
Report To:	Health and Social Care Committee	Date: 7 January 2010
Report By:	Robert Murphy Acting Director Social Care	Report No: SW/06/10/JA/AM
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Subject:	Interim Homelessness Strategy 2010 - 2011	

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise members of the proposed interim strategy to deliver the Council's homelessness service for the period up to and including December 2011, and to seek approval of the attached draft strategy document (Appendix A).
- 1.2 Local authorities no longer have a statutory obligation to produce a stand-alone Homelessness Strategy. Each local authority must now include their position on preventing and alleviating homelessness within the body of their Local Housing Strategy (LHS). However, with the gap between the end of the previous Homelessness Strategy (2007 – 2009) and the launch of Inverclyde Council's new LHS (2011 -2016), the Interim Homelessness Strategy will direct the joint work that requires to be undertaken in terms of delivering the Council's homelessness service in the interim period

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Interim Homelessness Strategy will seek to build on the progress made by the multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group over the past 3 years, and will set out to put in place a number of new measures that will address the remaining challenges facing the Council in terms of compliance with the abolition of the priority need test, scheduled to come into operation in 2012.
- 2.2 The Council's Homelessness Services will provide regular updates to Health & Social Care Committee on the performance and management of the service over the period covered by the new strategy. The newly updated performance management framework for Homelessness Services will similarly provide regular updates via the corporate reporting structures.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Members are asked to note and approve the content of the attached draft Interim Homelessness Strategy 2010 -2011 at Appendix A.

Robert Murphy
Acting Director Social Care

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's second Homelessness Strategy was approved by Committee in June 2007, and covered the period 2007 – 2009. This strategy now requires to be updated on an interim basis ahead of the launch of the Council's new LHS in 2011. The action plans contained within the Interim Homelessness Strategy will direct and deliver the Council's efforts in preventing and alleviating homelessness within Inverclyde in line with statutory obligations.
- 4.2 Significantly enhanced rights for homeless people were introduced within the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and further extended via the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003, and the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004.
- 4.3 It is the stated intention of the Scottish Government to eradicate homelessness by progressively increasing eligibility of those persons for whom the Council has a duty to re-house permanently. The target for completion of this process is 2012. It is therefore vital that the Council's updated strategy fully represents the best possible approach to achieving these aims.
- 4.4 The government's 2012 target is particularly challenging for Inverclyde Council given its status as a stock-transfer authority; and a high level of co-operation with Registered Social Landlords in the area will be vital in allowing this target to be achieved. An interim national target for increasing priority needing decisions by 2009 was surpassed by Inverclyde Council in the year past. These figures have been ratified and published by the Scottish Government.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Members note the contents of the draft Interim Homelessness Strategy for the period 2010 –2011, and approve its implementation as a living, working document that will direct and deliver the Council's efforts to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Inverclyde during this period.
- 5.2 Members note the completion of Phase 3 of the refurbishment work at the Inverclyde Centre, which has delivered high quality emergency and temporary accommodation for homeless adults in Inverclyde.
- 5.3 Members note the widening of options of original tenure of temporary accommodation achieved to date via strong partnership working with Oak Tree Housing Association. This innovative development has increased choice for homeless families in terms of where temporary accommodation is situated, thus easing access to local schools and other essential services.
- 5.4 Members note the increasing collaborative work between the Council and Inverclyde CHP in the establishment of dedicated health and addiction services for homeless people.
- 5.5 Members will be asked to consider a further proposal in due course that will seek to streamline the staffing structure within the Homelessness Service in order to establish the most effective and efficient structure of delivering the aims of the strategy.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal: There are no direct legislative implications other than the Council's continued statutory duty to provide a service to homeless and potentially homeless people and our co-operation with the regulatory inspection regimes.

6.2 Finance:

There is no direct financial impact contained within the draft Interim Homelessness Strategy document as any proposed service developments contained within the action plans will require subsequent committee approval.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

6.3 Human Resources: Issues contained within the draft Interim Homelessness Strategy that have staffing implications will require engagement with, and the support of, Organisational Development and Human Resources, and subsequent committee approval to secure desired outcomes.

6.4 Equalities: The Council's continuing commitment to equalities issues is acknowledged within the draft Interim Homelessness Strategy, which in itself has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will have a standing sub-committee that will monitor equalities issues relevant to the strategy as they arise.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Service Manager (Homelessness) has consulted widely with stakeholders within the multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group in the preparation of the draft Interim Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2011. This included the formation of 7 sub-groups in 2009 whose views helped to shape the formation of the strategy. These 7 sub-groups focused on the following areas which now form the individual sections of the draft document:

- a. Homeless Prevention
- b. Health and Homelessness
- c. Temporary Accommodation
- d. Housing Support
- e. Access to Housing
- f. Young Persons' Homelessness Issues
- g. Service Users' Input

7.2 In addition, Legal Services Agency were commissioned to provide a detailed needs assessment of advice and information services in Inverclyde, and the findings contained within the resultant report has assisted greatly in the action plan on advice and assistance.

DRAFT

Interim Homelessness Strategy

2010 – 2011

Interim Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2011

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1. Foreword

Convenor, Health & Social Care Committee

1. Foreword

As we launch our third Homelessness Strategy, I am pleased to note the ongoing improvements in the services provided to homeless people in Inverclyde over the past six years.

In the foreword to the previous Homelessness Strategy document, I commented on how our aims for the service could only be achieved by meaningful joint working with our various partners; and I am pleased to note the work of The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group as a multi-agency partnership that has helped to deliver real improvements in our service.

I am particularly pleased to note the completion of the work carried out in refurbishing the hostel accommodation at the Inverclyde Centre. The high standard of accommodation provided within this resource now compares favourably to any other similar provision elsewhere in Scotland, and does I believe, provide a strong indication of our commitment to providing a first class service to those most in need of emergency and temporary accommodation in our community.

I am also pleased to note our continuing commitment to homeless prevention work contained within this strategy document. I acknowledge the challenges we face in collectively combating the awful prospect people losing their homes in these difficult economic times.

There have been a number of significant changes in Inverclyde during the lifespan of the 2007 – 2009 Homelessness Strategy, none more so than the housing stock transfer, which saw the creation of River Clyde Homes and the launch of an ambitious plan for the regeneration and development of our area. We do not underestimate the challenge that this poses for our services to homeless people in terms of sufficient housing supply. I am encouraged however to note the support of our partners in the Housing Association sector in delivering innovative working arrangements that will form a key component in the discussions that lie ahead in the planning process for our new Local Housing Strategy due to be launched in 2011.

Once again, I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to all our staff involved in delivering the homelessness service, and to our partners in the health, housing and third sectors, without whose input we would not have achieved the significant progress that we are pleased to note elsewhere in this strategy document. We look forward to receiving your continued support over the course of this updated strategy as we face new challenges and grasp the opportunity to continue making improvements in providing the best possible to some of our most vulnerable service-users.

Joseph McIlwee
Convenor, Health & Social Care Committee

2. Purpose, Aims and Objective of the Interim Homelessness Strategy

2.1 The purpose of this interim strategy document is to identify what Inverclyde Council and our partner agencies will set out to do to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Inverclyde for the period up to 2011. From 2011 onwards, our next steps in planning our efforts in this area will be fully integrated into our Local Housing Strategy, within which homelessness will be a key component.

2.2 The broad aims of the interim strategy are to:

- Prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- Alleviate homelessness for those who experience it, and do all in our power to minimise the damaging consequences on families and our community caused as a result of homelessness and related issues.
- Fully secure joint-working and joint service delivery by all relevant agencies to provide user/needs led services.

2.3 The principal objective of this interim strategy is to implement a detailed action plan over eight distinct component parts that are vital to secure the best possible outcomes for our service-users. This will be achieved on a partnership basis involving Inverclyde Council, Inverclyde Community Health Partnership, Registered Social Landlords, the voluntary sector, and service-users. The eight distinct parts of the interim strategy that will guide our work are:

- Advice and information
- Homeless prevention
- Health and homelessness
- Temporary accommodation
- Housing support
- Access to housing
- Young person's homelessness issues
- Service Users' input.

2.4 The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG), populated by members from across the relevant partner agencies will have the lead responsibility for ensuring delivery of actions contained within this interim strategy. The HSSG will in turn inform the work of the Community Care Group on issues related to Homelessness, and will feed into the wider community planning processes in Inverclyde in this important area of social care.

