

Responding to Homelessness in North Dorset

A snapshot of current service provision
and an estimate of service needs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Between 1997/8 and 2000/1, the levels of those classified as unintentionally homeless and in priority need in England grew by 11%. In the South West, this figure was 25%. Between 1996 and 2001 the rate of increase for North Dorset District Council (NDDC) was 34%.
- Reasons for homelessness in NDDC do not follow national trends. In particular, nearly 75% of homelessness acceptances relate to:
 - Friends no longer being able to provide accommodation (this type of 'temporary' arrangement may mask an earlier episode of homelessness);
 - A higher than average rate of non-violent family breakdown (to which it is possible to add violent relationship breakdowns);
 - Rent/mortgage arrears;
 - Homelessness as a result of the end of assured shorthold tenancies/tied accommodation.
- The numbers of homeless households are aggravated by a distinct housing profile, which is at variance to the national figures. In particular, there is:
 - A higher than average number of people who own their homes outright;
 - A lower than average number of people buying their homes through a mortgage;
 - A lower than average number of people living in social housing;
 - A lower than average number of people living in privately rented accommodation.
- The paucity of a good standard of privately rented accommodation is a major factor that impacts on homelessness.
- Almost 50% of the households in the NDDC area earn less than £20,000 per annum (national average income is £24,407).
- Together, these figures suggest a need to develop preventative services, which focus on:
 - Issues related to the dual task of regenerating and improving standards within the private sector;
 - The need for money advice services to address issues

related to rent arrears;

- Early advice, mediation and legal services for those escaping domestic violence/responding to relationship breakdown.
- Problems with local services:
 - The development of the Connexions service might duplicate local youth-based projects;
 - The lack of move-on accommodation for those in 'first tier' housing provision creates blockage in the system;
 - There is some evidence of poor quality 'advice' services.

Key Recommendations/Action Points

- Funding of advice and support services must be linked to:
 - Preventative outcomes;
 - Regular completion and return of statistics in an agreed format;
 - The operation of a Quality Standards Framework.
- The pursuit of joint protocols between statutory agencies and social housing providers. These protocols should include:
 - Joint assessments of those in housing need;
 - Joint training of staff;
 - Opportunities for work-based placements for staff in partner services.
- Development of a preventative strategy that focuses on:
 - The Private Rented Sector*
 - Developing a protocol with private landlords and/or their representatives;
 - Creating a landlords' forum to develop good practice, standards, consistency, and provide an opportunity for landlords to express their needs as local business people;
 - Using housing improvement/environmental grants to assist landlords to improve property;
 - Re-appraising the Living Over The Shops initiative;
 - Undertaking an Empty Property Survey and devising a strategy to respond to findings.

Money Advice Services

Registered social landlords should be encouraged to follow the example set by Signpost in offering independent money advice. Funding for money advice services is also needed to cater for those in private or owner occupied housing.

Floating Support, Tenancy Support, & Independent Living Support Projects

There is a need for services that enable people to maintain accommodation and fulfil their responsibilities as tenants.

Mediation Services

There is a need for mediation services that focus on:

- Landlord/tenant relations;
 - Parent/teenage child relations;
 - Wider family relationships.
- Further research is needed on:
 - The routes by which local people gain access to housing;
 - The routes by which those who are deemed intentionally homeless and/or not in priority need gain access to housing;
 - The housing careers that are pursued by local people;
 - Why landlords do not continue assured shorthold tenancies at the end of six months' occupation.

INTRODUCTION

This report reviews the nature and extent of homelessness in North Dorset. In particular, it focuses on:

- Existing levels of homelessness;
- The causes of homelessness within the local authority area;
- Current service provision for homeless people/households;
- Identifying gaps in the provision of current services.

Reflecting the local authority's desire to develop a more pro-active and preventative approach to addressing housing need, this report identifies a number of strategies that it may wish to adopt in ensuring that this particular aspect of housing need is tackled effectively, with targeted resources aimed at preventing and addressing homelessness issues.

In order to gain a snapshot of the nature of the homelessness problem in North Dorset, this report draws on a number of different sources of information. These resources include publications and statistics from:

- The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;
- The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR);
- North Dorset District Council (NDDC) publications and statistics (including Housing Investment Programme (HIP) submissions and P1E returns);
- Dorset County Council (including Dorset Social Services and Dorset Youth and Community Service);
- Information from a range of social housing providers, and voluntary agencies providing advice and support within the local authority's area.

HOMELESSNESS

National and Regional Picture

Any attempt to gauge the nature and size of the homelessness population, whether at a local, regional or national level, remains problematic. The following two factors will always come into play.

A problem with data

This issue can be summarised in one short sentence:

We do not know the size of the homeless population.

In part, this problem is exacerbated by the variety of different organisations involved in meeting the needs of the homeless (central and local government, social housing providers, voluntary agencies), their competing agendas, and the particular groups of homeless people they serve (such as families, single people and young single people).

This, in addition to the differing methods of monitoring and data collection, has led to inconsistency in local, regional and national statistics. Subsequently, some homeless people appear in two or more agencies' data, while others may be ignored. At the same time, data collected on 'households' may fail to identify and recognise the actual number of individuals present within a particular 'family'.

A problem with definitions

As the term 'household' demonstrates, definitions are stumbling blocks when calculating the number of people who are homeless.

At a fundamental level, the problem with definitions can be summarised as reflecting the *rooflessness versus temporary accommodation* debate. The issue becomes confusing when we consider the different definitions used to define temporary accommodation, and how certain forms of temporary accommodation may leave the occupier at a greater risk of becoming homeless than others.

Amongst this general level of confusion, the most reliable indicator which acts to highlight general trends in homelessness is the information provided by local authorities through their HIP submissions and P1E returns. Every local authority is required to provide a range of common statistical information, including data related to the number of households seeking support under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts 1985 and 1996.

