

## Lambeth Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006



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এই তথ্য অন্য কোনো ভাষায় আপনার প্রয়োজন হলে অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন  
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### Yoruba

Tí ẹ ba fẹ Imoràn yí, ní èdè Òmiràn, ẹjẹ-ẹ kàn wà l'ágogo 020 7926 3628

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## Introduction

Nearly 60% of Lambeth's homes are in the private sector, either owner occupied or privately rented<sup>1</sup>. The quality and availability of this sector is therefore critical to meeting the needs of our current and future residents, and realising the objectives of our Community Strategy to create 'Warm, watertight and safe homes', more affordable homes and sustainable communities. Our Private Sector Housing Strategy aims to help us meet our Decent Homes obligations in the private sector, to capitalise on the Housing Act 2004 and to prevent and reduce homelessness. It is designed to reflect on and develop the work we are already successfully engaged in.

Lambeth, with long-established communities as well as new arrivals from Britain and overseas, is a diverse and vibrant borough. However, we have some of the worst deprivation and poverty in London. We are inner-London's most populated borough and we expect to remain the most dense for some time. Like other inner London boroughs there is a chronic shortage of good quality, affordable housing. Our Private Sector Stock Condition survey shows high levels of unfitness and disrepair particularly in pre-1919 private sector homes, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), pensioner households, and throughout rented sector. Further analysis through a BRE<sup>2</sup> Private Sector Stock Condition Model details this picture further, mapping housing quality at a local level.

We are committed to preventing and reducing homelessness in partnership with landlords, tenants, owner occupiers and other voluntary and statutory bodies, by addressing the new statutory reality as well as building capacity amongst stakeholders. This strategy will inform the work of our Private Sector Housing Unit (PSHU), and Lettings First Partnership, up to meeting the Decent Homes target in the private sector, and the production of our next Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. It will also sit alongside the Council's Homelessness Strategy. The Private Sector Housing Unit has developed a Private Housing Assistance Policy to provide strategic direction and a set of working practices which aim to be customer focussed and responsive to the borough's and private sector's needs. With new powers of enforcement as well as the availability of incentives and grants, we believe that we can build on our strong existing partnerships with all private sector housing providers.

New legislation has given us tools to tackle poor quality, empty and badly managed private sector housing. Because we believe that private sector landlords are partners in providing housing, we want to pursue a partnership approach with them, and focus on assistance, licensing and accreditation to improve the quality of housing. However we will use our enforcement policy to address some of the worst excesses of unscrupulous landlords. At the core of our work are five objectives:

- 1. To improve the quality of private sector accommodation particularly for vulnerable households**
- 2. To increase the supply of good quality private sector accommodation**
- 3. To improve condition of HMOs and practices of people managing HMOs**
- 4. To work with key stakeholders to improve quality and perception of the private sector**
- 5. To Maintain and build upon existing knowledge of private sector and effectively monitor and evaluate our work**

<sup>1</sup> Lambeth Stock Condition Survey 2003; <sup>2</sup> Building Research Establishment

The strategy sits at the heart of a broad and detailed policy framework operating at the national, regional and local levels.

### **The National Context**

The Housing Act 2004 and the Decent Homes Target are the main drivers of the development and implementation of this strategy.

#### *Housing Act 2004*

The Housing Act 2004 has significant implications for private sector housing. It replaces the 'fitness standard' with the 'Health and Safety Rating System', enables local authorities to further target empty private sector properties, establishes tenancy deposit schemes and introduces a licensing regime for HMOs.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Decent Homes in the Private Sector*

The ambition for homes to meet decency standards is shared across all tenures. However unlike decent homes in the social sector where all properties must be decent by 2010, we will ensure that 70% of private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people will be decent by 2010, and 75% by 2020.

### **The Regional and Sub-Regional Context**

#### *London Plan*

The Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy sets out a vision for London's Housing, based on principles of creating "Sustainable Communities". The central objectives of the plan all relate to Private Sector Housing. They are to:

- accommodate London's growth within its boundaries without encroaching on open spaces
- make London a better city for people to live in
- make London a more prosperous city with strong and diverse economic growth
- promote social inclusion and tackle deprivation and discrimination
- improve London's accessibility
- make London a more attractive, well-designed and green city

#### *London Housing Strategy 2005*

The London Housing Strategy is focussed on increasing the number of homes in Lambeth and on building sustainable communities. There is a strong focus on increasing the quality of existing homes, and the scale of the challenge posed by low quality private sector housing. It adopts the target of 70% and 75% of vulnerable households in private sector housing being in decent homes by 2010 and 2020 respectively.

#### *South West London Private Sector Housing Strategy*

In partnership with neighbouring London boroughs, this strategy identifies the investment needs of private sector homes in the south west of London. It sets out the scope of non-decency in the private sector, and proposes broad solutions that each borough can sign up to in order to address our joint obligations towards private sector housing in the sub region.

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<sup>2</sup> ODPM, Explanatory notes to Housing Act 2004

## **The Local Context**

### *Housing Strategy*

The 2004-7 Lambeth Housing Strategy (currently being updated) sets out the vision and key areas of action for Lambeth Housing, over a three year period. Among the core objectives within the strategy are to increase the supply of affordable housing, to prevent homelessness and to provide decent homes.

### *Homelessness Strategy*

The Homelessness Strategy is focussed on eradicating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families and reducing greatly the reliance on temporary accommodation. A greater role for the Private Sector is an important element of this, with objectives for increasing the use of Private Sector Leased properties and maximising the number of families re-housed on Assured Shorthold tenancies using the rent deposit scheme.

### *Empty Properties Strategy*

Lambeth's Empty Property Strategy highlights the importance of empty properties both to the wider environment in which they sit and as a wasted resource of valuable affordable housing. The number of long-term empty properties in Lambeth has been substantially reduced in recent years, however a range of measures are available to the council to bring these properties back into use.

### *Compulsory Purchase Policy*

We will take every step to assist owners of empty properties in bringing the accommodation back into use. However, there are some instances where properties remain empty for long periods of time despite our efforts. Our Compulsory Purchase Policy is an additional tool for bringing properties back into use. Whilst it is a weapon of last-resort, we will consider this action if there is no reasonable likelihood of a property being brought back into use by the owner.

### *Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy*

This policy deals with the practical application of enforcement procedures that we use to achieve the statutory housing and environmental standards. It sets out what owners, landlords, their agents and tenants of private sector properties can expect from officers.

