



Joint Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020

**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
June 2015**

HOW TO COMMENT ON THIS DOCUMENT

This is a consultation document prepared by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

The document includes actions that could be taken to effectively prevent or relieve homelessness across the districts.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of residents on the objectives and actions proposed.

The consultation runs from 16 June 2015 to 14 July 2015.

To send us your comments on the document, please visit our website and complete the online form:

www.southoxon.gov.uk/homelessnessstrategy or
www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/homelessnessstrategy.

Paper forms can be obtained by contacting the housing needs team on 01235 520202.

We will consider all comments received, and will use these to help us finalise the action plan which will be published as part of our homelessness strategy.

If you would like further information about this consultation, or have any questions, please contact:

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INTRODUCTION FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie, South Oxfordshire District Council

“We are very keen to put this homelessness strategy into place in order to prevent this unacceptable state, we are all too aware of the devastation it can cause”

Councillor Roger Cox, Vale of White Horse District Council

“The key to tackling homelessness is to focus upon preventing homelessness in the first place. Our homelessness strategy outlines robust measures that we can put in place to keep homelessness to a minimum and ensure we’re equipped to deal with homelessness in the most efficient, effective and least disruptive way”.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 is the first shared homelessness strategy for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

This strategy, supported by a detailed action plan, allows the councils to achieve two core strategic aims:

- to maximise the prevention of homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- to tackle the causes of homelessness in the community.

Following a review of homelessness in the districts, five key objectives have been identified to achieve these strategic aims:

1. improved partnership working to prevent homelessness
2. minimise the use of temporary accommodation
3. further develop our homelessness prevention service
4. improve access to suitable private rented accommodation
5. provide community outreach to address homelessness.

Both councils have a corporate objective to meet housing need. This homelessness strategy aims to address housing need by successfully tackling homelessness over the next five years.

The homelessness strategy has been developed in consultation with councillors, the public, service users, and stakeholders.



CONTENTS

Executive summary.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Housing in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.....	7
Homelessness in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.....	10
Housing benefit and welfare reform.....	13
The review and consultation process.....	15
Review findings.....	16
Strategic aims and key objectives.....	18
Action plan.....	19
The gold standard.....	35
Appendices.....	37-52



Introduction

As of August 2014 there were 2280 households in housing need on the council's housing registers. Housing need includes applicants who are overcrowded or in properties assessed as not meeting their basic housing requirements.

The demand for affordable homes continues to be a challenge facing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

Both councils are bringing forward new housing developments to address the level of housing need. From 2014/15 to 2016/17, there are between 500 and 600 new affordable homes planned in South Oxfordshire and 600 to 700 in Vale of White Horse.

The increasing demand for housing however continues to challenge supply. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Oxfordshire¹ calculates that every year an additional 331 affordable homes are required in South and 215 in Vale.

This strategy considers the current trends in homelessness, our ability to meet these demands and how we best meet these challenges in the future.

¹ GL Hearn Limited, April 2014 "Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Assessment"



HOUSING IN SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE

Households and tenure

There has been a 6 per cent increase in the number of households living in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse between 2001 and 2011.

The main tenure in South and Vale is owner occupation. Both districts are significantly above the national average of 63 per cent, at 73 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

Approximately 15 per cent of housing is provided by the private rented sector with the remaining 15 per cent by Housing Associations.

House prices

The average (mean) house price in quarter two 2013 for South Oxfordshire was £379,877 and £301,067 in Vale. This was significantly above the national average of £246,764.²

These relatively high house prices are reflected in the affordability of home purchase. The affordability ratio of homes in the South and Vale is 10.75 and 8.45 respectively, compared to the national figure of 6.59.³

Rent in the affordable housing sector

In 2010 a new model for funding affordable housing was introduced. Before 2010 the government funded “social” or “target” rents that were typically 40-50 per cent of market rents.

The new affordable rent model enabled registered providers to set rent levels at up to 80 per cent of market rent. The affordable rent model has been adopted by many housing associations, including South Oxfordshire Housing Association. An increasing number of properties are therefore being let at these higher rents.

The housing associations must however take into account the council’s tenancy strategy. The strategy sets the conditions for affordable rents, including the provision that the rent charged must not exceed housing benefit levels.

² Source HM Land Registry

³ The ratio of lower quartile house prices compared to lower quartile incomes.



Rent in the private sector

Between 2012/13 and 2014/15 the average rent increase for a 2-bedroom property across both districts was 5.5 per cent. Over the same period Local Housing Allowance only increased by 2 per cent. This has two negative impacts for the prevention of homelessness:

It is more difficult for low-income households to secure properties within the Local Housing Allowance rate.

It is more difficult to persuade private landlords to rent their properties at Local Housing Allowance levels.

The problem of securing affordable privately rented accommodation is particularly difficult in areas of South and Vale not covered by the higher Oxford LHA rate. Thame, Henley and Faringdon are all towns with significantly lower LHA rates as a result of being classed within Aylesbury, Reading and Swindon rental areas respectively. We have previously been unsuccessful in challenging these boundaries with the Valuation Office, however we continue to keep the situation under review.

The housing register and housing association lettings

Applicants to the housing register are placed into one of four priority bands:

- Band one: exceptional reasons for housing
- Band two: urgent need for housing
- Band three: significant need for housing
- Band four: adequately housed

The total number of households on the housing register as of August 2014 was 3146 for South Oxfordshire and 3073 for the Vale of White Horse. 36 per cent of these applicants had a significant, urgent or exceptional housing need.