However, while all the data collected by local authorities are consistent and reliable, they cannot be interpreted as recording an accurate level of homelessness. Given that local authority responsibilities towards different categories of homeless people vary, those who are either intentionally homeless or not in priority need may self-select and fail to seek advice and support from the local authority concerned.

The most reliable indicator of the levels of homelessness, therefore, concerns those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Table 1 (below) highlights that between 1997/8 and 2000/1 the number of households that fell into these two categories in England grew by 11% from 102,650 to 114,350.

Table 1: Statutory Homelessness by Region.

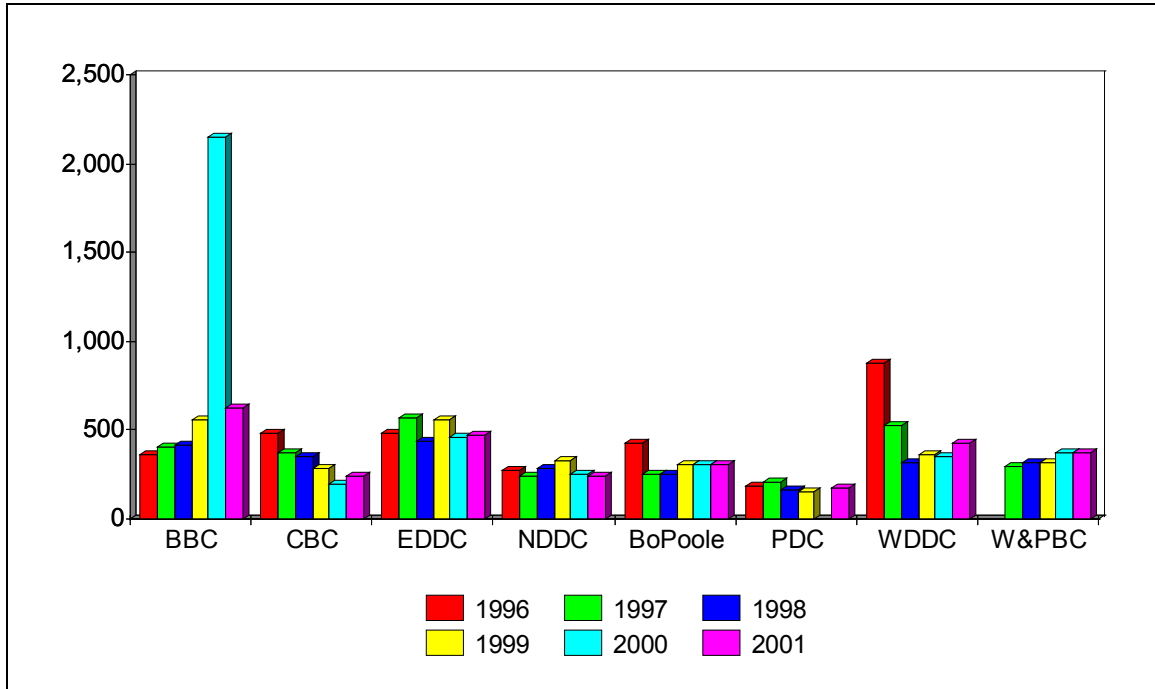
Region:	Unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 1997/8	Unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2000/1	% Change	Number per 1,000 households in 2000/1
North East	4,380	5,220	19%	4.8
North West	13,060	13,350	2%	4.7
Yorks & Humber	9,130	9,150	0%	4.3
East Midlands	7,550	7,370	-2%	4.3
West Midlands	14,670	13,860	-6%	6.4
East of England	8,120	9,800	21%	4.3
London	24,570	29,630	21%	9.5
South East	12,170	14,760	21%	4.4
South West	9,000	11,210	25%	5.4
Total	102,650	114,350	11%	5.5

Source: DTLR (2002b).

As this table demonstrates, this increase in numbers was not experienced consistently across England. The East Midlands region, for example, witnessed a reduction in the number of households accepted as homeless, while the figures for Yorkshire and Humberside remained static. The remaining regions experienced an increase ranging from 2% to 25%. It is significant that the South West region experienced the highest growth in homelessness acceptances during this four-year period.

The homelessness situation within Dorset reflects the position across the whole of England. Indeed, as Figure 1 (below) demonstrates, the number of homelessness applications varies across the local authority areas within the county.

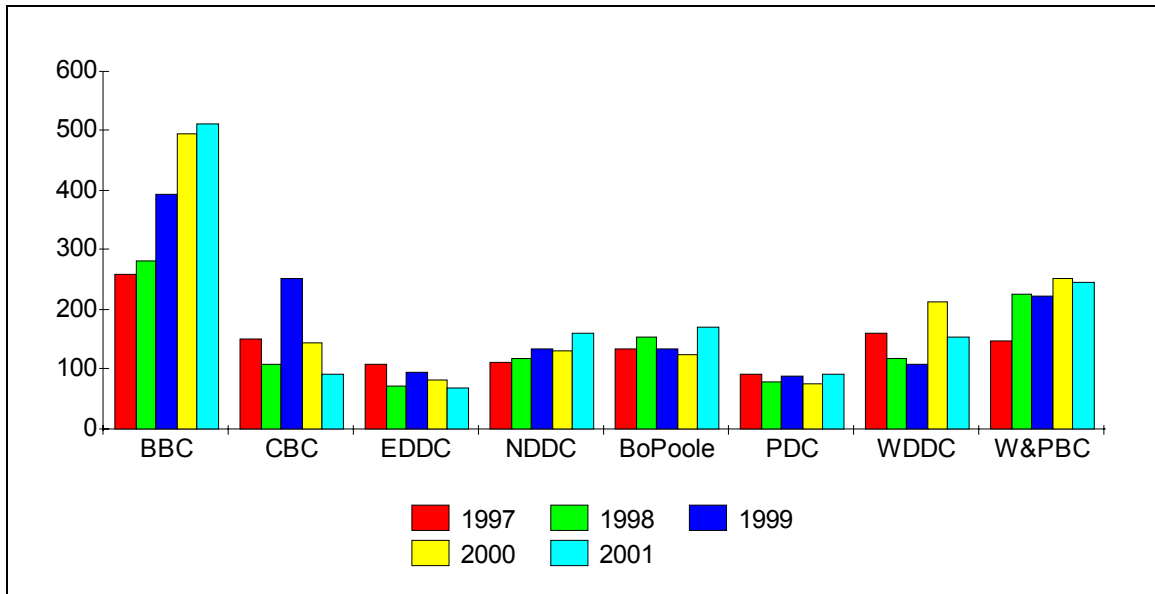
Figure 1: Number of Homelessness Applications in Dorset, 1996-2001.



