



Lambeth Homelessness Strategy 2005-2010

1. Introduction.....	2
1.1. Housing and homelessness in Lambeth	2
1.2. The Homelessness Act 2002	2
1.3. Strategic framework	3
1.4. Reviewing our strategy.....	7
1.5. Partnership working	8
1.6. Corporate performance assessment.....	8
1.7. Government and Lambeth funding	9
1.8. Rough sleeping in Lambeth	9
1.9. What has changed over the last two years?	10
2. Trends in statutory homelessness	13
2.1. Homeless acceptances	13
2.2. Temporary accommodation	16
2.3. Permanent accommodation	16
2.4. Client groups	16
2.5. Black & minority ethnic homelessness.....	19
3. Evaluating our strategy	21
3.1. Homelessness Scrutiny Commission.....	21
3.2. ODPM evaluation	21
3.3. Customer feedback	22
4. Delivering our Strategy.....	24
4.1. Our vision	24
4.2. Responsibility for delivery	24
4.3. A theme of partnerships	24
4.4. The structure of our strategy	25
5. Objective One: Prevent homelessness and provide housing options	26
5.1. Summary	26
5.2. Context.....	26
5.3. Towards preventing homelessness	26
5.4. Towards providing alternative housing options.....	27
5.5. Reducing homelessness against main causes.....	29
5.6. With our partners.....	30
6. Objective Two: Accessibility and quality of services.....	33
6.1. Summary	33
6.2. Context.....	33
6.3. Towards providing accessible quality services	33
6.4. With our partners.....	34
7. Objective Three: Support and opportunities	35
7.1. Summary	35
7.2. Context.....	35
7.3. Towards providing support and opportunities	35
7.4. With our partners.....	37
8. Objective Four: Suitable temporary accommodation	39
8.1. Summary	39
8.2. Context.....	39
8.3. Towards providing suitable temporary accommodation	39
8.4. With our partners.....	41
9. Objective Five: Monitoring, evaluation and review	42
9.1. Summary	42
9.2. Context.....	42
9.3. Monitoring.....	42
9.4. Evaluation.....	43
9.5. With our partners.....	44

1. Introduction

1.1. Housing and homelessness in Lambeth

Lambeth is a diverse and vibrant borough with a history of encouraging and supporting this diversity. It has long-established communities and international recognition. However, Lambeth is also the site of some of the worst deprivation in London.

Key facts about the Lambeth that provide the housing and homelessness context:

- Inner London's most populous borough with a population of 266,169
- 38% of residents are from black and minority ethnic communities, and constitute 69% of all households on the Housing Register, and 73% of homeless households.
- 41% of households live in social rented housing – far higher than the London average of 26%; owner occupation is growing but well below the London average of 49%.
- A high proportion of one-person households (38%) and lone parent households with dependent children (10%)
- The average price of a property in Lambeth (£256,000) is out of the reach of many residents.
- A decreasing supply of council housing which now stands at half the level that it was for most of the 1990s and decreasing further.
- Our Housing Needs Survey (2003) estimates that 21% of the borough's households are living in unsuitable housing, of these 57% require alternative accommodation to meet their housing needs. The largest problems are disrepair, overcrowding and lack of affordability.
- Our Private Sector Housing Survey (2002) found 11% of the private rented stock was unfit, compared to the London average of 5.6%.

1.2. The Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on authorities to conduct a review of homelessness in their area, and to develop a homelessness strategy in response to the findings of that review.

The homelessness strategy is required to address the causes of homelessness, how to prevent it, and how to ensure that sufficient temporary accommodation is available for those people who become homeless. It also aims to ensure that appropriate support is available to people who may be at risk of or who have experienced homelessness in order to break its cycle.

The Homelessness Review in Lambeth was published in July 2003 and drew on information that had been collected through extensive research and consultation with partners. The review did enable a close examination of the extent of homelessness in the borough and the range and quality of services available to help homeless people. The review also facilitated an extensive consultation programme, obtaining important feedback from a wide range of sources.

Following the review we published a short-term strategy, the aim of which was to address some of the immediate priorities identified in the review, and that the Act required, including ending the use of shared bed and breakfast for families with children.

By reviewing our strategy after a short period and updating it we are now able to address many of the additional issues raised during the Homelessness Review. Additionally we have the benefit of evaluation and good practice circulated since its publication. This has enabled us to produce an updated strategy that provides a more complete and holistic approach to addressing homelessness in Lambeth.

1.3. Strategic framework

1.3.1. Community Strategy Objectives

The Council's Community Strategy 2004-2015 objectives are a key reference point for all other Council strategies. The Homelessness Strategy will assist the delivery of the Community Plan, specifically targeting sustainable communities and enabling social inclusion, and supporting healthy communities by focusing on vulnerable people. The Community Strategy is therefore reflected in the Homelessness Strategy's aim to reduce homelessness and provide support to homeless people. Homelessness disrupts family life and affects the development and education of children. The Community Strategy objective of investing in children and young people is therefore also reflected in this strategy.

The Council's Community Strategy themes are:

- Creating a cleaner & greener environment
- Making safer communities
- Investing in children & young people
- Better homes and sustainable communities
- Supporting healthy communities
- Encouraging enterprise, employment and culture

Vulnerable People

Low quality housing can affect our residents' health, particularly if the problems are outside their control. High rents or mortgage payments can impact on health by reducing money or food, heating or normal social activities and creating anxiety.

Nuisance or noise from neighbours causes stress and can lead to social isolation. Lack of suitable accommodation can isolate people with disabilities and limit the independence of people with chronic health problems. Poor lighting, housing that is difficult to get to, or in poorly maintained environments, contribute to crime, risk of injury and fear – which encourages people to stay inside and keep children indoors.

Vulnerable people must be better supported, enabled to live more independent lives and are able to make their own contribution to the life of Lambeth.

Lambeth Community Strategy, 2004-2015

Specific objectives from the Community Strategy that relate to homelessness include:

- Optimise the supply of affordable housing by 500 homes a year consistent with the application of Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies. (Objective H3). This Homelessness Strategy acknowledges that a shortage of affordable housing is a main contributor to homelessness, and that the lack of supply of social rented accommodation is resulting in an increase in people living in temporary accommodation. This strategy takes the general aim to increase the supply of affordable housing, and applies it to issues such as increasing the affordability of the private rented sector. See Objective 1 of this strategy.
- Establish arrangements that will help secure homes needed by key workers employed within the borough. (Objective H5) See Objective 1 of this strategy.
- Enable vulnerable residents to live independently for as long as possible. (Objective Health 4) See Objective 4 of this strategy.
- Increase the number of pupils staying in education or moving into employment or training at age 16. (Objective CY6)
- Reduce teenage pregnancy. (Objective CY9) This, and the objective above, are particularly relevant given that preventing homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds is a key priority of the homelessness strategy. See 2.4.2 below.

1.3.2. Council priorities

The Community Plan objectives are in turn are reflected in the Council's overarching priorities. These priorities include improving customer services and being an efficient and effective Council. Our ability to deliver effective homelessness advice and prevention depends on a customer focused approach and service enhancement. Homelessness is very expensive for the Council, so reducing the level of homelessness, and making the best use of available resources, is a key value for money objective.

The Council's overarching priorities are:

- Better schools for the future
- Revitalising Lambeth
- Children's services
- Customer services
- An efficient and effective Council

1.3.3. Housing Strategy

This Homelessness Strategy links to the priorities set out in the Housing Strategy 2004-07. These are:

- 1) Increase the supply of affordable housing
- 2) Prevent homelessness where possible and otherwise provide good quality intermediate housing
- 3) Ensure value for money of services
- 4) Invest in the housing stock to provide decent homes for all
- 5) Improve community safety
- 6) Enhance community leadership – strengthening and empowering the borough’s most fragile communities

1.3.4. Supporting People Strategy

Supporting People plans and commissions housing-related support for vulnerable adults. These services are vital to prevent homelessness, and to support homeless people, since personal vulnerability places individuals at higher risk of becoming homeless. However, it should also be acknowledged that homelessness can be the result of factors unrelated to personal vulnerability (such as the scarcity of affordable accommodation), and that preventing homelessness often requires other forms of assistance and advice, in addition to, or instead of, support.

Housing-related support to vulnerable adults, of the type commissioned by Supporting People, therefore compliments Lambeth’s homelessness services in the following ways.

- The provision of support to people placed in temporary accommodation
- The provision of supported housing as an alternative to “general needs” social housing
- The provision of supported housing to people who do not qualify for social housing under homelessness legislation, but who nevertheless have support needs.
- The provision of support to help people retain their home.

The Supporting People Strategy 2005-10 notes that housing-related support services to single homeless people and rough sleepers accounts for 34% of their total commissioning. Supporting People have carried out a Strategic Relevance Review of the services they commission. This highlighted that many services were outdated or were inappropriate in meeting current needs and strategic aims.

The key areas of linkage between the Supporting People Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy are regarding rough sleepers, the role of the Support Needs Assessment and Placement Team (SNAP), the development of services that combine support with housing advice, and the development of alternative housing options.

A number of actions in the Supporting People Strategy therefore link into the Homelessness Strategy, and will involve joint working between Supporting People and the Housing Directorate.

For instance, with respect to single homeless and rough sleepers:

- remodel one direct access hostel to focus on assessment, initial stabilisation and referral to suitable housing and support services
- Increase referrals from SNAP team with identified and planned exit routes for housing to improve rates of move on.
- Increase provision of tenancy support services in temporary accommodation and accessing the rent deposit scheme

For young people and families they will:

- Work with SNAP Team to streamline and improve the referral, assessment and placement process.

For prisoners:

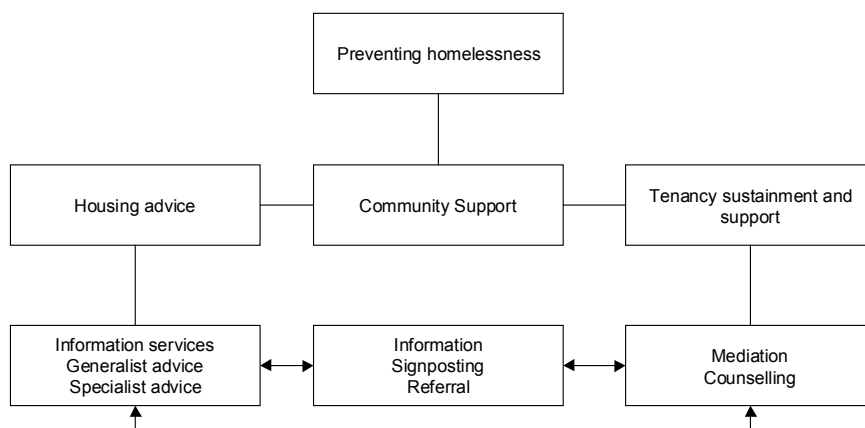
- Contribute funds to a Housing and Support Assessment Officer to work between Probation and Housing, working to prevent tenancy loss during a prison sentence and assessing housing and support needs on release.
- Commission prison discharge support service to improve access to temporary accommodation and resettlement on release.