In 2013/14 a total average of 41 households per week joined South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse housing registers. This figure includes an average of 17 households per week in housing need.

The number of housing association lettings fell by 12 per cent between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The allocation of properties through Choice Based Lettings is a key tool in the prevention of homelessness. It is more difficult to prevent homelessness when the number of available social lets falls.



New-build affordable homes

From 2014/15 to 2016/17 between 500 and 600 new affordable homes are planned in South Oxfordshire and 600 and 700 in Vale of White Horse. This includes major developments at Great Western Park in Didcot and Stockham Farm, Wantage. Further details of these developments are in Appendix 1. The planned supply across both districts does not however meet the future need according to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The rise in house prices, rent levels and the ongoing demand for affordable housing set a challenging environment in which to tackle homelessness.



HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE

The prevention of homelessness remains a challenge for both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

In August 2014, there were 1169 housing register applicants in housing need in South Oxfordshire and 1111 in Vale of White Horse.

During 2013/14 a total of 353 South Oxfordshire residents and 364 Vale of White Horse residents at risk of homelessness received advice and support from the housing needs team.

There is a legal duty for councils to provide advice and assistance to all households at risk of homelessness. There is also a duty for the council to accommodate eligible “priority need” households. The council’s legal duties regarding homelessness are outlined in Appendix 3.

The housing needs team successfully prevented homelessness in 84 per cent of cases in 2013/14 by either enabling households to remain at home or by helping them to secure suitable alternative accommodation.

However, despite this success, 40 households in South Oxfordshire and 63 households in the Vale of White Horse were owed an ongoing housing duty by the councils during 2013/14.

Reasons for homelessness

The three main reasons for homelessness in South Oxfordshire during 2013/14 was the loss of a private tenancy; being asked to leave by family or friends or a relationship breakdown. In Vale of White Horse the reasons were the loss of a private tenancy; leaving the armed forces and being asked to leave by family or friends.

The loss of a private tenancy has become the most common cause of homelessness in both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. This trend is reflected nationally as the number of private tenancies let at local housing allowance levels continues to fall.



Homelessness and the disabled

There are a small number of physically disabled people that have become homeless in South and Vale.

In 2014/15, three physically disabled people from Vale and one from South became statutory homeless.

Households with disabled members, depending upon the severity of their disability, normally receive higher priority on the housing register. This is particularly the case for properties that already have disabled adaptations. These priorities, combined with our homelessness prevention work, is why it is rare for households with a disabled member to become homeless.

We ensure that households with a disabled member receive a service that recognises their particular challenges and best meets their individual needs.

The building and the interview rooms at Abbey House, Abingdon are wheelchair accessible. The interview rooms are fitted with hearing loops for the deaf and hard of hearing. We also arrange home and hospital visits for disabled households who are not able to attend our offices.

We continue to develop our services to provide better access and outcomes for disabled households.

Rough sleeping

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council's have historically seen low levels of rough sleeping. There has however been a recent increase.

In 2013/14 a total of 57 rough sleepers were identified across South and Vale. In only the first six months of 2014/15 the same number of rough sleepers has been verified.

There is also a group of single homeless households who are not rough sleeping but have no permanent address. These households are described as having no fixed abode.

In August 2014 there were 94 housing register applicants in South Oxfordshire and 20 in Vale of White Horse with no fixed abode.



Supported housing

There are four main supported housing projects across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

Name	Location	Provider	Clientele	Bed Spaces
The Hagbournes	Didcot	Stonham Housing	Young persons aged 16 -25	11
The Foyer	Abingdon	Raglan Housing	Young persons aged 16 -25	21
The Vineyard	Abingdon	Oxford Homeless Pathways	Single persons or couples aged 24 and above	14
Refuge	South Oxfordshire	A2 Dominion Housing	Women fleeing domestic violence	4

The demand for supported housing is consistently higher than the availability of rooms. The Vineyard, Hagbournes and the Foyer all maintain a waiting list and prioritise applicants based upon their support needs.



HOUSING BENEFIT AND WELFARE REFORM

Over the lifetime of the last homelessness strategy the government introduced significant housing reforms that have impacted upon the prevention of homelessness.

Housing benefit reform – January 2012

- The maximum Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) rate was reduced from 50 per cent to 30 per cent of the average open market rent.
- The age a claimant could claim for a self-contained property, rather than a room, was raised from 25 to 35 years old.

The impact of these reforms was that the number of rented properties affordable to housing benefit claimants was significantly reduced.

Localism Act – April 2012

- Housing Associations were granted the power to issue fixed-term tenancies rather than assured (lifetime) tenancies.
- Local authorities were granted the power to discharge their homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

The impact of these reforms was that some housing associations in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse now issue fixed term tenancies. The housing needs team has also adopted the power to discharge the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

Welfare Reform - April 2013

- Spare room subsidy. Social housing tenants of working age received a deduction to their housing benefit if they are assessed as having a spare bedroom.

The impact of the reform was that 472 households in South Oxfordshire and 616 households in the Vale of White Horse had a deduction from their housing benefit. It has also increased the demand for smaller properties.

- Benefit cap. Working age families who are not in employment had their total benefits capped at £500.00 per week.

The impact of the reform was that 34 households in South Oxfordshire and 33 households in the Vale of White Horse had their benefits capped.