Source: Dobson (2002).

Figure 2 (below) highlights that the number of acceptances by North Dorset District Council has steadily increased since 1997, while the data relating to other local authorities within the county have remained fairly static (such as Purbeck) or declined (as with West Dorset between 2000 and 2001). It is difficult to identify the reasons for this variation.

Figure 2: Number of Homelessness Acceptances in Dorset, 1997-2001.

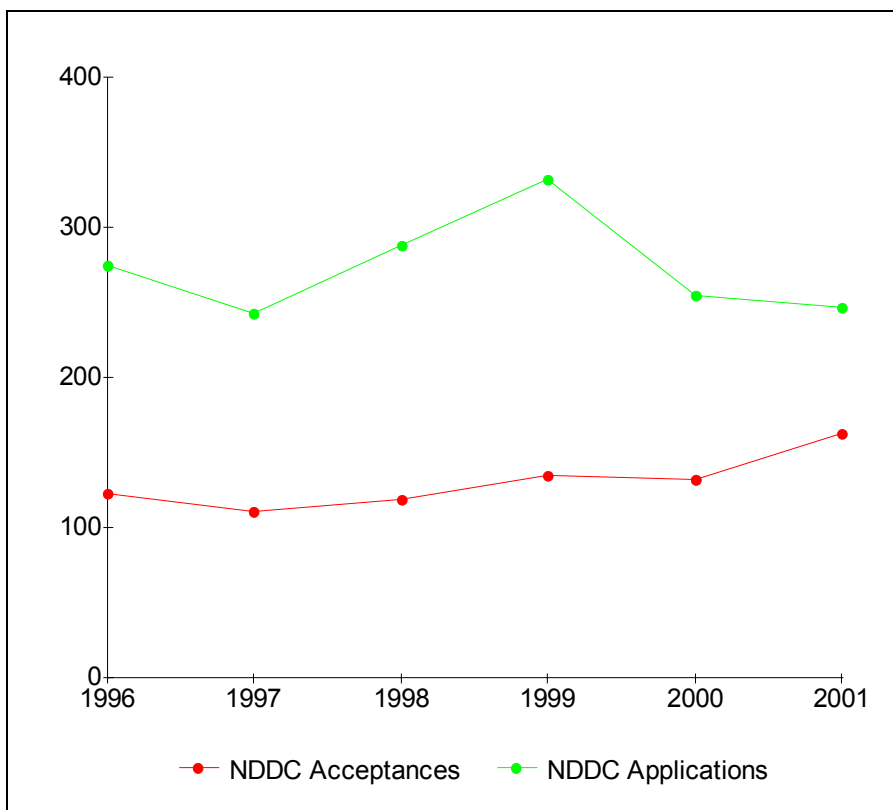


Source: Dobson (2002).

Homelessness Trends in North Dorset

Figure 3 (below) demonstrates the point made earlier regarding self selection but also highlights that, while the number of people seeking advice and support as homeless has dropped in recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need. (The drop in the number of applications may reflect the quality of advice and support provided by agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (see below)). This increase in acceptances represents a growth of 34% (between 1996 and 2001) and, as such, is significantly higher than that experienced in the South West region as a whole.

Figure 3: Applications and Acceptances by NDDC, 1996-2000.



Source: NDDC (2002).