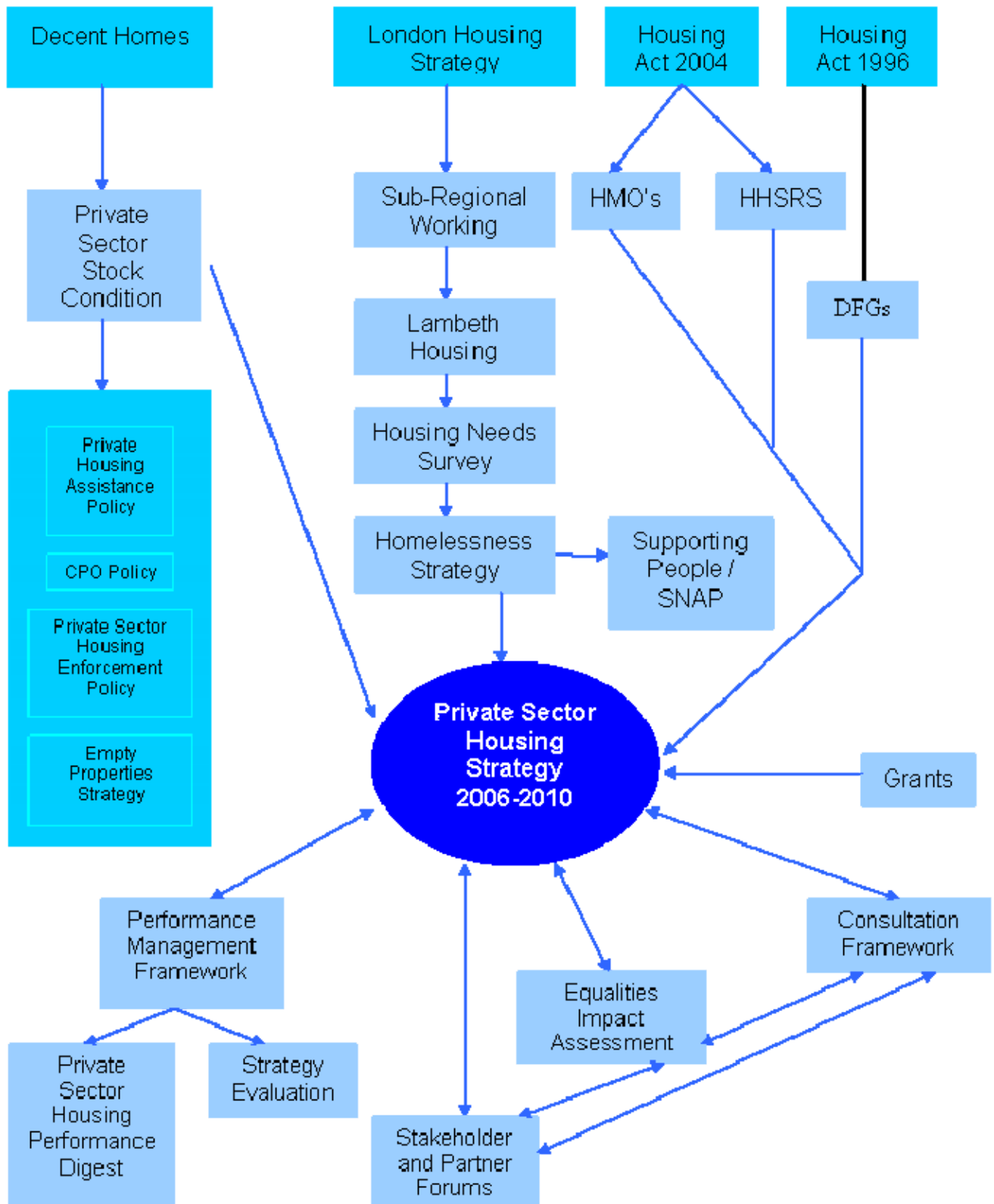
### *Private Housing Assistance Policy*

This policy sets out the assistance the council will provide in order to make dwellings in the private sector healthy, safe and secure enabling vulnerable people to remain in the community. It will work in conjunction with the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policies. It outlines the assistance and advice schemes that are available, the funding and grants that we can facilitate, and the conditions that are attached.

### *Supporting People Strategy and SNAP*

Supporting People is a programme aimed at providing housing-based support to vulnerable people. The Support, Needs, Assessment and Placement (SNAP) team aim to increase the proportion of vulnerable clients accessing Supporting People service. Private Sector support is an important component of the Supporting People programme, with funding going towards the Home Improvement Agency and the Rent Deposit Scheme.

**The Private Sector Housing Strategy:**  
 Embedded in a wider strategic framework



### *Housing Supply*

The supply and cost of housing within in Lambeth and surrounding areas is of great importance in both promoting and limiting access to the private sector and in determining the quality of the stock. In a market place with more housing than need, cost comes down and quality goes up as sellers and landlords compete for available business. In a market with a shortage of housing the converse is true; prices go up and quality can go down. The situation of Lambeth is nearer the latter. It is beyond the scope of this strategy to discuss issues to do with increasing housing supply. The local authority's Unitary Development Plan is at the heart of attempts to increase supply. The Housing Partnership's team works with Registered Social Landlords, the Housing Corporation and private developers to deliver a range of affordable housing units through Section 106 agreements.

### **The Evidence Base**

Before moving onto the individual elements of the strategy it is important to consider the evidence base that we have drawn upon in developing our plans. We draw primarily on three sources: the 2004 Stock Condition Survey, the 2003 Housing Needs Survey and the 2005 BRE Stock Condition Model.

#### *Lambeth's 2004 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey*

This study was carried out to identify the physical condition of private sector housing stock in Lambeth. The study focuses closely on energy efficiency and Decency. It combines the 'bricks and mortar' data with a socio-economic survey of households. Our new Private Sector Housing Strategy relies heavily on the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. Another survey will be carried out in 2008.

#### *Lambeth's 2003 Housing Needs Survey*

This research provided Lambeth with a comprehensive model of housing need in the borough, based on guidance laid out by the ODPM in July 2000. Local housing needs assessment plays a crucial role in underpinning land-use policies relating to affordable housing and new provision investment. The survey has particular relevance to private sector housing by showing affordability levels across all tenures, an analysis of household incomes and in-depth data on the housing need of equalities groups.

#### *Lambeth's 2005 BRE Stock Condition Model*

The BRE Stock Condition Model uses data from English House Conditions Survey to statistically model local housing conditions. It is a sophisticated technique that can be used to map stock condition levels at a very local level focussing on the new census super output areas. Like many other authorities we have used this to enhance our knowledge beyond the traditional stock condition survey.

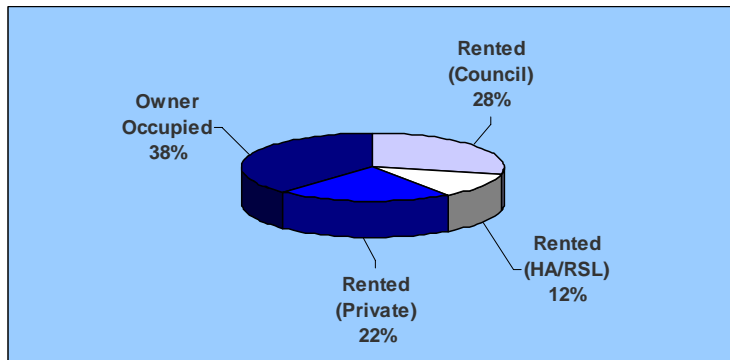
#### *Lambeth's 2004 HMO Study*

Lambeth commissioned research into the borough's HMOs, their location and specific problems that they held. Survey nearly 1800 buildings, the report concluded that there were a significant number of HMOs within the borough, that the majority of these were three-storeys or greater and these properties were in relatively poor condition, and represent a major area of significance for the borough. It was also noted that there were higher density areas of HMOs in the borough, particularly in the South and the West. The estimated cost of comprehensive repairs to these properties was put at £20m, with

£4m alone required for fire safety measures. However, it was recognised that the responsibility for these repairs lay with the landlord.

Figure 1 shows the mix of tenure within Lambeth. The proportion of owner occupied homes is far below the national average at 38%, compared to 68% in England as a whole. There is great variation between wards within the borough. For example, in Prince's in the north of the borough and Coldharbour in the centre there is a very large social rented sector but very few people in the private rented sector (approximately 12% in each ward). This contrasts with the Streatham area where for example 33% of St Leonard's and 24% of Streatham Wells wards live in private rented housing.

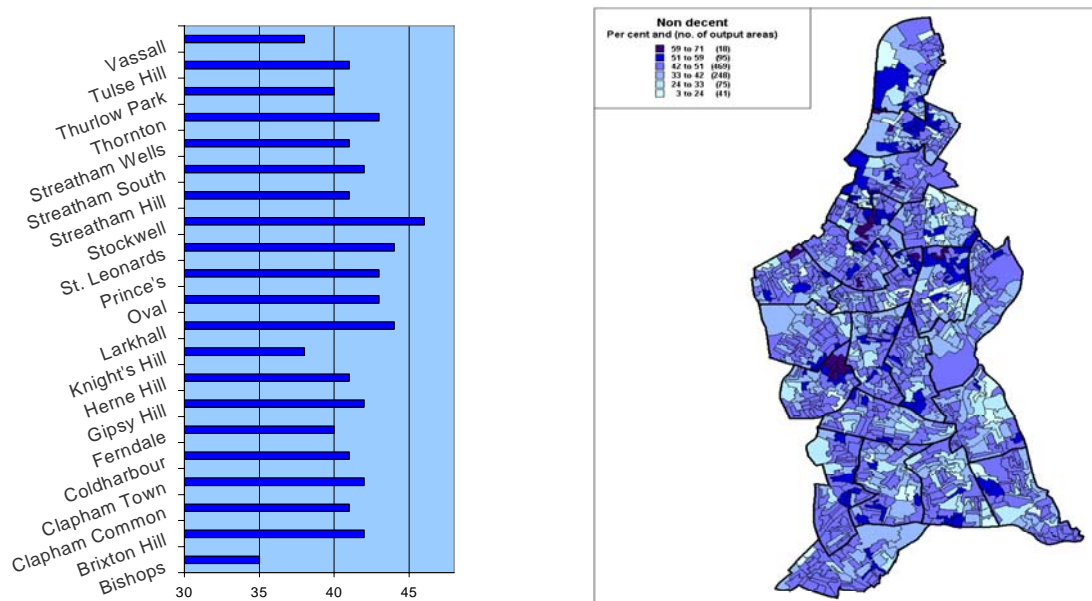
**Figure 1 Tenure Mix in Lambeth**



Source: 2003 Lambeth Stock Condition Survey

Figure 2 shows evidence of the quality of homes in the private sector. The bar chart shows levels of non-decency in the private sector by ward. The range is about 11% from Bishops to Stockwell. However if the two extremes are excluded the range is very narrow, approximately 6%. This suggests that private sector non-decency is a major issue throughout Lambeth and not one particularly confined to any one area. The map highlights this even further. Whilst there are pockets with high levels of private sector non-decency, they are just that – small areas surrounded by better condition properties and found throughout Lambeth.