1.3.5. London Housing Advice Strategy

The provision of good quality advice and assistance is key to preventing homelessness. Regard has therefore been had to the Greater London Assembly's *Housing Advice Strategy: a partnership approach to preventing homelessness through the provision of Housing Advice*, published in December 2004, and its implementation plan of May 2005.

The Housing Advice Strategy presents a partnership approach, that is usefully summarised by the following diagram (taken from the strategy) showing how advice, support and community support fit together to prevent homelessness:

Figure 1: A partnership approach to homelessness prevention



The five aims of the strategy are:

- To provide value for money for housing advice

- To ensure equality and outcome for all
- To prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
- To protect tenants/residents rights
- To promote housing options

Regarding homelessness prevention, key objectives are:

- To clarify the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness
- To work with other housing stakeholders to tackle issues that cause homelessness
- To improve liaison between related fields of advice and support services

Regarding promotion of housing options, key objectives are:

- To improve the availability of decent, affordable housing and hostel accommodation.
- To ensure on the London wide basis that there is sufficient provision of accommodation and support for people with support needs
- To ensure early intervention and good referral routes so people can access the advice they need and to help maximise the options available to them
- To develop more initiatives such as rent deposit schemes which provide practical solutions to issues such as accessing private rented accommodation

The Housing Advice Strategy recommends that housing advice should be a clear feature of Local Authority homelessness strategies and action plans, and that strategies should also reflect the importance of the provision of advice to owner-occupiers and long leaseholders, and recognise the importance of independent advocacy.

Key action points of the three-year strategy include:

- London-wide adoption of housing advice performance indicators that have been developed by the Association of Housing Advice Services, following an initial pilot.
- Adoption of minimum quality standards for housing advice service (to be based on Community Legal Services Quality Mark)

We aim to incorporate all these issues into the Homelessness Strategy and its associated Action Plan.

1.4. Reviewing our strategy

Having implemented the strategy, and learning from our own experiences, and those of others, we believe we were in a good position to undertake a review. In doing so we draw also from the external evaluation which has taken place during this period. In addition, it was a recommendation of the ODPM select committee's report on homelessness that authorities carry out a review of their strategy before the 5-years that the Act stipulates.

In reviewing and updating our strategy we have been able to take account of the evaluation carried out by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. We have updated our

strategy having had regard to the publication of the evaluation and good practice guide that followed.

The last two years have provided us with an opportunity to put in place a framework by which we can monitor the effectiveness of the homelessness strategy. We have learned from the best practice of others, at the same time carrying out our own research, implementing pilot schemes and undertaking evaluation toward to inform the development of solutions appropriate for Lambeth.

1.5. Partnership working

We have been able to consult extensively with our partners, and establish improved customer feedback systems that have been used to inform this review. Our Homeless Forum has developed into a significant event drawing in excess of 85 participants at the last meeting, representative of a wide range of organisations across the borough. We have also facilitated the development of groups to tackle specific issues such as the young homeless person's forum.

Focus on the strategy has enabled us to develop our partnerships and look to these to find appropriate solutions to the problems faced by homeless people. We have raised the profile of homelessness in the borough and sought to raise the issue of homelessness with relevant partners. The strategy has also led us to focus on positive outcomes for homeless people that go further than simply meeting their accommodation needs. For example we now look to ensure they are linked in with appropriate health services and worked with education to introduce procedures aimed at addressing the under achievement of pupils mobile as a result of homelessness.

There is more work to do in developing our partnerships, including improving the relationships between internal departments. The development of our new homelessness strategy is occurring at an opportune time in Lambeth, as significant reorganisation is underway within the departments that deliver services to our residents. Seizing this opportunity, this strategy, with a consistent theme of partnership working, seeks to embed homelessness in any new structure and utilise the already established Strategy Review Board to carry the homelessness agenda across the council.

We have developed productive partnership relationships. For instance, we have:

- Established a successful Homelessness Forum.
- Met quarterly with the Homelessness Forum Steering group
- Established a Strategy Review Board consisting of Officers at Assistant Director level from Housing, Social Services and Education, along with representatives from health and service providers
- Taken part in the Supporting People (SP) Strategic review of homelessness services and contributed to the SP 5-year strategy.
- Contribution to the SP Core Strategy Board
- Established a move-on group from Supported Housing
- Developed a Young Homeless Persons' Forum
- Developed the Lettings First Partnership to engage private sector landlords. (see 1.9 below)

1.6. Corporate performance assessment

From 2005, the Audit Commission has proposed changes to the corporate performance assessment, including a number of indicators that are directly linked to the delivery of the homelessness strategy.

A list of the Best Value Performance Indicators linked to the homelessness strategy is included in section 9 below.

1.7. Government and Lambeth funding

Just over £2m per year is spent on Lambeth Council's homelessness related services, such as preventing homelessness, providing alternative housing options, assessing housing applications from homeless people, and providing support to homeless households. Approximately £22m is spent providing temporary housing for homeless households each year. In addition, Lambeth Supporting People commissions about £7m worth of housing-related support services to rough sleepers and single homeless people from a mix of public and voluntary sector providers.

In 2003 and 2004 the ODPM made additional grants from a total fund of £60m to local authorities across the country based on their historic levels of homelessness in order to support their implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002. Lambeth received £2m. £406k was used to fund its homelessness strategy, and the remainder was used to provide services for rough sleepers. The same amount of grant is available for 2005/06.

In return for payment of this additional grant by the ODPM, Lambeth is required to provide outcomes that include:

- A reduction in the number of homeless acceptances against the primary reasons for homelessness
- Reduce the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation
- A reduction in the number of rough sleepers

In addition Lambeth has reinvested, under a "Spend to Save" programme, over £700k in each of the last two years as an additional sum to fund its homelessness strategy.

In its five-year homelessness strategy, *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes Changing Lives*, the Government announced that the sum available to local authorities for tackling homelessness will be increased from £60m to £74m by 2007/08. If Lambeth is to share in this, we need to demonstrate that we can deliver on the required outcomes and our updated strategy aims to do that.

1.8. Rough sleeping in Lambeth

According to the guidance on conducting street counts issued by the ODPM, Rough Sleeping is defined as:

"People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes")."

Lambeth has had a long history of rough sleeping, the focus of which was the infamous 'Bullring' on what is now the site of Waterloo's Imax Cinema complex.

In 2000, with the publication of *Coming in from the cold*, the Government tasked local authorities with the challenge of reducing rough sleeping across the country by two thirds. In May 2000 a benchmark count of rough sleepers found 47 people sleeping rough in the borough.

The Draft Rough Sleeping and Street Population Strategy attempted to describe the extent of rough sleeping in Lambeth and begin the process of assessing the levels of street based activities such as drinking and begging.

The strategy had the following objectives:

- To deliver and maintain the two thirds reduction and reduce still further the numbers to as near to Zero by 2006

- To assess and reduce the incidence of street drinking in the borough
- To assess and reduce the incidence of street begging in the borough
- Rough sleeping initiatives are co-ordinated by the Street Population Coordinator, based at Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust.

1.9. What has changed over the last two years?

1.9.1. Zero families in bed and breakfast hotels

A significant accomplishment of the strategy was achieving the target of zero families in shared bed and breakfast some 8 months earlier than required, and maintaining that figure since. In accordance with the legislation, no families with children are placed in shared bed and breakfast in Lambeth, except in an emergency and then for no more than 6 weeks.

Lettings First

Lambeth's Lettings First partnership was cited as an example of good practice in the National Audit Office's report *More than a roof: Progress in tackling homelessness*.

"The scheme involved setting up an agency that resembled a traditional estate agency, to shift public perception of working with a local authority and eliminate the stigma attached with being homeless. It aimed to encourage better working relationships with landlords in the borough and encourage more of them to allow their properties to be used for homeless families and those on low incomes"

Source: More than a roof: Progress in tackling homelessness, NAO 23rd February 2005

1.9.2. New priority need groups

With the implementation of the strategy came the extension of the priority need groups that led to a greater number of single people qualifying for homelessness assistance. In Lambeth we have taken steps to increase our provision for this group. We have developed a single-people plan to address homelessness prevention, and increased housing options for this group by including them in our "Lettings First" rent deposit scheme. We are also committing to reduce the use of shared bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation.

We also established a Move-on Group, and the Support Needs Assessment & Placement (SNAP) Team, to facilitate greater mobility into, across and out of Supporting People-funded housing schemes across the borough.

1.9.3. Increasing numbers in temporary accommodation

Despite the implementation of our strategy we have seen a substantial growth in temporary accommodation occupation. There is no doubt that preventative elements of our strategy have been effective, and we are now facilitating more private sector lettings than ever before, and the number of acceptances of homeless families has reduced in

the last two years. However, there remains however an underlying growth in homelessness across London, and a contrasting reduction in the availability of social housing to meet the needs or the expectations of this group. In Lambeth the shortfall in permanent homes is particularly relevant to family-sized accommodation, whilst permanent accommodation for single-person households remains in relatively buoyant supply.

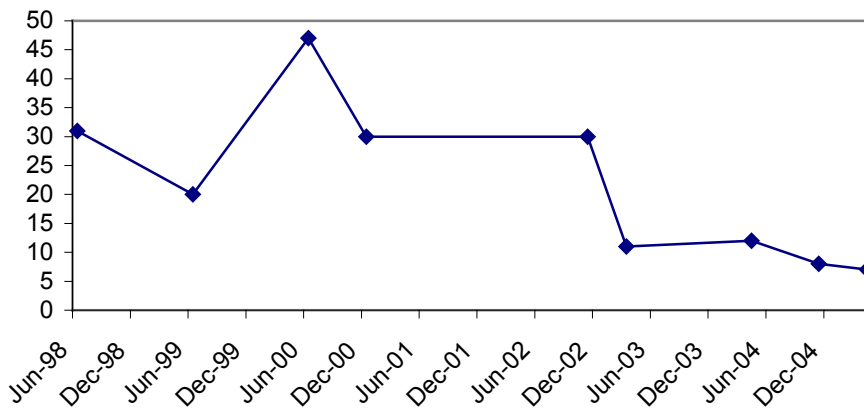
We recognise in Lambeth that the short-term solution to the shortage of permanent housing has to come from attracting private sector supply. The primary barrier to this in inner city areas is the affordability of this accommodation.

