

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 15 May 2008

Subject: **Homelessness in the South East 2007**

Report of: Regional Homelessness Manager
Government Office for the South East

Recommendation:

That the Board note the contents of this report.

Purpose of the Report:

This report is to present an annual review of homelessness within the South East for 2007.

HOMELESSNESS IN THE SOUTH EAST 2007

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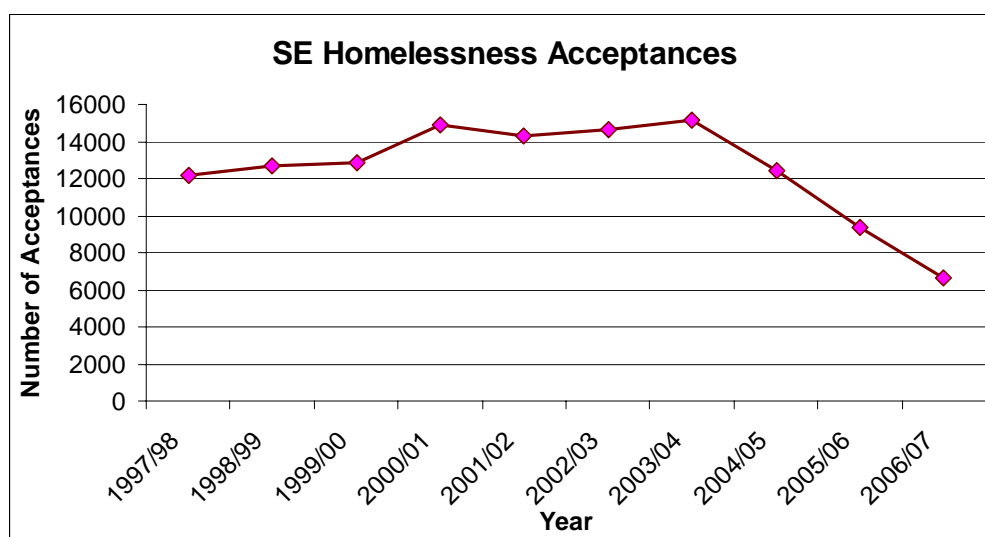
See note at end of report for an explanation about data sources.

1. Statutory Homelessness Acceptances 2006/07

1.1 As has been the trend over the last few years, the region saw dramatic and sustained reductions in the number of households accepted by local authorities as being homeless and in priority need for each quarter of 2006/07, as follows:

Q1 07	down by	27 %	(against the same quarter 06)
Q4 06	down by	22 %	(against the same quarter 05)
Q3 06	down by	32 %	(against the same quarter 05)
Q2 06	down by	32 %	(against the same quarter 05)

1.2 Acceptances during 2006/07 were 6,660, which is the lowest number for twenty years. This represented an annual decrease in acceptances of 29%. This compared with a 22% reduction across England. The following chart maps this recent trend.



1.3 Despite these notable reductions, acceptances have increased marginally in a handful of areas in the region. In most cases, the actual numbers are very low. See paragraph 5 below for more detail on the regional picture.

1.4 The main causes of homelessness in the South East are:

- ▶ Family/friends unwilling/unable to accommodate 40 %
- ▶ End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy 16 %
- ▶ Violent breakdown of relationship with partner 10 %

These rates are roughly comparable with England figures.

There is evidence that mortgage and secured loan repossessions are increasing. Homelessness due to mortgage arrears has recently increased from 2% to 3% of all acceptances.

1.5 In 2006/07, 65% of homelessness acceptances were households with children and/or pregnant women, which is slightly lower than the national average.

1.6 The last published data available (July-September 2007) showed that around 12% of homelessness acceptances in the region were from black and minority ethnic households, which was much lower than the England rate of over 26%.

2. Regional Homelessness Rates 2006/07

2.1 There are many different ways of measuring homelessness. Perhaps the most reliable is to look at the number of households accepted as being homeless per 1,000 households.

2.2 In 2006/07, the rate of homelessness acceptances per 1,000 households in the South East continued to fall, and stood at 2.0. This compared with 3.5 for England, and was the lowest of the regions.