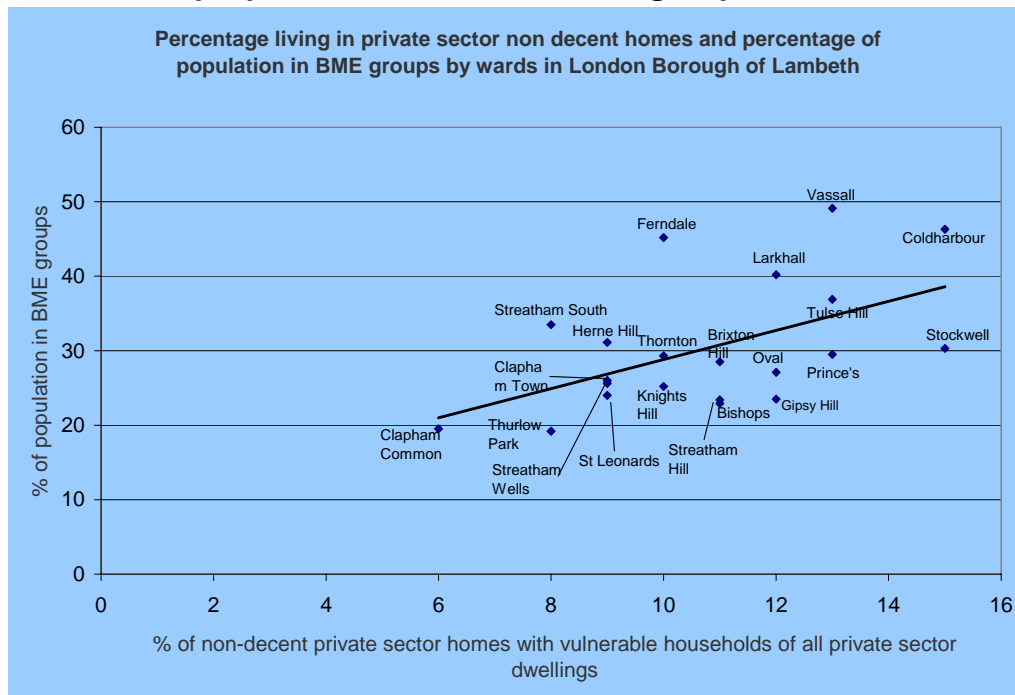
**Figure 2 Private sector non decent dwellings as a percentage of all private sector dwellings**



Source: 2003 Lambeth Stock Condition Survey

Source: 2005 BRE Stock Condition Model

**Figure 3 Percentage of all households in the private sector who are both vulnerable and living in non decent homes by Lambeth ward by proportion of ward from BME groups**



Source: 2001 Census of England and Wales / 2003 Lambeth Stock Condition Survey

The figure above shows the proportion of vulnerable households living in non decent private sector homes analysed against the proportion of BME households in each Lambeth ward (as set by Census 2001). It is evident that those wards with the highest level of BME households also have a higher proportion of vulnerable households living in non decent accommodation. Furthermore, Coldharbour has a high proportion of Portuguese residents, which would not be identified as a BME group from the 2001 Census, but who are recognised as a specific group within Lambeth’s Equality Strategy.

The evidence suggests high levels of non decency in the private sector spread throughout the borough. Perhaps unsurprisingly, vulnerable groups are more concentrated in particular areas than non decent private sector homes in general suggesting that some particular targeting in areas may be useful. However policy really needs to address the borough as a whole.

## Objective 1

### To improve the quality of private sector accommodation particularly for vulnerable households

Many vulnerable households live in accommodation that is either of poor quality or does not meet their basic needs, reducing their quality of life and adversely impacting upon their health. The Private Sector Housing Unit aims to improve the condition of low quality private housing, particularly with the aim of supporting vulnerable households and ensuring that people can remain in their home as long as possible. Our work is divided into four main areas:

1. Improving the quality of the Private Rented Sector
2. Improving the quality of owner occupied housing
3. Enhancing Energy Efficiency
4. Implementing the Housing Health & Safety Rating System

#### **Improving the quality of the Private Rented Sector**

We aim to continue fostering links with landlords to encourage improvements in the private rented sector. There are a number of avenues for achieving this:

- a) Lettings First and the Landlord Accreditation scheme are two avenues for improving the quality of private rented accommodation. We aim for over 90% of private sector leased properties, and properties owned by Accredited Landlords to meet decent homes. Landlord Accreditation is a major driver of improvement in this sector, recognising landlords who run a professional business and providing properties in a good condition, which are safe, secure and well managed for the benefit of the tenants who rent them. It also comes with a range of other benefits including: grant incentives: discounts (trade stores); preferential insurance rates; reduced fee on HMO license; preferred landlord status; reduced rates through letting/managing agents; use of the Accredited Landlord logo.
- b) HMO licensing, advice and assistance is a major area of improvement within the private rented sector. This is the focus of the next section of the strategy.
- c) Home Improvement Agency: whilst much of the work of the HIA is targeted at the owner occupied sector there are ways in which assistance is offered in the rental sector particularly if it is a protected tenancy.

#### **Improving the quality of owner occupied housing**

The principle objective with respect to owner-occupiers is to enable elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible. This is carried out in a number of ways by the Home Improvement Agency, including

- a) the provision of grants and loans
- b) providing advice and advocacy both on home improvement and income maximisation

By supporting and advising applicants through the application processes, HIA staff will ensure that reliable contractors are used, that applicants are not overwhelmed by the process, and that best value and added value are obtained in the form of referrals to other organisations and assistance with benefits. We aim to provide our service both efficiently and effectively and in line with key performance indicators. Specifically to

make visits within 6 weeks of being referred and that the time between receipts of the full recommendation from an Occupation Therapist to grant approval to average 4 months. In emergency cases, grant approval must take place within 1 month.

Funding will be sought to set up an adapted property register, covering all housing tenures. The HIA will work with Adult Services, Children's Services and the Housing Allocations Team to direct grants to those who need them most, and those whose need goes unnoticed. This assistance will vary depending upon resources and priorities and are set out within the Council's Private Housing Assistance Policy. The range of programmes include:

- Home Repair Assistance grants (HRAs) and Repayable Repair Grants (RPGs) aimed at elderly and disabled owner occupiers on low incomes.
- Houseproud and Loans for All, administered through the Home Improvement Trust and GLEEN<sup>3</sup> respectively are available to those not qualifying for grants.
- We will investigate the possibility of extending assistance into other areas, such as grants for loft conversions in very overcrowded low-income households with young children. These will be dependant upon available resources both locally and across the region and will support local priorities.
- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) will be the main vehicle for delivering major adaptations to homes. The HIA will continue to strengthen its working relationship with the Occupational Therapy and new Community Care Teams to deliver an improving service. Discretionary Disabled Facility Grants (DDFGs) will continue to be offered in the rare occasions when a financial top up is required. Further links will be sought with health professionals to enhance joint working in the area of hospital discharge and prevention of hospitalisation. We will also seek better value procurement options for simple adaptations.
- Repairs and improvements will be linked wherever possible to our Affordable Warmth Strategy (Also see the Energy Efficiency Chapter in this strategy).
- Where the resources are available, security and crime prevention will continue to be provided through a variety of measures. We aim to secure this funding either through the Lambeth Opportunities Fund (LOF) or alternative streams, including Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.
- Help the Aged will continue to be supported in order to be able to provide free locks and smoke alarms to pensioners.
- The partnership between the HIA, Age Concern Lambeth and Lambeth Endowed Charities will continue. Lambeth Endowed has donated a sum to the joint hardship fund which has been matched by the local authority. This fund enables HIA Case Managers and Age Concern's workers, particularly their Handymen to organise and fund small emergency and preventative works with the minimum of bureaucracy.
- With the help of NRF funding it is hoped to set up a Small Repairs service to carry out specialist small repairs (plumbing, electrical etc) at very short notice. This service will initially be targeted on the geographical areas of greatest need, particularly in relation to achieving decent homes for vulnerable households.

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<sup>3</sup>GLEEN (Greater London Energy Efficiency Network) is a not-for-profit company that promotes the benefits of energy efficiency throughout London and the surrounding districts in partnership with local authorities and other agencies

### *Providing advice and advocacy*

- We will work with our partners and the National Federation of Master Builders to compile a list of 'approved' contractors, available to those who do not qualify for the HIA service. This will be monitored and updated on a six monthly basis.
- Welfare Rights Advice, income maximisation, and advocacy are key parts of the HIA's service to owner occupiers. Funding will be sought to provide a welfare rights advisor to provide support to Case Workers working with vulnerable people and to provide assistance with appeals and benefits training.
- We will investigate options for providing mortgage advice by a qualified independent body through the South West London regional partnership.
- The HIA will seek to fund a worker to support and champion the needs of owner-occupiers, providing 'Moving On' or 'Housing Options' services, consisting of advice on alternative housing options, down-sizing, conversions, and assistance in finding alternative accommodation, especially sheltered.