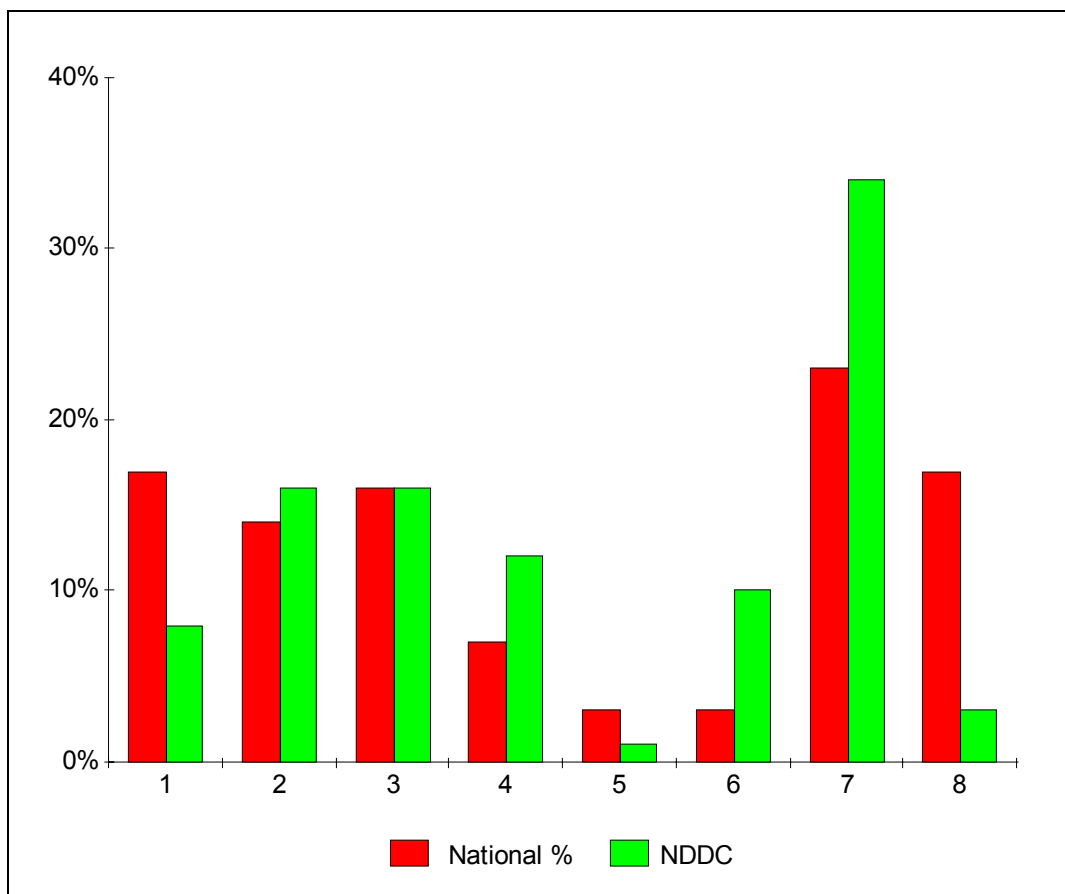
Causes of Homelessness in North Dorset

It is important to link this fact with the evidence highlighted in Figure 4. Indeed, this figure shows that the causes of homelessness in North Dorset are distinctly different to wider national trends. It appears that homelessness is both encouraged and exacerbated by a number of particular, localised issues, which centre on four key themes:

- Friends no longer able to provide accommodation (this type of ‘temporary’ arrangement may mask an earlier episode of homelessness);
- A higher than average rate of non-violent family breakdown (to which it is possible to add violent relationship breakdowns);
- Rent arrears;
- Homelessness as a result of the end of assured shorthold tenancies/tied accommodation.

These account for nearly 75% of homelessness acceptances. Anecdotally, one housing association noted that many homeless young people had either been in care or on Probation.

Figure 4: The Causes of Homelessness – National and NDDC Trends.



Source: DTLR (2002a); NDDC (2002).

Key: 1 = Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate; 2 = Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate; 3 = Violent breakdown of a relationship; 4 = Non-violent breakdown of a relationship; 5 = Mortgage arrears; 6 = Rent arrears; 7 = End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy; 8 = Other reasons.

These figures suggest that if the local authority wishes to tackle the number of homelessness acceptances, and devise preventative strategies, there is a need to focus on:

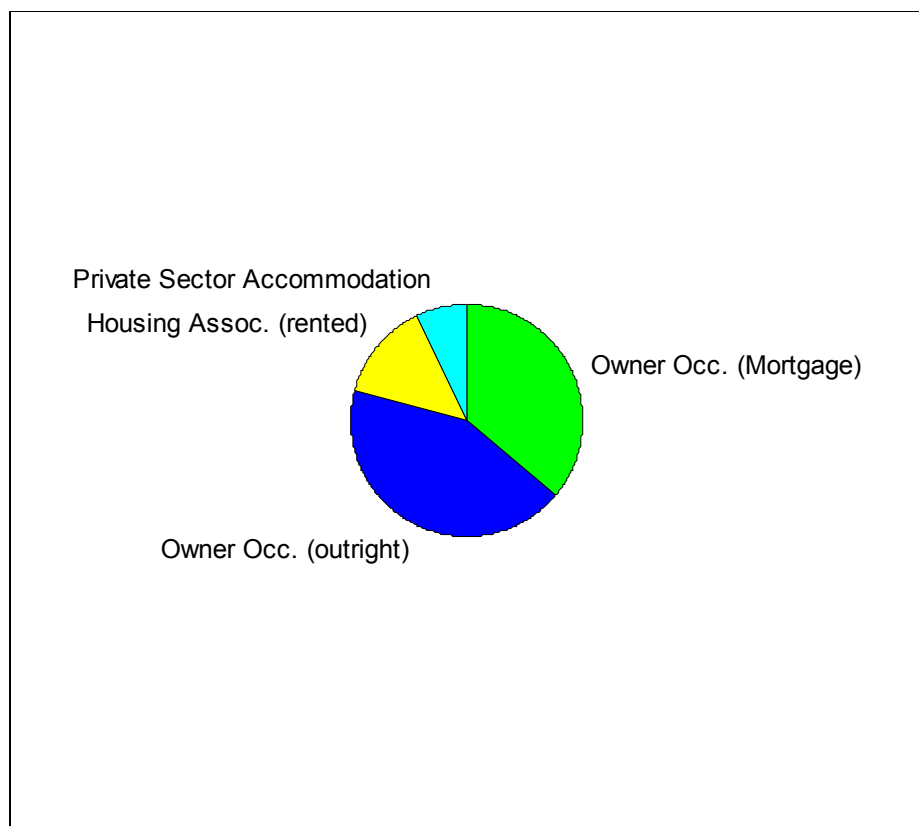
- Issues related to regenerating and improving standards within the private sector;

- The need for money advice services to address issues related to rent arrears;
- Early advice, mediation and legal services for those escaping domestic violence/responding to relationship breakdown.

Private Sector Housing in North Dorset

Almost 21% of North Dorset's housing stock is located within the rented sector (Figure 5). This is split between housing associations (13.5%) and the private rented sector (7.3%).