There has been increasing pressure on agencies that provide support and assistance to households struggling with debt issues.

The Housing needs team recognises the important role played by these agencies and strengthening our relationships with them forms part of our action plan.



THE REVIEW AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Homelessness Strategy is based upon a review of the housing services provided by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils.

The review considered:

- our achievements during the lifetime of the previous strategy
- actions remaining outstanding from the previous strategy
- our current provision
- the demand for our services
- the unmet demand for our services
- future challenges facing our service.

The consultation process will help inform the final version of the homelessness strategy.

The formal consultation will take place over a four week period and will be made available on the councils' websites.



REVIEW FINDINGS

Our key achievements over the last five years:

- High levels of success in the prevention of homelessness

Year	Success rate – South Oxfordshire	Success rate – Vale of White Horse
2010/11	88per cent	87per cent
2011/12	91per cent	89per cent
2012/13	93per cent	87per cent
2013/14	88per cent	80per cent

The first quarter of 2014 witnessed an improvement in the success rate to 90 per cent for South Oxfordshire and 89 per cent for the Vale of White Horse.

- Substantial reduction of households in temporary accommodation

Year	Households in temporary accommodation - South Oxfordshire	Households in temporary accommodation - Vale of White Horse
2009/10	27	31
2010/11	12	21
2011/12	12	24
2012/13	15	22
2013/14	17	20

Over the period of the last homelessness strategy, both councils have seen a significant reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation.

- introduction of a new joint allocations policy in December 2013
- establishing the shared housing needs team across both authorities
- introduction of “No Second Night Out” to tackle rough sleeping
- introduction of Connection Outreach Service to work with rough sleepers towards secure housing and independent living
- placements of 16 and 17 year olds into bed and breakfast minimised to only highly exceptional circumstances
- no breaches of the maximum 6-week rule for accommodating families in bed and breakfast
- expansion and growth of our social lettings agencies (White Horse Lettings) across both districts
- re-establishment of the Oxfordshire districts homelessness group
- a major upgrade of the Housing software (Abritas)
- increasing the level of support received at the Vineyard
- forming a cross-districts group to apply for the Gold Standard.



Strengths

- comprehensive and case-worked housing advice to residents
- experienced and knowledgeable officers
- good working relationships with stakeholder agencies
- clear focus upon the prevention of homelessness
- innovative approach to using the homeless prevention grant
- Housing Needs Officers have dedicated specialist areas.

Areas for development

- consultation with service users
- maximising use of supported accommodation
- improved provision of temporary accommodation
- increased prevention focussed upon the most vulnerable households
- accessibility to tailored advice and information
- raising awareness of the services we provide
- engagement with the local community to prevent homelessness.

Future challenges

- increasing demand for affordable housing
- increasing housing costs - both for purchase and rent
- increasing household debt
- potential further Welfare Reform affecting housing
- further reductions in welfare spending
- introduction of Universal Credit
- a reduction in Housing Related Support services
- sourcing suitable temporary accommodation
- improving communications with service users
- securing tenancies through private landlords
- re-commissioning of adult single homeless services.



STRATEGIC AIMS AND KEY OBJECTIVES

Following a review of our housing services two strategic themes have been identified for tackling homelessness over the next five years:

- to maximise the prevention of homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- to tackle the causes of homelessness in the community.

In order to achieve these strategic aims five key objectives have been developed to address homelessness over the next five years.

Our five key objectives to achieve the strategic aims:

to maximise the prevention of homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation:

- 1. Improved partnership working to prevent homelessness**
- 2. Minimise the use of temporary accommodation**

To tackle the causes of homelessness in the community:

- 3. Further develop our homelessness prevention service**
- 4. Improve access to suitable private rented accommodation**
- 5. Provide community outreach to address homelessness**

These objectives form the structure of our action plan that details the actions necessary to achieve our aims.

Measurable Outcomes

The success of the homelessness strategy will be measured against four key outcomes.

- the percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless
- the number of households in temporary accommodation
- The awareness of homelessness services within the community
- The completion of the key actions identified in the action plan.



South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

Joint Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020

ACTION PLAN



Homelessness Strategy – Draft Joint Action Plan

The prevention of homelessness remains a challenge for South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils.

As of August 2014, there were 1169 housing register applicants in housing need in South Oxfordshire and 1111 in Vale of White Horse.

In 2013/14 a total of 717 residents of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse were at risk of homelessness and therefore received case-worked support from the Housing Needs team.

The Housing Needs team successfully prevented homelessness in 84 per cent of cases by either enabling households to remain at home or by helping them to secure alternative accommodation.

However, despite this success, 40 households in South Oxfordshire and 63 households in the Vale of White Horse were owed an ongoing housing duty in 2013/14.

This draft action plan sets out proposals to build upon our success in preventing homelessness. The timescales focus upon key actions being taken early during the lifetime of the strategy.

The only additional expenditure within the action plan is for an interactive housing options module. The budget for this expenditure however has already been allocated.

The action plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. It will also be reviewed at quarterly performance meetings attended by the Housing Needs team, councillors and senior managers.

Following the consultation period the final version of the homelessness strategy will be published on the councils' websites.