#### **Case Study: Home Improvement Agency (HIA)**

*The HIA offers a range of services and is able to address service users multiple needs. Take the example of an owner occupier with a disability, referred to the HIA by the Occupational Therapy (OT) Dept, with the recommendation that she needs a stair-lift and a level access shower. The HIA Case Manager may visit and discover her to be living on a very low income, that the house lacks heating, that the roof is leaking badly and that she has been broken into recently and is frightened.*

*Through a Disabled Facilities Grant, the HIA can help secure her a stair-lift and a level access shower. The HIA Surveyor, who wrote the specification for that, can also write one for roof replacement and security work paid for with a Home Repairs Assistance Grant. The contractors who carried out the work came from the Council's list, and their work and payment is overseen by the HIA. A Coldbusters grant may be able to pay for central heating and insulation. The HIA have also helped double the resident's income by helping her to claim Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit and Council Tax Benefit.*

## **Enhancing Energy Efficiency**

Enhancing Energy efficiency is a important because it:

- reduces fuel bills
- makes homes more comfortable & healthier to live in.
- helps reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the main contributor to climate change.

This component of the Private Sector Housing Strategy will complement Lambeth's Affordable Warmth Strategy, currently under development, and the reporting requirements of the Home Energy Conservation Act. This is a particularly important are for Private Sector Housing. SAP Rating is a measure of a dwelling's overall energy efficiency running from 1 (highly inefficient) to 120 (highly efficient). While the average SAP rating in Lambeth's council housing is 63, in private housing it is much lower for owner occupiers without mortgage and with mortgages and in private rented properties at 49, 52 and 54 respectively.

Our strategy for Energy efficiency is based on three approaches:

- a) Grant Schemes
- b) Advice and Education
- c) Incorporating Energy Efficiency Into Repairs

#### *Grant schemes*

The grants and loans available at any time will vary according to resources and priorities, and are set out in the Council's Private Housing Assistance Policy. The Private Sector Housing Strategy will target grants and promote these through local forums, mailings and publications to increase the uptake. We will further work to increase this by implementing a systematic process of benefits health checks to identify needs and target support.

The main energy efficiency grant schemes in Lambeth are:

- Warm Front a national scheme providing grants for people who are over 60, pregnant, disabled or chronically sick as well as families with children under 16. A Warm Front grant of £2,700 or £4,000 (if oil central heating has been recommended) can provide a package of insulation and heating tailored to each property. 145 measures were installed through Warm Front in 2004/05 in Lambeth.
- Coldbusters provides grants for private sector homeowners or tenants on income-based benefits. Grants are available for heating and insulation. These have been available through the South West London Partnership and will be again for 2006-08. They are capped at £6,000 and awarded to Lambeth residents for works such as condensing boiler installations, upgrading heating controls, insulation and windows;
- Solar for London helps London home-owners install solar hot water heating equipment. Three installations were completed in 2004/05 in Lambeth. The Accredited Landlords Grants scheme provides grants for landlords accredited under the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Grants are available for works to make homes 'decent', including energy efficiency measures;
- Accredited Landlords Grants
- Loans for All provides low-interest or interest-free loans for private sector homeowners to install energy efficiency measures, including central heating, insulation and solar water heating. This scheme has been promoted throughout 2004/5 and 2005/6 but at the time of the strategy going to print, no loans had been taken up within the Borough.
- Private Landlord Energy Award Scheme (PLEASE) provides grants and interest-free loans to landlords for energy efficiency measures including replacement boilers and insulation. 8 grants were installed in 2004/05 in Lambeth under Please.
- HelpCo Energy Club is a membership scheme that offers lower prices for gas and electricity, fixed monthly or weekly payments and energy advice. The scheme is available to any Lambeth resident who is responsible for the payment of their home fuel bills.

#### *Advice & Education*

Advice and education should be provided to Lambeth private sector residents on different ways of reducing fuel bills such as heating hot water most efficiently, improving the insulation standards of homes and controlling condensation & damp

The South East London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (SELEEAC) provides free energy advice to Lambeth residents through a free-phone service. Since April 2005, the South East London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre have organised a range of presentations and events and training (See consultation and partnerships section for

more details). During 2004/05, SELEEAC provided Home Energy Advice packs to 1,123 households. They gave presentations on energy efficiency to six schools; they provided training to many healthcare and community groups. We aim to increase the number of Affordable Warmth-related presentations and training events by 5% annually.

The Private Sector Housing Strategy will support the expansion of training, including training for staff in fuel poverty and providing energy efficiency advice, as well as advising and informal local landlords and tenants through the Private Sector Housing Forum.

#### *Energy Efficiency through repairs*

Energy efficiency measures are incorporated into repairs carried out by grants from Lambeth's Home Improvement Agency. Work includes, doors and windows, replacement repairs and double glazing, under-floor insulation, loft and flat roof insulation, roof replacement and repair, cavity wall insulation, installation and repair of central heating, new boilers. Funding is provided through grant aid such as Coldbusters grants, Home repairs Assistance grants, Hardship Grants, Repayable Repair Grants and Please Grants. The HIA also addresses the issue of Fuel Poverty through its Welfare Rights and Income Maximisation work

### **Implementing the Housing Health & Safety Rating System**

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) replaces the fitness standard as the tool for assessing the health and safety standards of a dwelling and defining the parameters for intervention by the local authority. The principle behind the HHSRS is that 'Any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors'<sup>4</sup>. Implementation of the HHSRS requires a strategic approach to both assessment and enforcement, in line with national and local priorities, a focus on the most vulnerable households.

#### *HHSRS Assessments*

The HHSRS assesses 29 categories of housing hazards divided into 4 main groups: Physiological hazards (e.g. excess cold and heat, and pollutants such as asbestos), Psychological hazards (e.g. overcrowding and noise), protection against infection (e.g. hygiene and water supply) and protection against accidents (e.g. falls on stairs and electrical hazards). The HHSRS assessment determines and informs enforcement decisions by taking into account the likelihood of a hazardous occurrence and its potential severity. The assessment provides a numerical value of the level of danger enabling the authority to prioritise intervention where the hazards are most severe.

A Category 1 hazard will trigger a duty on the authority to take appropriate enforcement action and will also trigger action in the context of decent homes. The standard will include a requirement that a decent home should be free of Category 1 hazards. Enforcement action will therefore remain a key part of the strategy to deal with unsafe or non-decent homes, particularly those in the private rented sector. The two hazards most likely to lead to a mandatory response from the Council are *fire* and *excessive cold*. Private rented dwellings are most likely to be in the mandatory or discretionary category.

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<sup>4</sup> Housing Health and Safety Rating System Guidance (Version 2)

### *Enforcement*

We intend to issue guidance to landlords, with advice on the principles of HHSRS and to aid understanding of the process that needs to be followed to help a landlord identify hazards in their property. In addition, we will apply the principles of the Enforcement Concordat, which provides a blueprint for fair, practical and consistent enforcement.

Where an HHSRS assessment determines that a hazard has a rating termed as Category 1, the authority is obliged to take action. For hazards identified under Category 2 the local authority will have discretionary powers and these will be managed according to our Enforcement Policy. The Council has signed up to the Government's 1998 Enforcement Concordat setting out what business and others being regulated can expect from enforcement officers. The aim of the policy is to ensure that all enforcement actions comply with the principles of consistency, proportionality and openness. The HHSRS enforcement legislation will enable local authorities to decide that, despite the presence of a Category 1 hazard, immediate enforcement action is unnecessary or not practicable. This may arise where, for example, the occupant is not vulnerable to the hazard in question, or the hazard is an integral feature of a listed building which cannot be dealt with and of which the occupants are fully aware. However, the local authority will exercise its powers to take enforcement action to deal with hazards in the interests of the health and safety of an owner or tenants, and particularly, in relation to the PSA7 target and its focus on vulnerable households.

### *Enforcement Options*

A range of enforcement options are open to the local authority:

- Serving an improvement notice;
- Making a prohibition order, which closes the whole or part of residential accommodation or restricts the number of permitted occupants;
- Taking emergency remedial action;
- Serving a hazard awareness notice;
- Make a demolition order – for specific category and under prescribed circumstances;
- Make a clearance area – for specific category and under prescribed circumstances;
- Prosecute lack of compliance.

Depending on the circumstances informal and or formal notices will be issued together with details of the work required to reduce the level of risk. Section 49 of the 2004 Housing Act allows the costs associated with the preparation and enforcement of these notices to be recovered.

