temporary supported housing and hostels have access to high quality life skills training, and ensuring that appropriate rehousing preference is given to those who are ready for resettlement

Increase the role of the private rented sector in providing decent, settled homes to homeless households by:

- Extending the role and function of Home Lettings housing option in the light of changing needs and developing good practice models.
- Continuing to build upon the prevention of homelessness due to loss of assured short hold tenancy through reference to good practice models.
- Exploring the role of the private rented sector in the prevention of homelessness through overcrowding via the provision of interim housing solutions.

Ensure that all social housing providers play a full role in the prevention and tackling of homelessness.

Ensure a consistency of approach to the housing of vulnerable groups between social landlords by developing shared protocols, based on best practice, concerning: Comprehensive Assessment Frameworks, exclusion and eviction policies, information sharing, appropriate levels of nominations to homeless households.

Improve Birmingham's Homeless Services by:

- Reconfiguring Supporting People funded services to better reflect most pressing need.
- Developing a single gateway to services for vulnerable people.
- Ensuring customers are fully involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Ensuring that good practice is embedded across the in-house hostel service in a way which enhances customer experiences and outcomes.

Ensure that homelessness services effectively meet the needs of all communities, including gypsies and travellers, and commission services in areas where there is an identified gap by:

- Undertaking an internal audit of data sources in order to ensure their accessibility and appropriateness to monitoring needs.
- Utilising data to ensure that prevention resources are appropriate to presenting need.
- Undertaking a full evaluation of the implications of the Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) of the Homelessness Strategy.
- Developing an action plan to address the areas of weakness as identified by the EINA.
- Establish a multi-agency monitoring and innovation group to oversee the implementation of the EINA action plan.

Assess the feasibility of establishing a multi agency information sharing pilot based on models of best practice.

To improve and extend homelessness prevention provision to children, young people and families by:

- Developing a Domestic Violence Housing Strategy
- Eradicating the remaining short term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Developing an annual curriculum 'campaign' in Birmingham schools for year 10 pupils to raise awareness of the realities and risks of leaving home.
- Implementing the Sanctuary scheme on a citywide basis.
- Supporting families through effective, timely and accessible mediation services.