3. Homelessness. The National Context

3.1 This interim strategy is set in the context of a national policy framework and within the local context of Inverclyde. At national level, preventing and tackling homelessness has long been a part of the Scottish Government's broader agenda of social inclusion and of creating a fairer Scotland. Homelessness continues to be one of the activities regulated in both local authorities and housing associations by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

3.2 The direction of the raft of new homelessness legislation over the past decade was set out in the final report of the Homelessness Task Force established in 1999. This report published in 2002, set out a 10-year action plan to prevent homelessness wherever possible and provide effective responses to homelessness as and when it occurs.

3.3 The recommendations made within the final Homelessness Task Force report led directly to the current legislative framework for homelessness as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003.

3.4 The 2001 Act sets out in particular, details of increased duties of local authorities in respect of the following:

- Advice on homelessness issues
- Permanent accommodation
- Temporary accommodation
- Review of decisions
- Duties of Registered Social Landlords – Section 5/6

3.5 The 2003 Act has introduced further legislative changes which have had a significant impact on both current and future service provision. In particular, these include:

- Extension of priority need categories and planned abolition of the priority need test altogether in 2012.
- Changes to the operation of intentionality test.
- Powers to modify the local connection test.
- Definition and control of suitable temporary accommodation (*now enacted via the introduction of the Unsuitable Accommodation (Scotland) Order 2004*).
- Duties to inform LAs of proceedings for recovery of possession inc. mortgage default (*enacted on 1st April 2009 via Section 11 of the Act*)
- Changes to grounds for recovery of assured tenancies

3.7 A range of other legislative changes in recent years and national policy developments over the past decade or so has also had a direct impact on how homelessness services are delivered, and the context within which the delivery of these services must now operate. These include:

- Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002:
 - changes the way community care is charged for,
 - creates new rights for carers,
 - introduces a requirement for joint-working.
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995: Gives local authorities a duty to:
 - accommodate 16-17 year olds,
 - provide after-care support services to 16-18 year-olds.
 And a power to:
 - accommodate 18-20 year-olds
 - provide after-care support services to 19-20 year-olds.
- Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003:
 - places a general duty on local authorities to secure best value and to develop a community planning process within which the homelessness strategy should sit.
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001:
 - has created a national framework for the regulation of registered accommodation services, and more pertinently to the homelessness service in Inverclyde, housing support services.
 - by December 2010, all staff involved in providing housing support to homelessness service clients, will have to qualify for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000:
 - Section 6 of this Act transferred the responsibility for accommodation costs for 16-17 year olds to local authorities from the previous system which was dependent on Housing Benefit.
 - there is also now a duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of through-care and after-care needs of young people leaving local authority care. In many cases, the after-care needs of this client group are likely to include housing and support needs.
- Health & Homelessness Guidance:
 - All Health Boards are now charged to produce Health & Homelessness Action Plans, which must be delivered in partnership with relevant local stakeholders.
 - In Inverclyde, the Health & Homelessness Action Plan is delivered and monitored by a group of stakeholders that forms a standing sub-group of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.
- Data Protection Act (1988):
 - Amongst its provisions, this Act which came into force in 2000, gives homeless applicants certain statutory rights to see and check information that the local authority holds about their application.

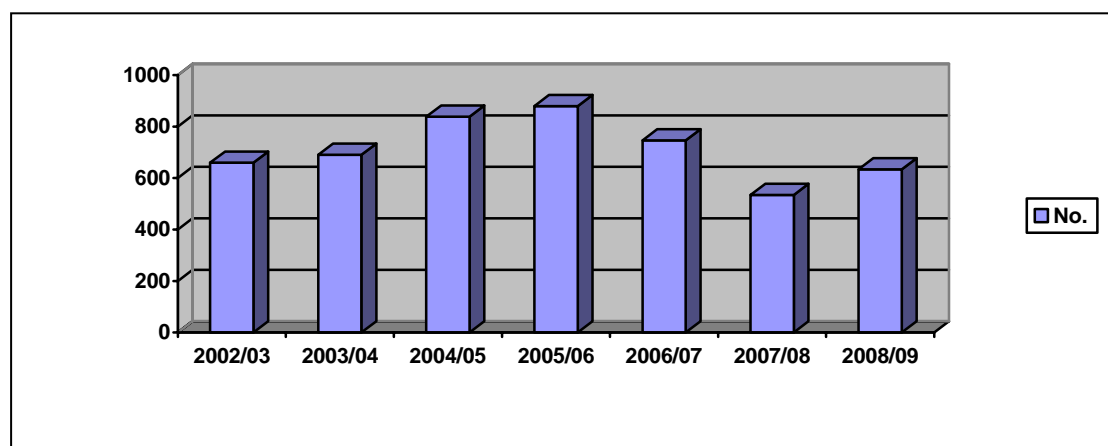
4. Homelessness. The Local Context for Inverclyde

4.1 Inverclyde's homelessness service is a distinct service located within Social Work Services under the larger corporate umbrella of the Education & Social Care Directorate.

4.2 It is recognised however, that in order to deliver the aims and objectives of this strategy, clear links must be established with the overall objectives of the Inverclyde Community Plan 2008-2018, and in particular the five main priorities contained within which are to work in partnership within Inverclyde Alliance to make a difference in the areas of:

- Health Inequalities
- Alcohol Misuse
- Employability and Enterprise
- Responsible, Active Citizens
- Protecting the Environment and Reducing Inverclyde's Carbon Footprint

4.3 The following graph indicates the level of homeless presentations over the past 7 years since the introduction of the new legislative framework for homelessness provision as precipitated by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.



There was a steady increase in presentations directly following the introduction of the new legislation and this trend was mirrored throughout Scotland. However since reaching a peak of 879 presentations in Inverclyde for the reporting year 2005/06, the level of presentations both locally and nationally has reduced and levelled off. With the exception of 2007/08 when an unusually low figure of presentations was recorded in Inverclyde (*this was generally linked to the unavailability of a single accommodation locally due to the refurbishment of the Inverclyde Centre*), it is now generally accepted that a figure of around 580 to 600 presentations looks like a realistic figure of homeless presentations from which future service provision can be projected. Early projections for 2009/10 would indicate that this will continue to be the case.

4.4 In the wake of the transfer of Inverclyde Council's entire housing stock in December 2007, it is particularly vital that the links between this strategy and the Council's Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) are clearly identified in the run-up to the abolition of the priority need test in 2012. Such links are particularly essential in ensuring the availability of an appropriate range of suitable housing options in terms of sustainability, especially for those in the most vulnerable client groups.

4.5 The desired outcomes contained within the Homelessness Strategy will also directly inform the input on homelessness in the Social Work Business Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, the Community Care Plan mechanisms, and will also feed ultimately into the Council's strategic objectives contained within the Single Outcome Agreement with national government.

4.6 The overall provision of homelessness services comes under the regulatory remit of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). Inverclyde Council's homelessness service was inspected by the SHR in 2008, when it was noted by the regulator that our service had made significant improvements since the previous inspection in 2004. The service is now committed to fully addressing the areas requiring improvement as noted in our improvement plan, and the implementation of this new strategy will greatly assist in the achievement of these objectives. Details of the SHR 2008 inspection report can be found on the SHR website at:

http://www.scotishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_inverclydecounc_ia48a56208.pdf

4.7 The support element of the homelessness service is also subject to annual review by the Care Commission since the implementation of the Regulation of Care Act, and has to date received favourable inspection reports. The most recent Care Commission report published in January 2009 can be found on the Care Commission website at:

http://www.carecommission.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=198&bereNextPageId=ReportDataDetails_action.php&action=displayReport&repld=CS2004078039

4.7 As noted elsewhere in this document, it will be essential for the Council to approve and implement a new structure for Homelessness Services in the early part of this strategy development in order to both increase efficiency and best value, and to satisfy recommendations included in both the recent SHR and Care Commission Inspection reports. Greater detail on the planned staffing restructure is contained within Section 6 of this document.

5. The Nature and Causes of Homelessness.

5.1 The vast majority of people who present as homeless have lost their accommodation because their living arrangements with family or friends have broken down, or because there's been a dispute in the household. This is a consistent national trend in Scotland and is reflected in the reasons given for homelessness in Inverclyde. In the reporting year 2008/09, of the 633 homeless presentations to Inverclyde Council, 220 (35%) had been asked to leave their most recent accommodation by family or friends.

5.2 Only a tiny proportion of homeless people in Scotland are rough-sleeping on the street. Most stay on friends' floors or with family, sometimes in precarious arrangements that can go wrong. Whilst we believe that we have very low numbers of people at risk of 'street homelessness' in Inverclyde, we remain vigilant on this and act immediately on any anecdotal evidence; and offer services to those who may fall into this category.