### *Enforcement, Monitoring and Review*

As part of the regulatory impact review a formal monitoring process of the new enforcement regime will be commissioned within three years of implementation. This is in line with proposed monitoring of the HMO licensing scheme, and will enable an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the enforcement regime, particularly through the use of the HHSRS as an intervention tool.<sup>5</sup>

### *Assistance*

The local authority will endeavour to make some financial assistance available, in the form of grants or loans, for Landlords (HMO owners) to encourage them to make the properties healthy and safe. The criteria for any assistance and any conditions that would apply are set out within Lambeth's "Private Housing Assistance Policy", (PHAP). This is discretionary, and will vary according to available resources and priorities, reflecting local priorities.

## Objective 2

### To improve the condition of HMOs and practice in managing HMOs

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) cover most types of accommodation where there are groups of people living together who do not constitute a family and where these people share some kind of amenity or common entrance. HMOs attract specific attention because of the high risk of health and safety risks which can be concentrated in this category of accommodation. The Housing Act 2004 introduces a new regulatory framework for HMOs which form an important component of this strategy. Lambeth, as is typical of an inner London borough has a large number of HMOs. Our understanding of HMOs in the borough has been bolstered by the dedicated HMO study which was carried out in 2004. The study suggested that there were approximately 7,000 HMOs within the Borough, 72% of which were three-storeys or greater and 76% of these being shared by 5 or more households. With respect to HMOs there are three particular areas for action:

1. Licensing
2. Identification and Risk
3. Addressing the needs of excluded groups

#### *Licensing*

The Housing Act makes it mandatory for HMOs that meet certain criteria to be licensed. These are where the building:

- is occupied by more than one household and in which more than one household shares an amenity (or the building lacks an amenity) such as a bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities; or,
- is occupied by more than one household and which is a converted building which does not entirely comprise self contained flats (whether or not there is also a sharing or lack of amenities); or
- comprises entirely of converted self contained flats and the standard of conversion does not meet, at a minimum, that required by the 1991 Building Regulation and more than one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies.

Initially, we will focus on those properties that fit into the mandatory requirement to licence. However, the Council will also gather evidence throughout 2006/7 as to the types of properties or occupancy that are of highest risk and use this to establish any case for additional licensing. At the time of this document going to print, it was felt that Lambeth would not look to implement additional licensing before October 2007, and at any point that before such a regime was implemented it would first:

- ensure there is sufficient evidence to support that additional licensing is required and that this action would significantly reduce risk to tenants;
- ensure that all key stakeholders and partners are consulted, including the Private Sector Housing Forum and local landlord associations;
- obtain official approval for extending licensing by the Secretary of State.

We consulted widely with our stakeholders on HMO licensing, particularly on conditions, room size standards, fees, planning applications and timescales for implementation. This resulted in the introduction of incentives for early application, such as:

- A reduction in the licence fee for applications received within the first three months;
- No prescribed room size standards for applications received within the first three-months<sup>5</sup>.
- Additional reductions in the licence fee for accredited landlords and those who have already been recognised as being 'fit and proper'.

All of these incentives are based on the principle that 'good' landlords and agents, managing 'good' properties are less likely to require overt intervention on the part of the local authority, and are also more likely to actively seek to get their property licensed. However, where an application is not forthcoming within the initial period, it is more likely that this will require pro-active identification by the Private Sector Housing Unit and hence less likely to be at a reasonable standard.

### *Identification of HMOs*

Our strategy for identifying HMOs has been drawn from an assessment of a pilot programmes in two wards and the HMO study. Identification will be based on a range of approaches:

- Environmental Health Officers responsible for private sector housing have been split into two teams, based on two areas which encompass an even distribution of HMO properties. Cases are prioritised according to risk.
- The HMO database will be informed and by working in partnership with the Benefits Service, Council Tax, and Planning and Building Control.
- Tenants living in HMO properties are a key source of information. Changes that came into effect with the Housing Act 2004 are more likely to protect tenants' interests in the property, whilst also giving an incentive to contact the local authority, should they believe that a property is not licensed. Specifically, the HHSRS will enable the Local Authority to take action on a dwelling, even if the tenant is evicted, as well as giving the opportunity for the Council to apply for a rent repayment order for up to twelve months if the property is not licensed. Therefore, publicity will be targeted at tenants in key parts of the Borough, (e.g. areas where there are a higher of three-storey HMOs).
- Additionally, officers will check sources where vacant lettings are advertised and further investigate properties which could be HMOs.

### *Assistance & Enforcement*

The Council will endeavour to make some assistance available, in the form of grants or loans, for HMO owners to encourage them to make the properties healthy and safe. The criteria for any assistance and any conditions that would apply is set out within Lambeth's Private Housing Assistance Policy. This is discretionary, and will vary according to available resources and priorities. However, they would always be time limited and may require work to be completed within a specified timescale or Notice period.

The Council's enforcement policy in relation to private sector housing is set out within the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, which is available at the same sources as the Assistance Policy. Further details on how the Lambeth intends to use the HHSRS

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<sup>5</sup> For applications received within the first three-months of licensing, the rooms be assessed against the HHSRS alone. After this period, the room size standards will apply, although the HHSRS assessment will still apply.

as a strategic function is set out elsewhere in this strategy. Any enforcement action will be compliant with relevant legislation and in specific reference to HMO properties; the Council will take pro-active steps to use both Interim and Final Management Orders for all types of HMOs which cause a severe risk to the public. This will be carried out in partnership with other stakeholders (e.g. Lettings First). If necessary Works in Default will be carried out, and the cost of these retrieved, with interest, as a charge placed upon the property. Any enforcement action taken on an HMO will be publicised. The owners and/or agents will be 'named and shamed' and action will be taken to ensure that they are registered as a 'fit and proper person' for the purposes of licensing, not only within Lambeth, but also with any other London Authorities which operate the same criteria<sup>6</sup>.

### *Identifying vulnerable and excluded groups*

HMOs are often a source of housing for vulnerable groups, as they can be cheaper accommodation at the lower end of the market. Some of these groups, such as younger people and those in receipt of welfare benefit, may well be identified through data sources such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax, National Asylum Seeker Service, Adults' Services, Building Control and Planning. However, many of these potentially groups may not be as accessible, or as identifiable. The Private Sector Housing Unit will use these available sources of information and cross-reference them with other key data, (such as census details). The service will research good practice, in terms of reaching these excluded groups and implement an action plan, which will ensure all homes meet the minimum standards as set out within Housing Act 2004.

#### *Case Study: AN HMO in Brixton*

*This property first came to the attention of the Environmental Health section when a report of a fire incident was received in January 2003. An officer traced the owner and, the following month, made two visits to measure the property for the preparation of plans. The plans were submitted for consultation with the Fire Safety Officer of the London Fire and Emergency planning Authority. The Notice of Intention was served in April and it was agreed with the owner that as long as an alarm system was installed within six months she would have one year in which to complete all of the works. The formal notice was served in July. The landlord was contact in October that year regarding progress on the works. At the request of the landlord an officer visited the following month to check the work. Whilst the majority of the work had been done there remained some outstanding items and a letter was sent to the landlord. A further visit was made in December and noted work was in progress. The landlord was contacted again in 2005 requesting access. A site meeting was held as a result and it was noted that all the work required by the notice had been completed.*

The definition of an HMO for the purposes of the Housing Act 2004, varies from that of Planning. HMO licensing cannot be used to require a property to remain occupied as an HMO, or prevent an application from being approved. Lambeth Planning Department is responsible for deciding whether a development should go ahead. Any application for conversion to or from an HMO would be judged entirely on its own merits. However, generally speaking, Lambeth would seek to protect bed-sit type properties, whilst shared houses, which would potentially move in and out of multiple occupancy, would be less likely to have an objection based on the property being an HMO.

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<sup>6</sup> A register of 'fit and proper persons' will be maintained and monitored by all London Authorities through the Association of London Government (ALG). This practice could be adopted across authorities outside London and would be supported by this strategy.

## Objective 3

### To increase the supply of good quality private sector accommodation

With an acute shortage of housing in Lambeth, especially so for vulnerable groups, the private sector has a key role to play in increasing the supply, through:

1. Reducing the number of empty properties
2. Reducing the number of empty flats above shops
3. Opening up access to private rented housing for vulnerable groups

#### **Reducing the number of empty properties**

Empty properties do not just blight the environment; they are a precious resource that is being wasted. The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey identified 2551 empty properties, 58% of which were undergoing some form of renovation, repair or modernisation. Our Empty Property Service, guided by the work of our Empty Property Strategy 2004-7, focuses on the rest. We aim for major year-on-year reductions in Lambeth's empty properties to significantly reduce the number over the next few years.