The growing temporary accommodation population and the affordability of the private sector are two problems that were identified in the ODPM Select Committee report that made recommendations to deal with this at the national level. The problems are also recognised and addressed in ODPM's Homelessness Strategy- *Sustainable Communities- Settled Homes Changing Lives* published in March 2005.

Lambeth's homelessness strategy has a part to play in the local solution. In our updated strategy we will be seeking to significantly increase access and accessibility to the private rented sector to enable us to contribute to the Government's target of reducing by 50% the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.

1.9.4. Low numbers of rough sleepers

Figure 2: Lambeth street counts



We have delivered and exceeded the two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping with an 85% reduction recorded in April 2005 against our 2000 baseline. We have established a firm basis for effective joint working across the statutory and voluntary sectors to reduce rough sleeping.

The Street Population Coordinator and the Supporting People team, have carried out reviews of Lambeth homelessness accommodation projects, assessing the value for money and strategic relevance of these projects and, while mindful of cross borough responsibilities, ensuring adequate access and support are available to Lambeth rough sleepers.

In addition, the Street Population Coordinator has:

- Commissioned research on street drinking within the borough of Lambeth.
- With colleagues in the London borough of Southwark, commissioned a study of homelessness daycentres across the two boroughs, benchmarking against key strategies in particular the Homelessness and Supporting People strategies.
- Given training to local agencies working with homeless people to ensure proper understanding of referral mechanisms to the Homeless Persons Unit and Housing Advice Teams.
- Piloted housing advice outreach at a key homeless daycentre in the borough.

2. Trends in statutory homelessness

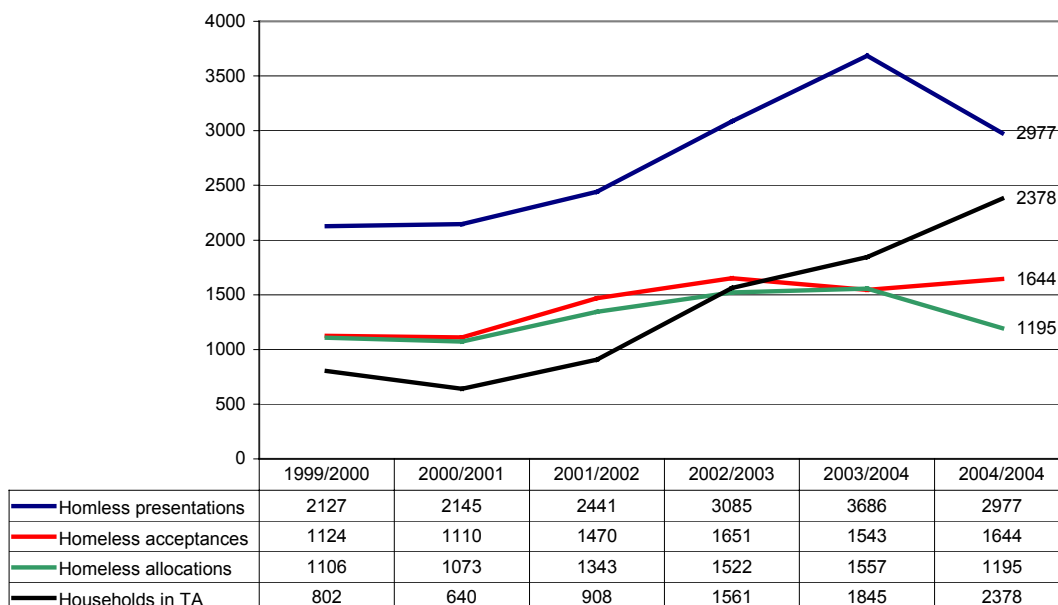
Since undertaking the Homelessness Review, and implementing the Homelessness Strategy, there has been a decrease in the number of homeless applications (“presentations”¹) being received. This is in part due a change in recording methods which was piloted in 2004. However, it is also the result of an increased emphasis on homelessness prevention and the provision of alternative housing options such as rent deposits arranged through Lettings First.

One significant change has been the profile of homeless applicants, which now has a higher proportion of single-person households compared to families with children. Our previous strategy focused on the needs of families with children, in response to the Government targets to reduce the numbers of families living in bed and breakfast hotels. For instance, our Lettings First scheme was initially targeted at this group to encourage families to move to private rented accommodation. One consequence of this is that single-person households now account for a higher proportion of acceptances.

We have already started to address this by developing a “Plan for Single Homeless People”, and opening up the Lettings First programme to them.

Demand for temporary accommodation (TA) has remained relatively low, however there has been considerable growth in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation, directly attributable to a fall in the supply of family sized permanent accommodation becoming available.

Figure 3: key homelessness trends



2.1. Homeless acceptances

As mentioned above, it is an outcome required by the ODPM, and a condition of receiving the homelessness grant, that the Council reduces the number of homeless acceptances² against the primary causes of homelessness in the borough.

In Table 1 below are shown homeless acceptances in Lambeth against reasons for homelessness. The primary causes of homelessness in Lambeth have changed slightly.

¹ Presentations or applications represent an application for assistance made by a person under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.

² Acceptances represent those households, who having made a homeless application, the council accepts a full housing duty.

In the last two years there have been significant reductions in the numbers of and refugee/asylum seeker households.

Table 1: Homelessness acceptances

Acceptances	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	+/- change 02/03 v 04/05
Parents no longer accommodate	353 21%	329 21%	329 20%	-8%
Relative/friend no longer accommodate	509 31%	504 33%	603 37%	+18%
Private evictions	270 16%	223 14%	227 14%	-16%
Refugee/asylum	179 11%	127 8%	79 5%	-56%
Relationship breakdown/at risk	102 6%	47 3%	81 5%	-21%
No fixed abode	53 3%	44 3%	58 3%	+9%
Unreasonable to occupy	83 5%	73 5%	63 4%	-24%
Other reasons	102 6%	198 13%	204 12%	+100%
Total acceptances	1651	1545	1644	-0.4%

2.1.1. Parents or other relatives/friends unwilling to accommodate

These are the primary causes of homelessness, accounting for 57% of acceptances. The strategy aims to address the primary causes of homelessness and initiatives have been undertaken, including family mediation for those who experience relationship breakdown (including young people).

2.1.2. Private sector tenants

Tenancy Relations Officers and Tenancy Sustainment Officers have worked to prevent homelessness among private sector tenants, for instance by providing benefits advice and liaising with landlords. Additionally an Environmental Health Officer has been seconded to the Housing Services Unit in order to address the needs of households who find themselves in unsuitable accommodation.

2.1.3. Asylum seekers

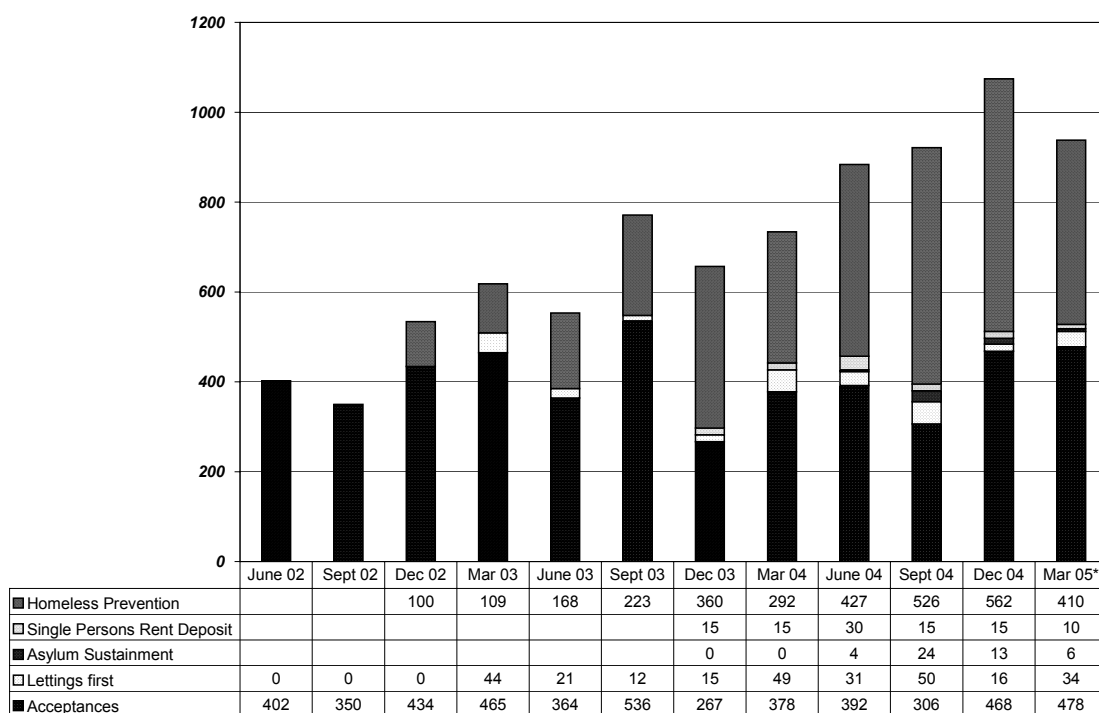
Many asylum seekers, particularly those who were granted leave to remain under the Government's amnesty last year, have been sustained in their own homes without being required to make homeless applications. We have achieved this through close working

with Social Services³ and the use of rent deposits and landlord negotiation facilitated by Lettings First.

2.1.4. Other causes

Other reasons represent a wide range of reasons for homelessness, which include causes such as hostel hospital and prison hospital discharge, loss of tied accommodation.

Table 2: Acceptances, prevention and options



2.1.5. Homelessness prevention and options

Although we have not seen a reduction in the number of acceptances, particularly between 2003/04-2004/05, there is significant evidence that acceptances would have been considerably higher, without the prevention and options work that has been carried out. This is illustrated in Table 1 above, which shows increasing levels of homelessness prevention and options. For instance, in the last quarter of 2005 we prevented 410 households becoming homeless compared to 109 for the same period in 2003.

³ Social Services will, by the end of 2005, cease to exist, being replaced by a Children's Directorate and an Adult & Community Services Directorate.

2.2. Temporary accommodation

There has been a significant increase in the use of temporary accommodation (see Table 1 above). The growing population in temporary accommodation is directly attributable to families with children, and is a result of a lack of suitable permanent family sized accommodation. However, despite the growing numbers, significant improvements have been made in the quality and location of this temporary accommodation, with the result that there has been a significant reduction in the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation.

