

raising_{the}roof

homelessness**special**edition

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VHG

Promoting Social Inclusion in the East of England | homelessness special

Working for providers of accommodation and support

Editorial

We are now over two years into the Homelessness Prevention agenda following the Homelessness Act 2002 and, the strategic reduction of rough sleeping in 1998/99. This marked a huge cultural change in the way that the Government viewed the delivery of services to homeless people which had been very reactionary to a more strategic and pro-active delivery from both the statutory and voluntary services.

Tensions were inevitable, after all, delivery and response in the statutory sector had remained the same for decades with a very few isolated pockets of innovation. Targets on use of B&B and rough sleeping forced Housing Needs departments into serious and often painful reviews of the way they worked internally and externally.

The voluntary sector welcomed these changes and indeed had campaigned long and hard to see the categories of priority need extended and an end to the warehousing of vulnerable families and children. However, this change impacted both positively and negatively on our culture too. We have been the rescuers of the most difficult and chaotic clients and find it hard to be challenged on the way in which we work and prioritise. The sense is and was 'they don't want to deal with them so how can they criticise the way we work?' Another tough challenge was that the focus of funding and planning was to meet the new statutory duties.

It is important though to review the progress of these changes and to see how well we have managed these tensions in the East of England so VHG has produced this Homelessness Special Edition in order to provide a regional overview.

Emma Daniel
Chief Executive – VHG

Regional Progress on Statut

The ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) measures progress on reduction in homelessness through statutory acceptances (measured via P1E returns). These statistics have obvious limitations as these figures do not take into account non-statutory homelessness which are the single homeless people which the vast majority of VHG members work with. However, they do illustrate trends in performance against need. In order to clarify who is included in

these statistics the ROOF diagram opposite illustrates this:

The Prevention Agenda would view these statistics as being the easiest method to view progress because the argument is that people should be prevented from becoming homeless through various methods (e.g. rent deposit, advice, support, loans etc) rather than become homeless and then be accepted as such by the local authority.

Good practice on prevention of homelessness and tackling homelessness in the Eastern Region:

The following are just a few of the many areas of innovation and good practice which are happening in the East of England:

Leaving institutional care

Hospital Link Workers - Julian Housing Support:

The service covers the county of Norfolk, funded by the Homelessness Directorate, with matched funding from PCT's. At least one, and sometimes two, Julian Housing Link workers are attached to each psychiatric acute ward in Norfolk. The service was developed because we recognised that often people are admitted to hospital because their housing difficulties are impacting on their mental health. Problems can seem insurmountable. Often a timely intervention could stop matters deteriorating, thus preventing a lengthy admission. The Link Workers make contact with clients as early on in the admission as possible. Link Workers can help the client make contact with housing providers, accompanying them to interviews, and helping them through the application process. A total of 85 people were assisted by the service in the last three months.

Patients find the service helpful, reducing their anxieties about their housing situation at a time when they are feeling particularly vulnerable. These connections have been an important route to more suitable interim accommodation than bed and breakfast for homeless clients and have prevented the loss of accommodation and therefore the need for interim accommodation for many.

Advising young people of their housing options

MAP (Mancroft Advice Project):

The MAP project offers a free independent information, advice and counselling service to 11 to 25 year olds. They help young people in finding accommodation, with money and debt

issues, benefits advice, as well as help on broader issues like health, mental health, sexual and drug issues. They work with any young person who goes to them and also have an arrangement with Social Services to help children in care and foster care. They run a drop-in as well as visiting young people through an appointments system. In 1999/2000 they received 6,721 enquiries for information. From the Rough Sleepers Unit 'Preventing tomorrow's rough sleepers: a good practice handbook 2001.

