



A “Housing Options Approach”

Kirsty Morrison
Strategy & Research Manager,
City of Edinburgh Council



Why did CEC implement a “housing options approach”?

- Not just about homelessness: about accessing a home
- An “advice led” service
 - Communities Scotland inspection - “the Council describes itself as an advice led service. It provides a wide range of housing advice and not all people approaching its service are necessarily homeless. In 2004/05 the Council carried out 7667 housing advice interviews, 68% of these resulted in a homeless assessment” (2006 -07 – 8594 – 64.1%)

Why?

- Principles of Homelessness Prevention: DCLG Guidance
 - Providing an improved service for all customers with less distinction in the service provided to applicants in relation to their probable priority need status asking “how can we help?” rather than “who can we help?”
 - Examining all possible accommodation solutions
 - Exploring the pros and cons of any available and appropriate options to help applicants make informed decisions or choices

Background

- 2002 – 2007 Strategy



- 2003/2005 Advice & Information Strategies



- 2007 – 2012 Strategy



- New Advice Strategy

How does it work in operation?

- All staff can provide basic housing options advice/interviews
- Specialists:
 - Housing Options Team
 - Temporary Accommodation Service
 - Homeless Officers at Neighbourhood Offices
 - Property Shop Staff
 - Housing Advice & Information Strategy Team

What are Choices?

- CEC – Key to Choice
- RSL's
- PSL
- Private Sector
- Staying in Own Home (Safe as Houses)
- Shared Ownership
- Market Rent
- Homestake

What are the Benefits?

- Customer
 - Person Centred Approach
 - Holistic
 - Empowerment
 - Choices
 - CHR and CBL
- Staff
 - Empowered
 - Less “them/us”
 - Range of information and advice

Impact

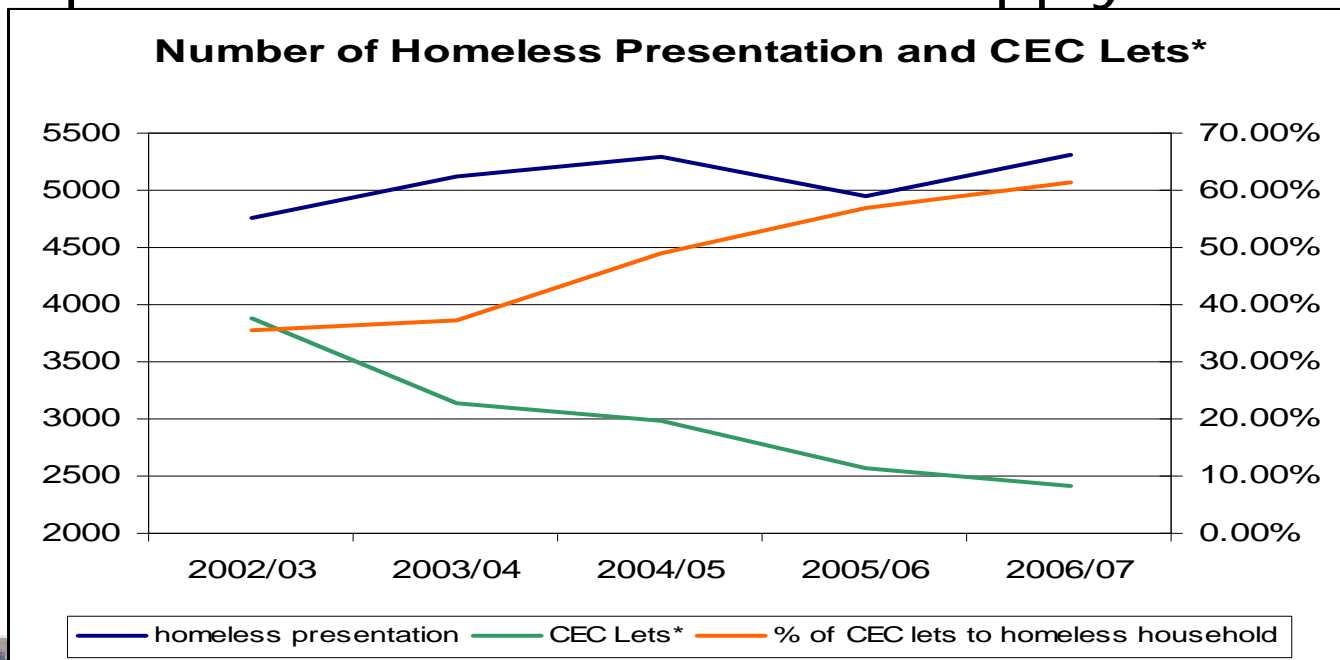
- Tenancy Sustainment increased (knock on effect to housing supply)
- More likely to stay if choice given in home
- Support Needs assessed at time of interview
- Referrals/signposting to appropriate services
- Person Centred Approach to finding a home

Gatekeeping?

- NO!!
- Allows the individual assessment of a person needs/wants/desires and circumstances
- Option to find the best possible solution to their housing need regardless of status
- Advice and information to the forefront
- Cases audited
- Homelessness presentations on the increase!

Why other options?

- Increased homelessness presentations/decrease in supply



Future Developments

- Draft Homelessness Strategy 2007 - 2012 – Consultation period
- 89 participants and 283 service users involved in production
- Major focus on expanding housing options – greater reliance on the private market (Training)
- Key challenges needed to be incorporated – SUPPLY...

Aims

- Prevention
- Access (Housing Options)
- Temporary Accommodation
- Sustainable solutions
- Cross cutting principles



Tools

- Training – JTI/Shelter
- Housing Options Guide
- Key to Choice website
- Edinburgh Landlord Accreditation



Questions

- What happens in your local authority area?
- What are the pros and cons of having a “housing options” approach?
- What are your view on gatekeeping?
- How should LA’s meet the 2012 target?