1. Improved partnership working to prevent homelessness

Objective	Key Actions	Timescales	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnership working with stakeholder agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with supported accommodation providers to promote rapid progression for clients into independent living. Actively focus upon homelessness prevention at multi-agency meetings. e.g. public protection meetings and Social Services case conferences. Maintain regular meetings with key housing associations with a renewed emphasis on tackling potential homelessness. Assist supported housing providers to increase their move-on options for their clients. Work with other councils to secure additional funding for the prevention of homelessness. Develop closer links with armed forces leavers and their representative agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Years 1 - 5 Ongoing Years 1 - 5 Regular meetings Ongoing Years 1 - 5 Quarterly meetings Ongoing Years 1 - 5 Ongoing Years 1 - 5 Ongoing Years 1 - 5 Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Advice Team Leader Housing Needs Officers Affordable Lettings Officer Housing Needs Officers Housing Needs Manager Designated Housing Needs Officer



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the available tools to promote financial inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish rapid referral protocols and procedures with key agencies providing debt and benefits advice, including CAB, Wantage Independent Centre and Oxford Welfare Rights. • Investigate the benefits of working more closely with Credit Unions. • Link homeless households into opportunities for education, training and employment. 	<p>March 2016</p> <p>February 2016</p> <p>September 2016</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the services available for young persons at risk of homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the value of introducing external mediation services to prevent family relationship breakdowns. • Expand the services available to young people through the re-commissioning of the Young Persons Pathway. • Investigate expanding the assistance offered to under 35's to access private rented accommodation. 	<p>August 2017</p> <p>May 2015</p> <p>September 2016</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Private Lettings Officer</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the services available for adults at risk of homelessness, including rough sleepers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-commission the Adult Homeless Pathway to provide the most effective services for reducing single homelessness. • Establish effective working with partner agencies to provide Severe Weather Emergency Provision. 	<p>subject to County Council timescales</p> <p>Years 1-5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing procedures and protocols to concentrate upon tackling homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refocus Young Person service providers on either the prevention of homelessness (floating support) or quick, successful re-housing outcomes (accommodation based support). 	<p>September 2015</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p>
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2. Minimise the use of temporary accommodation

Objective	Key Actions	Timescale	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise the number of households placed in temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness in the first instance. 	Years 1 – 5 Ongoing	Housing Advice Team Leader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise the opportunities for households at risk of homelessness to secure alternative accommodation. 	Years 1 – 5 Ongoing	Housing Advice Team Leader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early identification of at risk households with specific housing requirements. eg disabled household members or large families. 	December 2015	Housing Advice Team Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure households move quickly through temporary accommodation into settled housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively work with households in temporary accommodation to pursue their options for moving into settled accommodation. 	Years 1 – 5 Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team Leader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with accommodation providers to ensure households do not remain longer than necessary in their temporary accommodation. 	Years 1 – 5 Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team Leader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement our private sector discharge policy where appropriate to end our homelessness duty. 	December 2015	Private Lettings Officer



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the provision of temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an assessment of the future provision of temporary accommodation. • Reconfigure the provision of temporary accommodation in line with agreed recommendations. 	<p>In development</p> <p>dependent upon appraisal recommendations</p>	<p>Head of Development and Housing</p> <p>Head of Development and Housing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the management of own-stock temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update all policies and procedures. • Review and update maintenance schedules. 	<p>June 2015</p> <p>Years 1- 5 ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Lettings Team Leader</p> <p>Temporary Accommodation Officer</p>



3. Further development of our homelessness prevention service

Objective	Key Actions	Timescale	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the housing options offered to customers through the provision of enhanced housing advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a Housing Needs team development programme. This would be tailored to the individual needs of the team member but with a wider benefit to the whole team. Encourage an environment for knowledge-sharing both within the Housing Needs team and with partner agencies. 	<p>March 2016</p> <p>Years 1- 5 Ongoing</p>	Housing Needs Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our service to customers by communicating with them using the most effective method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full implementation of the Channel Shift strategy to introduce more efficient customer communication eg. improved housing advice on council websites. Work with the Housing Needs Manager to prepare for the Enhanced Housing Options module on Abritas. Focus upon vulnerable and complex households unable to engage with self service options. 	<p>March 2016</p> <p>April 2016</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Designated Housing Needs Officer</p> <p>Designated Housing Needs Officer</p> <p>Housing Needs Officers</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue preparations for Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing training for the Housing Needs Team for the continued roll out of Universal Credit. Liaise with stakeholders to ensure they are prepared for the impact of Universal Credit. Ensure regular updates are received from housing benefit concerning changes to Universal Credit and its progress towards implementation. Establish links with the DWP as a liaison for the implementation of Universal Credit 	<p>April 2015 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1-5 Ongoing</p> <p>April 2015 Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve the bronze level award for the Government's Gold Standard challenge for Housing Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with our partner councils to complete the assessment process and initially achieve the bronze level Gold Standard. Use the National Practitioner Support Services self-diagnostic toolkit to assess our services and their value for money. 	<p>2016 – month dependent upon partner councils</p> <p>Awaiting website toolkit from NPSS</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the evidence base and recording of homelessness within the districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the range and detail of data collection required for preventing homelessness within the Housing Needs team. Create framework to ensure cases of partnership working to prevent homelessness prevention are recorded. 	<p>September 2015</p> <p>December 2015</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a monitoring procedure for repeat homelessness. 	May 2016	Housing Advice Team Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a customer feedback framework that supports continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain ongoing procedures for collecting and monitoring customer feedback. Ensure actions are taken and monitored as a result of the customer feedback. 	<p>Years 1-5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1-5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Designated Housing Needs Officer</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a benchmarking group to promote best practice and value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate comparable local authority housing services to form a benchmarking group. Reach agreement on the comparative data to be collected and a process for collating, monitoring and analysing the information. 	<p>June 2016</p> <p>December 2016</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p>