5.3 The current legislative definition of homelessness in Scotland incorporates people who are living in overcrowded accommodation which is endangering their health or otherwise living in accommodation which it is unreasonable for them to occupy. There may be significant overlap between people applying under the homelessness legislation and people on waiting lists for social housing; certainly the circumstances in which people are currently living could well be very similar, yet many people would assume these groups to be entirely different. In Inverclyde in 2008/09, 166 (26%) of those households presenting as homeless, indicated that they had a current waiting list application with one or more Registered Social Landlord

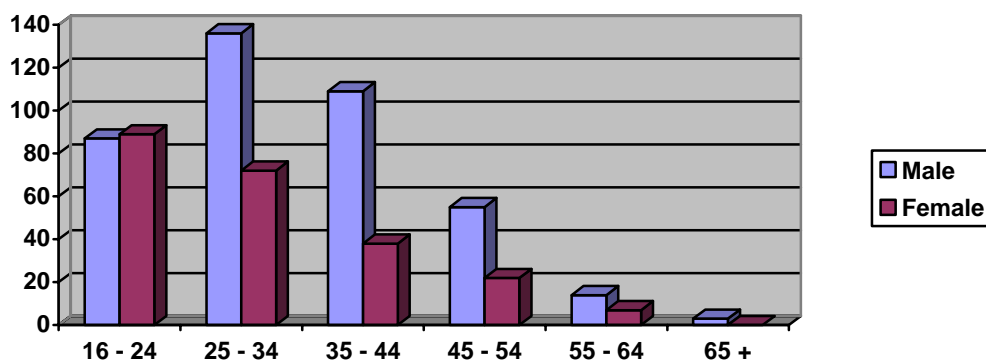
5.4 As noted elsewhere in this document, with health and addiction services now on hand within Homelessness Services, we are beginning to gain a clearer indication of the prevalence of drugs use, alcohol dependence and mental health issues amongst those presenting as homeless. There remains a significantly higher occurrence of these issues amongst homeless clients than within the public in general.

5.5 At any one time Inverclyde Council will have around 250 'live' homeless cases. Of which, around 115 -120 will be living in temporary accommodation provide by the Council (Inverclyde Centre and temporary furnished flats in the community), with the rest staying in accommodation 'care of' family and friends, sometimes referred to as 'homeless at home' (see 5.3 above).

5.6 The stated ethnic origin of those presenting as homeless to Inverclyde remained predominantly White Scottish, with 96% of all homeless presentations in 2008 describing their ethnic origin thus. The Council is however aware of an increasing Polish migrant worker population within the area, and has already taken steps to provide improved levels of communication with this community, in order to facilitate better access to services. It remains to be seen however, if homeless presentations from the Polish community will increase as a result of this work, and it will be important

for the Council to monitor any shift in numbers in line with our equalities agenda.

5.7 Of the 633 homeless presentation made to Inverclyde in 2008/09 78% were single people. 64% of the main applicants in all households were male and 36% female. Around 28% of all main homeless applicants are under 25, with 60% of all applicants under 35. There has been a gradual increase in the age range of males presenting as homeless in Inverclyde over the past 5 years which has saw the 25-34 as being the predominant age group whereby previously this had been the 16-24 age group. The opposite trend has shown to be the case amongst females, were the 16-24 age group is now the predominant set. The graph below indicates the breakdown in age/gender of homeless applicants to Inverclyde in 2008/09:



5.8 There is a significant body of research which shows that if homeless people are allocated poor quality accommodation then they are more likely to become homeless again as they feel vulnerable and unsupported. Repeat homelessness in Inverclyde has shown a decline in recent years. In 2008/09, 6.95% of all homelessness presentations in Inverclyde had previously presented within the past 12 months. Whilst the reduction in this figure from previous years is welcome, 44 cases of repeat homelessness is still a significant figure which can only be addressed by the provision of good housing support in tenancies and an increased focus on homeless prevention work to which the Council is fully committed.

6. Current Service Provision in Inverclyde.

6.1 Homelessness Services is based within the Inverclyde Centre, which houses both the operational staffing of the service and emergency and temporary accommodation for homeless clients. Service delivery is effectively split into 4 separate strands; homeless prevention, homeless assessment, temporary accommodation, and housing support.

6.2 Our Homeless Prevention and Assessment Officers provide a weekday service during working hours which is both a receiving service for homeless applications, and a proactive service in dealing with requests for homeless prevention interventions including our new duties in line with Section 11 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 as highlighted elsewhere in this document. It is proposed within this strategy the homeless prevention and assessment functions be merged with our housing support function in order to create a holistic and generic casework system.

6.3 There are 25 self-contained temporary accommodation units within the Inverclyde Centre hostel and 6 emergency bed spaces including one family flat. There are around 90 temporary furnished flats spread throughout the area, let by the Council from partner RSLs. Around one-third of these flats are privately-owned accommodation, factored on behalf of the service by Oak Tree Housing Association. It is our objective within the objectives of this strategy to increase our number of flats to 100 and to include as much choice of size and geographical spread within the area as possible.

6.4 Housing Support is currently provided by our Resettlement & Support Officers for the duration of the client's time spent within the homelessness service. This housing support service is offered to clients for a period up to 6 weeks beyond tenancy sign-up. Any required ongoing support outwith this period is regularly commissioned to an approved housing support provider if it is deemed necessary to support the client in their ongoing resettlement. As noted above at 6.2, it proposed to merge this service with our homeless prevention and assessment functions in order to create a holistic and generic casework system.

6.5 In partnership with Inverclyde Community Health Partnership and Fairer Scotland Fund, we also provide access to a range of health and addiction services from within the Inverclyde Centre, which are detailed in Section 9 of this document.

7. Advice and Information

7.0. With the shift in emphasis in homelessness service provision to earlier proactive, prevention work, it has become increasingly important that good quality information and advice on homelessness and related issues is made more accessible. This will allow agencies to become more proactive in addressing homelessness issues, and allow for better planning of resources deployment.

It is further recognised that such advances in the provision of good quality information can be best achieved by partner agencies working in partnership to ensure ease of access to advice and information services, and wherever possible to eliminate duplication for service-users.

In their inspection report in 2008, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) made comment on some of the perceived weaknesses in the provision of advice and information.

In response to this, the Council commissioned an independent audit of our advice and information services to both homeless clients in particular and to the wider community with the emphasis on homeless prevention.

The following recommendations from the report have been incorporated into the action plan to assist in allowing the service to address some of the weaknesses noted in the inspection report, and to further enhance the advice and information role played by the Council and our partners in the delivery of this strategy.

7.1 In order to provide greater co-ordination between advice and information providers in Inverclyde, this strategy will;

- a) Seek to establish an Information and Advice Forum amongst existing providers in order to ensure greater co-ordination and ease of access to services.
- b) Produce a directory of service providers and information available in accessible formats that can be readily updated to reflect ongoing developments.

7.2 To ensure that formal, effective mechanisms are in place for all relevant agencies to make appropriate and informed inter-agency referrals for those households experiencing difficulties with housing and related issues, this strategy will:

- a) Develop and agree a referral process with the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, implement this process, and formally monitor on a six-monthly basis.
- b) Explore with IT suppliers the most efficient supporting mechanisms in order to produce qualitative information for both reporting and analytical purposes.

7.3 In order to update and maintain good quality publicity material that is accessible, and clearly communicated to prospective clients, this strategy will:

- a) Develop and agree a publicity sub-strategy with the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.
- b) Review all current publicity material and include 'date of update' on all publications.
- c) Introduce regular inspection of public access buildings to ensure availability of updated publicity material.

7.4 To open up access to information and advice services throughout the Inverclyde area, this strategy will explore the feasibility of providing homelessness advice outreach surgeries in Port Glasgow and Gourock and implement a pilot project, subject to review.

7.5 In order to encourage greater mutual understanding of respective roles in providing information and advice, this strategy will seek to develop and facilitate a training programme to reflect the availability of information and advice services, and to develop methods of improved joint-working in this area.

7.6 In order to break down barriers to new clients accessing homelessness services, and to provide a more holistic service to those seeking advice on housing, homelessness and other related issues, the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will establish a sub-group to specifically explore the feasibility of a centrally-located 'one-stop-shop' facility whereby partners from the Council, RSLs and voluntary organisations could provide general advice and homeless assessments as required.

8. Homeless Prevention

8.0. Homeless prevention has become one of the key strands in the delivery of our services to households in Inverclyde who may be at risk of losing their home.

This type of activity has come into even sharper focus with the introduction of Section 11 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 on 1 April 2009. This legislative development places a responsibility on all non-Council landlords, and mortgage lenders to inform the local authority of any impending court action to seek decree for eviction. This in turn places a more concentrated focus on the Council to react appropriately, and where possible, avoid any such action.