For instance, we are working to ensure that as many households as possible are placed in local accommodation. We set a local target (within BVPI 203) with the aim of ensuring that more of our homeless households are placed within the borough boundary. This enables links with health and Children's Services, schools, colleges and informal support links to be maintained. We currently have 78% of homeless households accommodated within the borough against a target of 80%.

2.3. Permanent accommodation

Over the last two years there has been a serious reduction in the numbers of properties becoming available for letting to homeless households. This is demonstrated in Chart 1 above. In 2004/05 the number of lettings becoming available to homeless households fell short of its target by 295, and this of course has a "knock on" effect to the numbers of households in temporary accommodation.

A number of initiatives were implemented with the aim of increasing the supply, but have had no significant impact.

The council implemented a transfer incentive scheme, which between 2003 and 2005 resulted in the release of 100 family sized properties for letting to homeless families. The out of London lettings Schemes, which initially showed promise as tenants or homeless households agreed to be rehoused in areas of low demand, has produced disappointing results. Less than 10 households have been rehoused through this route in the last year.

In the last 12 months the number of nominations being received from our RSL partners has been closely monitored, and once again the supply of family-sized accommodation has failed to meet its target although additional single person properties were made available.

2.4. Client groups

The tables below show the acceptances by household size, and by priority need category. They illustrate that there has been a reduction in the number of households with dependent children, and pregnant women, but this has been offset by a corresponding increase in single and all-adult households. There has been a significant increase in the number of 16/17 years olds, following the extension of priority need to this category. They make up 12% of all acceptances or 25% of all acceptances other than households with children or pregnant women.

Table 3: Acceptances by household size

Household size	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	+/- change 02/03 v 04/05
Lone parent female	538	347	545	+7%

Lone parent male	76	63	56	-26%
Single female households	464	460	325 ⁴	-30%
Single male households	361	430	448	+24%
Couples and all-adult households	212	245	270	+27%
Total	1651	1545	1644	

Table 4: Acceptances by primary reason for priority need

Priority need	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	+/- change 02/03 v 04/05
Dependent children	756	583	644	-15%
Main applicant pregnant	231	203	202	-13%
16/17 year olds	95	175	199	+109%
Vulnerable for other reason	569	584	599	0%
Total	1651	1545	1644	

2.4.1. Single person households

There has been an increase in the number of single person households accepted by the council. The Lambeth Homelessness strategy to a large extent followed the Government's family-focused agenda, whilst at the same time failing to anticipate the increase in demand resulting from the extension of the priority need groups. In 2000/01 they represented 40% of acceptances and this increased in 2004/05 to 59%.

A large part of the increase in single person households is due to the increased number of 16/17-year-olds being accepted. The increase is also partly due to the extension of priority need to other single people. It is also a consequence of an historic lack of suitable alternative accommodation for this client group.

These single person households are all "vulnerable" in some way, whether by virtue of age, illness, physical disability or other reasons. Therefore, a support needs assessment is a key component of prevention, identifying options and suitability of temporary accommodation.

We have attempted to open up options available to single person households, which included the provision of rent deposits and direct access to supported housing through the Support Needs Assessment & Placement Team. The numbers involved have however had no significant impact on the numbers of acceptances.

2.4.2. Young People

There has been a sharp rise in the number of acceptances among 16/17 year olds and this is directly attributable to the changes in legislation, which now confers on them an automatic priority need when they are found to be homeless.

We have been working with Home and Away, a local advice agency, specifically to address the needs of this group. Homelessness prevention is the priority with an emphasis on family mediation. It is clear though that this isn't sufficient, and a Young Homeless Persons' Forum has been established with key strategic partners that includes providers, advice agencies, Children's Services, the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator and Supporting People. The forum is working to agree universal procedures and

⁴ Until 04/05, pregnant single women were counted with single women in this table. In 04/05 they were recorded as Lone parent. Therefore, the 02/03 and 03/04 total for single female household includes a proportion of pregnant women.

information resources that will be adopted across relevant organisations across the borough.

Additionally there is a shortage of suitable accommodation and support available for this client group within Lambeth. This has been identified for action in the Lambeth Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010. A Young Persons Commissioning Group has been established that brings together Housing, Supporting People, and Children's Services to plan and coordinate commissioning across the Council for young people.

We have also been working in partnership with Relate in order to address relationship breakdown with parents, a key cause of homelessness among this group. Following an initial pilot, we have entered a contract with Relate to provide homelessness prevention mediation services.

We are seeking to develop an accommodation-based scheme for young people, that will provide respite accommodation whilst family mediation is undertaken. The aim of the scheme will be to reduce levels of homelessness amongst this group. This service will also include access to education and training for young people. This project is being developed through the Young Persons Commissioning Group.

Reducing teenage pregnancy and increasing the number of pupils staying on in post-compulsory education are objectives of Lambeth's Community Strategy that will also support our aim to reduce homelessness amongst this age group. Therefore, we will continue to work through the Young Homeless Persons' Forum to develop joint working on these issues. For instance, there is anecdotal evidence that pregnancy rates are high amongst young people living in Council temporary accommodation. This suggests that research into whether this is the case is necessary, with a view to targeting initiatives at this group.

2.4.3. Care Leavers

Planning for care leavers in Lambeth starts early. A Housing Officer is seconded to the Care Leavers Team in the Children's Directorate. This Officer ensures that an early application is made to the housing register, and that a timely offer of appropriate accommodation is made to coincide with the end of the care placement. Resettlement and other support are provided by *Aim Hi*, a service commissioned by the Children's Directorate. This effective policy forms part of Lambeth's contribution to The Children's National Service Framework and the *Every Child Matters* Agenda.

2.4.4. Families with children

The actual number of acceptances to this group has fallen since 2002 and this is a direct result of the prevention work and alternative housing options, which has been directed specifically toward them. The numbers of families with children in TA however has continued to increase due to the shortage of suitable permanent supply. The number of families with children in TA in April 2005 compared with March 2004 shows an increase of 28%.

2.4.5. Asylum seekers & refugees

The number of Asylum Seekers /refugees accepted has fallen since 2002/03 as a result of a targeted approach of sustaining their existing tenancies. Until they become eligible for Housing these applicants are usually accommodated by the National Asylum Seekers Support Service (NASS) or the council's Children's Directorate or Community Services Directorate. By entering into early negotiation with the landlords of their accommodation we have managed to sustain many of these households in that accommodation, and so preventing the disruption that homelessness can cause.

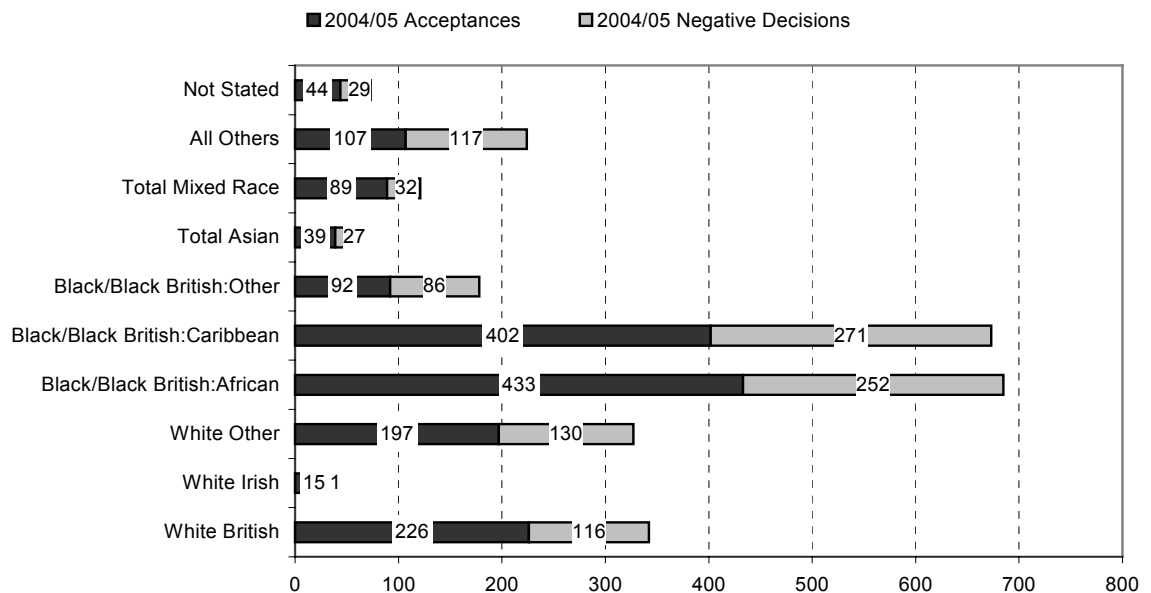
2.5. Black & minority ethnic homelessness

About 35% of Lambeth's population is comprised of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households. They also represent 62% of Lambeth tenants. Among homeless acceptances their representation rises to 70%. Accounting for this can be a number of social-economic factors, which include lower incomes, higher unemployment and poor health, which increase a dependence on social housing.

This figure has not changed over the life of the strategy, which although indicating that it is non-discriminatory, has failed to address the higher incidences of homelessness among this group. We have identified the need to collect and analyse the comparative data between BME households and their white counterparts, which could determine different causes in homelessness and priority need and for which specific BME targeted strategies could be developed.

Increases in homelessness among BME households is a feature of inner London boroughs and there is a correlation between high dependency on social housing, reduction in supply, a lack of mobility and the lack of affordable alternatives.

Figure 4: Types of decision by ethnicity



In 2004/05 we applied the same ethnicity monitoring codes to our data collection used by the Census. As Figure 4 above demonstrates all Part VII decisions made to all ethnic groups in 2004/05, and reveals, the ethnicity of our largest client groups are Black/Black British; African and Black/Black British; Caribbean, followed by White British households. Monitoring work in 2005/06 will focus on adding greater depth to this ethnicity profile through supporting information on gender, age and reason for homelessness for each individual group.

Our strategy aims to specifically address homelessness among black and minority ethnic households by increasing monitoring and research, directly engaging with BME households and developing specific BME homelessness strategies both on a local and sub regional level.

2.5.1. Supporting People services and BME service users

The ethnic profile of Supporting People clients is very different to the homelessness profile, and is closer to the profile of the population of Lambeth. For instance, 46% of SP clients are White British compared to 49% of the population.