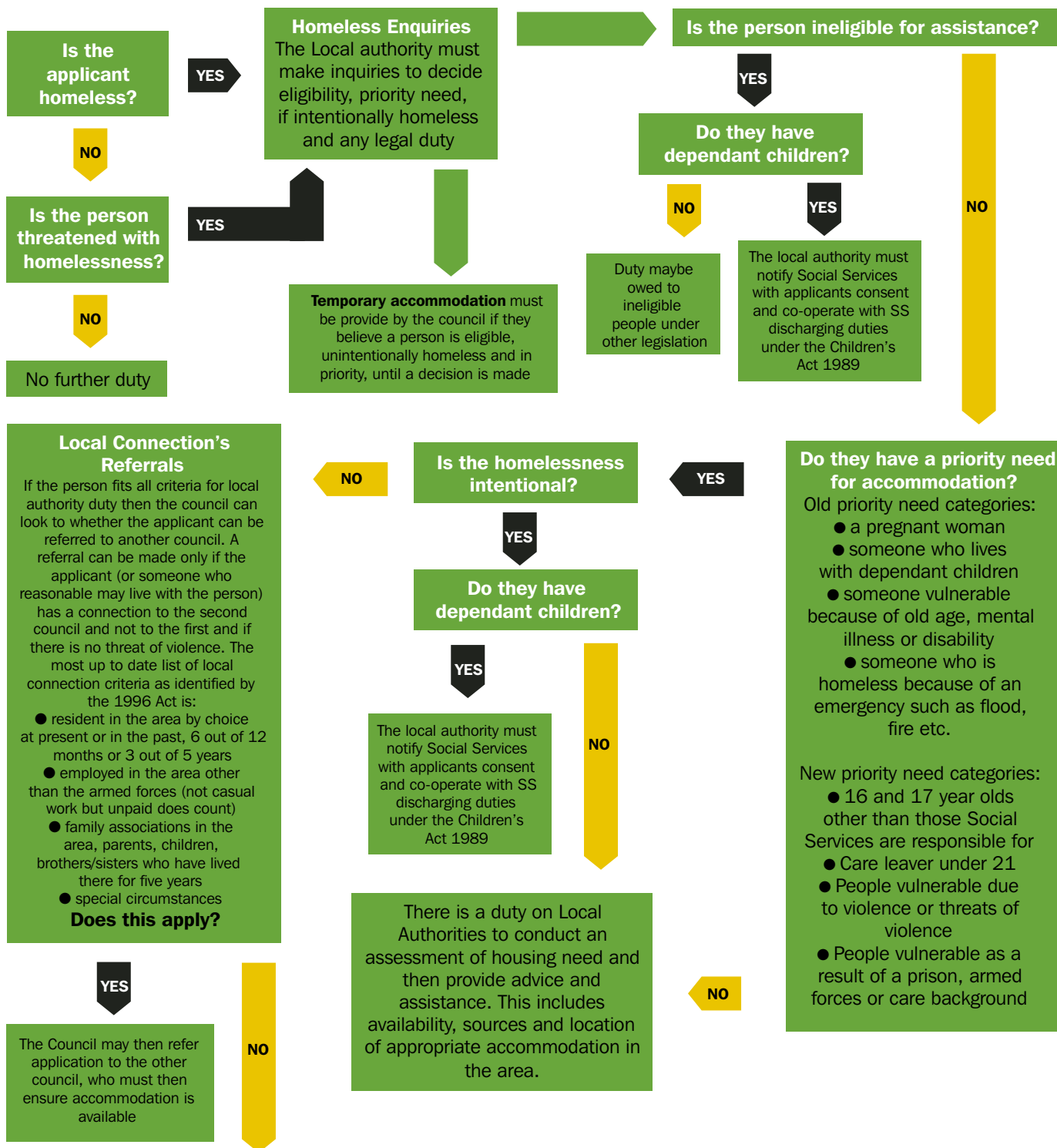
Promoting independent living

Artisan Crescent,

Alwyck Housing Association:

Located on the Oysterfields estate on the north-west edge of St. Alban's, Artisan Crescent offers 8 purpose built self contained and furnished flats and bedsits attached to communal facilities. The scheme is focused primarily on meeting the needs of young people leaving care and other young people who require support in developing their independent living skills ages 16 – 21. Accommodation is offered on an assured short-hold basis. Tenants are particularly encouraged to accept responsibility for managing their own accommodation. Regular tenant participation meetings are held and tenant representatives attend the Project Management Committee meetings. A small staff team are available at appointed times to provide advice and assistance on a range of issues including budgeting, benefits advice, access to employment and training and day to day living skills. The staff team then provide resettlement and outreach to former tenants in the wider community.

