

Action Plan

Birmingham Homelessness Strategy 2008 +



Self Portrait Birmingham

The photographs featured in the Homelessness Strategy 2008+ were taken as part of a project called Self Portrait Birmingham. This new project aims to explore the meaning of community using photography. The people in the photographs are a mixture of staff and clients, all of whom have either experienced homelessness or are closely involved in efforts to reduce its effects.

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 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.





Homelessness Action Plan

Our updated Homelessness Strategy for 2008+ tells you about our ambitious future plans to help some of the most vulnerable residents in the city.

The Homelessness Action Plan is made up of a set of high-level objectives and actions, located within nine identified action areas (these can be found in the shaded objective tables)

We have described a set of impacts that we want our strategy to achieve, these are based on:

- the Council Plan
- the Sustainable Communities Strategy (Birmingham 2026).

We believe that the areas of action in the table below will help us to realise impacts.

AREA OF IMPACT	AREA OF ACTION
Enjoy a high quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move-On• Homelessness Services• Private Sector• Social Housing Partnerships• Monitoring and Innovation• Children, Young People and Families
Be healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health
Be economically active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills and Employment
Be safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private Sector• Homelessness Services• Temporary Accommodation• Children, Young People and Families
Make a contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills and Employment

Central to this vision is the realism that they can only be achieved in partnership with other key statutory, private and voluntary sector agencies.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the amount of time and effort required to achieve real partnership working, including the development of the relationships and key structures under which this partnership can work, together with the necessary negotiation to bring about a realignment of priorities, planning and budgets.

The Homelessness Action Plan consists of a set of high-level objectives and actions that form part of nine identified action areas.

From these, an implementation plan will be produced with partners, which will outline the actions necessary to achieve each objective. This implementation plan will contain the responsibility, milestones, timelines and monitoring mechanisms that will enable effective delivery by all of the Homelessness Strategy's Core Implementation Group.

“ The Homelessness Action Plan consists of a set of high-level objectives and actions that form part of nine identified action areas”

Skills and employment action area

The provision of training, support and appropriate pathways into employment can play an important role in helping homeless people to become independent and by helping to stop them from becoming homeless.

Therefore, the new policy direction requires a review of the current employment and training provision and its' ability to meet the needs of the homeless and those 'at risk', together with the potential to increase the skills development and employment opportunities available to these groups.

Objective 1:

To tackle worklessness amongst homeless groups by:

- 1. Embedding the Places of Change agenda in Birmingham's homeless services.*
- 2. Utilising data from current activity to build a clear picture of the barriers affecting homeless people in making an economic contribution to the city.*
- 3. Ensuring that the employment and training needs of homeless people are fully recognised and appropriately prioritised within Birmingham's Worklessness Strategy.*

Health action area

People who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation are more likely to suffer from poorer physical, mental and emotional health than the rest of the population. These health problems can be both a contributory factor to and a consequence of homelessness.

Through improved commissioning there is an opportunity to:

- review the delivery of health-related care to the homeless population,
- learn from innovation, and include within the revised homelessness strategy a full assessment of the health needs of different groups of homeless people.

Objective 2:

To promote health and wellbeing among homeless and other vulnerable groups by:

- 1. Ensuring access to healthcare for homeless families in all forms of temporary accommodation.***
- 2. Working in partnership to build and strengthen current models of access to primary health care and mental health treatment for homeless people.***
- 3. Ensuring substance misuse treatments and alcohol-related services for homeless people are accessible and integrated within the overall approach.***

'Move On' action area

In Birmingham, around 48 per cent of short term supported housing units are occupied by people who are ready to move on, but do not have all the elements of housing and support in place to enable them to do so.

A key element of the Homelessness Strategy will be the development of a 'move on' implementation plan which will:

- improve strategic co-ordination between move on partners to promote effective move on solutions
- promote best practice in pre-tenancy support to prepare vulnerable people for independent living
- promote access to move on accommodation
- promote access to settled move on accommodation
- promote sustainable tenancies.