That the profile of Supporting People clients should be so different to the profile of homelessness services raises a number of important questions. It is hoped that understanding the profile of Supporting People clients may help us understand more about BME homelessness, and indeed, the relation between support and homelessness more generally. The Support Needs and Assessment Team (SNAP) has a key role in collecting data on this. As a service based within the Housing Department acting as a gateway to Supporting People services, it is ideally suited to collect useful information about the ethnicity of clients who pass through the gateway, and to see how this differs from the general profile of homeless applicants.

SNAP's role in collecting evidence about BME groups is also highlighted in the Supporting People Strategy.

3. Evaluating our strategy

Lambeth's strategic approach to homelessness has been the subject of evaluation on various levels both within and outside the council. The feedback we have received, good practice examples, and the effective solutions we have observed in other councils have in many cases been included in our day to day work. Carrying out this extensive review, and updating our strategy, provides us with an opportunity to embed what we have learned and implement further activities in future work.

3.1. Homelessness Scrutiny Commission

The Council's own Homelessness Scrutiny Commission made a series of recommendations, which were immediately adopted. These included the creation of a cross-departmental Strategy Review Board, consisting of senior Officers of the Council from Housing, Children's Directorate and Community Services, along with representatives from the local Health Authority, local service providers and the Education Department. This board was established and has been instrumental in ensuring that a thorough review of the strategy was undertaken. The Board will continue to meet and ensure that the future annual review is carried out, and that the objectives of the strategy remain relevant and focused.

The Homelessness Scrutiny commission went on to propose further recommendations, which included:

- Establishing a homelessness forum
- Identifying and providing greater support to Lambeth tenants in danger of losing their home.
- That equalities issues are more fully included in future versions of the strategy.
- That the strategy seeks to make more opportunities of closer joint working both across the council and with relevant partner organisations.

The homelessness forum has gone from strength to strength and the feedback, which has been received from members, has been very encouraging. The Forum is currently still Council led, but a steering group is established which includes partners from Health, Supporting People, and Providers.

This updated strategy aims to address much of the feedback that we have received over the last 2 years, addressing equalities issues and an emphasis on closer joint working through shared objectives.

3.2. ODPM evaluation

In 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister carried out an evaluation of all homelessness reviews and strategies that had been published the previous year. Their report was produced in November 2004, although each Authority was given individual feedback on their own review and strategy beforehand.

The feedback that Lambeth received raised a number of issues, some of which had already been addressed by the recommendations of the homelessness scrutiny commission. Others however can be fully addressed with this updated strategy.

The review itself was held up as an example of good practice due to its scope and depth, and has been used to inform the developments described below.

The evaluation determined that the strategy covered too short a term, being only 18 months-two years in duration. This is acknowledged, although it was deliberate, with a

view to addressing the immediate priorities which included rehousing the 900 plus families with children we had in shared bed and breakfast. It was always the intention to review the strategy and develop something longer-term and this document is the result of that intention.

The strategy was also criticised for being limited in its scope. This criticism is valid. There were only a limited number of objectives, particularly relating to additional outcomes such as health, education and support.

The mechanism for review and evaluation was reported as being weak. The strategy was in fact under review through the publication of an annual action plan and an internal audit conducted by service managers and the Head of Supply and Demand Sub Division. The effectiveness of the strategy was also evaluated by performance monitoring and reporting to the homelessness Forum and elected members. However, these points were not made explicit within the strategy document itself. This weakness has been addressed, and the methods of review and evaluation have been set out in the updated strategy.

Following individual feedback to authorities, a report was published by the ODPM detailing the outcomes of the evaluation exercise. This report, "*Local Authorities Homelessness Strategies Evaluation and Good Practice*" cited various examples of good practice which had been noted across the country a number of which were already in use in Lambeth, although this was not acknowledged within the report. Lambeth has further examples of good practice, such as the mapping of the placement of homeless families with children across the borough to inform the education department, which have been implemented since the evaluation took place.

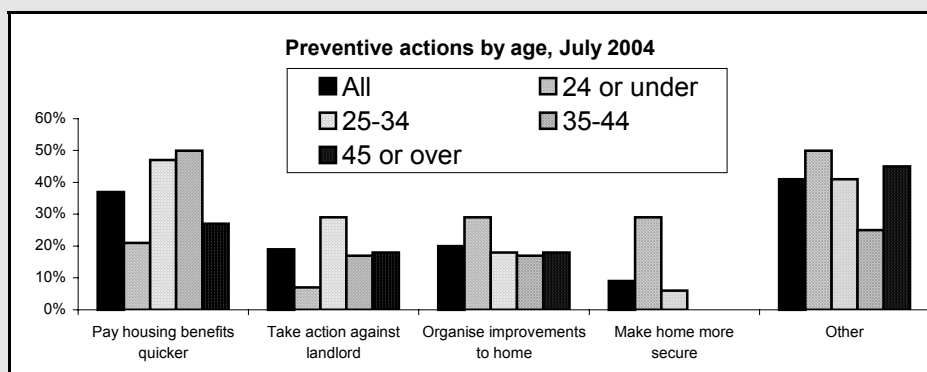
Many other examples of good practice which are described in the report have been incorporated into this strategy document, whilst we have also continued to look for local solutions to some of the problems we are faced with.

3.3. Customer feedback

As a part of the strategy we started to collect, on a regular basis, feedback from our customers about the service we offer them. Focus groups were carried out in 2003 followed by an extensive customer survey, which was undertaken in 2004. These highlighted a number of areas where we needed to take action, but have also enabled us to include the opinions of our customers in reviewing our strategy.

A question in our 2004 Customer Survey asked;

“What could be been done to prevent your homelessness?”



Over one third of respondents stated that paying housing benefits quicker might have had a positive impact on the situation, this is especially the case amongst those aged 25-44. One in five stated that action against landlord and/or making improvement to their home might have prevented them from being homeless.

However, a large proportion of respondents (41%) stated that other measures than those mentioned might have helped. Unfortunately a substantial proportion of these respondents said that nothing could have been done by the council to prevent them from being made homeless, with domestic violence being cited as the reason in a large number of cases.

Source- Lambeth Housing Services Unit Survey 2004

3.3.1. Listening to our customers: young people

In focus groups carried out in 2004, we were able to look specifically at the services we were offering to two distinct groups; young homeless people & those homeless due to domestic violence.

One of the priorities we learned from young homeless people was their lack of even the most basic essential items once they we made homeless. In response to this we created a starter pack, especially for young people who have been placed in temporary accommodation, which includes bedding and basic cooking utensils.

3.3.2. Listening to our customers: women experiencing domestic violence

Women who were homeless due to domestic violence told us that what they wanted was to put distance between themselves and the perpetrator. Good practice suggested that homelessness among this group could be prevented with the introduction of a sanctuary scheme, which aims to make victims of domestic violence more secure in their own homes and empowers them to remain. In Lambeth we are developing a one-stop shop for people experiencing domestic violence; we are committed to this initiative, working with our own Community Safety Department, the Police and other partners in the Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust to support it. Whilst we are planning to carry out further research in this area, the information we have obtained from our users will inform the services for homeless people we offer from the One Stop Shop.

4. Delivering our Strategy

4.1. Our vision

The vision and the themes of the Lambeth strategy support the objectives of the Lambeth Community Plan. We want to provide better homes for homeless people and help sustain communities by preventing homelessness through early intervention. We want to ensure that homeless children and young people are placed at no disadvantage because they are in housing need, and that all homeless people can share employment, training, education and health opportunities. We want to develop choice and real options, and to include homeless people as we plan and develop these. Services will be developed in response to assessed local need and with the intention of promoting choice, independence and diversity in line with other local national and strategic objectives. We want to achieve this by working in meaningful and effective partnerships that deliver shared outcomes that benefit the whole of our community

4.2. Responsibility for delivery

Key service managers have the primary responsibility for delivery of the homelessness strategy on a day to day basis within the housing department. Their areas of responsibility cover housing advice and homeless assessments, housing support, temporary accommodation, allocations and housing association (RSL) nominations, along with finance and IT systems, reporting & monitoring. These managers, along with the Homelessness Strategy Coordinator and the head of the Supply and Demand subdivision, meet monthly as the Strategy Delivery Group, to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

4.2.1. Strategy Delivery Group

The Strategy Delivery Group works to an action plan, which includes performance indicators to measure progress of the strategy toward key objectives. Performance against these objectives is widely reported and includes the Homeless Monitoring Group, chaired by the Executive Director of Housing, The Homelessness Forum and its steering group, and the Strategy Review Board.

To date the action plan has been developed on an annual basis and its development has constituted an annual review of the homelessness strategy in Lambeth. The action plan is subject to extensive consultation in its draft form with a wide range of partners. Developing a longer-term strategy will enabled us to better plan our services to meet the challenges we are likely to face.

4.3. A theme of partnerships

Lambeth Housing cannot deliver the homelessness strategy alone and so has over the last few years demonstrated considerable progress in developing partnerships in key areas of prevention, options and positive outcomes. The work which has been undertaken so far has raised the profile of homelessness across the agendas of our partners, and in updating our strategy we aim to strengthen the links with our partners by including shared objectives.

We will ensure that our updated strategy is relevant to the plans of our key partners, including Health and Children's Services. We will continue to develop partnerships with the private sector, registered social landlords and other authorities to provide homes for homeless people. Equally important we will strengthen our working relationships with other council departments including Education and Community Safety.

Our key strategic partners continue to include Health, Children's Services, Community Services and Supporting People. We will continue to involve them in planning services for homeless people and working with them to deliver a holistic approach.

4.4. The structure of our strategy

We have expanded our strategy considerably to better reflect our approach to addressing the needs of homeless people, which we have developed over the last few years. The strategy has five key themes or objectives.

OUR FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES:

Prevent homelessness and provide housing options

Accessibility and quality of services

Support and opportunities

Suitable temporary accommodation

Monitoring, evaluation and review

5. Objective One: Prevent homelessness and provide housing options

5.1. Summary

We will:

Put prevention and housing options at the forefront of what we do.

Ensure that prevention advice and options are available to people at an early stage.

Develop and enhance our homelessness service, ensuring fast and accurate assessment of applications, providing wide-ranging advice and assistance, and addressing the issues of those found intentionally homeless.

5.2. Context

The majority of homelessness in Lambeth can be attributed to a handful of causes. However the prevention solution to these causes in individual cases can be very different depending on the circumstances of the people concerned. We have therefore aimed to develop a flexible approach to preventing homelessness. Where we are unable to prevent homelessness we offer alternative housing options.

