

Homelessness review

HQN

Bill Hewlett

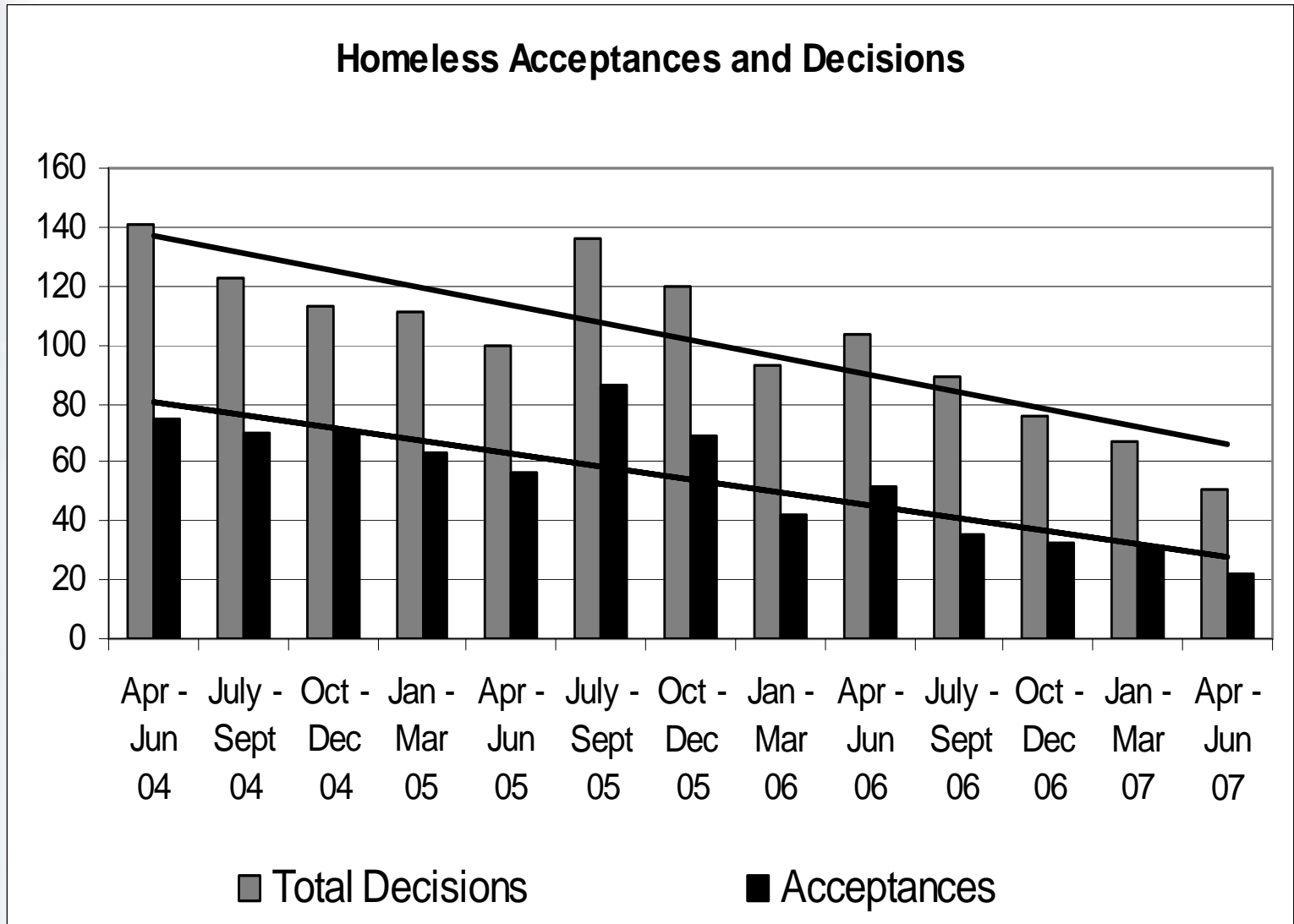


Homelessness strategy

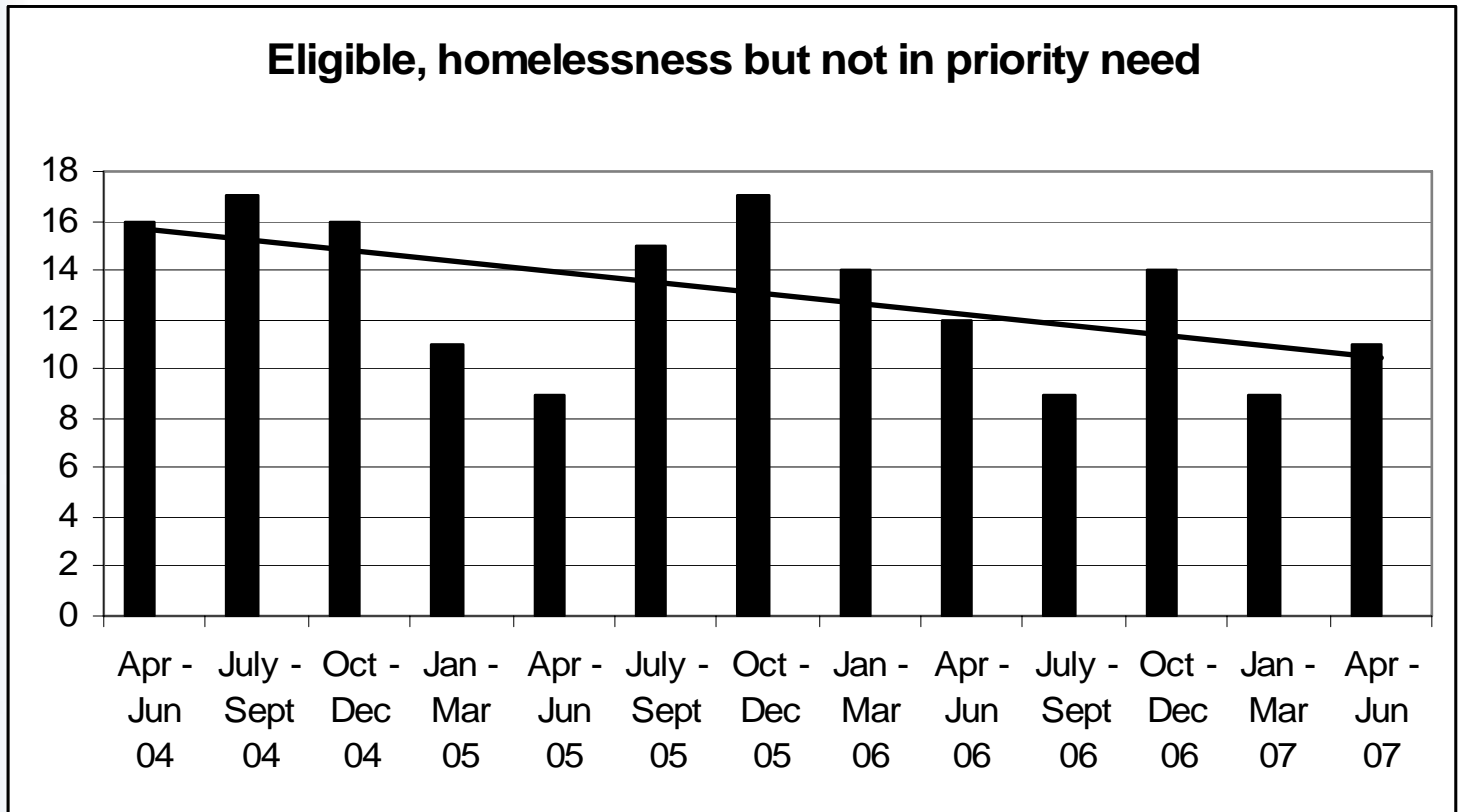
Homelessness strategy published 2003:

- || 2002/03 772 applications 316 accepted
- || 2006/07 335 applications 152 accepted
- || Applications down 59%
- || Acceptances down 52%

Homelessness levels



Non Priority Homeless



Reasons for homelessness

The most common reasons for homelessness as recorded over the three-year period 2004/05 2006/07 were:

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	28.9%
Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	14.5%
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	12.3%.

Reasons for homelessness ...(cont'd)

Comparing Richmond upon Thames, sub-region and London
2006/07

- || Most common reason in all areas was homeless due to parental eviction
- || Both the sub region and London had eviction from other relatives and friends in second place (in Richmond this reason was fourth). In percentage terms this was more than twice the level experienced by Richmond upon Thames
- || The loss of an assured shorthold tenancy in both the sub region and London was the third most common reason with 10.3% and 11.7% respectively. In Richmond upon Thames this comprised nearly 18%