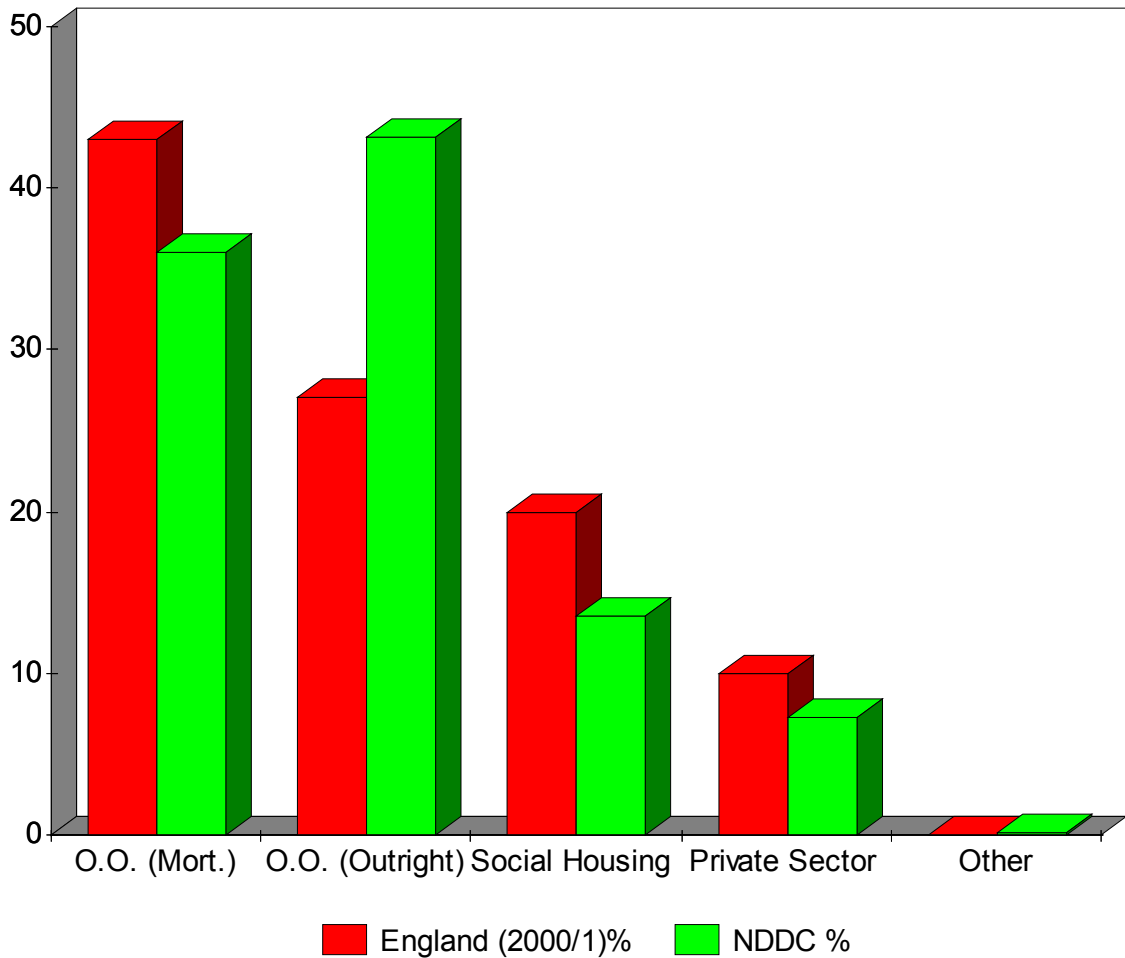
Figure 5: Housing Stock within North Dorset.



Source: NDDC (2002).

If the causes of homelessness in North Dorset are at variance with national trends, Figure 6 (below) highlights that the nature of housing tenure within North Dorset is also significantly different to England as a whole. In particular, North Dorset has a higher number of people living within the owner occupied sector. Indeed, the affluence of the area is demonstrated by a significantly higher number of people who own their property outright. In addition, the proportion of those living within the social housing and privately rented sector is far lower than the national average. As a consequence, people in North Dorset have far fewer housing options available to them when in housing need.

Figure 6: Comparison Between Housing Tenure in England and North Dorset.



Source: DTLR (2002c); NDDC (2002).

These statistics highlight the need to focus on strategies designed to support and 'regenerate' the private rented sector.

In addition to its relatively small size, successive reports have identified the private sector housing stock within the NDDC area as being problematic on a number of fronts. These problems are likely to exacerbate the demand for homelessness services from this sector. Table 2 (below), which explores the access that different occupiers have to basic energy saving facilities in North Dorset, highlights that those living in the private rented and tied accommodation sector experience consistently poorer access to basic facilities than most other tenures, and across all the variables.

Table 2: Access to Basic Facilities by Housing Tenure.

Facility	All tenures %	Owner occupier with mortgage	Owner occupier no mortgage	Private rented	HA rented	Shared ownership
Central Heating - Full	82.8	86.0	84.5	66.4	76.1	100.0
Central Heating - Partial	10.1	8.2	9.5	15.5	15.2	0.0
Hot Water Tank Insulated	80.2	78.6	84.6	73.8	72.8	71.7
Loft Insulation	77.6	83.8	80.9	52.8	63.2	50.7
Double Glazing - Full	65.9	65.1	67.4	35.8	81.6	64.8
Double Glazing - Partial	17.0	18.9	17.0	17.5	10.6	4.6
Water Pipes Insulated	57.0	62.0	63.0	33.1	34.9	51.4
Cavity Wall Insulation	34.8	32.2	37.3	14.6	45.5	17.7
Draught Proofing	26.1	28.6	27.6	9.1	23.2	32.7

Source: NDDC (2002).

Developing this further, Table 3 (below) notes that, with the exception of the category 'additional security', the tied and privately rented sectors are identified as being in need of more work across the different variables than any other sector.

It is evident that the paucity of a good standard of privately rented accommodation in the area is a major factor impacting on homelessness.

Table 3: Work Required on the Property by Tenure.