In order for prevention to be effective we have to ensure that our services are delivered in a consistent and timely manner. This will be a key outcome required from our review of the way homelessness services are delivered. Additionally we need to ensure that appropriate options are available for all client groups, including single-person households, those with support needs, and those who do not have a priority need under the homelessness legislation.

The success of our prevention and options approach will, to a large extent, be dependent on our ability to provide accessible quality services as described in Objective 2 below.

5.3. Towards preventing homelessness

Our prevention agenda needs to be wide-ranging, accessible and concentrating on early intervention. We will take a more proactive approach to delivering homelessness prevention advice either in our central office, or in the community, through GP's surgeries, Lambeth's Joint Service centres or other appropriate venues.

For instance, our Outreach Team has evolved to include prison and hospital discharge workers, and a young persons link worker whose aim is to provide early advice or signposting before homelessness is imminent. The housing advice function of these specialist areas can be covered by the whole of the team whilst the liaison element provides a single point of contact for operational staff working with these client groups. The development of these posts was as a direct response to gaps identified in the 2003 Review and subsequent feedback we have received.

The work of the advice service will be reviewed and we will develop procedures for staff to deliver a range of options. By improving the quality of customer service in the Housing Services Unit we will ensure that appropriate advice and assistance can be provided in sufficient time to assist prevention.

In order to prevent homelessness, we will:

- Ensure our staff have the knowledge, skills and support they require to provide effective housing advice and to prevent homelessness
- Provide relevant information for customers in a range of formats
- Offer debt and money advice
- Develop pre-court work
- Establish a schools programme
- Create links to GP surgeries
- Work with SP to provide advice and options in hostels (this links to the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10, which commits to remodelling a direct access hostel to focus on assessment and resettlement)
-

5.3.1. The private rented sector in Lambeth

Lambeth has one of the largest private rented sectors in the country, with 21.5% of the total housing stock in this sector, compared with 14.9% across London and 10.4% nationally. It is estimated that 11.0% of the private housing stock is unfit for human habitation, which is equivalent to nearly 10,000 properties⁵. However, in trying to improve conditions, care needs to be taken to ensure that the tenants are not put at risk of homelessness, especially as the vast majority will have non-secure tenancies.

We will employ an Environmental Health (Homelessness Prevention) Officer to deal specifically with cases where there a threat of homelessness is identified in an attempt to link together the prevention and support services.

Furthermore, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is a connection between some addresses within the Borough and cases of repeat homelessness, especially in relation to overcrowding. The Environmental Health (Homelessness Prevention) Officer will lead on these cases, serving notice directly on the landlord, in order to prevent this practice in future.

5.3.2. Outreach homelessness prevention services

To increase our provision of housing advice, and to reach out to the community earlier, we will develop the outreach and visiting service that we currently offer. In particular we will be looking to develop an options package, which consolidates individual areas of homelessness prevention activity, and equip our staff to deliver this in the community.

5.4. Towards providing alternative housing options

We will:

Continue to develop housing options for homelessness people, particularly as an alternative to making a homeless application.

⁵ Source- Lambeth Stock Condition Survey 2003

Increase the supply of suitable alternative accommodation for both permanent and long-term temporary use, and offer these options as a real alternative to homeless people.

We believe that we can only provide our users with real choice by the provision of truly sustainable options. One such choice has been derived from our successful Lettings First Partnership, which was key to our achieving the target of zero families in bed and breakfast.

Since starting up with leasing arrangements, Lettings First expanded to include a rent deposit scheme for families with children. The scheme has now enabled more than 300 families with children to secure accommodation in the private rented sector, with landlords taking advantage of advice, support guaranteed rent and a steady supply of suitable tenants. Lettings First plays an important role in sustaining these tenancies with 65 “re-signs” being anticipated in the first 3 months of 2005

The scheme has also gone on to sustain more than 76 previously non-qualifying asylum seekers in their existing accommodation, with a further 24 households being re-housed in alternative private rented accommodation in an area of their choice. A further 14 households chose to make their own arrangements in the private rented sector having been given assistance and advice from Lettings First. The advantages of which have included stability for the family and avoiding disruption to schooling etc which would have occurred should the “traditional” homelessness route have been followed.

Lettings First is a success story and one of which we are rightfully proud, it is proving that our rent deposit scheme is not just a quick-fix solution, but is allowing Lambeth to provide settled, sustainable homes within the private sector.

We intend to expand their contribution to our options portfolio as a year one priority for this strategy to include these housing options for single person households whether or not in priority need.

We will review the way in which we present housing options to our customers

Housing Options need to include a range of services aimed at preventing homelessness at an early stage. We will be extensively reviewing the way in which options and housing advice is delivered in order to deliver a seamless range of early intervention and alternative housing options. Access directly into supported housing will also be improved through developing the work of and links to the SNAP Team.

We will examine ways to make the private rented sector more affordable to households on low incomes.

Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation is an objective of the Lambeth Community Strategy. The supply of public sector lettings available to homeless households has continued to fall and demand for this accommodation can never be met. The answer to this has to be the private sector and we welcome the government’s forthcoming review of the legislation that may enhance the role that the private sector can play in providing a solution. The problem in Lambeth, London and the South East continues to be the cost of renting, or buying property in this sector. Although Housing Benefit often covers the financial cost this can often lead to homeless households remaining in a poverty trap and unable to get on with the rest of their lives.

We want to address this and will be looking at opportunities not only to expand private sector supply for homeless people, whether rented or purchased, but also to examine ways in which this accommodation can be made more affordable.

Towards this we will:

- Continue to develop Lettings First and extend the criteria for the people they can assist.
- Explore greater use of 10 year/longer term leases and how these can be used to provide settled accommodation.
- Enhance and invest in the Tenants Transfer Incentive Scheme and aim to extend this to our RSL partners.
- Implement and promote our Key Worker Strategy.
- Explore cost effective options for large households
- Work with our private Sector team to implement and benefit from the Empty Homes strategy.
- Ensure that we explore ways in which the Housing Act 2002 can be used to benefit Homeless people
- Look at subsidising rents from TA Surplus
- Work with Housing Benefits to maximise use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness
- Assisted purchase

5.4.1. Rent Deposit Schemes

Access to the private sector as a solution to homelessness can be assisted through the use of rent deposits. A drawback of this however is the amount of capital which can be tied up with landlords. Different models of deposit schemes exist including guarantee and bond schemes, where the deposit is underwritten rather than handed over to the landlord at the start of the letting. By carrying out extensive research, across more than 30 schemes nationally, we have been able to develop a model that draws on the best practice we have identified.

Having the model ratified by The National Rent Deposit Forum, we have now started to implement this within the Lettings First partnership and will monitor it's progress and measure it's success over the coming year.

A national deposit scheme is due to be established in April 2006⁶, which will regulate how landlords hold their tenants' deposit money. We will examine the likely consequences that this change in regulation may have on the operation of our scheme.

5.5. Reducing homelessness against main causes

We will set annual targets to reduce the number of homeless part VII applications by the main causes.

We will continue to develop specific solutions to different causes of homelessness. Reducing homelessness will include a combination of prevention and options development.

5.5.1. Parents, relatives or friends unwilling to accommodate

We will:

- continue to offer appropriate mediation services.

⁶ Housing Act 2004

- seek to identify cases early when an application is made to join the housing register, and contact prospective homeless households early.

5.5.2. Loss of private sector tenancies

We employ a dedicated Environmental Health Officer who will aim to assist all households who are inadequately housed. This will also include liaison with the Private Sector Housing Unit to carry out property improvements such as disability adaptation.

Tenancy Relations Officers will work with Landlords to prevent homelessness.

We will work with Housing Benefits to address rent arrears and examine ways in which the Discretionary Housing Allowance can be used to prevent homelessness.

5.5.3. Former Asylum Seekers and refugees

We will work with Children's Services, Community Services, NASS and private landlords to sustain these households in their current accommodation.

5.5.4. Public sector evictions

We will ensure that appropriate support is identified through a Support Needs Assessment and that this can be met by working closely with the Supporting People Team.

5.5.5. Prison and hospital discharge

We will develop our outreach service to work with these two groups to prevent homelessness on discharge. This links to an objective within the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10. See 1.3.4 above.

5.6. With our partners

We will maintain reductions in rough sleeping, reducing the basic benchmark target of 15 to 12 and then 10 over the next two years

Rough sleeping initiatives are co-ordinated by the Community Safety Unit of the Chief Executive's Department. They will review and update the current Rough Sleepers and Street Population Strategy, with a view to developing a new strategy to run until 2010

In partnership between the Street Population Coordinator and the Housing Directorate, we will continue the roll out of comprehensive training to ensure full understanding of referral mechanisms.

Against the backdrop of the recent daycentre study, the Street Population Coordinator will explore the use of daycentres as centres for the delivery of homelessness prevention services.

The Street Population Coordinator will, in partnership with the Alcohol Strategy Coordinator in the DAAT, and the Supporting People team, commission outreach and support services to work with problematic street drinkers and street users, to prevent them becoming tomorrow's rough sleepers.

The SNAP Team will work with Supporting People, the ODPM and the Street Population Coordinator to ensure rapid placement and effective move on and support for rough sleepers from hostels.

The Street Population Coordinator will, through the Outreach Forum, explore greater coordination of outreach and support to vulnerable groups, as well as the implementation of a common database for the recording of individuals, their support needs and outcomes.

We will enable greater use of supported housing schemes and promote a range of move on options for people who are ready to leave supported housing.

We have developed the Support Needs Assessment & Placement (SNAP) team to ensure appropriate use is made of Supporting People funded housing across Lambeth. We will develop the work of this team and ensure that greater mobility is achieved into, between and out of supported accommodation.

In order to deliver we have developed a Move On Strategy Group with Officers of Housing, Supporting People and Supported Housing providers. We will support the developments of strategies in order to increase the move on from Support housing

The Lambeth Supporting People Strategy will play an important part in the prevention of homelessness. It states “We will sustain communities by commissioning services that prevent homelessness through early intervention and tenancy sustainment. These Services will help people to live independently and will help to prevent admission to hospital or institutional or residential care. The programme will ensure that people are able to live in their own homes and in supported accommodation.”

We will support the development and success of external housing options and ensure our customers are given informed choice.

There are a number of schemes, either national or local, in which we can participate and offer to our customers. We will examine ways in which we can promote these schemes within Lambeth and assist people who may wish to take them up.

- HEMS
- LAWN
- OOL Lettings
- MoveUK (which will be combining the above)
- Sub regional Allocations

We will involve our RSL providers in the delivery and objectives of the homelessness strategy.