London	4.9
North East	4.4
West Midlands	4.0
Yorks & Humber	3.9
North West	3.9
England	3.5
East Midlands	3.4
East	3.0
South West	2.4
South East	2.0

2.3 The region's close proximity to London can cause its own problems, however. For example, there is evidence of out of area placements by some authorities, particularly to coastal areas of the region such as Thanet, which can increase the pressures on local services.

3. Temporary Accommodation 2007

3.1 The Government has set a target to halve the numbers of households in Temporary Accommodation by 2010. This is an individual target for each local authority.

3.2 At the end of September 2007, the number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) in the region was 7,400. This is a reduction of about 45% against the baseline figure of 13,362 at the end of December 2004. A total of 25 authorities have met the target, with a further dozen close to their target. The region is expected to meet the target during 2008, although a few authorities will require extra assistance to help them to achieve their target.

3.3 The use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation has also been reducing in the region. At the end of September 2007, there were 440 households in B&B. This is a significant fall compared to the 1,500 in B&B in September 2003. The majority of use of this type of accommodation was for single people or couples without children (75%).

4. Youth Homelessness 2007

4.1 During 2007, the profile of youth homelessness, especially 16-17 year olds, was raised through the work of the National Youth Homelessness Scheme (NYHS). For the first time, statistics of homeless young people were collated. This age group makes up about 3% of the population, but the rate of homelessness is around 8.5% in England. Figures for 2006/07 shows that in the South East this was higher at 11.5%, although that was lower than an earlier rate of around 14%.

4.2 The Government has set a target to eliminate the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for 16-17 year olds by 2010. Two sets of figures from September 06 and June 07 have shown that this is an issue in parts of the South East. The number in B&B reduced from 139 to 72 over this period, but there is still significant use of this type of accommodation for this age group in some areas that are considered to be national hotspots.

The reductions in statutory homelessness in the region and the good progress made in reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation need to be put into context.

This is because local authorities, with their partners, have been working smarter. In most cases, homelessness services have been transformed so that more emphasis is placed on **preventing** homelessness rather than **processing** homelessness.

The level of need has remained constant or has increased, as demonstrated by increasing numbers on local housing registers, but people are now less likely to have to be badged as homeless before they receive help.

5. Regional Variations

5.1 Homelessness Rates

Homelessness is generally much lower in the South East than in other regions. Nevertheless, there are places in 2006/07 where the rate of acceptances was higher than the national average of 3.5:

Gravesham	6.6
Hastings	6.3
Gosport	5.4
Dartford	4.7
Oxford	4.2
Tonbridge & Malling	4.2
Brighton & Hove	4.1

Of these, only Gravesham showed an increase. Acceptances here went up by 36% over the year. Around 90% of authorities in the region registered decreases in acceptances in 2006/07.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are areas with exceptionally low rates of homelessness:

Epsom & Ewell	0.0
Guildford	0.0
Reigate & Banstead	0.2
Hart	0.3
Mole Valley	0.3
West Berkshire	0.3
Wokingham	0.4
Runnymede	0.5
Test Valley	0.5
Waverley	0.5

The highest levels of black and minority ethnic homelessness during the last recorded quarter (July-September 2007) were in:

Oxford	48 %
Slough	47 %
Worthing	43 %
Wycombe	39 %
Cherwell	23 %
Milton Keynes	23 %

5.2 Temporary Accommodation

At September 2007, 25 local authorities had met the target to halve numbers in temporary accommodation. These were Aylesbury Vale, Dartford, Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Fareham, Guildford, Hart, Horsham, Maidstone,

Mid Sussex, Milton Keynes, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, Runnymede, Rushmoor, South Bucks, South Oxfordshire, Swale, Tandridge, Test Valley, Waverley, West Berks, West Oxfordshire, Woking, and Worthing.

A further 2 had previously met the target but had not sustained it. These were Eastbourne, and Rother.

There were 5 authorities recording numbers higher than the December baseline figure, although in all these cases the numbers were fairly low. These were Chiltern, Gravesham, Lewes, Winchester, and Windsor & Maidenhead.

Most authorities have phased out the use of Bed & Breakfast, as it is the most expensive form of accommodation and is inappropriate for families and young people. Around a quarter of the region housed in B&B are in Brighton (103 at September 2007). Other fairly high users are Crawley (33), Eastbourne (30), and Portsmouth (28).