Work required	Owner occupier with mortgage	Owner occupier no mortgage	Private rented	HA rented	Shared ownership *
Additional Security	34.3	38.5	24.9	39.0	0.0
Improved Heating	21.2	19.8	45.1	31.1	11.0
Re-wiring	16.9	18.5	19.0	11.1	0.0
Damp Proofing	13.5	14.5	34.1	27.4	0.0
Roof Repairs	19.4	18.3	21.9	17.6	0.0
Window Repairs	36.7	30.0	50.8	14.8	23.3
Insulation	29.4	28.0	42.1	13.4	65.8
(* Low volume of data)					

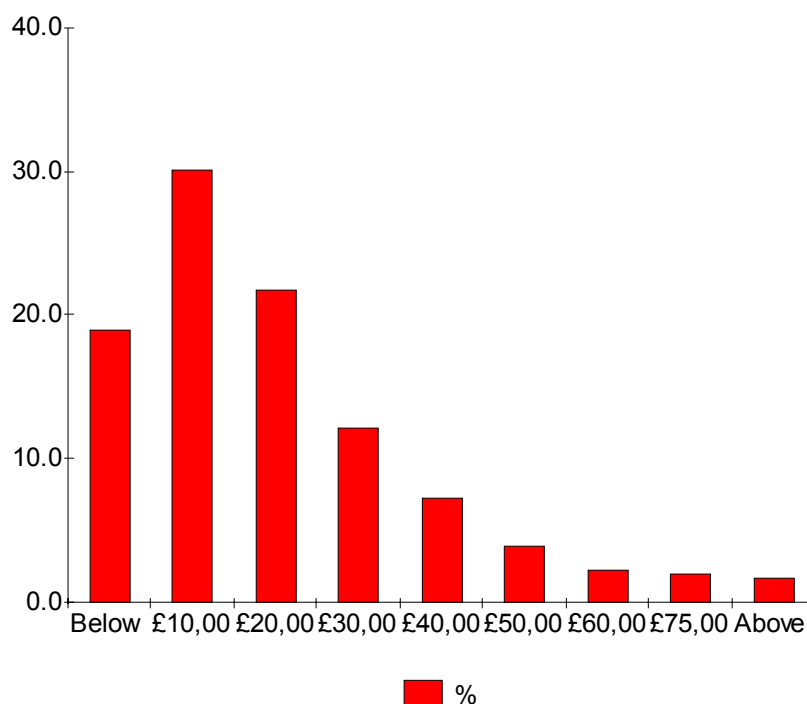
Source: NDDC (2002).

If the local authority wishes to encourage a healthier and vibrant private sector housing stock within its area, it needs to address a number of issues. It is important to note that the strategy should adopt a more encouraging 'partnership' approach with private landlords.

Rent and Mortgage Arrears

The *North Dorset Housing Needs Survey (2002)* highlights that almost 50% of the households in the area earn less than £20,000 per annum (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Gross Annual Incomes of Households in North Dorset.

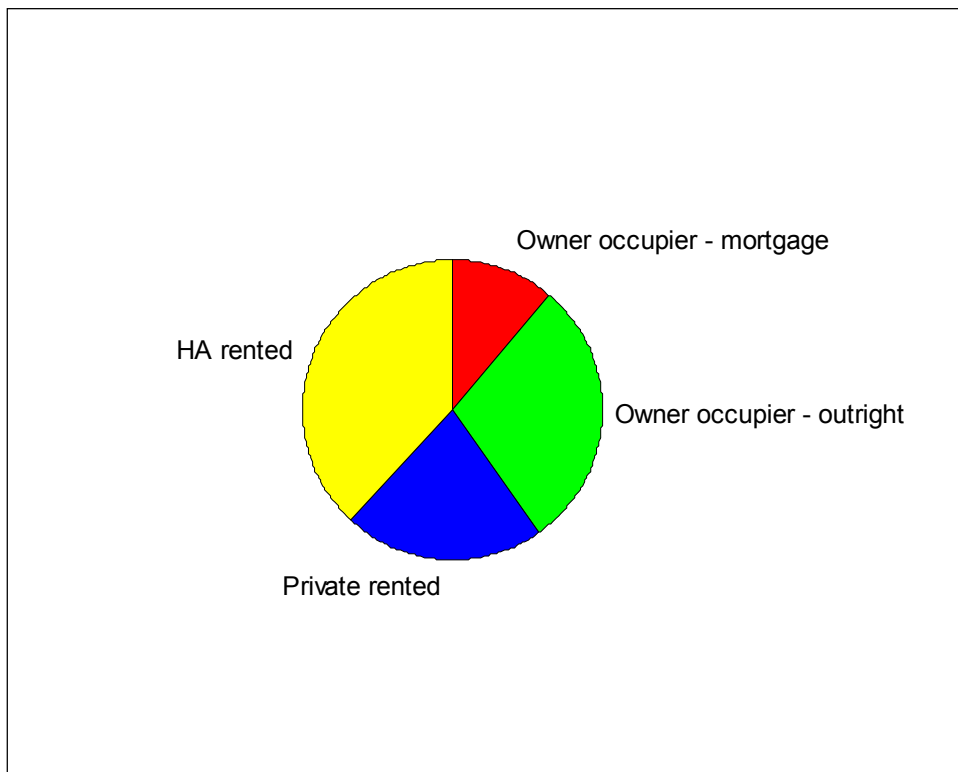


Source: NDDC (2002).

When we consider this lower income group by housing tenure, it is clear that most of those earning less than £20,000 live within the rented sector.

This group of people are likely to form a significant proportion of those who find themselves in mortgage or rent arrears. This currently constitutes 11% of North Dorset's homelessness population. The scale of the problem is confirmed by data provided by North Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau. In the first quarter of the financial year 2002/03, the Bureau dealt with 34 cases of mortgage or rent arrears. The figures for the second quarter show a slight increase to 35 cases of mortgage or rent arrears. These figures equate to a rate of between two and three new cases per week within the North Dorset area. (Recommendations for action on this issue are addressed later in this report.)