The Council, in conjunction with our partners will continue to use all means at our disposal to prevent homelessness, and will increase efforts in raising the profile of the dangers of homelessness throughout our community.

In particular, this strategy will address the following points:

8.1 The Council will collect and analyse on an ongoing basis, referrals received from landlords and mortgage lenders, in order to provide a focused reactive service to such referrals on an informed basis. To assist in this work, and to publicise the issues involved, we will incorporate details of Section 11 activity into the new performance reporting framework and subsequent reporting processes.

8.2 In order to promote awareness of the work of Homelessness Services, and in particular the importance of homeless prevention in achieving the best possible outcomes, Homelessness Services will facilitate an 'information road show' to Social Work teams within the Council, partner RSLs and colleagues in the voluntary sector. These information sessions will seek to increase the knowledge base within services as to how issues of homelessness and potential homelessness can be best overcome by early intervention strategies.

8.3 Homelessness Services will seek to re-establish close links with colleagues in Education Services with a view to re-commencing a programme of information events in local schools promoting to an appropriate section of the school population a greater awareness of homelessness and related issues and how to seek advice on tackling such issues.

8.4 Homelessness Services will introduce a one-to-one casework service in line with the expressed wishes of service-users. This will minimise duplication in service provision, and free up more time for casework staff to concentrate on homeless prevention work.

9. Health and Homelessness

9.1 The impact on housing on health is well known. Similarly, the links between homelessness, unstable housing tenure, threat of losing ones home and poor health have been explored extensively. Our main areas of focus in addressing the issues of health and homelessness are:

- To work in partnership to prevent homelessness where a health issue may be causing an increased risk of becoming homeless (such as depression and anxiety or an addiction).
- To ensure the health needs of people experiencing homelessness are met, wherever possible in mainstream services with input from specialists as required.

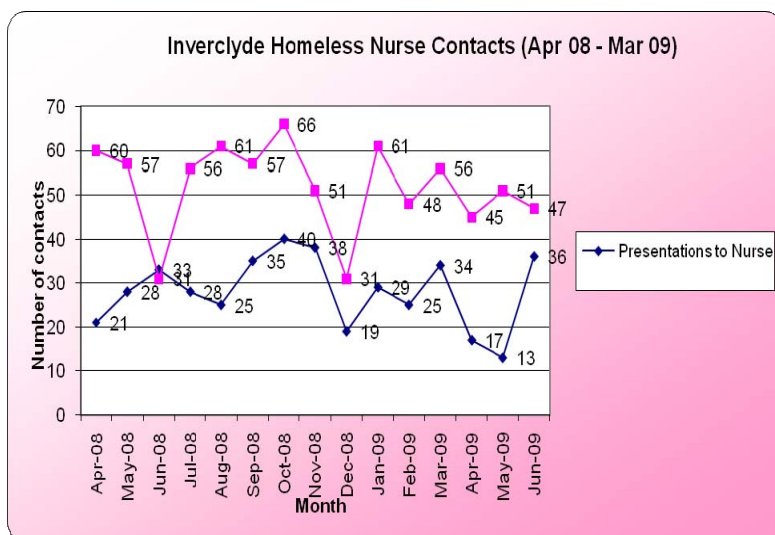
9.2 The range of services on offer to people experiencing ill health/ health issues while homeless include:

- Community Nurse for Homeless People – a specialist nurse working in the community setting to address the health needs of homeless people. The nurse service is provided out of the Inverclyde Centre with outreach to temporary accommodation. The nurse works closely with mainstream and specialist services to provide a link and help facilitate access for clients.
- Community Drugs Worker – a drugs worker attached to the Inverclyde Centre providing a full range of support services for people experiencing homelessness that have a drug addiction or require support and assistance for issues related to problem drug use.
- Homelessness Alcohol Detox Team – Funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund, a specialist alcohol team attached to Homelessness Services, based in the Inverclyde Centre, who can provide support and assistance to people experiencing homelessness who have alcohol dependency and wish to address their drinking.

9.3 In addition to these specialists the main sources of advice and support for health issues available to homeless people remains a mainstream service accessed through GPs – as is the case for anyone seeking assistance with their health. Health Visitors are available to support homeless families with children, Primary Care Mental Health workers are in place to support mild to moderate mental health problems and other services

are available as required (such as podiatrists for foot care). Specialist mental health and addictions services are also delivered through Inverclyde Community Health Partnership and Inverclyde Council to deliver higher end care and treatment. In addition there is a wide range of voluntary sector serviced who support health and wellbeing and fulfil a vital addition support role for people experiencing homelessness who have health issues.

9.4 The chart below gives an example of activity related to health and homelessness from the point of view of the Community Nurse for Homeless people. It is now policy that everyone who presents as homeless to Inverclyde Council will be offered an assessment of their health needs by the Community Nurse, who can then link in to the other services as required via a single point of contact, and ensure that clients see their GP or register with a GP if this is required. The proportion of total client presentations to the service who are seen by the nurse continues to rise allowing us to respond to health needs more quickly and appropriately as a core element of homelessness service delivery.



9.5 According the the presentations to the homelessness nurse in the last year the top ten health complaints requiring to be addressed by the nurse have been:

Primary reason for presentaiton	Numbers in 12 month period
Non-specific mental health	76
Depression	67

Drug Dependency	62
Arranging GP registration	57
Wound Care	43
Alcohol Dependency	38
Deep Vein Thrombosis	18
Pregnancy Test	17
Infection	13
Trauma	11

9.6 In late 2008 it was decided to establish a Health and Homlessness Action Group. The purpose of the group was to develop an action plan around health and homelessness. This action has been included in the revised Homlessness Strategy to give focus to meeting the the health needs of homeless people. The key priority areas of the Health and homelessness Action Group are:

- Gaining a deeper understanding of the health needs of homeless people and the impact of illhealth on the ability to maintain housing tenure.
- Providing a range of health information and health improvement opportunities for homeless people.
- Facilitating better engagement of homeless people in mainstream services to support health and wellbeing, making best use of specialist services where these are required.
- Monitoring the need for and use of services by people experiencing homelessness.

10. Temporary Accommodation

10.0. The Council has made significant progress via the Homelessness Strategy 2007 – 2009, in improving both the quality and geographical spread of temporary accommodation units provided for the use of homeless clients who require this service.

Most notably during the course of the 2007 - 2009 strategy, refurbishment work was completed in 2009, on hostel accommodation within the Inverclyde Centre. This refurbishment has resulted in the provision of 25 self-contained temporary accommodation units over two floors. This has eliminated the requirement for sharing personal living space and cooking/bathroom facilities. Provision of disabled accommodation is also included onsite, which allows full disabled access to accommodation in line with the Council's responsibilities under the relevant disability discrimination legislation.

The quality of temporary accommodation has also been greatly improved via the introduction of the Lead Tenancy Scheme (LTS) in conjunction with Oak Tree Housing Association. The LTS essentially affords the opportunity of accessing suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, which increases choice for service-users and lessens the burden on local RSLs to provide temporary accommodation options for the Council from their existing stock.

In order to build on the progress made over the past two years, this strategy will seek to take forward the following specific actions to further enhance the Council's reputation as a provider of good quality temporary accommodation for homeless households:

10.1 A full review of our position in terms of the LTS will be carried out in order to assess the success of the service and the need to increase units supplied via this method, or to consolidate at present levels. Findings of the review will be reported on to the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, and recommendations made for the next phase in development of the LTS.

10.2 It is recognised that it can be unhelpful to have a high concentration of temporary accommodation units within one particular area. The East/Central Greenock area in particular has in the past, carried an imbalanced community burden in terms of the concentration of temporary accommodation units. This can cause difficulties for accommodation management and challenging circumstances for clients with addiction issues; and can prove to be a hindrance in achieving sustainable outcomes in terms of longer-term resettlement. This issue is a historical one for Homelessness Services and is a reflection of the distribution of housing stock supplied by the Council's previous Housing Services at the establishment of Homelessness Services in 2002.

In order to address this, Homelessness Services will initiate a programme of gradual reduction of temporary accommodation situated in this area over the lifespan of the new strategy, with eventual withdrawal of provision in this area as the desired outcome.

10.3 The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) established to oversee the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy 2007 – 2009, has noted on a number of occasions, the continuing gap in the provision of short-to-medium term supported accommodation for single homeless clients with addiction, mental health or other issues that prevent them from making a successful transition to living in an independent tenancy immediately following a period of homelessness. This can inevitably lead to failed tenancies, arrears issues for the client and repeat homelessness.