Primary Homelessness and Rough Sleeping



Accommodation Duty : If a person is eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, then the council must secure accommodation for that person. The council must maintain and publish an allocations scheme which includes a statement of the policy on offering choice or the opportunity to express preferences about accommodation. The scheme must also give **'reasonable preference'** to: statutory homeless people, homeless people the local authority has a duty to house and people not in priority need who have been housed under the new power, people in unsanitary/overcrowded/unsatisfactory accommodation, people who need to move on medical/ welfare grounds and people who need to move on hardship grounds. Additional preference may be given to those with urgent housing needs. A local authority may adjust/ remove priority from an applicant if they or a member of their household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicant an unsuitable tenant. The local authority must consider each application for allocation for housing, give advice and information about the right to apply and my help to those who may have difficulty applying.

PROGRESS

		2003/04 Quarter 2 June – Sept actual numbers accepted as priority need	2004/05 Quarter 2 June – Sept actual numbers accepted as priority need	% change	2003/04 Number of acceptances per 1000 households	2004/05 Number of acceptances per 1000 households
Norfolk	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Breckland	56	76	36%	2.8	3.9
	Broadland	90	60	-33%	5.4	6.2
	Gt Yarmouth	103	78	-24%	5.3	8.2
	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	74	113	53%	5.0	5.6
	North Norfolk	62	34	-45%	4.9	4.6
	Norwich	172	175	2%	13	13.8
	South Norfolk	28	34	21%	3.3	2.0
	Totals	585	570		County average	County average
				5.7 per 1000	6.3 per 1000	
Suffolk	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Babergh	29	21	-28%	2.6	2.2
	Forest Heath	16	16	0%	1.9	2.4
	Ipswich	78	105	35%	6.9	5.7
	Mid Suffolk	31	23	-26%	3.5	3.7
	St Edmundsbury	25	47	88%	3.5	3.4
	Suffolk Coastal	44	41	-7%	3.5	3.0
	Waveney	84	87	4%	4.8	4.8
	Totals	307	340		County average	County average
				3.81 per 1000	3.6 per 1000	
Essex	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Basildon	76	67	-12%	6.5	5.2
	Braintree	83	104	25%	6.5	7.0
	Brentwood	26	31	19%	3.2	4.2
	Castle Point	21	79	276%	2.7	2.2
	Chelmsford	89	46	-48%	5.2	5.3
	Colchester	148	85	-43%	6.6	8.9
	Epping Forest	46	60	30%	2.9	3.7
	Harlow	80	83	4%	10.1	9.5
	Malden	36	43	19%	4.5	5.6
	Rochford	23	12	-48%	1.7	2.1
	Southend on Sea	115	76	-34%	3.3	4.5
	Tendring	62	87	40%	6.4	4.9
	Thurrock	109	108	-1%	5.8	6.7
	Uttlesford	23	11	-52%	2.6	2.4
Totals	937	892		County average	County average	
				4.9 per 1000	5.1 per 1000	
Hertfordshire	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Broxbourne	46	60	30%	7.5	5.1
	Dacorum	29	25	-14%	1.8	2.0
	East Hertfordshire	38	38	0%	2.1	2.4
	Hertsmere	14	19	36%	2.5	1.6
	North Hertfordshire	43	30	-30%	4.0	3.3
	St. Albans	53	36	-32%	3.5	3.1
	Stevenage	40	30	-25%	4.5	4.8
	Three Rivers	15	30	100%	3.5	2.7
	Watford	38	34	-11%	5.5	4.2
	Welwyn Hatfield	104	100	-9%	9.0	8.4
Totals	420	402		County average	County average	
				4.4 per 1000	3.8 per 1000	
Bedfordshire	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Bedford	105	86	-18%	7.8	5.9
	Luton	108	112	4%	7.7	6.4
	Mid Bedfordshire	35	36	3%	2.7	2.5
	South Beds	77	76	-1%	6.7	6.9
	Totals	325	310		County average	County average
				6.2 per 1000	5.4 = per 1000	