4. Improve access to suitable private rented accommodation

Objective	Key Actions	Timescale	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer assistance to access the private rented sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the range and level of services offered by the private lettings team. Implement the agreed recommendations following the options appraisal. Approach landlords of Houses in Multiple-Occupation to assess whether they would be able to provide shared rooms for under 35 year olds. 	<p>December 2015</p> <p>March 2016</p> <p>Years 1-5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Private Lettings Officer</p> <p>Private Lettings Officer</p> <p>Private Lettings Officer</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved support to private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a marketing strategy with the communications team to publicise our services. Review the level and type of incentives offered to private landlords. Implement the agreed recommendations following the options appraisal. 	<p>November 2015</p> <p>December 2015</p> <p>March 2016</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Private Lettings Officer</p> <p>Private Lettings Officer</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an annual Housing Needs landlord's forum. 	May 2016	Housing Lettings Team Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop internal private lettings procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop our internal referral processes to ensure properties are quickly matched to the most appropriate customer. Investigate recycling rent-advance loan repayments back into the homelessness prevention fund. 	Years 1-5 Ongoing January 2016	Housing Advice Team Leader Private Lettings Officer



5. Provide community outreach to address homelessness

Objective	Key Actions	Timescale	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase engagement with the community to identify and help vulnerable people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise talks with GP's and health workers to help identify persons in urgent housing need. Improve liaison with internal and external partner agencies to identify and address hidden homelessness in the community. Establish links with local societies and religious groups to identify and tackle hidden homelessness. 	<p>Years 1 - 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1- 5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Designated Housing Needs Officer</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise the profile of homelessness issues within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the communications team to raise awareness of the Housing Advice service in the community. This will include establishing a baseline survey for measuring public awareness of our housing needs service. Attend council meetings to provide briefings and updates on tackling homelessness. Attend stakeholder meetings to provide information on homelessness issues. . 	<p>Years 1 - 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Housing Needs Officers</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced liaison with Registered Providers to prevent homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure early identification of households at risk of homelessness. Support Registered Providers to sustain tenancies for vulnerable households at risk of homelessness. 	<p>Years 1 - 5 Ongoing</p> <p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Lettings Team Leader</p> <p>Lettings Team Leader</p>
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Wider actions to support the homelessness strategy

Objective	Key Actions	Timescale	Responsible Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise the supply of affordable housing through enabling and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on housing need and homelessness to support housing development. 	<p>Years 1 – 5 Ongoing</p>	<p>Lettings Team Leader</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist Registered Providers to tackle under-occupation in the social housing sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with Registered Providers to identify under-occupying households. Review incentives to encourage households to downsize. 	<p>Years 1 – 5 Quarterly Meetings Ongoing</p> <p>September 2015</p>	<p>Allocations Officer</p> <p>Lettings Team Leader</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective and efficient access to temporary accommodation through Registered Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferred partner status for housing development introduced for Registered Providers. The preferred criteria to include provision of temporary accommodation and Houses in Multiple-Occupation. 	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>Principal Development Officer</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Allocations Policy to ensure it fully supports the Homelessness Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a formal review of the Allocations Policy ensuring any changes support the prevention of homelessness. 	<p>April 2017</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate bringing empty homes back into use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with Environmental Protection to identify long-term empty homes that may be suitable for bringing back into use. 	<p>April 2016</p>	<p>Housing Needs Manager</p>



The Gold Standard

The Gold Standard is a government-funded initiative to improve local authority front line housing options services. The programme provides support and training for councils to undertake a peer review before applying for the Gold Standard.

“South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils are committed to achieving the Gold Standard for our housing advice service. It will provide national recognition of our council’s strong commitment to tackling homelessness.”

Anna Robinson

Strategic Director

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils



The Gold Standard sets ten challenges that local authorities have to achieve to be awarded the Gold Standard.

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service including written advice to all clients.
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or effective local alternative.
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
6. Develop a suitable private sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both client and landlord.
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to change.
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 years old in bed and breakfast accommodation.
10. Not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless it is an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks.

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse Housing Needs team has formed a peer review group with Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse intend to apply for the Gold Standard in 2016.