Objective 3:

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

1. **Undertaking a strategic review of current supported housing for homeless people to identify future needs for:**
 - **direct access**
 - **intermediate support**
 - **floating support.**
2. **Reducing by 50 per cent long-term residency in supported housing schemes through:**
 - **implementation of the 'Move On Plans Protocol' (MOPP)**
 - **ensuring all in temporary supported housing and hostels have access to high quality life skills training**
 - **ensuring that appropriate rehousing preference is given to those who are ready for resettlement.**

Private sector action area

We're currently facing a shortfall in the social rented sector where demand is more than supply. In the face of this, several local authorities and registered social landlords have designed some new ways of using the resources of the private sector to tackle some of the most testing problems, such as overcrowding, rooflessness and provision of flexible solutions to temporary accommodation needs.

As part of the homelessness strategy, we need to consider some of these models which have been developed nationally, to examine whether they have the potential to ease some of our local issues here in Birmingham.

Objective 4:

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

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

Temporary accommodation action area

The Government has set a target that by the year 2010 the number of households living in **all types** of temporary accommodation will be reduced by 50 per cent.

In addition to significantly reducing the numbers of households who are forced into accessing temporary accommodation, the council is committed to driving up standards in the sector and exploring alternatives to temporary accommodation for key client groups.

Objective 5:

To reduce numbers of people in, and increase rate of move on from, temporary accommodation by:

- 1. 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.*
- 2. Improving the quality and accessibility of temporary accommodation by ensuring all accommodation exceeds minimum established standards.*
- 3. Developing a model of respite provision for different client groups as an alternative to temporary accommodation.*

Developing social housing partnerships action area

Birmingham's Social Housing Partnership (BSHP) has established a Housing Needs Nominations Group, comprised of the Homelessness Champions for the major social landlords in the city. This group will work in partnership with Birmingham City Council to address the housing needs of the homeless and most vulnerable.

This group is key to the development of joint practice and protocols at a citywide level, to prevent and respond to homelessness in the city.

Objective 6:

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

To ensure that a consistent approach is applied 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.*

Homelessness services action area

The homeless strategy sets out the vision against which we will undertake a thorough review of all Supporting People funded services to homeless individuals.

Our vision reflects our commitment to the 'places of change' agenda and the desire to create 'housing pathways' that will help homeless individuals to achieve a stable and sustainable life.

Our work to create 'housing pathways' will make us think about how we can improve access to supported housing and housing advice. And it is vital we empower customers to contribute to this process.

Objective 7:

To improve Birmingham's homeless services by:

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

Monitoring and innovation action area

It is vital that in delivering homeless services, attention is paid to ensuring that these meet the needs of all who approach us for support and assistance.

In assessing the effectiveness and accessibility of our services, we need to ensure that good models of monitoring and data review are adopted, together with a commitment that wherever a weakness or gap is identified, every practical effort will be made to address this.

The homelessness strategy places an emphasis on multi agency and partnership working. In order to build a comprehensive and robust picture of homelessness in Birmingham, we will need to examine the potential for increased data and intelligence sharing.

Objective 8:

Ensuring that the 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:

- 1. Undertaking an internal audit of data sources in order to ensure their accessibility and appropriateness to monitoring needs.***
- 2. Utilising data to ensure that prevention resources are appropriate to presenting need.***
- 3. Undertaking a full evaluation of the implications of the Equality Impact Needs Assessment of the Homelessness Strategy.***
- 4. Developing an action plan to address the areas of weakness as identified by the EINA.***
- 5. Establishing a multi-agency monitoring and innovation group to oversee the implementation of the EINA action plan.***
- 6. Assessing the feasibility of establishing a multi agency information-sharing pilot based on models of best practice.***

Children, young people and families action area

The preparation of this homelessness strategy is being carried out against a backdrop of increasing presentations and acceptances of young people and women who are victims of domestic violence. It is vital that we focus our efforts on understanding the factors which are driving this trend and work with our voluntary sector partners to undertake any identified restructuring of services which might be required to address the needs of this particular group.

In Birmingham, we have a number of examples of good practice. And we should build on these in order to maximise impact. Central to this are projects undertaken by both St Basils and Ashram which work directly with young people in school settings in order to prevent homelessness among this group.

Objective 9:

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

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

www.birmingham.gov.uk/housing

**If you would like this information in Braille, large print or on audiotape,
please contact your local neighbourhood office or housing team.**