PROGRESS

		2003/04 Quarter 2 June – Sept actual numbers accepted as priority need	2004/05 Quarter 2 June – Sept actual numbers accepted as priority need	% change	2003/04 Number of acceptances per 1000 households	2004/05 Number of acceptances per 1000 households
Cambridgeshire	Regional figures	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	Cambridge	64	62	-3%	4.0	5.8
	East Cambs	44	58	32%	4.8	6.0
	Fenland	27	34	26%	2.9	3.4
	Huntingdonshire	43	87	102%	3.9	3.6
	Peterborough	126	121	-4%	5.1	7.0
	South Cambs	30	32	7%	1.9	2.4
	Totals	334	394		County average	County average
					3.7 = per 1000	4.7 = per 1000

Regional	National figures	36,347	32,224	-11%	6.2	6.6
	East of England	2,908	2,908	0%	4.9	4.9
	South West	2,897	2,468	-15%	6.0	5.3
	North East	2,147	2,292	7%	6.4	7.8
	North West	4,734	4,530	-4%	5.3	6.4
	London	8,646	6,514	-25%	9.6	9.6
	South East	4,031	3,298	-18%	4.4	4.5
	Yorkshire & Humber	4,343	3,795	-13%	7.3	7.7
	East Midlands	2,464	2,457	0%	4.7	5.5
West Midlands	4,177	3,962	-5%	6.8	7.2	

Estimate of number of people sleeping rough in England June July 2004

Local Authority District	Region	2004 HSSA (HIP) Estimate	Street Count		JUNE 2004 ESTIMATE	
			Date (yyyymmdd)	Number	SOURCE	NUMBER
1 Westminster	L	51+	21/04/2004	175	Count	175
2 City of London	L	21-30	01/03/2004	22	Count	22
3 Manchester	NW	11-20	20/05/2004	18	Count	18
4 Derby	EM	11-20	16/03/2004	14	Count	14
5 Preston	NW	11-20	25/02/2004	14	Count	14
6 Bournemouth	SW	11-20	26/03/2004	12	Count	12
7 Lambeth	L	11-20	07/04/2004	12	Count	12
8 Swindon	SW	11-20	28/04/2004	11	Count	11
9 Kensington and Chelsea	L	0-10	26/03/2004	10	Count	10
10 Liverpool	NW	0-10	21/11/2003	10	Count	10
11 Brighton and Hove	SE	0-10	25/02/2004	9	Count	9
12 Norwich	E	0-10	23/03/2004	9	Count	9
13 Exeter	SW	0-10	04/03/2004	8	Count	8
14 Hackney	L	0-10	15/04/2004	8	Count	8
15 Northampton	EM	0-10	11/05/2004	8	Count	8
16 Wigan	NW	0-10	21/04/2004	8	Count	8
17 Birmingham	WM	0-10	13/11/2003	7	Count	7
18 Oxford	SE	0-10	16/03/2004	7	Count	7
19 Brent	L	0-10	13/04/2004	6	Count	6
20 Coventry	WM	0-10	25/03/2004	6	Count	6
21 Gloucester	SW	0-10	03/07/2003	6	Count	6
22 Reading	SE	0-10	11/06/2004	6	Count	6
23 Shrewsbury and Atcham	WM	0-10	27/04/2004	6	Count	6
24 Southwark	L	0-10	16/03/2004	6	Count	6
25 Bristol	SW	0-10	25/11/2003	5	Count	5
26 Camden	L	0-10	17/03/2004	5	Count	5
27 Tower Hamlets	L	0-10	21/11/2003	5	Count	5
28 Watford	E	0-10	09/03/2004	5	Count	5
29 York	YH	0-10	31/03/2004	5	Count	5
30 Blackpool	NW	0-10	21/05/2004	4	Count	4
31 Ealing	L	0-10	18/12/2003	4	Count	4
32 Haringey	L	0-10	02/04/2004	4	Count	4
33 Leeds	YH	0-10	26/03/2004	4	Count	4
34 Nottingham City	EM	0-10	30/03/2004	4	Count	4
35 Peterborough	E	0-10	30/03/2004	4	Count	4
36 Bedford	E	0-10	24/11/2003	3	Count	3
37 Burnley	NW	0-10	12/06/2003	3	Count	3
38 Cambridge	E	0-10	09/03/2004	3	Count	3
39 Canterbury	SE	0-10	28/11/2003	3	Count	3
40 Dartford	SE	0-10	13/10/2003	3	Count	3