APPENDICIES

Appendix 1: Quantative Data Sets

Appendix 2: List of stakeholders for consultation

Appendix 3: Homelessness and the law



Appendix 1: Quantative Data Sets

Housing in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

Issue	Source
<p>Population</p> <p>South Oxfordshire As of March 2011, there were 134,300 people living in the South Oxfordshire District. This was up from the total of 128,200 residents at the time of the last census survey in 2001, an increase of just over 6,000 (5per cent).</p> <p>Vale of White Horse As of March 2011, there were 121,000 people living in the Vale of White Horse District. This was up from the total of 115,600 residents at the time of the last census survey in 2001, an increase of around 5,300 (5per cent).</p>	<p>Census 2011</p> <p>Census 2011</p>
<p>Households</p> <p>South Oxfordshire There were 54,100 households with at least one resident in the South Oxfordshire District as of March 2011. This is an increase of 4per cent since 2011.</p> <p>Vale of White Horse As of March 2011, there were 49,400 households with at least one resident in the Vale of White Horse District. This was up from 45,800 in 2011 – an increase of 8per cent.</p>	<p>Census 2011</p> <p>Census 2011</p>
<p>Unemployment</p> <p>South Oxfordshire Unemployment in South Oxfordshire at the time of the 2011 census was around half of the national average. Of the economically active population in South Oxfordshire, 3.4per cent were unemployed compared with 6.3per cent nationally. Of the 2,446 unemployed in March 2011, 27per cent were in the age group 16-24. This was just below the national average of 28per cent.</p> <p>Vale of White Horse Unemployment in the Vale of White Horse at the time of the 2011 census was around half of the national average. Of the economically active population in Vale of White Horse, 3.3per cent were unemployed compared with 6.3per cent nationally. Of the 2,190 unemployed in March 2011, 27per cent were in the age group 16-24. This was just below the national average of 28per cent.</p>	<p>Census 2011</p> <p>Census 2011</p>



<p>Income</p> <p>South Oxfordshire The median salary in South Oxfordshire is £37,632.</p> <p>Vale of White Horse The median salary in Vale of White Horse is £36,933.</p>	
<p>Tenure</p> <p>South Oxfordshire There are over 58,018 homes in South Oxfordshire. There is an above average rate of owner occupation with 73per cent of households in South Oxfordshire either fully owned or owned with a mortgage. This is above the national average of 63per cent. There has been an increase in the number of households that are renting privately, from 12per cent of the total in 2011 to 15per cent in 2011. Social rented homes accounted for 11.4per cent.</p> <p>Vale of White Horse There are over 52,389 homes in Vale of White Horse. There is an above average rate of owner occupation with 70per cent of households in Vale of White Horse either fully owned or owned with a mortgage. This is above the national average of 63per cent. There has been an increase in the number of households that are renting privately, from 13per cent of the total in 2011 to 15per cent in 2011. Social rented homes accounted for 13.3per cent.</p>	<p>Census 2011</p> <p>Census 2011</p>
<p>House Prices</p> <p>South Oxfordshire The mean average house price in Quarter 2 2013 for South Oxfordshire was £379,877.</p> <p>Vale of White Horse The mean average house price in Quarter 2 2013 for Vale of White Horse was £301,067.</p> <p>England The mean average house price in Quarter 2 2013 for England was £246,764.</p>	<p>HM Land Registry / CLG Table 582</p>



Rents in the private sector						The Rent Service
Local housing allowance rates in South Oxfordshire valid from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015:						
Monthly	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	
Reading	£328.25	£656.50	£808.04	£924.13	£1313.00	
Aylesbury	£312.17	£530.23	£656.50	£826.80	£1249.99	
Oxford	£350.18	£681.76	£825.80	£988.00	£1313.00	
Local housing allowance rates in Vale of White Horse valid from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015:						Zoopla
Monthly rent	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	
Reading	£328.25	£656.50	£808.04	£924.13	£1313.00	
Aylesbury	£312.17	£530.23	£656.50	£826.80	£1249.99	
Oxford	£350.18	£681.76	£825.80	£988.00	£1313.00	
Swindon	£250.16	£443.82	£547.08	£656.50	£849.00	
Private sector average rents August 2014						
South Oxfordshire						
Monthly rent	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	
Didcot	£428.50	£667.33	£862.33	£1131.00	£1659.67	
Henley	£505.50	£970.67	£1360.67	£2127.67	£2535.00	
Thame	£425.00	£719.33	£966.33	£1187.33	£1659.67	
Wall'ford	£461.43	£726.67	£1048.67	£1265.33	£1807.00	Zoopla
Vale						
Monthly	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	
Abingdon	£478.50	£745.33	£936.00	£1217.67	£1737.67	
Faringdon	£394.13	£563.33	£745.33	£944.67	£1759.33	
Wantage	£448.10	£676.00	£788.67	£1438.67	£1369.33	



Housing Register

South Oxfordshire

The number of people on the housing register in August 2014 was 3,146:

Bed need	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total
1	40	95	368	1165	1668
2	0	114	282	620	1016
3	1	26	166	179	372
4	0	24	53	13	90
Total	41	259	869	1977	3146

Those assessed as being in emergency need (Band 1) accounted 1per cent. Applicants assessed as being in Urgent housing need (Band 2) accounted for 8per cent. Applicants assessed as Significant Housing (Band 3) accounted for 28per cent. Band 4 (adequately housed) accounted for 63per cent of all applicants registered.

Vale of White Horse

The number of people on the housing register in August 2014 was 3,073:

Bed need	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total
1	38	95	390	1119	1642
2	4	76	282	655	1017
3	1	27	115	167	310
4	0	29	54	21	104
Total	43	227	841	1962	3073

Those assessed as being in emergency need (Band 1) accounted 1per cent. Applicants assessed as being in Urgent housing need (Band 2) accounted for 7per cent. Applicants assessed as Significant Housing (Band 3) accounted for 27per cent. Band 4 (adequately housed) accounted for 65per cent of all applicants registered.