5.3 Youth Homelessness

Some authorities had accepted high levels of 16-17 year olds as homeless during 2006/07. Those with very high numbers and levels were:

<u>LA</u>	<u>Number*</u>	<u>%age of acceptances</u>
Brighton & Hove	64	13 %
Dover	21	23 %
Eastbourne	38	24 %
Hastings	80	33 %
Maidstone	14	26 %
Medway	67	19 %
Shepway	25	37 %

**(Number also includes care leavers aged 18-20)*

Most authorities do not use Bed & Breakfast for 16-17 year olds, but the region does have some significant users. The highest is Brighton & Hove with 21 in June 2007, although this was not typical and the local authority and its voluntary sector partners have worked hard to successfully reduce these numbers. More recent numbers recorded locally have been in single figures. Other users are working towards alternative provision, but this still remains an issue for Ashford, Dover, Eastbourne, Gosport, Hastings, and Portsmouth.

6. **Rough Sleeping**

6.1 In 1998, the Government set a target that by 2002 the number of rough sleepers should be reduced by two thirds. The target was met in 2001 and has been sustained with a level of just under 500 in England during 2007.

6.2 The number of rough sleepers in the South East, as measured by annual street count exercises, fell year on year up to 2006, when only 47

rough sleepers were recorded. In 2007, however, there was an increase to 71. This was mainly due to increases in Reading and Southampton. In fact, the 15 recorded for Reading was the highest counted outside of London.

6.3 CLG published a Policy Briefing in September 2007, *Rough Sleeping - 10 Years on from the Target*, and they are currently considering future direction in this important area. In December 2007, Shelter published *Reaching Out – A consultation with street homeless people 10 years after the launch of the Rough Sleepers Unit*. The report called for rough sleeping counts to be supplemented with surveys.

7. Regional Housing Advice

7.1 In March 2006, GOSE, the Legal Services Commission, Shelter, and Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) jointly published *Mapping the future – Why the South East needs a regional housing advice strategy*. This consultation document was launched at a regional homelessness prevention conference. With the support from the Regional Housing Board, further consultation events were held in the summer of 2007 and a regional report is due to issue in the spring of 2008.

8. South East Homelessness Forum

8.1 The South East Homelessness Forum (SEHF) was launched in September 2006 as a key element of the South East Homelessness Action Plan 2006-07, and as a sub-group of the Regional Housing Forum. It has been chaired by Peter Morton, Chief Executive of Paragon Housing Group since November 2006.

8.2 SEHF has a wide membership base including representatives from central government, regional organisations, local authorities, registered social landlords, the private sector, voluntary sector organisations, and individuals with a keen interest in the homelessness agenda. It incorporated the partnership working on regional housing advice, and during 2007 it established a Youth Homelessness sub-group and a Private Rented Sector sub-group.

8.3 In January 2008, SEHF agreed to re-focus its activities, to tackle homelessness in the region, by providing long-term solutions to housing need and its wider impacts. This will be delivered in 2008 through four key themes of work:

1. Private Rented Sector sub-group. Enabling the private rented sector to provide long-term sustainable homes for homeless people. This group will be led by John Holmström (BHT).
2. Youth Homelessness sub-group. Providing young people and their families with real alternatives to homelessness. This group will continue to be led by Nick Hibberd (Brighton & Hove Council).

3. Vulnerable People sub-group. Developing joined up solutions for the region's vulnerable people. This group will be led by Kathryn Williamson (RAISE).
4. Worklessness sub-group. Creating pathways to opportunity so that homeless people can access training and reach their employment potential. This group will be led by Karen Stalbow (Shelter).

Glenn Austin
Regional Homelessness Manager
On behalf of the South East Homelessness Forum (SEHF)
April 2008

Data sources

In most cases the statistics used throughout this report are those published by CLG. Some are updated quarterly; others such as the annual homeless rates shown at 2.2 and 5.1 are published at the end of the financial year, hence the differing timescales shown.

Youth homelessness figures are collated quarterly but are not yet published. The figures quoted at 4 and 5.3 are from two surveys at the end of 2006/07 and in June 2007.