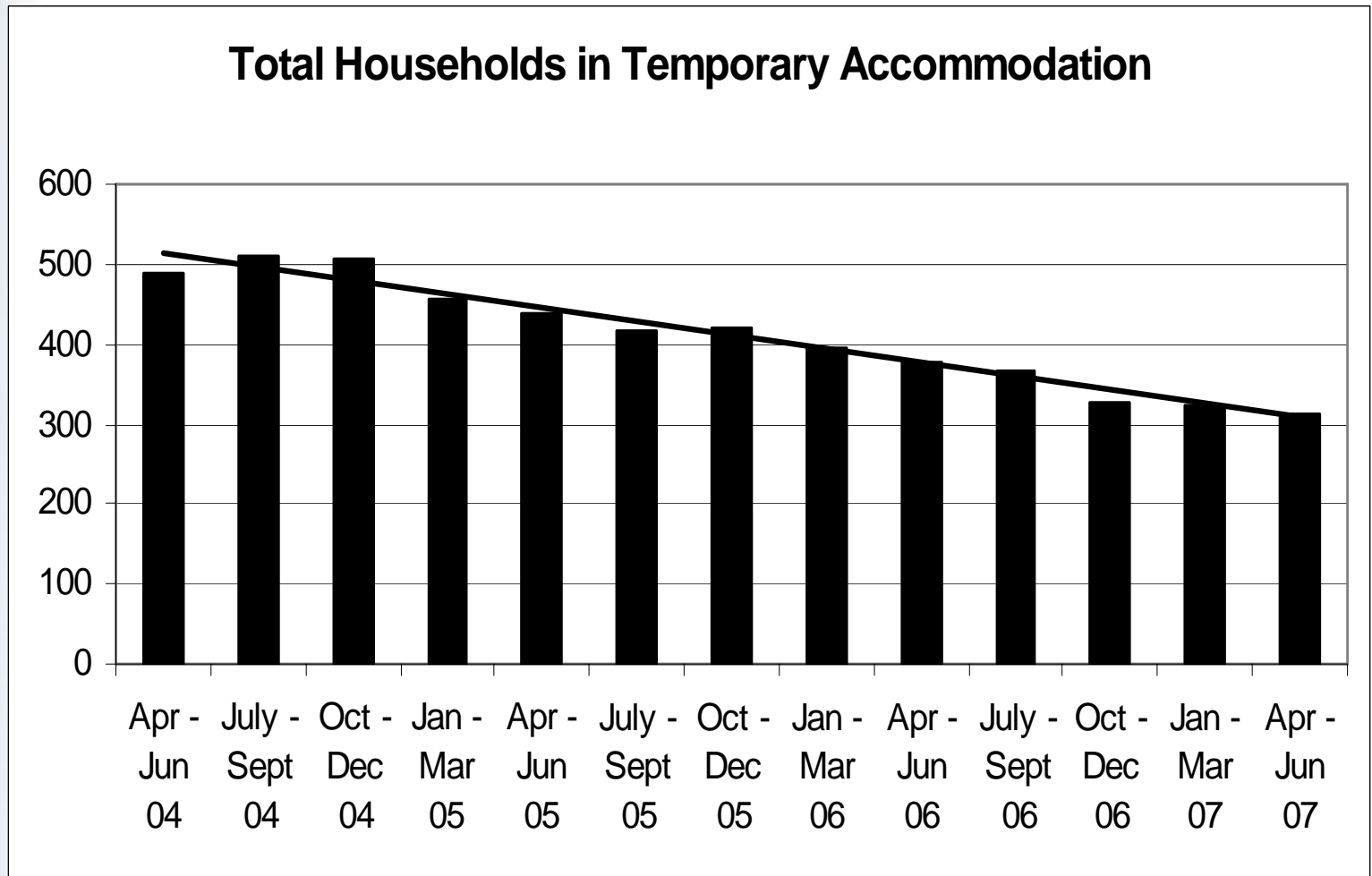
Priority need categories

- || Over the 3 year period, 44% of accepted households had dependent children
- || Nearly 13% were due to a member of the household being pregnant with no dependent children
- || 16/17 year olds comprised over 16%, (2006/07 27 people)
- || People with mental health problems (10.7%)
- || Older people made up 4.5% of acceptances

Accommodation reduction target

- || DCLG target to reduce by 50% the numbers in temporary accommodation
- || Dec 2004 – 508 households
- || June 2007 – 312 households
- || 38% reduction so far

Numbers in temporary accommodation



LBRuT – Homelessness strategy

2003 – 2007 achievements

- || Adoption of in-house performance indicators measuring homelessness prevention with targets
- || Review of existing information and leaflets
- || Production and distribution of tenants' information pack for private sector tenants
- || Increase in-house capacity by shifting staffing from assessment to advice
- || Establish safer homes project
- || Research amongst landlords and letting agents re evictions
- || Referral protocols established with SPEAR
- || Hostel for homeless 16 and 17 year olds soon to be opened