Social Lettings

Year	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse	Total lets
2011/12	320	322	642
2012/13	435	469	904
2013/14	391	366	757



New Affordable Homes Built

Year	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
2009/10	78	186
2010/11	38	198
2011/12	194	63
2012/13	143	143
2013/14	187	67

New Affordable Homes Forecast 2014/15 to 2015/16

South Oxfordshire

2014/15

Scheme name	Rented	Shared Ownership/Equity Loan
Great Western Park	35 2 x 1 bed flat 6 x 2 bed flat 2 x 1 bed house 4 x 2 bed house 10 x 3 bed house 11 x 4 bed house	26 2 x 1 bed flat 8 x 2 bed flat 8 x 2 bed house 8 x 3 bed house
Fairmile Hospital, Cholsey	5 1 x 2 bed house 3 x 4 bed house 1 x 2 bed refurb	3 3 x 2 bed house
17 Thame Park Rd, MEMEC	6 6 x 2 bed flat	0
Queensway, Didcot	2 1 x 3 bed house 1 x 4 bed house	2 2 x 2 bed house
Gallowstree Common, Kidmore End	5 2 x 1 bed flat 2 x 2 bed flat 1 x 3 bed house	1 1 x 2 bed house



Bakers Piece, Kingston Blount	10 2 x 1 bed flat 4 x 2 bed flat 1 x 2 bed house 3 x 3 bed house	0
Icknield Place, Goring (ECH scheme)	30 23 x 1 bed 7 x 3 bed	10 5 x 1 bed 5 x 2 bed
Sunnymede Tetsworth	7 2 x 2 bed flat 3 x 2 bed house 2 x 3 bed house	0
Rookery Hse, Garsington	10 4 x 1 bed flat 6 x 2 bed flat	0

500 + homes are currently forecast for completion across 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Vale of White Horse

2014/15

	Rented	Shared Ownership
Coxwell House Faringdon	9 6 x 1 bed/2p flat 3 x 2 bed/4p hse	7 6 x 2 bed hses 1 x 3 bed hse
Sth of Faringdon Rd, Southmoor	15 10 x 2 bed hses 3 x 3 bed hses 2 x 4 bed hses	0
Folly Farm Faringdon	8 2 x 1 bed flats 3 x 2 bed flats 3 x 3 bed hse	3 3 3 x 2 bed hses
Coxwell House Faringdon	2 1 x 3 bed/5p hse 1 x 4 bed/7p hse	0
Majors Rd, Watchfield.	36 4 x 1 bed flat 5 x 2 bed flat 11 x 2 bed house 11 x 3 bed house 5 x 4 bed house	1 1 x 2 bed house



Chilton Fields, Harwell	21 9 x 2 bed house 8 x 3 bed house 4 x 4 bed house	4 2 x 2 bed house 2 x 3 bed house
Mayott House, Abingdon Extra Care Housing scheme	36 36 x 1 bed flat	4 4 x 2 bed flat
Fouracres, & 1 – 33 Lime Road, Botley	14 10 x 2 bed flat 2 x 2 bed house 2 x 4 bed house	4 4 x 2 bed house
Walnut Trees Ashbury	5 5 x 3 bed house	2 2 x 3 bed house
Nalder Estate, East Challow	21 5 x 1 bed flat 4 x 2 bed flat 4 x 2 bed house 5 x 3 bed house 3 x 4 bed house	5 3 x 2 bed house 2 x 3 bed house
Broadwater, Wantage	4 tbc	1 tbc
Tilbury Lane, Botley	25 1 x 1 bed flat 6 x 1 bed flat 6 x 2 bed flat 7 x 3 bed house 5 x 4 bed house	15 1 x 1 bed flat 11 x 2 bed 3 x 2 bed
Draycott Road, Southmoor	5 3 x 1 bed flat 2 x 3 bed house	3 1 x 2 bed flat 2 x 3 bed house

Further sites are likely to deliver around **440** new homes through 2015/16 to 2016/17.



Homelessness in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

Issue	Source																								
<p>Temporary Accommodation</p> <p>South Oxfordshire Number of households in temporary accommodation at year end:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="240 584 772 848"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number in temporary accommodation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2009/10</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr><td>2010/11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>2011/12</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>2012/13</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>2013/14</td><td>17</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Vale of White Horse Number of households in temporary accommodation at year end:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="240 994 772 1258"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number in temporary accommodation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2009/10</td><td>31</td></tr> <tr><td>2010/11</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>2011/12</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>2012/13</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr><td>2013/14</td><td>20</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number in temporary accommodation	2009/10	27	2010/11	12	2011/12	12	2012/13	15	2013/14	17	Year	Number in temporary accommodation	2009/10	31	2010/11	21	2011/12	24	2012/13	22	2013/14	20	<p>CLG returns</p>
Year	Number in temporary accommodation																								
2009/10	27																								
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<p>Acceptances – reasons for homelessness</p> <p>South Oxfordshire The most common reason for losing the last settled accommodation is loss of tied or an assured short hold tenancy</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="240 1559 1214 2031"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2010/11</th> <th>2011/12</th> <th>2012/13</th> <th>2013/14</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Parents Can No Longer Accommodate</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Relatives / Friends Can No Longer Accommodate</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-violent Relationship Breakdown With Partner</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Parents Can No Longer Accommodate	5	5	7	5	Other Relatives / Friends Can No Longer Accommodate	4	3	5	3	Non-violent Relationship Breakdown With Partner	0	3	5	6					
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14																					
Parents Can No Longer Accommodate	5	5	7	5																					
Other Relatives / Friends Can No Longer Accommodate	4	3	5	3																					
Non-violent Relationship Breakdown With Partner	0	3	5	6																					