The HSSG has recommended that the feasibility of establishing a supported accommodation resource, centrally-located, that could provide an opportunity to assist clients learn tenancy and other life skills to prepare them for taking on the responsibility.

This strategy will explore the possibility of establishing such a project, and the options available for partnership work in developing such a proposal with a partner Housing Association, and the options for securing an appropriate level of revenue funding for the housing support element. Request will be submitted to the Council's Planning & Housing Team in order to ensure inclusion of such a project in the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Programme for 2011.

10.4 One notable achievement in the last Homelessness Strategy was the protocol agreed between Homelessness Services and Inverclyde Women's Aid. This protocol allowed greater unencumbered access to temporary accommodation for women and their families who had been the victims of domestic abuse.

In order to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this protocol, this strategy will direct a review of the protocol, and will implement any improvements deemed necessary. Homelessness Services will facilitate any required training for staff of both partner organisations, as demonstrated in the review process.

11. Housing Support

11.0. The Council is acutely aware of the needs of some of our most vulnerable service-users to be supported in day-to-day independent living situations. We believe that an agreed level of housing support can be required in some situations to ease the transition from a period of homelessness to independent tenancy management and eventual resettlement.

We fully acknowledge how the inability to manage can negatively impact on our clients. At all times we seek to address their housing support needs through taking the time with clients to agree a tailored support plan. We will also continue to monitor and review the support plans and ensure that service-users are fully consulted in amendment or development in the plan.

It is also acknowledged that some service-users may require ongoing housing support beyond the period of time for which Homelessness Services staff can reasonably be expected to provide. In these cases, Homelessness Services will seek to provide ongoing commissioned housing support in line with the needs of the service-user and the availability of resources. Throughout the period of the Homelessness Strategy 2007 - 2009, Homelessness Services has on a number of occasions established ongoing commissioned support following the client's move to their own tenancy and will continue to assess the suitability of such packages both in terms of commissioning to approved support providers in the voluntary sector and with our colleagues elsewhere in Social Work Services.

In order to ensure ongoing improvement in our housing support services to homeless clients, and to ensure highest standards of quality in the provision of these services, this strategy will in particular, focus on the following four key elements to achieve focus on delivery of support and best possible outcomes for clients:

11.1 Following on from some comments made by service-users during the consultation process in the process of developing the strategy, we will seek to ensure that clients are provided with information at the framing of their support plan of the availability of ongoing support beyond the stage of moving into a tenancy. In addition, Homelessness Services will build in to the case management system a 'trigger-point' at the point of any offer of tenancy, at which point the Caseworker involved will re-iterate to the client the availability of ongoing housing support where necessary to assist with tenancy sustainment and resettlement.

11.2 Establish within a new set of Service Standards to be developed for this strategy, an explicit reference to the client's right to view their support plan at any time, and be fully involved in discussions on any amendments made; and that this right be made clear to the client on a regular basis throughout the duration of the support plan.

11.3 To establish within Homelessness Services two posts of Homemaker to provide direct assistance in the co-ordination process of settling clients into new tenancies. This will include duties such as 'supervised spends' of Community Care Grants received by clients, when such assistance is deemed appropriate within the individual support plan.

11.4 To report on the number of live commissioned support packages and hours involved and submit details to Homelessness Strategy Steering Group on a quarterly basis. Such details also to be included in the quarterly statistics package established within the new reporting framework as noted elsewhere in this strategy.

12. Access to Housing

12.0 One of the key recommendations made by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) in its report on Inverclyde Council's homelessness service in 2008 was that the service must source more permanent accommodation to prevent homeless people waiting lengthy times for houses. The figures reported by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) for 2008/09 indicated that the percentage of social rented lets within Inverclyde still fell significantly below the national average. Whilst it is accepted that there is a hurdle to be overcome in terms of the conflicting priorities of RSLs vis-à-vis demolition and regeneration and homelessness provision, it is clear that every effort must be made in partnership with RSLs to ensure greater access to suitable housing for homeless clients to allow this strategy to fully achieve its aims.

The SHR report also made note in its recommendations of how the homelessness service must ensure that equalities are mainstreamed throughout its activities. In order to ensure that the equalities agenda is pursued throughout the delivery of the homelessness service, the rights of homeless people must be protected in terms of equality of access to social rented housing. To achieve this aim, there must be no artificial barriers placed in the way, which undermine these rights. The Section 5 referral process has to be continuously monitored to ensure that this is the case.

In order to assist in this area, it is also incumbent upon strategy members to seek to broaden the housing tenure available to homeless clients to include better access to private rented accommodation. The proposed changes in legislation over the next few years may assist in this aim, and allow us to expand the criteria allowing homeless people to access our Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. If successful this could have the additional benefit of easing the burden on RSL partners in being the sole providers of accommodation.

During the course of discussions on the previous strategy, RSL partners have raised the issue of hidden homelessness that may currently be contained within general waiting lists, and exacerbated by a reluctance of some people to approach the homelessness service for assistance. It would be helpful if a greater understanding of this issue could be gained by the strategy steering group in order to inform future capacity planning in housing access.

In summary, with respect to access to housing, this strategy will seek to address the following points in particular:

12.1 To continue to lobby local RSLs to increase the percentage of lets to homeless households in relation to all available lets via established means of regular communication; and to report on progress made to Health & Social Care Committee and to the Scottish Housing Regulator in terms of commitments contained with the inspection report improvement plan.

In addition, for Homelessness Services to carry out a review of the effectiveness of current Section 5 referral arrangements in conjunction with RSLs to assess scope for improvement in the system and processes

12.2 To ensure that accommodation priorities for homeless households form an integral part of part of Inverclyde Council's Strategic Housing Investment Programme as it develops over the lifespan of this strategy; and that a specific homelessness section is drafted and forms part of Inverclyde Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for the period 2011 – 2016.

12.3 To increase the scope of the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (RDGS) in line with proposed changes to Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001; and ensure that the criteria is expanded to open up this avenue to housing for more homeless clients.

Additionally, the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group should seek to encourage increased awareness amongst private landlords of the RDGS, and encourage higher levels of participation in the scheme, by means of a renewed publicity campaign.

12.4 To formally request a written position from all partner RSLs in the area, as to how they will assess Section 5 referral requests for homeless clients with former tenant arrears, or who have been subject to a recent eviction order. In relation to this the Council will formally outline its policy in terms of the future use of arbitration in cases where it is believed that homeless clients are being unfairly treated in the consideration of Section 5 referrals in these instances.

12.5 To seek agreement with partner RSLs on jointly commissioning research on the subject of hidden homelessness in the area in order to gain a greater understanding of its prevalence in Inverclyde, and to better inform capacity planning surrounding the provision of social rented housing to meet the needs of homeless households.

13. Young Persons' Homelessness Issues

13.0 Addressing the housing needs of young people, including those leaving local authority care, will continue to play a key role in the aims of the Homelessness Strategy. This will fit directly with the prevention agenda as we seek to divert young people away from homelessness situations, by utilising early intervention strategies.

It had become the settled view of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group over the past two years that in order to achieve our aims, the provision of good quality accommodation with tailored support would be a key element in providing young people with the best possible opportunity to sustaining future independent living. Accommodation options should provide solutions at the emergency, short-term and longer term.

As we take forward these issues, this strategy will seek to address the following issues in particular:

13.1 To explore ways of securing sustainable and recurring revenue funding in order to commence the development of a young person's supported accommodation project.

13.2 To establish a post of Housing Access Liaison Officer within the new staffing re-structure for Homelessness Services. This post will provide a direct link between young people, their support worker and housing providers in order to facilitate the best possible opportunity for accessing sustainable tenancies, without recourse to homeless accommodation unsuitable to the needs of young people.

13.3 To facilitate from within the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group a sub-group that will carry out a direct assessment of the housing and accommodation needs of young people.

13.4 To assess the feasibility of establishing a project similar to '*Nightstop*' as practised within other local authority areas. The idea behind this model is to provide safe emergency accommodation for young people on a very short-term basis via the use of volunteers subject to satisfactory enhanced disclosure checks. This negates the necessity for young people to present as homeless increases the element of choice available in terms of suitable accommodation, and in some instances the possibility of constructive reconciliation with family members. The possibility of such a development was first noted as a recommendation within the Scottish Churches Housing Action (SCHA) report to the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group in 2008, which carried out a wide-ranging consultation with service-users of the homelessness service past and present.

13.5 Following on from the assessment work noted at 13.3 above, the sub-group will then seek to develop and implement an appropriate training programme for Homelessness Strategy Steering Group members and organisations on young person's housing and homelessness issues.

14. Service Users Input

14.0 It is fully acknowledged that the views of service-users are an essential component of this strategy. In order to assist in our understanding of service-users views, consultation was carried out with both existing service-users and former users of the service in the preparation of the strategy.