The Housing Associations that work with Lambeth have a key role to play in both the prevention of homelessness and the provision of accommodation for homeless people. We will develop a specific plan for the involvement of our RSL partners and this will include;

- Reviewing proposed development across the borough and the sub region.
- Reviewing the nominations agreements and the monitoring processes
- Examining RSL policies in relation to transfers and evictions

We will continue to engage the private sector through our Lettings First partnership.

Lettings First has been one of our success stories. We will continue to support this partnership between the council and Amicus Housing to encourage private sector landlords to work with the council for the benefit of homeless people.

- Our Landlords Development Officer will set up a landlord accreditation scheme.
- We will contribute to the development of a Houses of Multiple Occupation Strategy to encourage the use of this type of accommodation across the borough.
- We will continue to develop our rent deposit guarantee scheme and work with the National Rent Deposit Forum in establishing best practise

6. Objective Two: Accessibility and quality of services

6.1. Summary

We will:

Provide services of the highest quality that are accessible to all

Carry out an extensive review to improve our homelessness service to ensure that our strategy is delivered effectively in a way to emphasise homelessness prevention and options.

6.2. Context

The homelessness review identified a number of issues about access to our services that we can now address. Some of these were also highlighted in the customer feedback activity we have undertaken over the last year and some have come about as a result of our increased engagement with partners through the homelessness forum, its subgroups and other meetings we carried out whilst implementing our strategy.

We aim to address the issues that have been raised through an extensive review of the work of the sub division.

The review will have two specific aims, firstly to improve customer services, a requirement that is highlighted in the findings of the customer satisfaction survey, and secondly to examine the way in which we deliver our strategy.

We want to ensure that a consistent emphasis of early intervention to facilitate homelessness prevention is being implemented across the subdivision.

6.3. Towards providing accessible quality services

We have already started this process with a project team starting the first phase of the comprehensive review of our homelessness services. In order to deliver this objective we may have to reorganise and restructure the teams we have in the subdivision. In particular we will be;

- Improving the way we deliver housing advice and prevention options outside of the office environment and into the community.
- Implementing extensive staff training to improve consistency
- Improving communication between Business Units
- Improving web based information
- Changing work practices and extending the times services are available.
- We will audit the service in line with a recognised customer service standard such as Chartermark.

We will improve the information we provide about our homelessness services for our users and for partners.

- Develop and publish meaningful customer service standards
- Review our communication methods

- Update and maintain our website
- Produce a suite of leaflets which can be issued to reflect a users needs.
- Develop and maintain process maps and procedures for our services
- Develop a Linking-Up Guide to improved the interagency flow of information.
- Develop and implement a customer newsletter

6.4. With our partners

We will consult with our partners and our customers as we develop our services. We will undertake an annual customer satisfaction survey and publish the results and the plans we will be taking to implement year on year improvements.

We will ensure that when addressing housing need we consider the wider implications for our customers, and ensure that ours and other services are complimentary to each other.

- Lambeth Community plan
- Links to Housing benefits
- Provide advice about other council services of relevance to users
- Education project

7. Objective Three: Support and opportunities

7.1. Summary

We will:

Deliver our services in a way that impacts positively on life chances rather than having a detrimental effect

Prevent homelessness not only by offering appropriate and timely advice, but also by ensuring that appropriate support is available for people who find difficult to manage their tenancies

7.2. Context

We want to ensure that the opportunities available to households are not restricted because of their homelessness. Homelessness has a detrimental effect on people's health, and children's education and development. We aim to ensure that our strategy works to minimise the negative impacts of homelessness.

In this section we are particularly concerned with;

- The effects of homelessness on children
- Ensuring access to supported housing and assessing those with multiple needs
- Developing move on from supported housing
- Maximising access to health services

7.3. Towards providing support and opportunities

7.3.1. Children

We will be mindful of the effects of homelessness on children and develop our services to minimise the impact upon them.

Every Child Matters: the Five Objectives for Children and Young People

- Be healthy
- Be safe
- Enjoy and achieve through learning
- Make a positive contribution to society
- Achieve economic well-being

The impact of homelessness can have serious consequences on the well being of children. We will develop our policies with this in mind and ensure that we consider the needs of children as we deliver our services.

Towards increasing educational achievement

We participated in a DfES funded research project on the potential effects of pupil mobility on educational attainment with our Education Department. Housing's role was to increase the flow of information between Housing and Education and that role included quantifying potentially mobile households in Lambeth. Each quarter Housing now maps homeless households with children/pregnant women in temporary accommodation in Council, NASS and DSS supported asylum seekers in the Borough and plots all three strands of data in the context of borough postcode, schools, Sure Start areas and GP surgeries. The maps identify demand on individual schools and allow Housing to illustrate the effects of temporary accommodation procurement in specific postcode areas.

Arising from this work, staff managing hostels and agents managing other leased property now routinely encourage households with children to visit Education's One Stop Shop so that take up of schools places among mobile households is maximised. This helps ensure that demand on schools is shared more evenly across Lambeth, and staff also discourage households, where appropriate, from moving schools when households move either between temporary accommodation placements or move into permanent property. We have raised awareness of homelessness and the constraints governing Housing's duties among education professionals at local meetings with them, and by distributing an information leaflet to them.

We will continue prioritising the needs of children by;

- Encouraging and facilitating the involvement of young fathers
- Providing further information about schooling
- Working to minimise moves in temporary accommodation
- Developing settled accommodation
- Ensure protection for children witnessing or experiencing domestic violence.

7.3.2. Support needs assessment

We will ensure that the housing support needs of homeless households are promptly assessed and that those needs are met either internally or by referral to a partner agency.

Housing Support has a vital role to play in homelessness prevention, by providing appropriate housing options and for ensuring that access to services for homeless people. Lambeth's SNAP Team has been developed to ensure that access to appropriate housing support can be arranged to meet any of these roles.

The work of Housing advisers, tenancy sustainment officers and others will be reviewed to ensure they can offer practical advice and assistance in a wide variety of circumstances. Where more intensive or longer-term support is required links will be strengthened to providers through the SNAP team.

- Increase level of support in temporary accommodation (this links to the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10 Action Plan)

We will develop the role of the SNAP Team ensuring easier access to supported housing for greater numbers of people.

The SNAP team will arrange access to appropriate supported housing for people who are threatened with homelessness. They will not have to make a homeless application to access this, (although we will be able to offer it as temporary accommodation for those who have done so.) The provider of the accommodation we place into will receive an additional nomination to the council's housing register, ensuring a constant supply of move on from the scheme.

- We will develop and publish an action plan and quarterly reports on the activity of the SNAP Team.

7.4. With our partners

Work with Health to ensure that all homeless people have access to appropriate health services and that people who face homelessness from hospital have access to appropriate advice and assistance.

- Hospital Discharge Liaison Coordinator will work to prevent homelessness and plan discharges for homeless patients.
- Develop Information leaflets and the Linking Up guide
- Continue to send data on homeless placements out of borough to the GLA NOTIFY system.
- Continue to send notification of households with Children under 5 to appropriate health authorities.

Work with education to maximise the take up of school places among homeless households.

- Pupil Mobility Project
- Share more information with education professionals
- Address the needs of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Develop specific plans to address the homeless prevention needs of single person households.

Research into Day Centre provision across Lambeth and Southwark has highlighted the role that day centres can play in the homelessness prevention and support agenda. The research recognises that day centres capacity to assist in the delivery of homelessness strategies is under utilised. We will work with Supporting People and the Street Population Coordinator (responsible for commissioning day centre provision) to develop integrated policies within day centres.

Lambeth and Southwark local authorities and PCTs [should] consider the role of day centres in the next reviews of homelessness, Supporting People, Community Safety, DAT and health strategies.

Day Centre Provision for Single Homeless People in Lambeth and Southwark, March 2005, Sarah James and Ceri Sheppard

We will also

- Develop and implement the plan for single homeless people.
- Continue to develop the work of the Young Homeless Person's forum.
-

We will provide effective information advice for new tenants and support for families who may be at risk of homelessness

The Homelessness Review and later the Lambeth Supporting People Strategic Relevance Review identified a particular need for support among homeless families. We will work with the Supporting People Team and providers across the borough to provide appropriate support that meets the specific needs of this client group.

Last year we piloted a scheme, *Moving in, Moving on*, in partnership with Broadway Housing. This scheme aimed to provide pre-tenancy advice and information to households who may not need extensive support services, but who will benefit from information about their tenancies, obligations and responsibilities, paying the rent and other basic issues relating to good tenancy management. The scheme has received some excellent feedback and we will be evaluating it carefully as we roll this out in the course of our strategy

Work with SSD to assist intentionally homeless households.

- Employ a dedicated social worker
-

We will support the objectives of the National Strategy for Refugee Integration.

Asylum seekers, once granted discretionary leave or humanitarian protection are considered to be refugees. While the responsibility for asylum seekers remains with the National Asylum Seeker Support Service (NASS) refugees are eligible for housing assistance under homelessness legislation. Under the Home Office's "Integration Matters" policy a national strategy for refugee integration has been developed which states that the first step towards the integration of refugees must be to identify and help with their most pressing needs. Finding and settling into safe and appropriate housing, accessing employment or social security support, addressing any health concerns, and getting children settled in school are crucial to enabling refugees to focus on the longer-term aspects of integration.

- Ensure that our homelessness prevention activity is accessible and promoted among refugee communities and their representatives.
-
- Ensure that housing options and rent deposit guarantee schemes are accessible and promoted among refugees' communities and their representatives.
-
- Work with other authorities to ensure that dispersed refugees can access accommodation in the area where they have established a local connection.

8. Objective Four: Suitable temporary accommodation

8.1. Summary

We will develop and maintain a balanced portfolio of quality temporary accommodation that meets the current and projected needs of our homeless clients.

8.2. Context

The provision of temporary accommodation (TA) is one of the key elements of a homelessness strategy. We are concerned here not only with adequate supply, but a supply that is financially balanced and responsive to trends. Quality, location and value for money are key issues that need to be addressed during procurement and the operation of in-house schemes and our relationship and monitoring of our provider-partners must be managed on a day to day basis.

In order to predict this uncertain demand we have developed a procurement projection model which uses information we collect during our monitoring activity. We use the model to predict the amount and profile of the future temporary accommodation to meet and to ensure our fiscal responsibilities can be met.