Figure 8: Population of North Dorset Earning Less than £20,000 by Housing Tenure.



Source: NDDC (2002).

Homelessness through Domestic Violence and Relationship Breakdown

Over a quarter of those who are classed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need (28%) are either victims of domestic violence or non-violent relationship breakdown. In many of these cases the applicant and his/her family will have a pressing need for immediate/emergency accommodation. (Weymouth Women's Refuge reports a total of five clients from the area having received support in recent years). While there may be a continuing need for such accommodation, the local authority should consider whether, in some cases, permanent housing solutions might be better secured by encouraging the applicant to seek legal solutions to securing the household's 'home'. (Recommendations for action on this issue are addressed later in this report.)

SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IN NORTH DORSET

This research exercise has received little support from the range of agencies operating within the North Dorset area. While many agencies have been willing to explain referral processes, very few have provided statistical data outlining the number of clients and the range of issues with which they work. The exceptions to this have been North Dorset District Council, Weymouth Women's Refuge (Stonham Housing Association) and North Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau. The failure of other agencies (particularly those which promote themselves as offering advice and support) to provide statistical reports is likely to be indicative of a number of issues:

- A failure to collect reliable data on those seeking advice and support.
- Poor quality advice and support services, which fail to relate to a quality standards framework;
- A failure of funding agencies to establish monitoring processes to ensure that any financial assistance provided has been spent on the services they have funded;
- A reluctance to share confidential material;
- An inability to plan strategically.

This situation exacerbates the confusion surrounding the levels of homelessness within North Dorset, as discussed earlier.

While many agencies failed to provide statistical evidence of the number of homeless people they see, all those we contacted spoke highly of the services provided by NDDC.

Statutory Services

A range of statutory agencies are involved in working with homeless people. These include:

North Dorset District Council

Although the local authority is no longer a provider of social housing, it continues to have a responsibility towards homeless people and a central role in the strategic management and planning of housing in the area. As a consequence of its role in meeting the needs of homeless people, the local authority continues to exercise its nomination rights to social housing providers, and funds a number of services which aim to respond to homelessness. There is, however, a need for a clear strategic vision

as to what services NDDC should fund, what measurable outcomes are wanted, and a clear monitoring and accountability structure for such funding. (See details below and Recommendations).

Social Services

Social Services have a duty of care for certain categories of young people. Interviews with officers have identified a positive working relationship between NDDC and Social Services staff.

The staff interviewed suggested that they worked closely with NDDC Housing Officers, adopting the role of 'negotiator' between the young person and their parents/carers. Normally, attempts are made to re-integrate young people back into the family home, or to gain a letter of estrangement, thus proving that homelessness was not intentional.

It appears that no statistical data is collected on the number and nature of youth homelessness by Social Services. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that on average one young person a month presents themselves as homeless in the Sturminster Newton office.

Social Services have a specialist team of staff supporting vulnerable young people (ASSIST).

Youth Offending Team (YOT)

The YOT offers a Bail Support Service. This work includes offering floating support, paid through Transitional Housing Benefit. Most of those on bail are in urgent need of accommodation.

Mental Health Services: North Dorset Primary Care Trust

The Community Mental Health Teams that serve North Dorset actively work to prevent homelessness and support those who are homeless or who are at short-term risk of homelessness. Dealing with clients who are already homeless is rare, and it is estimated that only one or two people per year are seen in these circumstances. Referrals are made to housing officers and 'vulnerability' is generally acknowledged. It was commented on that there was a good working relationship with the District Council Housing Office.

More commonly, their clients are at risk of becoming homeless as a result of rent arrears and/or breach of tenancy agreement. In these situations, workers actively seek to resolve problems with clients directly. The Trust has a number of housing projects in partnership with Signpost Housing Association. This includes a small respite unit in Blandford Forum, which provides graduated support for clients who are re-entering the community. The Assertive Outreach Team has a number of flats available for clients who need specialised support. This is an example of good interagency planning and provision of local housing. Despite this,

problems still exist whereby clients are delayed in their discharge from hospital due to the unavailability of suitable accommodation. Housing needs often change for individuals who have been staying in hospitals, where it would be inappropriate for them to return to their previous home. This exacerbates the problem.

Another significant problem cited was the immediate discontinuation of Housing Benefit as soon as a client is admitted to hospital. As a result, clients often get into rent arrears which then affect their chances of suitable transfers at a later date. This is clearly a 'systems' problem and its resolution should be made a priority.

Social Housing Providers

Housing Associations

NDDC has a number of generalist and specialist housing associations operating within the area. These include:

- Signpost Housing Association;
- Stonham Housing Association;
- Bournemouth Churches Housing Association;
- Raglan Housing Association;
- East Dorset Housing Association;
- Magna Housing Association;
- Sovereign Housing Association;
- Hastoe Housing Association;
- Sanctuary Housing Association.

These Housing Associations provide various levels of support for those in rent arrears, with Signpost having recently established a partnership with Shelter to provide independent advice to its tenants on rent arrears and associated issues. Other initiatives include young Raglan tenants working with the Prince's Trust to develop self-employed business opportunities.

Existing range of specialist provision

The area has an existing range of more specialist housing provision. This includes:

Shaftesbury

Jude Court

Offering six beds for vulnerable 16-25 year olds. There is low support provided, and there have recently been no evictions. Managed by Signpost Housing Association (new build). This provision has strong links with Tobys and Connexions. There is a need for more move-on accommodation.

Magdalene Lane

Three empty flats belonging to Sanctuary Housing Association which will be transferred to Signpost Housing Association and linked to Jude Court to provide a high level of support for young people.

Gillingham

The Old School House

A six-bed scheme for young single homeless people managed by Magna Housing Association.