Analysis and relevant factors

Regionally, London has the worst statutory homelessness issue with 9.6 per thousand households accepted as statutory homeless as opposed to the national average of 6.6 however it has had the greatest reduction in acceptances. The East of England has not moved from last year's position but overall has the second lowest figure per thousand households nationally. This may be due to the activity in the East of England in picking up the 'Prevention Agenda' earlier than other regions in the country. Norwich has a very high level of homelessness per thousand households with nearly three times the regional average and twice the national average. This figure has also risen albeit very slightly and therefore the ODPM have expressed concern. Some other cities around the country have higher figures than this but most have shown significant decrease since the previous years P1E returns.

The rough sleeping statistics illustrate that there are 5 areas within the East of England which feature in the 40 areas of highest rough sleeping. These figures alone don't tell the whole story in terms of progress and therefore we need to look at the table below which shows the trend in rough sleeping in those areas:

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Bedford	3	3	11	0	7
Cambridge	3	9	19	16	21
Peterborough	4	9	3	0	2
Norwich	9	0	0	1	1
Watford	5	0	1	4	9

All statistics taken from the ODPM website – www.odpm.gov.uk

Rough sleeping increases can be due to many factors. One factor is the lack of available or suitable hostel accommodation for very chaotic substance misusers. The need for safe and safely managed accommodation is paramount in getting people with very complex needs and challenging behaviour into accommodation. Another group which is difficult to place are Schedule 1 Offenders and arsonists which pose insurance issues and complex management issues for hostel managers. In Birmingham, Prime Focus have developed accommodation which is designed to meet this need:

A new complex needs unit has been established as a response to extensive research over a four year period. Prime Focus runs a specific provision for men, over 25 years old, who present with multiple or complex needs and are excluded from accommodation. These men will be former or current rough sleepers. The allocations and referral panel consists of several

agencies, including the Contact and Assessment team (CAT), Probation Service, social services, the Community Mental Health Team, the Primary Healthcare Team and Focus Management. The project provides 15 self-contained one bedroom flats with communal facilities including a lounge, access to computers and a laundry. There is 24 hour staff cover on site and active housing management. From the Rough Sleepers Unit 'Preventing tomorrow's rough sleepers: a good practice handbook 2001.

Rising rough sleeping may also be due to a lack of move-on from current hostel bed spaces and may be addressed successfully through a focus on this issue ensuring that beds are available to meet the levels of need and that people aren't staying in a hostel where they require either no support to maintain a tenancy or a lower level support which can be provided by a floating support service.

Local Connection Policies:

Urban areas have much higher levels of homelessness than rural areas which is probably due to the provision and availability of services in the county cities or main towns. Where rural homelessness is tending to increase this may be due to a more rigorous approach to 'Local Connection' policies by urban councils. In rural areas where pressure is increasing on urban councils this may illustrate a less rigorous approach to such policies.

Housing Growth Areas:

Other pressures on areas showing higher proportions of homelessness than the regional average will be economic growth areas and London overspill. Indeed in the East of England, areas which have been identified as housing growth areas by the Regional Housing Strategy also have higher than average proportions of homelessness per thousand households.

Deprivation and poverty:

Areas identified as been among the most deprived areas in the Country such as Gt Yarmouth, NELM (Norwich) and Luton also have statistically worse homelessness issues than neighbouring boroughs/ districts.

Better use of existing stock:

The Empty Homes agency has announced that regionally the East of England has reduced it's empty homes by 3,951 to 59,467 which is a reduction of 6.2%. Some areas around the country, such as the West Midlands, have actually recorded increases.