The provision of temporary accommodation within the borough boundary is important to us and also to our users and partners. As a local target under BVPI 203 we have been able to report increases in the numbers of households accommodated in Lambeth since April 2004. . We believe that it's important to keep our homeless households close to their support networks and so mitigate the effect their homelessness may have on education, employment and access to established health services. Currently 78% of our homeless households are accommodated within the borough

The reduction in the use of shared bed and breakfast has been applied specifically to families with children. In Lambeth we believe that this accommodation is unsuitable for all households and so have a local objective by March 2006 reducing by 50% the numbers of single-person households accommodated in shared bed and breakfast.

8.2.1. Settled Homes

The Government's five- year homelessness strategy, *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives*, refers to enabling temporary accommodation to become a settled home. This will play a key part in the target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. We will be seeking to apply this model in Lambeth and explore the possibility of acquiring more properties on long leases so they can be offered to homeless households for the duration of that lease. Although this accommodation may not be permanent in the traditional sense, it will offer an opportunity for households to plan their lives, encouraging stability for themselves and the community, whilst living securely in quality housing.

8.3. Towards providing suitable temporary accommodation

We will continue to provide a range of temporary accommodation options which includes the development of schemes with private sector partners. Although self-contained

accommodation is often seen as the ideal there is also place in the temporary accommodation portfolio for other tenures, which includes hostels and for some shared bed and breakfast which can offer companionship, structure and informal support.

To manage this portfolio of accommodation is a challenge and we will concentrate on ensuring we do so efficiently to achieve value for money and maximise availability.

If we are to meet the needs of our clients we need to know what they are and what they are likely to be. We will continue to maintain a projection model which is informed by data we collect regarding information such as demand for TA, the numbers we permanently house, performance of our RSL partners nomination agreements, the numbers that cease to qualify etc.

- Day to day management
-
- Managing the procurement projection model.
-
- Carry out TA demand forecast for the term of the strategy
-

We will ensure that the financial cost of provision of temporary accommodation is balanced against the need to procure properties of a suitable quality and that surplus created will go to meet the needs of homeless people.

By close management of our TA portfolio and reducing the turnaround and void rates we can ensure that a surplus is created which can be used to fund “Spend to Save” schemes. The SNAP team, the outreach team and tenancy sustainment officers are all examples of initiatives that have been funded in this way.

The provision of TA has to take account of the financial cost. The council aims to maximise the subsidy it receives for providing temporary accommodation and ensure that surplus is used to prevent homelessness and subsidise more expensive forms of temporary accommodation.

The Council operates a “Hardship Scheme” which aims to ensure that households who are placed in temporary accommodation are not stuck in the benefit trap of not being able to afford the relatively high rent if they should return to work and lose their entitlement to housing benefit. The scheme works by the council subsidising the rent to a degree that for the customer it is reduced to that of an average cost of a council property. We will be reviewing this scheme and ensuring that it is widely promoted among all households in temporary accommodation.

- Maximising subsidy
- Hardship scheme
- Address and improve the void rate
- Improve links with Housing Benefit

We will continue to reduce the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.

Our notable success story has been the reduction in the use of shared bed and breakfast for families with children. Since achieving this in July 2003 no homeless family with children lived in this type of accommodation for more than 6 weeks. This is quite an achievement considering that we have experienced substantial growth in the use of TA as permanent supply diminishes.

We will continue to reduce the inappropriate use of TA in a variety of ways.

- We will review and increase our provision of disabled and mobility standard units and ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.(DDA)
- Increase amount TA located within the borough. We currently achieve 70% against a target of 80%.
- We will improve the quality of accommodation we provide for single person households.
- We will continue to reconfigure shared hostel accommodation into self-contained units.
- We will work with long-stay households in temporary accommodation to improve their housing chances and encourage take up of other options

8.4. With our partners

Attract private landlords and expand the use of privately rented and leased accommodation for people in housing need.

In Lambeth our Lettings First partnership has been successful in engaging private sector landlord to help use accommodate homeless households, either in leased properties, or to prevent homelessness by joining our rent deposit scheme. We will continue to work on this success, but also work to develop a wide range of models, which harness private sector accommodation.

- We will continue to promote Lettings First and develop landlord services
- We will continue to work with Private Agents Sub-leasing Scheme (PAS) providers to develop specific schemes within Lambeth including a percentage of fully disabled accessible properties.
- We have employed a Landlord Liaison Officer who will initiate a landlord accreditation scheme

We will fully utilise supported housing provision as a source of temporary accommodation for those in housing need.

In 2004 we established the Support Needs Assessment & placement (SNAP) team as a part of our homelessness strategy. This team is responsible for determining the support needs of individuals referred to them and identifying a provider where those needs can most appropriately be met.

One aim of the team is to assess the needs of people who have made a homeless application under Part VII of the Housing Act and utilise supported housing as suitable temporary accommodation. An advantage to the provider is that the nominee's route out of supported housing is already planned, and this prevents problems further down the line trying to arrange move-on. When the tenant is ready an offer of accommodation from the Council's housing register can be arranged with either the SNAP team or the provider arranging appropriate resettlement support.

9. Objective Five: Monitoring, evaluation and review

9.1. Summary

We will continuously monitor our performance, and evaluate whether we are being successful in meeting the aims of the homelessness strategy.

9.2. Context

The Lambeth homelessness strategy is based on evidence that has been collected during and since the 2003 review. We will keep this information up to date and use it to inform the strategy as we implement and continue to develop it. Using this information we will ensure that we target the services we provide towards those areas of greatest need and where positive outcomes can be achieved. The information collected through our monitoring systems will enable us to evaluate and review our strategy effectively.

As a result of our monitoring we have identified a number of trends which have been able to address whilst implementing our strategy and more fully as we have updated it. This includes significant increases in the numbers of homeless single priority households and an increase in the numbers of families with children who are living in temporary accommodation.

9.3. Monitoring

We will continuously monitor homelessness in Lambeth and the effectiveness of our strategy in addressing it, ensuring that the evidence we collect is used to inform its ongoing development

- Collect evidence on the reasons for homelessness in the borough.
- We will improve the depth of reporting on BME homelessness.
- Relevant managers responsible for the delivery of homelessness services will meet monthly.
- We will report Monthly to the Executive Director of Housing
- Publish monthly performance reports on the Internet.
- We will report regularly to elected members.
- We will publish quarterly outturn reports with recommended actions in addressing trends.

•
Examples of what we will monitor;

- The numbers of applications, we receive who they're from and how long we take to process them
- The numbers of repeat homelessness
- The reasons for homelessness in Lambeth
- Gender and age range of applicants and their reasons for homelessness
- Applications, reasons for homelessness and decisions to BME and other groups
- Collection rates for TA provision- funding source for strategy

•
We will undertake continuous evidence based evaluation of our strategy by analysing the information we collect and the success of our strategy will be evaluated not only against the homelessness it prevents or resolves but against the shared objectives of our partners.

The strategy is a working document and will be continuously evaluated to ensure it remains fit for purpose. External evaluation of our strategy will be encouraged through the Homelessness forum and by and at joint boards which homelessness managers and staff attend.

We will report twice yearly to members regarding homelessness in the borough and explain how we are addressing any areas of concern that may be identified as a result of our monitoring.

Key aspects of homelessness prevention work are already the subjects of Best Value Performance scrutiny. The table below lists those national indicators, which are used to monitor Lambeth's performance.

Table 5: CPA indicators linked to homelessness

Indicator	Description
BV 183i	Length of time in shared bed and breakfast
BV 183ii	Length of time in shared temporary accommodation
BV 203	Percentage change in the number of families (with children) in temporary accommodation.
BV 203 Local	Percentage of all households accommodated inside the borough
BV 214	Incidences of repeat homelessness where a duty was accepted within the last 2 years.
BV 213	Incidences of homelessness prevented for at least 6 months through housing advice per 1,000 head of population.

9.4. Evaluation

We will evaluate the strategy, its outcomes and its success by how well it achieves the objectives we have set and the shared objectives we have included from our strategic partners.

- Equalities impact assessment
- Evaluate against identified best practice
- Against ODPM and other expert advice
- Feedback from our partners
- Report to the Homelessness Forum

We will evaluate;

- The cost of our temporary accommodation portfolio
- The effectiveness of our homelessness strategy
- Homelessness among BME and other specific groups

Whilst we monitor and evaluate our strategy as a continuous process we shall carry out a formal review annually in order to address any trends or external influencing factors such as forthcoming legislation. This will also enable our partners and user's views to be formally and regularly incorporated into the process.

Embedding this review process within the strategy addresses a concern raised by the HQN evaluation. Although this major review was already planned at the time the concern was raised. Addressing one of the Concerns a formal review however will be carried out each year between January and March. We will ensure that our partners are involved with the review and that the views of our customers are considered embedded review process.

We have developed a Homeless Strategy Review Board following a recommendation of the Homeless scrutiny commission. The board is made up of senior Officers of the Council at Assistant Director level from Education, Housing, Children's Services and Community Services, along with representatives from strategic partners such as public health, primary health care and supported housing providers and the homelessness forum. The Board is chaired by the Executive Director of Housing and reports to the Executive Member for Housing. The role of the Board is to oversee the implementation and review of the Lambeth homelessness strategy and its function is now included within the strategy itself.

9.4.1. Annual review

We will carry out a review of our homelessness strategy on an annual basis and ensure that the review is informed and consultative of all our strategic partners.

- We will, review the strategy annually between January and March
- We will carry out an annual survey of our users.
- We shall undertake focus sessions to obtain customer feedback,
- Reviews will include consultation with our partners and feedback we receive from our customers
-

9.4.2. Possible influencing factors during review

- HB subsidy changes
- Children's Bill
- HB Pathfinders

9.5. With our partners

Ensure that our strategy reflects the vision of the Lambeth community plan and includes objectives shared with our strategic partners that will deliver outcomes which benefit all residents of Lambeth and homeless people in particular.

In order to deliver this we will develop clear links with our homelessness strategy and key relevant strategies across the council and among our strategic partners. This will include;

- Lambeth Community Plan
- Lambeth Supporting People 5-year Strategy
- Lambeth Housing Strategy
- Drug Action Team Strategy
- An Alcohol Plan for Lambeth
- Strategic Children's Service Plan
- Comprehensive Equalities Policy

We will engage with BME groups to obtain a better understanding of homelessness among this community and involve them more specifically in future strategy development.

Members of Lambeth's BME population are over-represented in homelessness statistics and addressing this will be a priority of the strategy. In order to do this we will carry out and commission extensive research into the causes of homelessness among Black and Minority ethnic people and develop a strategy specifically to address these causes.

- We will develop a BME Strategy Subgroup of the homelessness Forum
- We will carry out race equality impact assessment of the strategy
- We will commission research into causes of homelessness in the BME community
- We will carry out and report close monitoring of homelessness among BME people.