Blandford Forum

Magnolia Court

A ten-bed scheme for young single people offering low support. This project does not appear to have moved on significantly, due to contractual issues between the housing associations involved.

The Plocks

A six-bed scheme for 16-25 year old single people referred by Probation, Social Services and housing services and managed by Stonham Housing Association.

Stonham Housing Association has seen at least 150 homeless people in the last five years, mainly coming from within North Dorset. Local people do not generally want to move from the area. Probation and Social Services top up some of the support funding.

It could be argued that the current level of housing provision for young people within the area is sufficient for existing needs. However, the lack of move on accommodation presents a major problem in facilitating a turnover of bed spaces in these services (see Recommendations).

Refuges

There are a number of women's refuges in the area. These include:

- North Dorset Refuge. This is currently being completed and comprises 10 units. It has been suggested that move-on accommodation will be needed;
- Weymouth Women's Refuge. This refuge has had consistently high occupancy rates (approaching 99%), with 360 referrals in the past year. Due to telephone contact issues, workers are not always able to collect details of the user's home address;
- Women from the NDDC area also use the Bournemouth, Mendip, and Yeovil refuges. For reasons already cited, statistics are not reliable.

Advice and Referral Services

Within the area there are a number of generalist advice services, and those specifically for young people. These include:

- Citizens Advice Bureaux - offering broad-based generalist and specialist advice services to national standards;
- Treads - advice service for young people, Blandford Forum;
- Tobys - advice service for young people, Shaftesbury (Tobys has links with Shelter who provide a regular surgery);
- Connexions - offering young people information on housing issues. These may result in signposting or referral to specialist organisations with the appropriate level of support depending on the young person's needs (13-19). There is no data on the number of people seen since opening in April 2002.

The development of the Connexions service should help to extend the provision of services for young people across the local authority's region. These services are likely to duplicate those already offered by other youth services in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to develop the local authority's strategic role as a housing enabler, the following points have been identified as recommendations.

Future funding & monitoring processes

- All services and organisations currently funded to work with those in housing need should be required to produce statistical data demonstrating the take up of services, specific services offered, and simple demographic data on the clientele;
- All housing and homelessness services that are funded by NDDC in the future should be required to collate statistics in an agreed format;
- All funded services should be required to provide regular returns (quarterly) of statistics to a central point.

Promoting quality & best practice in supporting those in housing need

- The local authority should consider the appropriateness of continuing to fund those agencies that only appear to act as referral services;
- Future funding for advice services should only be provided to those agencies that work within an agreed quality standards framework. This framework should include:
 - quality of training of advice workers;
 - access to on-going training and development support for advice workers;
 - the standard of information resources that are available to advice workers;
 - access to, and use of, secondary advice services (such as second tier advice agencies/solicitors etc);
 - mechanisms that review the nature and quality of advice provided to members of the public.
- There should be a joint protocol between NDDC and Social Services for assessing the needs of those who request, or who are in receipt of, services from both organisations. It should include:
 - The collection of statistical data, which should be regularly reviewed to identify trends and the need to develop specific services;
 - An opportunity for staff in statutory agencies to undertake short work-based placements in other statutory agencies (for social work staff to work in housing services and vice versa);
 - Encourage joint training opportunities for staff in different agencies;
 - Explore the feasibility of establishing choice-based lettings schemes.

Specific preventative services

- The local authority should consider conducting research that explores the routes by which local people gain access to housing;
- The local authority should conduct research into the routes by which those who are deemed intentionally homeless and/or not in priority need gain access to housing;
- The local authority should consider conducting research on the housing careers that are pursued by local people;
- The local authority should consider focusing on only funding those services that demonstrate a preventative approach to working with those homeless people the local authority is required to support through an accommodation-based route.

Private Rented Sector

In order to address the fundamental issues associated with this sector, the local authority must consider how it might regenerate the number of properties available for local people, and improve the standard of accommodation offered. The strategy might include:

- Developing a protocol with private landlords and/or their representatives;
- Creating a landlords' forum to develop good practice, standards and consistency, and provide an opportunity for landlords to express their needs as local business people;
- Using housing improvement/environmental grants to assist landlords to improve property;
- Re-appraising the Living Over The Shops initiative;
- Re-appraising the Rent Deposit Scheme;
- Undertaking an Empty Property Survey and devising a strategy to respond to findings.

Money Advice Services

The local authority should consider supporting money advice services. These services could particularly support those in mortgage or rent arrears. Rent arrears are a major factor in causing homelessness in the area. Those offering money advice services should ideally work closely with floating support workers (see below) in order that the root causes of debt can be addressed.

Floating Support, Tenancy Support, and Independent Living Support Projects

The local authority should consider funding more services that help to support people in maintaining their accommodation and fulfilling their responsibilities as tenants. This needs to take place within the private and social housing sectors. Support of this kind is widely recognised as being beneficial, but while many registered social landlords are

committed to developing floating support, services are more difficult to fund and develop for vulnerable people within the private rented sector.

Where no single agency is necessarily required to develop services for the private sector, it would seem that interagency intervention and responsibility is the only way forward. Agencies that traditionally have little direct housing provision work, but have a track record of individual care, should be encouraged to participate in the development of floating support.

Mediation Services

The local authority should consider funding mediation services. These services would attempt to reduce homelessness resulting from relationship breakdown. These services would focus on:

- Landlord/tenant relations;
- Parent/teenage child relations;
- Wider family relationships.

Move On Accommodation

First tier housing projects are in danger of providing 'permanent' accommodation for current residents. There is a need to prioritise the development of move-on accommodation for those living in first tier housing projects such as bail hostels, refuges and single person units. At present, many agencies experience high occupancy and low turn over.

Similarly, red tape holds up the re-letting of accommodation. Electrical tests, for example, which are required when tenants change, are reputed to take as long as a month.

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