Strategic Options for Charities

In view of the trend in tackling homelessness and the Supporting People programme many charities are facing tough decisions about their place in their local, county and regional strategies on homelessness and provision of supported accommodation. This will prove to have enormous impact on the way in which they deliver services and the level of delivery provided. One of the major management challenges for charities will be to empower non-sector board members to make effective decisions over the coming years. The key options for many organisations are:

Specialise: A charity which has specialised in homelessness is to switch its attention to helping offenders because it believes that there are too many homelessness charities duplicating each

other's work. St Giles Trust works with homeless people and offenders in the South East of England but Director Daniel Currie told Inside Housing too many agencies were trying to provide homelessness services. The move follows the bankruptcy of

homelessness project St Botolph's in April last year and aborted merger talks between Shelter and Crisis. Mr Currie said: 'I think one of the things that helped me to focus was when St Botolph's closed. A lot of those services have been picked up by other agencies. It became clear that there's a bit of duplication of services.'

He admitted that St Giles' move was also fuelled by competition for funds but maintained that a rationalisation of providers would leave more funds for frontline services. Article taken from Inside Housing – 7th January 2005 p.7

If an organisation is already very specialist then it is important that they can demonstrate very high quality service delivery and clearly demonstrate where applicable that higher costs per unit are providing value for money and solid outcomes. The provision of services is

becoming increasingly a 'competitive marketplace' and providers must ensure that their product is demonstrably higher quality if it is higher cost.

Diversify: A diversification of activities and funding streams puts a charity in strong financial position. This is an option for many organisations and sounds quite straightforward. However, the process is tougher than it sounds. The charity may develop a strategy for diversification which is in line with their constitution and then have all stakeholders sign up to this strategy. The next stage in the process is to confirm need for the new services with the proposed client group and then review the strategy. Finally, finding a suitable funding stream which will inevitably involve further

compromises is also very difficult. This option takes investment of time and money. Therefore the organisation will need to be reasonably stable financially in order to build this process or be fortunate in gaining funding for the process which is occasionally available via local CVS organisations or Charitable Trusts.

Merger/ Growth: This is a model of development that is best known to our members and sector in terms of RSLs. In fact, mergers are not a popular route for charities at present. Often a merger isn't necessary for partnership delivery of services and there is a lot of advice and information on this from organisations such as the Charity Commission and NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations). One of the key causes of poor outcomes is that

one party may be struggling financially and any other governance or strategic issues will be exposed and exacerbated by merger discussions and processes. It can be fear of losing identity and control; the values of the organisations and working cultures need to be compatible. It is, however, clear that 'economies of scale' will mean that charities working together on delivery will ensure lower costs and administrative overheads. This will clearly make such as partnership more attractive to funding bodies especially where procurement methods are being used.



'Terrence Higgins Trust

'shaping the future of management' In 1998, Terrence Higgins Trust realised that improvements in medical treatment were changing the needs of people with HIV. The charity needed greater flexibility, consistency and quality in the delivery of its services. It responded with the Shaping the Future programme. After extensive consultation, THT changed the charity's governance arrangements, established a planning and performance management focus, improved the charity's accountability and increased its needs-led services through mergers with related charities. THT has merged with seven HIV charities in the last 18 months, gaining wider geographical coverage and

increasing its size by 50 per cent. It is providing more services to more people and has reduced the duplication of work by small organisations in the HIV sector.'

Taken from the Charity Awards website-
<http://www.charityawards.co.uk/previous/2000/winners/social.htm>

Final Option: There is a final option which is to remain the same and trust that the organisation is in a strong enough position to continue to assist its' client group. It is my view, that few if any of our members have this luxury given the current climate in key funding streams. Some organisations may find themselves and their activities gradually eroded over the

next few years unless they fully consider the strategic arena in which they operate and clearly define their role in delivering that change. Some may find dramatic cuts which radically challenge their survival and the continuation of a service to their clients.

What is imperative is to understand the environment we operate in and the challenges facing our statutory funding partners in order to ensure that services are meeting either the priority needs of our current funders or diversification of funding enables our organisations to continue to deliver to the clients that are our priority.

Emma Daniel



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