There appeared to be a consistent view from those consulted, that greater clarity could be achieved in terms of what service-users can expect from the service and what expectations were placed upon them in terms of input to their individual support plans, and their working relationship with Homelessness Services staff.

Another recurring view was that feelings of isolation can be easily exacerbated whilst living in temporary accommodation; this view was especially prevalent amongst single persons' resident within the Inverclyde Centre.

Existing service-users were also keen to express an interest in a 'drop-in' service on health, homelessness, and related issues that provide a specific focus for homeless people; and for consideration to be given to the establishment of social activities within the Inverclyde Centre.

In order to address these issues, this strategy will seek to develop the following specific areas:

14.1 To publish and implement a set of Service Standards that are fully accessible to all service-users and carers in various formats. The Service Standards document will clearly reflect the consultation process carried out with service-users in the preparation of this strategy. We will also seek to ensure that these Service Standards are fully integrated into the aims and objectives of this strategy.

14.2 Homelessness Services will co-ordinate a weekly 'drop-in' at the Inverclyde Centre for the exclusive use of homeless clients. This new service will concentrate on the provision of advice and information on general homeless issues, health & homelessness advice including professional advice on addictions, and signposting to other relevant sources of advice and information.

14.3 In order to address issues of isolation, and develop opportunities for greater social contact and encourage life skills for homeless clients, Homelessness Services will:

a) Commence discussions with the Inverclyde Volunteering Service and other relevant community groups as necessary in respect of developing and encouraging volunteer input in befriending and support for homeless clients.

b) Consult with residents at the Inverclyde Centre in order to gauge interest in the development of a regular social event at the Inverclyde Centre run by staff and volunteers.

c) Re-introduce cookery lessons for homeless clients on an agreed regular basis, as part of the resettlement process, in line with the model set out by colleagues in Social Work Service's Occupational Health Team.

15. Equalities

15.1. The Interim Homelessness Strategy will continue working on enhancing our work in the area of equalities, and this document is subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. The attached Action Plans will be the subject of ongoing scrutiny as we attempt to achieve our various objectives.

15.2. The strategy will seek at all times to ensure equality of access to services provided under the umbrella of Homelessness and Health & Homelessness. In order to achieve this, the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will have equalities as a standing item on its agenda.

15.3 The previous Homelessness Strategy (2007 -2009) introduced an Equalities Sub-Group in order to complete the Equalities Impact Assessment the first time round. This sub-group also played a key role in developing training opportunities for stakeholders, and instigated the move by Homelessness Services to become members of Positive Action in Housing (PAiH), whom we are delighted have on board as partners in our drive to ensure that equality of access over a range of areas remains as a key objective in the development of our new strategy.

15.4 Under the direction of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, the Equalities Sub-Group will be re-convened on an ad-hoc basis throughout the lifespan of the new strategy in order to look at carrying out impact assessments on new developments, and to make arrangements for training and development opportunities on equalities issues for all stakeholders.

16. Role of Steering Group

16.1. The previous Homelessness Strategy Steering group set up to deliver the Homelessness Strategy 2007 – 2009, whilst noting the success of the group in delivering the strategy objectives and providing an accessible information forum and platform for discussion on homelessness issues in Inverclyde, took a decision to enact changes on how the group should be constituted for the Interim Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2011.

16.2. It was agreed that as opposed to convening on a six-weekly basis with all stakeholders present, the group would establish an executive group in line with other Community Care development groups in order to provide more direct focus in ensuring that the objectives contained in the Action Plans were being achieved in line with stated timescales. The executive group would also provide feedback on any factors that were having an adverse effect on the achievement of these timescales.

16.3 For the duration of the Interim Homelessness Strategy, the full stakeholder group will now meet on an eight-weekly cycle, and retain the same format as before.

16.4 The executive group (also chaired by the Service Manager - Homelessness) will also meet eight-weekly in the intervening period between each full steering group, and provide the steering group with a detailed update of the work progressed in that time.

16.5 The make-up of the executive group will consist of no more than 10 or so members and should contain a representative of each of the main stakeholder groups, e.g. key Social Work operational areas, Social Work Strategy, Registered Social Landlords, Community Health Partnership, Voluntary Organisations, and Service Users Groups.

Section 7 – Advice & Information Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	To provide greater co-ordination between providers of advice and information in Inverclyde.	Number of cross-sector partner agencies providing advice in discrete specialist areas.	<p>Seek to establish an Information & Advice 'forum' amongst existing providers in order to ensure greater co-ordination and ease of access to services.</p> <p>Produce a directory of service providers and information available in accessible formats that can be readily updated to reflect ongoing developments.</p>	<p>January 2011</p> <p>March 2010</p>	<p>Service Manager (Homelessness)</p> <p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p>
2	To develop formal mechanisms for effective referrals to Homelessness Services and to other agencies offering specialist advice for households experiencing difficulties with housing and related issues.	No formal referral mechanism in place, other than those statutory arrangements in respect of Section 11.	<p>Develop and agree referral process with Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, implement and monitor on 6-monthly basis.</p> <p>Explore with IT suppliers most efficient supporting mechanisms in order to produce qualitative information for both reporting and analytical purposes.</p>	<p>January 2010</p> <p>January 2010</p>	<p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p> <p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p>

Section 7 – Advice & Information Action Plan

3	To update and maintain good quality publicity material that is accessible, and clearly communicated to prospective clients.	Current hard copy publicity limited and not dated.	Develop and agree publicity strategy with the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.	March 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
		Website publicity limited and not immediately accessible when logging on to Council website.	Review all publicity material and include date of update.	March 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
			Introduce regular inspection of public access buildings to ensure availability of updated publicity material	April 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)
4	To increase access to information and advice services throughout the Inverclyde area.	Current access to services is generally restricted to Greenock, and during office hours.	Explore feasibility of providing outreach surgeries in Port Glasgow and Gourock and implement pilot project.	April 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
5	To develop a multi-agency training programme through the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, in order to increase a mutual understanding of respective roles in providing information and advice.	Partners provide regular 'guest speaker' input to Homelessness Strategy Steering Group in respect of service provided by their respective organisation.	Facilitate training programme to reflect availability of information and advice services, and to develop methods of improved joint-working in this area.	January 2011	Service Manager (Homelessness)
6	To explore the possibility of establishing a 'one-stop shop' facility in partnership with RSLs and other information and advice providers	Housing information and advice provide in different settings by Homelessness Services, individual RSLs, Legal Services Agency, and other third sector groups.	Establish sub-group of Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, to explore feasibility of centrally-located where partners could provide general advice and homeless assessments as required.	November 2009	Service Manager (Homelessness)

Section 8 – Homeless Prevention Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	To collect and analyse ongoing information in respect of Section 11 referrals, in order to continually improve reactive service to such referrals	Information being collected on spreadsheet as stand alone information item.	Mainstream Section 11 reporting into new Homelessness Services quarterly reporting process. Respond as appropriate	January 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)
2	To increase awareness of homeless prevention activity amongst partner agencies and internal Social Work Services; and encouraged more informed and earlier intervention in potentially homeless cases.	Homeless prevention staff carry out information sessions with partner agencies on an ad-hoc, as requested basis.	Carry out a programmed 'information roadshow' to Social Work teams, RSLs and voluntary organisations facilitated by Homeless Prevention Officers.	Commence by December 2009	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)
3	To ensure that suitable programmes are in place within schools and other educational establishments within Inverclyde to increase awareness of homelessness and related issues and how these can be best addressed.	School visits carried out on ad-hoc basis as arranged.	Instigate discussions with Inverclyde Council Education Services as to appropriate level of input required and programme diary of visits.	January 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)
4	To place greater emphasis homeless prevention activity in all homelessness casework, and that greater priority is given to such activity as part of caseworker job content.	Service operates 'two-tier' system of support to clients with an artificial differentiation between homeless prevention, assessment and resettlement work.	Introduce 'one-to-one' casework service in order to shift level of priority on homeless prevention duties of caseworkers.	January 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)

Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS STANDARD 2: TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE, IN PARTNERSHIP, TO PREVENT AND ALLEVIATE HOMELESSNESS

OBJECTIVE 1:

TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THERE IS CLOSE JOINT WORKING AND LEARNING AMONGST THOSE AGENCIES THAT HAVE IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE LIVES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE.