Review and strategy development

- || HQN track record
- || First stage Homelessness review
- || Review homelessness – desk top analysis

Consultation with:

- || Service users
- || Staff
- || Stakeholders
- || Neighbouring councils

Timetable

- || November start
- || Preliminary views – homelessness forum
- || Seek further views by early January
- || Publish and consult on review and draft strategy January/ Feb
- || Finalise strategy March

Stakeholder consultation

- || Questionnaire sent to 30 stakeholder organisations
- || To date seven responses

Strengths

Partner agencies consider the main strengths of the homelessness service to be:

- || Staff commitment to the service
- || Rent deposit scheme
- || Ability to meet targets

Weaknesses

- || The need for improved joint working with partners and stakeholders
- || The need to promote and advertise homelessness services and their accessibility
- || Lack of information on what housing options are available
- || Lack of awareness on domestic violence
- || Poor use of private rented sector
- || Gate – keeping approach towards homelessness with a tendency to avoid taking an application

Gaps in service provision

- || Supported housing for young people
- || Floating support – cross cutting / including supporting people in the private sector
- || Need to develop further mechanisms to prevent parental evictions
- || Lack of move on accommodation

Causes of homelessness

The main causes of homelessness were considered to be:

- || Family breakdown
- || Termination of AST

This mirrors the actual experience

Views on future homelessness

- || Further right to buy and continuing reduced voids levels will have a further impact on numbers on the housing register who are not being re-housed which could impact on homeless levels, particularly parental evictions
- || Increase in numbers of refugees/migrant workers
- || Increase in mortgage repossessions
- || Potential increase in HA evictions due to government's RESPECT agenda and clamping down on anti-social behaviour

Future homelessness ...(cont'd)

- || Significant risk that the changes to the Housing Benefit payment system could lead to a rise in homelessness. The introduction of local housing allowance will mean that housing benefit recipients will be paid directly rather than to the landlord - increase in evictions in the private rented sector due to rent arrears
- || It is likely that there may be an increase in homelessness as a result of domestic violence due to an increased awareness of options

Future action

In terms of access to housing, stakeholders recognise the importance of:

- || Providing clear and precise information, including advice and signposting
- || Suitable, safe and settled accommodation
- || Being actively involved in the maintenance of tenancies
- || Early intervention to minor tenancy issues to prevent them becoming more serious

Emerging issues

- || Review of local experience
- || HQN knowledge base
- || Consideration of best practice
- || Government direction

Secure housing

- || Low % of HA stock
 - Richmond upon Thames 11.7%
 - London 26.2
 - England 19.3%
- || The average house price exceeds the national average by more than 200% – beyond the reach of households with average income levels
- || Confirms the need for more affordable housing
- || Move on essential to maintain through put from hostels/temp accommodation

Supporting People

- || Ensure that the continuation of the current services are strategically relevant – ongoing service needs analysis. Monitor the impact of new services
- || A review of use of services in terms of referrals made, acceptances and refusals to identify service gaps. Further analysis of needs to inform future service requirements
- || Ensure that sufficient floating support is available to support people into independence
- || Ensure access to high level needs/high risk services outside the borough, when required by maintaining and developing joint protocols with partner agencies
- || Investigate opportunities for the development of generic floating support services for groups with cross cutting needs

Young people

Government commitment to:

- II End, by 2010, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by local housing authorities in discharging their homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds
- II Improved access to homelessness mediation across the country (including family mediation for young people), so that there is a general expectation of such services
- II Creation of a new national supported lodgings development scheme providing accommodation, advice and mediation services for young people who can no longer stay in the family home

Accessible and sensitive services

- || Low level of BME population in Richmond comparatively
- || Need to ensure that homelessness and support services are accessible to all minority groups
- || Planning and delivering joined up services around specific client groups e.g. mental health, offenders etc.

Private rented sector

- || Vital to meet housing needs
- || Offers realistic housing options
- || Follow best practice models – strong joint working across council/with external agencies (e.g. Spear) and with landlords
- || Maintain people in tenancies – floating support

Private sector

- || Large proportion of owner-occupation within the borough
- || Increase in interest rates
- || Possible housing downturn
- || Buy-to-let
- || Availability of housing advice in relation to sustaining this tenure

Joint working

- || Ensuring multi agency approach
- || Good and effective working with voluntary sector
- || Commissioning – jointly
- || Information sharing
- || Implementation
- || Monitor outcomes
- || Homelessness forum – membership / TOR