##### *Case Study: One empty property in Brixton*

*The property had been empty for over 15 years and had substantially deteriorated. There were many complaints from neighbours regarding fly tipping, overgrown gardens and squatting, however the owner was unwilling to bring the property back into use or to sell on. Compulsory Purchase procedures were instigated however during the course of the CPO, the owner contacted the Council to request the details of developers who would buy the property. The CPO was stopped when the owner completed the sale of the property. The new owner, who subsequently became a Preferred Landlord, then refurbished the property and sold the two flats on completion of the works.*

Empty properties and their owners are difficult to identify. We use various methods and work with a range of partners within and external to the council to expedite the process. A major barrier to returning empty properties to use is their condition and the costs involved in renovation. Tools for tackling empty properties include:

- *Empty Property Grants:* A limited number of EPGs are available via the South-West London Regional Partnership, which will continue through 2006/8.
- *Empty Property Advice:* We may be able to connect the landlord with another landlord or developer willing to take on a derelict property. Private Sector Leasing through Lettings First which offers a rent guarantee is also an incentive for owners.
- *Empty Dwelling Management Orders:* Under the Housing Act 2004, councils can compulsorily lease properties for five years to homeless households. This option is only economically viable if the property is in a reasonable state of repair.
- *Compulsory Purchase Orders:* CPOs and much more importantly the threat of CPO has been an important tool in bring empty properties back in to use and despite the costly and lengthy process we anticipate it remaining so.
- *Enforced Sale:* Working in partnership with Building Control and Regulatory Services we can carry out works on a property, recovering costs through an enforced sale.
- *Preferred Landlords:* The Preferred Landlords scheme is the best way of dealing with CPO'd property. Any landlord with a track record of maintaining well managed properties and tenancies and that actively rent or sell redeveloped properties can become preferred landlord and bid for a CPO's property. This is a successful partnership with the private sector representing good value for money for the council

## Reducing the number of empty flats above shops

Properties above shops are a source of housing particularly suitable to single people. There is significant untapped potential for this form of housing, but in developing this sector a range of significant issues need to be addressed in connection with the appropriateness of tenure, the provision of safe access and anti-social behaviour. Making the best use of properties above shops requires commitment to working with planners and funding bodies. An action plan will be developed as part of this strategy and will form part of the Empty Property Strategy that will be updated by May 2007. This plan may well focus on specific areas within the borough and will be dependant upon local regeneration schemes, funding opportunities and Council priorities.

## Opening up access to private rented housing for vulnerable groups

There are significant barriers to private rented accommodation for many groups and our innovative Lettings First partnership is aimed both at creating incentives for landlords to house vulnerable groups and to lower barriers for people on low incomes to rent in this sector. Success in this area is important not just due to the shortage of affordable housing. Opening up the private rented sector to vulnerable households significantly increases their level of choice in living in an area of their choice, accessing the schools, and community services their best suit their needs.

a) *Targeting Landlords:* Lettings First secures private rented properties through the Private Sector Leasing scheme. Properties are procured for 3-5 year periods with Lettings First taking over the management of the property and guaranteeing rent for the owner. So far over 700 properties have been secured in this way in 3½ years and this is an area of great potential growth as Lettings First's reputation grows and relationships with landlords continues to improve.

b) *Targeting tenants:* A major barrier to private sector tenancies is the security deposit. The Assured Shorthold Tenancy (Rent Deposit) scheme provides deposits for homeless families when they sign a 1 year Assured Shorthold Tenancy. As a further incentive they receive £50 per household member (up to a £250 maximum) to join the scheme. Private rented tenancy officers work with landlords and letting agents to ensure that at the commencement of the tenancy the property is sound and complies with Lettings First health and safety requirements. The tenancy agreement is provided free of charge. Tenants are also given a tenancy guide book and details of what is available locally in respect of schools, medical centres, hospitals, and dentists.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is at the heart of a radical programme for further reform in the private sector. Pending announcement of the final LHA policy, Lambeth Benefits Service (LBS) is developing an Impact Plan addressing issues raised by the 18 Pathfinder authorities where the LHA is being trialled as well as local factors. The plan includes consultation and engagement with landlords, community, welfare and advice groups and other statutory agencies such as the Rent Service.

*Case Study: Opening up access to private rented housing for vulnerable groups*  
*The Assured Shorthold (Rent Deposit) Scheme is good for both landlords and tenants. One of our landlords stated "I didn't know what to expect...I'd never really considered letting to people on housing benefit before...the main thing was that I knew I'd get the rent paid, whatever happened, and Lettings First vetted the tenants..." He is keen to sign a new contract with the same family for another year. "I used to get tenants who would then move on quickly and leave the property empty, which was not so good financially: the current tenants have stuck around, and I'm signing a new contract for a second year."*

## Objective 4

### To work with key stakeholders to improve quality of the private sector

Whilst there are increasing enforcement powers open to the local authority in attempting to improve conditions within the private sector we will best achieve our goals if partnership working is at the heart of all we do. In recent years we have built strong partnerships and worked closely with stakeholders in some parts of the service, whilst in other areas there are significant challenges ahead. Some key areas include

1. Building on successful partnerships with landlords
2. Empowering private sector tenants
3. Improving our outreach to excluded groups

#### **Building on successful partnerships with landlords**

There are several avenues through which we will develop our partnership working with landlords:

- The Landlord Accreditation Scheme will be developed giving recognition to those landlords who run a professional business
- Lettings First will continue the quarterly newsletter giving landlords up to date information on our services, new legislation and any items of interest.
- An annual Landlords Conference will continue to be provided for Accredited Landlords tailored to meet their needs and requirements it will foster closer links between Lettings First and these key stakeholders
- We will continue with the work of the of the Accredited landlords sub-group of the Private Sector Housing Forum
- Local landlord associations and forums provide a voice for landlords and an opportunity to deliver key messages and consult on policy. These partnerships will continue to be supported.

#### **Empowering private sector tenants**

Private sector tenants are a difficult group to consult and include many who historically have found it difficult to assert their rights. One important role of the PSHU is to build a relationship with tenants to better understand their needs and empower them to stand up for their rights and standards which they should expect.

- *The Private Sector Housing Forum (PSHF)* consists of private tenants (among other groups). In re-establishing the PSHF during 2004, all tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit were contacted and invited to become involved. The PSHF holds open meetings on a quarterly basis and covers topics that are of specific interest to tenants, as well as landlords. The PSHF has also established a working group to focus on issues that impact on private tenants, such as access to accommodation, and will survey local tenants with the aim of establishing what they would like to see from the forum to be more involved.
- *Rent Repayment Orders*: Tenants living in HMO accommodation that does not meet the conditions of the licence, or where a licence has not been applied for, will be able to apply retrospectively via the Council for a Rent Repayment Order. This potentially can be backdated by up to 12 months, and does mean that unsuitable accommodation will be brought to the attention of the local authority at the point of when the tenant has secured other appropriate accommodation.
- *Tenancy Deposit Scheme* The mechanism in which tenants' deposits are held will need to comply with government approved schemes (either custodial or insured).

This has the potential to increase both the number of tenants contacting the local authority as well as the number of managing agents, and hence could create a much wider range of people to consult with on matters relating to private sector housing.

- *Landlord Accreditation* In promoting landlord accreditation locally, we will also be encouraging people looking to rent in the sector to actively enquire about the behaviour of their landlord before they move into the property.

All of these aspects will pro-actively publicised by the PSHF, Lettings First and the Council, through websites, presentations and the local media in order to inform and empower private tenants.

#### *Case Study: Landlords Conference*

*In order to acknowledge the professional commitment of those landlords who have led the way in improving standards of management in the private rented sector we at Lettings First/Lambeth decided to host a free landlord conference in January 2006. The event was seen as an excellent opportunity to bring landlords up to date with the latest developments in Housing Law and also be an opportunity to engage with some of the organisations who have shown their support and commitment to the accreditation scheme by providing incentives in the form of discounts to reward those landlords who undertake professional training. Key speakers at this event were the President of the Residential Property Tribunal and the Chief Executive of the Tenancy Deposit Scheme. In all the feedback from this event was extremely positive with a desire that such events should be held on an annual basis.*

#### Improving our outreach to excluded groups

Across our service we understand and are concerned that many who need our service the most and indeed some who may be adversely affected by our pressure to improve quality are those we find it hardest to communicate with, consult with and advertise our services to. This was one of the key areas identified by the Equality Impact Assessment of this strategy. A significant challenge across our service is therefore to improve in terms of outreach.

We will actively promote the work of the service through local community centres in specific parts of the boroughs. We will work with internal partners such as the Benefits Service and Adult Services to identify vulnerable households and sources of poor condition accommodation. We will also undertake research to identify good practices in communicating and engaging with excluded groups, for example migrant workers and asylum seekers.