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
1.1	There will be an integrated Health and Homelessness Action Plan covering services in Inverclyde. This action plan will be an integral part of the Inverclyde Homelessness Strategy and inform other relevant plans. The Action Plan will be reviewed regularly by the Homelessness Strategy Group.	Planning & Performance Manager (Health and Homelessness Action Group)	Action Plan will be continually updated and reviewed in line with the timescales of the Homelessness Strategy to be reviewed in 2011.	Action Plan published as part of <i>Homelessness Strategy 2009 - 2012</i>
1.2	The Health and Homelessness Action Group (HHAG) will meet bi-monthly to facilitate discussion across the partnership around issues relating to the health of homeless people in Inverclyde, and to take reports on developments/activity related to health and homelessness.	Planning & Performance Manager (Health and Homelessness Action Group)	To report to Homelessness Strategy Steering Group 6 weekly	Group continues to meet with consistent attendance.
1.3	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will agree a shared work plan to address health inequalities and health improvement for homeless people	Health Improvement Senior (Adults & Older People)	Ongoing via annual review	Work plan/ themes to focus on being agreed via HHAG
1.4	The Health and Homelessness Action group will work to influence the agenda of the Housing and Accommodation Sub Group	Service Manager (Homelessness) and ASM (Community Mental Health Team)	Monthly meetings on Housing and Accommodation Sub Group	

OBJECTIVE 2:

TO ENSURE THAT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES TO IMPROVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE WORK CLOSELY ALONGSIDE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES IN OTHER AREAS

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at
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Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

				October 09
2.1	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will work to ensure that the health needs of homeless people are mainstreamed in planning in each agency and across the partnership (e.g. Inverclyde Alliance, Joint Care Strategy Board), particularly with regards to health improvement/protection.	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Regular updates to joint care strategy board	

HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS STANDARD 3: TO DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROFILES AND HEALTH NEEDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ACROSS THE AREA

OBJECTIVE 3:

TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN AN EVOLVING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE SO THAT SERVICES WILL BE MOST RESPONSIVE TO THE HEALTH NEEDS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HOMELESSNESS

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
3.1	We will work to collect, discuss and respond to research and policy/ legislation changes relating to health and homelessness and review new research findings.	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Ongoing via regular review	Material is routinely collected and shared with the HHAG membership to support discussion/action. Community nurse is a member of the Homelessness & Addictions Research Group hosted by St. Andrews University, providing opportunity to disseminate national picture.
3.2	We will scope the potential for an assessment of the health needs of homeless people in Inverclyde.	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Summer 2010	Joint work between health and addictions teams has begun to collect together previously undertaken research to begin the scoping required.

Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS STANDARDS 4: TO ENSURE HOMELESS PEOPLE HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE FULL RANGE OF HEALTH SERVICES

OBJECTIVE 4:

TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS WHICH PREVENT HOMELESS PEOPLE FROM HAVING THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEEDS MET

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
4.1	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will establish what the barriers are to homeless people accessing health services and having their health and wellbeing needs met, taking action as required. (action may include culture change work and identifying resources)	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Ongoing	Initial work has commenced.
4.2	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will facilitate an increase in the numbers of homeless people accessing their GP (where required) or a nurse-led health check.	Community Nurse (Homelessness)	Ongoing – stats review every quarter as part of SOA reporting.	36 people out of a total of 47 presentations to the Homelessness service were seen by the homelessness nurse as at June 2009. Proactive follow-up work on all homeless presentations.
4.3	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will identify, support and promote links for people experiencing homelessness to the recovery and wellbeing model (e.g. raising awareness of support groups etc)	ASM (Community Mental Health Team)	Ongoing	Developing information pack for all who take up temporary homeless accommodation.

HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS STANDARD 5: THAT SERVICES RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE HEALTH NEEDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

OBJECTIVE 5:

Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

TO ACHIEVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND THE GREATEST POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND WELL- BEING OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
5.1	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will support the development of processes of service users feedback to the Homelessness Service and improve service users and community engagement, feeding back on the impact/outcome of engagement and involvement.	Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG)	HHAG will report on contributions to this action at each HSSG	
5.2	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will ensure that benchmarks are set for the indicators set out below in order that improvement can be measured.	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Stats review each quarter	Stats to end of Q2 will be reviewed at November HHAG and HSSG.
5.3	Develop activity data and outcomes for other linked services (e.g. Gateways 2)	ASM (Community Mental Health Team) and HHAG	March 2010	

OBJECTIVE 6:

TO ESTABLISH ONGOING EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF THE USE OF SPECIALIST HEALTH SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
6.1	<p>We will work to ensure that there is up to date reporting of activity data related to health and homelessness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers going through the homelessness service seen by the Community Nurse for Homeless People Numbers going through the homelessness service seen by the Community Drugs Worker Numbers of people going through the homelessness service seen by a member of the Homelessness Alcohol Detox team Numbers of individuals using the homelessness service and attending overdose awareness 	Various	Ongoing (reports to come to each Health and Homelessness Action Group meeting). Full stats review each quarter	<p>A combined reporting framework has been started which will include routine reporting as per this action.</p> <p>Community Nurse awaiting placement on Training for Trainers Course on overdose awareness and use of Naloxone.</p>

Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

	<p>raising sessions and receiving naloxone provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of people presenting as homeless who receive an assessment of their healthcare needs (SOA indicator*) • The destination on discharge of homeless people discharged from hospital 			
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OBJECTIVE 7:

TO IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF MAINSTREAM HEALTH SERVICES FOR HOMLESS PEOPLE

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
7.1	The Health and Homelessness Action Group will work to ensure greater engagement with homeless people amongst mainstream health improvement activity.	Health Improvement Senior (Adults & Older People)	Ongoing with regular review	Health improvement information has been made available to homeless people via the Inverclyde Centre and in the wider community.
7.2	Community Nurse for homeless people will deliver assessments in relation to mental health needs and manage mild to moderate mental health issues, supporting referral/access to other services as appropriate.	Community Nurse (Homelessness)	Ongoing	Mental health needs assessments are an integrated part of the service on offer to all clients via the nurse service.

OBJECTIVE 8:

TO IDENTIFY AND MEET THE NEEDS OF PARTICULAR GROUPS WITHIN THE HOMELESS POPULATION: WOMEN, CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS, REFUGEES, GAY MEN AND LESBIANS, PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE.

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
8.1	We will adopt and support the work of the Equalities	Service Manager	Ongoing	

Section 9 – Health & Homelessness Action Plan

	Sub Group of the Homelessness Strategy Group to ensure the homelessness service, health services and others are equalities sensitive and have a better understanding of the nuances of our homeless population.	(Homelessness)		
8.2	We will ensure that Equalities Impact Assessment are mainstreamed in our work	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Ongoing	An impact assessment will be carried out on the current model of service delivery in relation to health and homelessness by end of 2009.

OBJECTIVE 9: TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE PREVENTION INITIATIVES

Ref.	ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	Baseline Position at October 09
9.1	We will develop and implement a plan and programme for health improvement, protection and screening relevant to homeless people.	Community Nurse (Homelessness)	Ongoing	Work has not yet commenced.
9.2	We will work to raise awareness of the services of offer and to publicise the work of the HHAG, ensuring that clients have knowledge to access preventative and palliative services to reduce the impact of homelessness on their health.	Health and Homelessness Action Group	Ongoing	A piece of publicity about health and homelessness is planned to coincide with the publication of the new Homelessness Strategy.

Section 10 – Temporary Accommodation Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	To review position in terms of progress made in Lead Tenancy Scheme (LTS) in conjunction with Oak Tree Housing Association, and requirement to provide HSSG with report on success of scheme to date in terms of increasing choice and improving quality of temporary furnished accommodation for homeless households.	30 LTS units in use as at 21 September 2009.	<p>Agree any need to increase level of lets used for temporary accommodation via LTS.</p> <p>Make arrangements for phased introduction of new LTS units to temporary accommodation stock if required.</p>	December 2009	Assistant Homelessness Services Manager (Temporary Accommodation)
2	To review position in terms of concentration of temporary accommodation units in East/Central Greenock area.	10 temporary accommodation units situated in East/Central Greenock areas.	Make arrangements for phased reduction of temporary accommodation units in East/Central Greenock area as/when they become vacant, and return units to relevant RSL.	Commence process by January 2010.	Assistant Homelessness Services Manager (Temporary Accommodation)
3	Ongoing requirement to establish short-to-medium term supported accommodation project for adults with a level of support needs that minimise likelihood of immediate tenancy sustainment. Decrease the number of repeat homeless presentations in these circumstances.	<p>Approval for project not achieved in Homelessness Strategy 2007-1009.</p> <p>No current project available in the Inverclyde area.</p>	<p>Explore availability of ongoing revenue funding to assist in establishment of the project.</p> <p>Request inclusion in the relevant annual Inverclyde SHIP programme for project development purposes.</p>	Arrange for inclusion in Inverclyde SHIP for 2011.	Service Manager (Homelessness)
4	Ensure agreed level of access is being afforded to Women's Aid in terms of emergency and temporary accommodation for women and children who are the victims of domestic abuse.	<p>Protocol agreed between Women's Aid and Homelessness Services.</p> <p>Service Manager (Homelessness) attends Violence against Women Multi-Agency Group.</p>	<p>Meet with representatives of Women's Aid and review effectiveness of existing protocol.</p> <p>Implement any improvements if necessary.</p>	March 2010	Assistant Homelessness Services Manager (Temporary Accommodation)