Violent Relationship Breakdown With Partner	0	1	2	5
Violent Relationship Breakdown With Associated Person	0	1	2	0
Other Violence	0	1	1	1
Other Harassment	1	1	1	0
Repossession	1	1	2	0
Rent Arrears On HA property	0	0	1	0
Rent Arrears - Private Sector	1	1	1	0
End of tied or Assured Shorthold Tenancy	3	4	9	10
Loss Rented, tied accom for other reason	5	3	9	7
Left Prison or On Remand	0	0	0	1
Left Hospital	0	0	0	1
Left HM Forces	0	0	0	1

Vale of White Horse

The most common reason for losing the last settled accommodation is termination of an assured short hold tenancy followed by leaving the armed forces.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Parents cannot accommodate	7	9	11	4
Relatives or friends cannot accommodate	2	4	2	6
Non-violent relationship breakdown with Partner	4	4	5	4
Violent relationship breakdown with partner	11	12	4	4
Violent relationship breakdown with other person	0	0	1	0



Other Violence	2	0	1	1
Other Harassment	1	1	0	1
Mortgage Arrears	0	2	1	1
Housing Association arrears	0	0	0	1
Private rent arrears	1	0	2	1
End of tied or assured shorthold tenancy	2	8	16	16
Loss of rented, tied accom for other reason	5	4	7	5
Left Hospital	2	1	1	1
Left Other Ins LA	0	1	0	0
Left HM Forces	2	5	10	14
Left Other Reason	5	2	3	0

Homeless Decisions – reason for priority need

South Oxfordshire

The most common reason for being considered to be in priority need is applicant whose household includes dependant children.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Applicant whose household includes dependant children	11	14	30	27
Household with pregnant woman	5	5	4	2
Applicant formerly in "Care", and aged 18 to 20 years old	1	0	1	0
Vulnerable due physical disability	0	1	3	2
Vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap	2	1	5	7
Vulnerable due to having been in care	0	1	1	0
Vulnerable due to having been in custody/on remand	0	0	0	1



Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of violence/threat of violence	1	1	1	1
Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of domestic violence / threat of violence	0	0	0	1

Vale of White Horse

The most common reason for being considered to be in priority need is applicant whose household includes dependent children.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Applicant whose household includes dependant children	25	33	47	41
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a pregnant woman	5	7	9	4
Applicant aged 16/17 years old	2	0	1	1
Applicant formerly in "Care", and aged 18 to 20 years old	1	1	0	0
Applicant who is homeless because of emergency	1	0	0	4
Vulnerable due to old age	0	0	0	1
Vulnerable due physical disability	3	4	1	6
Vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap	4	6	6	0
Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of violence/threat of violence	3	2	0	1
Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of domestic violence / threat of violence	2	2	0	0



Homeless Prevention		
Number of prevention achieved		
South Oxfordshire		
Year	Preventions Achieved	
2010/11	330	
2011/12	242	
2012/13	378	
2013/14	286	
Vale of White Horse		
Year	Preventions Achieved	
2010/11	232	
2011/12	354	
2012/13	343	
2013/14	256	
Percentage of successful preventions		
South Oxfordshire		
Year	Success Rate	
2010/11	88 per cent	
2011/12	91 per cent	
2012/13	93 per cent	
2013/14	88 per cent	
Vale of White Horse		
Year	Success Rate	
2010/11	87 per cent	
2011/12	89 per cent	
2012/13	87 per cent	
2013/14	80 per cent	
Rough Sleeping		
Verified Rough sleepers		
	2013/14	2014 Apr - Sept
South and Vale	57	57



Non statutory homelessness / No Fixed Abode

South Oxfordshire

There are currently 94 applicants on the South Oxfordshire District Council housing register who are 'no fixed address'

Vale of White Horse

There are currently 20 applicants on the Vale of White Horse District Council housing register who are 'no fixed address'



Appendix 2: List of stakeholders for consultation

Probation Services
Primary Care Trust
Mental Health services
Children Social Care
Connection Floating Support
Connection Outreach Service
Domestic Violence Services
Mind Response
The Vineyard
The Foyer
The Hagbournes
Citizens Advice Bureaux
South Oxfordshire Housing Association
Sovereign Housing Association
Other partner local Registered Providers
Adult Social Care
Joint Housing Steering Group
Cherwell District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
Oxford City Council
Community Safety Team
Environment Protection
Planning
Legal
Finance
Service Users
NSNO Pathway Providers
Councillors
OCVA
Shelter
YMCA Henley
Oxford Welfare Rights



Appendix 3: Homelessness and the law

The first duty of the council towards any household threatened with homelessness is to try and prevent them from becoming homeless in the first instance.

If we are unable to prevent homelessness within 28 days, we will undertake a formal homelessness assessment. The assessment is carried out in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

We consider whether someone is eligible for assistance; homeless; in priority need, and whether they are intentionally homeless. We also consider whether they have a local connection.

If the applicant is eligible, homeless and in priority need we would provide temporary accommodation. There is no choice over the type or location of the temporary accommodation.

If the applicant is intentionally homeless they will only be provided with temporary accommodation for a short period to allow them to make their own housing arrangements.

If the applicant does not have a local connection they will be referred back to the local authority where they do have a local connection, unless they are fleeing violence.

If the applicant is accepted as homeless they will be provided temporary accommodation until the housing duty is ended. The duty may be ended by one suitable offer of a private tenancy or through the offer of a suitable tenancy through Choice Based Lettings.