## Objective 5

### To Maintain and build upon existing knowledge of private sector and effectively monitor and evaluate our work

Our ability to be effective in our strategic, enabling and enforcement functions in the private sector will be determined by the level of our knowledge and understanding of the sector and the impact of the interventions outlined in this strategy. Tools that will enable us to check the effectiveness of this approach include:

- Private Sector Stock Condition Survey:
- Targeting & reality testing of key areas identified through research
- Improving our understanding of how different minority ethnic groups use our service
- Qualitative research on vulnerable private sector households
- Embedding the Private Sector Housing Digest
- Monitoring the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan

#### **Increasing the depth of our knowledge**

##### *Stock Condition Survey*

Our last stock condition survey was published in 2004. We are planning a new stock condition survey in 2008. This will provide an important measure of our progress in improving quality in the private sector, assessing whether progress on the multitude of schemes outlined in the strategy have had a significant impact on the sector as a whole. Critically it will assess our progress on PSA7 – the Decent Homes Target, showing us the scale of the challenge of meeting our 70% target for 2010.

##### *Targeting and reality testing of key areas identified through research*

Whilst poor quality in the private sector is found throughout the borough, evidence from our Stock Condition Survey and BRE stock condition model has shown pockets of particular need. Where such pockets exist, such as large numbers of HMOs or poor quality pre-1919 owner occupied housing there is a need to target relevant services. We need to work with our data from the Stock Condition Survey combined with monitoring evidence from our officers on the ground to target any particular hotspots.

##### *Improve understanding of take-up of services by ethnic group*

Our knowledge of take-up of services by ethnic groups has been limited previously with respect to certain communities such as those of Somalian and Portuguese origin. The implementation of new IT system in the department that will hold detailed ethnic data based on 2001 census categories, as well as the established systems used within the PSHU, will allow us to analyse the recipients of our service and assess whether any changes are required in order to make our distribution more equitable.

##### *Qualitative research on vulnerable private sector households*

We aim to carry out qualitative research on the situation of vulnerable private sector households, in order to understand the sector and identify particular ways in which we could improve both the nature of the services we offer and the ways in which we market ourselves, to help meet the needs of vulnerable residents.

This cycle of monitor, review and analysis will help to ensure that the service continues to meet the needs of vulnerable residents.

## A Performance Management Framework

Our performance management framework for the work of the private sector has two key areas

- Monitoring our key performance indicators and targets
- Monitoring the Strategy Action Plan

### *Monitoring our key performance indicators and targets*

At the heart of our Performance Management Framework will be a new Private Sector Housing Performance Digest. This fits into the wider performance management framework of the housing department and the council as a whole. It will be signed off at Senior Management level and will be publicly available on the internet and on request. The digest will contain specific and measurable performance indicators that will track and evaluate the effectiveness of the Private Sector Housing Strategy, allowing intervention if performance slips. The digest has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, will be reported quarterly. The indicators for the digest are as follows:

<b>Description (Number unless stated as proportion)</b>	
Assured Shorthold Tenancies secured through rent deposit scheme	HMOs improved through local authority action
New private sector units procured by Lettings First	HMOs licensed
Proportion of private sector units procured which are 'handed back'	Time between full application being received for HMO licence and licence being issued (if required)
New landlords accredited	Proportion of licences to be issued within 6 weeks of application
Landlord training events	No. of properties made decent through local authority activity
Proportion of accredited landlord properties at decent homes standard	Proportion of private sector dwellings occupied by vulnerable households being decent. (Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008)
Proportion of properties procured by Lettings First at decent homes standard	Proportion of customers receiving a 'good' or 'better than good' service
Properties improved through HHSRS Action	Proportion of customers receiving a 'good' or 'better than good' service from a BME background
Proportion of properties improved through HHSRS at decent homes standard	'Loans for all' referrals
Completed grant cases	Security and crime prevention grants
Houseproud referrals	Completed empty property grants
Properties made decent through HIA assistance and advice	Properties brought back into use or demolished through the activity of the local authority
Completed Coldbuster cases	Proportion of empty properties vacant for longer than 6 months

### *Monitoring our Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan*

We will report annually at the AGM of the Private Sector Housing Forum and to the Departmental Management Team on progress towards meeting the objectives and targets set out in the Action Plan.

## Strategy Action Plan

<b>To improve the quality of private sector accommodation particularly for vulnerable households</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Date / Responsible Officer</b>
To ensure that properties taken on through long term lease or assured shorthold tenancy will meet the decent homes standard. Lettings First to advise owners as to how they could achieve this standard.	95% of properties procured at decent homes standard, as assessed by Lettings First	From April 2006  Lettings First Manager
To address the needs of elderly and disabled owner occupiers living in unsuitable accommodation, where this cannot be adapted to meet their needs.	Create a 'Moving On' service consisting of a specialist advice worker	April 2007  HIA & Grants Manager
To improve the income of vulnerable owner occupiers	Create a specialist welfare rights role within the HIA	April 2008  HIA & Grants Manager
To improve response times and value for money in responding to the need for small and emergency repairs for vulnerable people	Work with partners to create a small repair service using local contractors	July 2006  HIA & Grants Manager
To address the needs of overcrowded families with young children	Present options paper on loft conversions for Business Plan	April 2007  HIA & Grants Manager
To provide options for those who do not qualify for assistance through the HIA	Create an approved contractors list in partnership with the Federation of Master Builders	Dec 2006  HIA & Grants Manager
To further improve working relationship between HIA and Occupational Therapy Service	Co-location of services focussed on disabled customers	April 2007  HIA & Grants Manager
To address the needs of older people who feel unable to remain in their own homes because of the overgrown condition of their gardens	Work with partners to create a volunteer gardening service for older people	April 2009 HIA & Grants Manager
To improve access to hard-to-reach groups	Drop in sessions in GP surgeries; joint publicity work with Benefit Service; presentations at local community centres	From April 2006 HIA & Grants Manager
To improve levels of understanding on energy efficiency and ways of reducing fuel bills.	Produce leaflet launched through Affordable Warmth Strategy	December 2006 Energy Strategy Officer

To raise awareness of the role of SELEEAC (South East London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre)	Develop a referral network for , professionals and community workers	December 2006 Energy Strategy Officer
To advise private sector households on issues of energy efficiency and reducing fuel bills	Create a helpline in partnership with SELEEAC	August 2006 Energy Strategy Officer
To ensure that effective implementation of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System delivers private sector homes that are 'warm, watertight and safe'	Agree a monitoring approach sub-regionally / pan-London which allows for benchmarking and identifying best practice	April 2007 Environmental Health Manager
To ensure that the implementation of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System links into the wider Housing Regeneration and Community Strategy Themes.	Develop a multi-disciplinary working group through the Private Sector Housing Forum	July 2006 Head of Private Sector Housing
To raise awareness of role of private sector housing environmental health	Identify parts of community not using service and develop communication plan	December 2006 Head of Private Sector Housing

### **To increase the supply of good quality private sector accommodation**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Date / Responsible Officer</b>
To convert properties procured for private sector leasing into assured shorthold tenancies	Survey existing landlords to establish risks to stakeholder engagement	July 2006 Lettings First Manager
To ensure that properties owned by accredited landlords meet decent homes standard	Create and circulate self-assessment survey for landlords to establish levels of decency and provide targeted advice	March 2007 Landlord Accreditation Development Officer
To maximise housing supply available to vulnerable households, households at threat of homelessness and key workers.	Update Empty Property Strategy introducing approach for dealing with flats above shops	September 2007 Empty Property Manager
To ensure smooth implementation of future Benefits model	Produce impact plan, which addresses lessons learnt from Pathfinders that includes public consultation, engagement and communication	By November 2008 Benefits Project Manager

### **To improve condition of HMOs and practices of people managing HMOs**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Date / Responsible Officer</b>
To ensure the council fulfils its statutory duty with respect to HMO licensing	1,500 mandatory HMOs licensed	March 2008 Head of Private Sector Housing
To ensure that risks in other HMO properties are effectively managed	Apply to licence those non-mandatory HMOs that are evidenced as being the highest risk	October 2007 Head of Private Sector Housing
To improve properties to the	Targets set for individual	From April 2006

revised standard through direct action of the local authority	officers (15 pa 2006-8; 18 pa 2008-10)	Environmental Health Manager
To implement a mechanism for identifying and monitoring the most vulnerable occupants living in HMO accommodation	Complete research on engaging with 'excluded groups'	February 2007 Head of Private Sector Housing
<b>To work with key stakeholders to improve quality and perception of the private sector</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Date / Responsible Officer</b>
To further develop the existing knowledge of private sector housing providers	Annual Lambeth Landlord Conference	Annually Lettings First Manager
To ensure that Lettings First becomes and remains an accredited agency	8 officers accredited per year	Annually Lettings First Manager
To ensure that local landlords operate their businesses at a high level	350 landlords accredited through Lettings First	March 2010 Landlord Accreditation Development Officer
To develop engagement of private sector tenants	Work in partnership with PSHF in creating tenant focus group	April 2007 Head of Private Sector Housing
<b>To Maintain and build upon existing knowledge of private sector and effectively monitor and evaluate our work</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Date / Responsible Officer</b>
To record and monitor work of the private sector housing unit in line with national and local developments	Upgrade and maintain internal IT systems; active involvement on user groups to influence development of systems	April 2006 All managers
To update knowledge on condition of private sector homes, especially in relation to levels of decency for vulnerable households	Publish updated Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	December 2008 Head of Private Sector Housing
To use knowledge to engage 'excluded groups'	Implement recommendations of research on 'excluded groups'	April 2007 Head of Private Sector Housing
To ensure that knowledge of customers, properties and practice is used to deliver improved services	Work with local partners sub-regionally / pan-London to benchmarking performance and identifying best practice	April 2007 Head of Private Sector Housing

## Effective Partnership Working

Partnership working is critical to our strategy whether helping to identify at risk residents or in delivering services. We carry out regular visits and presentations to publicise our work and have a range of fact-sheets that explain our various services.