Section 11 – Housing Support Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	Need to provide greater clarity of levels and frequency of housing support provision. In particular, in respect of availability of housing support provision after clients have moved into tenancy following period of homelessness.	<p>Clients are offered ongoing housing support in line with their support plan by Resettlement & Support Officers. This is targeted for a period of around six weeks maximum following tenancy sign up. Any further housing support required is the subject of commissioning from an external provider.</p> <p>Service-Users and Service Users representatives have expressed concern that clients may not be clear on the availability of support and timescales involved.</p>	<p>Ensure that clients are provided with information at outset of support plan of availability of support up to and beyond tenancy sign-on.</p> <p>Establish 'trigger-point' at the time of tenancy offer, where Homelessness Services Caseworker, will re-iterate to client as a matter of course, the ongoing availability of housing support to assist in long-term tenancy sustainment.</p>	January 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)
2	To enshrine in Service Standards the accessibility of Housing Support plans to clients and re-enforce their right to be fully involved in discussion on any proposed changes in Housing Support plans.	Service- User consultation complete in terms of Service Standards development.	Establish set of Service Standards that will make explicit the client's right to view support plan at any time and be fully involved in any amendments implemented.	March 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
3	Need to provide more direct staffing focus on assisting clients at initial stages of moving to tenancies	Resettlement & Support Officers provide assistance where available on supervised spends of Community Care Grants.	Establish two posts of 'Homemaker' within Homelessness Services staffing structure to ensure more effective co-ordination in the process of settling clients into new tenancies.	April 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
4	To continually review commissioned external housing support in order to ensure that level of provision is fully meeting the clients' needs, and is providing best value to the Council.	Regular meetings convened between Homelessness Services and main support provider.	Report on number of 'live' commissioned packages to be submitted to HSSG on quarterly basis. Housing Support commissioning activity to be included in quarterly statistics packages.	December 1009	Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)

Section 12 – Access to Housing Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	To substantially increase the percentage of permanent housing offers made to statutory homeless households by RSLs via the Section 5 referral process, in relation to available lets.	Homeless households in Inverclyde receiving substantially less social rented lets than national average (based on 2008/09 figures)	<p>Continue to lobby local RSLs to increase number of lets to homeless households via established means of regular communication. Report on progress to H&SC Committee and to SHR in terms of Improvement Plan commitments.</p> <p>Carry out review of Section 5 referral arrangements in conjunction with RSLs to assess possibility of improving processes.</p>	<p>October 2009 (H&SC Committee report)</p> <p>August 2010 (SHR Report)</p> <p>February 2010</p>	<p>Service Manager (Homelessness)</p> <p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p>
2	To ensure that the housing requirements of homeless households are included in the planning process that forms Inverclyde Council's annual Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP and the development of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS)	<p>Young Persons' supported accommodation project included in the 2009/10 SHIP.</p> <p>Homelessness Services to provide specific input into LHS planning programme.</p>	<p>Ensure that accommodation priorities for homeless households form in integral part of SHIP; including information flow via Housing & Accommodation sub-group (SW).</p> <p>Draft specific Homelessness Section in Inverclyde Council LHS 2011-2016.</p>	<p>September 2010</p> <p>March 2011</p>	<p>Service Manager (Homelessness)</p> <p>Service Manager (Homelessness)</p>
3	To increase capacity of offers of housing made to homeless clients via the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (RDGS)	<p>RDGS facility only available to clients who receive a non-priority homeless decision.</p> <p>Decrease in offers of RDGS accommodation from Private landlords since introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA)</p>	<p>Increase scope of RDGS criteria in line with proposed changes to Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.</p> <p>Encourage increased awareness of RDGS to private landlords via publicity campaign.</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>January 2010</p>	<p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p> <p>Assistant Service Manager (Homelessness)</p>

Section 12 – Access to Housing Action Plan

4	To ensure that homeless clients are not discriminated against in terms of accessing housing due to previous tenancy failure or former tenant rent arrears.	Several Section 5 referrals returned by RSL due to former tenant arrears/previous eviction proceedings, in conflict with Code of Guidance.	To formally request RSL policy position in writing, and form Council policy position on use of arbitration in such circumstances.	November 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
5	To gain a greater understanding of the prevalence of hidden homelessness in Inverclyde in order to inform capacity planning surrounding provision of social rented housing to meet the needs of homeless households.	No specific research carried out in this area in recent times.	Seek agreement from RSLs to jointly commission research on the subject in order to inform Homelessness input to capacity planning contained within the LHS 2011-2016.	March 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness) Team Leader (Housing)

Section 13 – Young Persons’ Homelessness Issues Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	Need for supported temporary accommodation to meet needs of young people in preparing for independent tenancy, including young people leaving local authority care.	Previous properties identified for development by RSL partners, and capital funding agreed via Inverclyde SHIP. Proposal unable to proceed due to lack of availability of revenue funding.	Explore ways of securing sustainable and recurring revenue costs funding in order to commence alternative project development.	February 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
2	To establish post of Housing Liaison Officer to assist in developing protocols with housing providers to ensure improved, planned throughput for young people to suitable tenancies, including fair representation in the Section 5 referral process.	No current established liaison with specific remit for securing appropriate and suitable housing for young people.	Establish Housing Liaison Officer post within staffing re-structure of Homelessness Services.	April 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)
3	Need to carry out housing/support needs assessment with young people in order to gain a greater understanding of specific issues facing young homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.	No local up-to-date specific needs assessment available which directly canvasses views of young people.	Carry out direct needs assessment with cross section of young people with housing-related needs as a specific action for the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.	March 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Children & Families Throughcare)
4	Assess the requirement for emergency/overnight access to accommodation for young people in crisis situations.	Recommendation made in Scottish Churches Housing Action (SCHA) report, to explore feasibility of such a project.	Explore possibility of developing such a project including availability of suitable volunteer capacity.	March 2010	Assistant Service Manager (Children & Families Throughcare)
5	Need to carry out training amongst Homelessness Strategy members on the specific issues facing young people at risk of homelessness and related issues.	No training carried out in this specific area during the duration of the 2007-2009 strategy.	Develop and implement appropriate training programme for HSSG member organisations on Young Persons’ Homelessness Issues.	October 2010	Assistant Service Manager (SW Strategy)

Section 14 - Service Users' Input Action Plan

No.	Issue	Position at October 2009	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
1	To formally adopt Service Standards to reflect commitment to best possible standards of service provision which fully reflects the specific needs and expressed views service users.	Formal consultation completed with both existing and previous users of Homelessness Services in Inverclyde.	Publish and implement Service Standards that are fully accessible to all service users and carers in various formats. Service Standards to be fully integrated into the aims and objectives of the strategy, and included in the strategy document.	December 2009.	Service Manager (Homelessness)
2	To develop accessible and weekly advice 'drop-in' service specific to the needs of existing clients of Homelessness Services. 'Drop-in' to include advice and signposting on health/addiction/money advice and other issues relating to homelessness and resettlement.	No 'drop-in' facility aimed directly at the existing client-group.	Commence weekly 'drop-in' facility at Inverclyde Centre to include 'on-hand' advice and sign-posting in health, housing, addiction, money/debt advices. Ensure adequate staffing levels are provided from partner organisations to ensure success of project.	November 2009	Service Manager (Homelessness)
3	To develop opportunities for social contact for homeless clients in order to combat issues of isolation and difficulties in resettlement.	No direct provision provided from within either statutory or voluntary sectors aimed specifically at existing homeless clients.	Commence discussions with Inverclyde Volunteer Centre and other relevant community groups as appropriate in respect of developing volunteering in befriending and peer support. Consult with residents at Inverclyde Centre to gauge interest in development of weekly social 'event' run by staff/volunteers. Re-introduce cooking lessons for homeless clients as part of resettlement process on agreed regular basis.	January 2010 January 2010 March 2010	Service Manager (Homelessness)/ Assistant Service Manager, SW Strategy Team) Assistant Homelessness Services Manager (Resettlement & Support) Service Manager (Homelessness).