- The Private Sector Housing Unit, and Homelessness Services, prevention and advice teams are key partners within the Housing Department. We jointly develop services to prevent homelessness.
- Citizens' Advice Bureau and local law and advice centres are key partners in accessing and contact tenants.
- Joint working with Planning, Building Control, Housing Benefit and Council Tax departments is essential to identify high risk properties, including HMOs.
- London Fire Emergency Planning Authority is a key stakeholder in terms of ensuring that properties are safe in terms of fire prevention and means of escape. Fire Officers are consulted on a regular basis with respect to the layout of HMOs, and they were consulted on when the HMO Policy was approved. LFEPA also refer properties that they identify as a potential risk to the Private Sector housing Unit. This working relationship will continue.
- Metropolitan Police and National Asylum Seeker Service are key external partners, both in terms of identifying potentially vulnerable tenants, at risk properties and developing crime reduction initiatives. Referrals are encouraged between the services.
- Working alongside the Magistrate Courts, County Courts and the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) we can better identify landlords who are not 'fit and proper'. We remain on the Steering Group of the LLAS and will develop our relationship with the Courts].
- We work alongside the boroughs of Wandsworth, Croydon, Richmond, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton and Sutton, as the South West London Regional Partnership. The Private Sector Housing sub-group has produced a South West London Private Sector Housing Strategy. We work to make effective use of borough resources by developing common guidance such as a

model application forms; joint training for staff and landlords; a fee structure; a process for additional licensing schemes. We work together to draw in capital funding for schemes such as Coldbusters, Houseproud and Empty Property Grants.

- Lettings First provides its service through a partnership between the Housing Department, Avenue Lettings and private sector landlords.
- The Home Improvement Agency works closely with the Community Occupational Therapy Service. Working with Social Workers, Housing Register Team and the Primary Care Trusts enables this service to be provided much more holistically.
- The Private Sector Housing Unit, Help the Aged and the London Fire Emergency Planning Authority are key stakeholders in the Handy Van Scheme, which provides security measures for older owner-occupiers and tenants.
- Age Concern, Lambeth Endowed and the Home Improvement Agency have worked together in both funding and administering the Lambeth Hardship Fund, which is targeted at emergency measures for vulnerable private sector residents.
- A key partner in delivering Repayable Repair Grants is the Home Improvement Trust. They developed loan products for private sector housing renewal.
- Lambeth have worked with Creative Environmental Networks, Greater London Energy Efficiency Network and the Energy Advice Centre in developing products targeted at energy efficiency.
- We will continue to work with good landlords, through partnerships such as the National Landlords' Association, the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the 'Preferred Landlords Procedure'.

## Consultation

Consultation is embedded into the work of the Private Sector Housing Unit through our extensive partnership working and the more formal structures for consultation which we use.

### *Formal Consultation on the Private Sector Housing Strategy*

The Draft Private Sector Strategy for Consultation was sent to a range of partners and stakeholders in mid February including those listed below. It was discussed in an issue of Lambeth Life. The strategy will also be presented at the Private Sector Housing Forum in March 2006 for further discussion before final approval.

#### *Groups consulted:*

*Home Improvement Agency Advisory Committee  
Age Concern Lambeth  
African Caribbean Mental Health Carers  
Mencap Older Carers Group  
Lambeth Chinese Community Association  
Lambeth Accredited landlords  
Private Sector Housing Forum mailing list*

*Minnie Kidd Support Group  
Amardeep Project  
Lambeth Resource Centre  
Lambeth Contact-a-Family  
Citizens Advice Bureau*

### *Ongoing consultation in our work*

The Private Sector Housing Forum meets quarterly and is attended by landlords, tenants, advice agencies, councillors and council officers. In the past year it has focussed on issues such as HMO licensing, energy efficiency, tenancy deposit and engaging with private sector tenants. The Chair, Vice Chair and steering group are elected annually at the AGM. They set the agenda and decide on the need for any specific subgroups.

Other consultation takes place through the Landlords Conference, the HIA Advisory Committee, customer surveys by service users and through our list of accredited landlords.

### *Equalities Impact Assessment*

During the writing of the strategy a range of officers from the Private Sector Housing Unit, the Performance and Strategy and the Equalities team carried out an equality impact assessment of the strategy. The aim was to identify any ways in which the strategy could have adverse or inequitable outcomes for any specific groups, and to consider ways to mitigate those risks. The results fed into the strategy. A copy of the Assessment is available on request.

## Jargon buster

Throughout the document we have used words and initials which may not always be clear to the reader. The jargon buster below includes explanations of some of the commonly used expressions

### Lambeth Council & Central Government Schemes

*Accredited Landlord Scheme:* Operated by Lettings First to reward and provide incentives for landlords who manage properties to a good standard and who demonstrate respect and responsibility towards their tenants

*Assured Shorthold (Rent Deposit) Tenancy Scheme:* Helps homeless households access private rented housing partly through providing help with the deposit

*Home Improvement Agency (HIA):* Team which helps older and disabled residents in the private sector with repairs, disabled adaptations or home improvements.

*Landlord Accreditation:* Scheme recognising good practice among private landlords

*Lettings First:* Agency on Streatham High Street, which helps place at risk homeless households in private rented housing

*Private Sector Housing Forum:* Forum for council to consult with stakeholders

*Private Sector Housing Unit:* Key delivery unit of council for private sector housing

*Private Sector Leasing Scheme:* Lettings First leases private sector properties for homeless households, guaranteeing income for landlords

*Rent Deposit Scheme:* Lettings First pays deposits to help homeless households move into private sector housing

*Rent Repayment Orders:* Tenants living in HMO accommodation that does not meet the conditions of the licence, or where a licence has not been applied for, will be able to apply retrospectively via the Council for a Rent Repayment Order

*Tenancy Deposit Scheme:* Mechanism to hold private sector rent deposits centrally

### Grants & Loans

*Accredited Landlords Grants:* Grants available to Accredited Landlord Scheme

*Coldbusters:* Heating and insulation grants for people on income based benefits

*Disabled Facilities Grant:* Help with adaptations for disabled residents

*HelpCo Energy Club:* Membership scheme that offers lower prices for gas and electricity, fixed monthly or weekly payments and energy advice

*Houseproud/Loans for All: Loans for those not eligible for grants*

*Private Landlord Energy Award Scheme (PLEASE):* Provides grants and interest-free loans to landlords for energy efficiency measures

*Solar for London:* Helps home-owners install solar hot water heating equipment

### Housing Terminology

*Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI):* Performance measures of local authorities set by the Audit Commission

*Compulsory Purchase Order:* A statutory tool allowing public authorities to purchase property under certain circumstances

*Decent Homes:* The Government's agenda for raising the minimum standard of housing

*Fuel Poverty:* Where a large proportion of income is spent on household fuel

*HHSRS:* Housing Health and Safety Rating System replaces the former fitness standard

*HMO:* A House of Multiple Occupation covers most types of accommodation where there are groups of people living together who do not constitute a family and where these people share some kind of amenity or common entrance.

*Private Sector Housing Digest:* Monthly report on private sector performance indicators

*SAP Rating:* Standard Assessment Procedure measures home energy efficiency

## Contact Information

More information on the services discussed in the this strategy can be found by contacting:

### **Private Sector Housing Unit / Home Improvement Agency**

Hambrook House  
Porden Road  
London SW2 5RW

Tel: 020 7926 4444

[www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/HousingPlanning/PrivateHousing](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/HousingPlanning/PrivateHousing)

### **Lettings First**

15-16 The High Parade  
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Tel: 0845 064 000

[www.lettingsfirst.com](http://www.lettingsfirst.com)

