

***Building a Housing Ladder of  
Opportunity***

**Hammersmith & Fulham Council**

**Homelessness Strategy**

## **Contents**

### **1. Summary**

### **2. Reviewing the Council and its Partners' Approach to Homelessness Prevention**

Evidence Base Headline Findings

Reviewing Joint Working

Hammersmith & Fulham's Housing Options Service

Future 'Direction of Travel'

### **3. 2012 – Year of Housing Change**

2011 Localism Act

Mayor of London's Revised London Housing Strategy

Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity Work Programme

### **4. Future Priorities**

Theme 1 – Preventative Action – Identifying and Helping Need Groups

Theme 2 – Housing Allocation Scheme and Flexible Tenancies

Theme 3 – New Housing Supply

Theme 4 – Future Service Delivery

## **Annex 1 – References**

## **Annex 2 – Evidence Base**

## **Annex 3 – Mayor of London's Revised Housing Strategy Policy Abstracts**

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**Note:** Section 148 of the Localism Act amends section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 to allow housing authorities to make "private rented sector offers" to end the homeless duty to a household. The Government published in May 2012 the following document *Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – Consultation* which set out how the Government expected local authorities to consider the suitability of accommodation for homeless people regarding both its quality and its location. At the time of preparing this Homelessness Strategy, the Government was in the process of considering responses and is expected to publish its final document later in 2012. Once published, the Council will adopt a procedure note that will introduce its approach to this issue.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 Reducing homelessness and its causes are the two core objectives of this document. This Homelessness Strategy begins with a brief analysis of homelessness trends based on evidence set out in Annex 2; a brief review of the Council's recent homelessness work to date; and based on the review and current housing policy trends, what the future direction of travel for this area of work might take; and finally, identifying future areas of homelessness work for future action.
- 1.2 The impact of the Government's housing benefit caps and, in the future, Universal Credit caps, is considered likely to have an impact on households who have been living in relatively expensive private rented accommodation, particularly for large families.
- 1.3 The reduction of the most obvious form of homelessness, rough sleeping, will remain a high priority for the Council and will support the regional and national initiatives designed to meet that shared priority. The Council is also keen to reduce the potential for ex-Armed Services Personnel finding themselves on a fast, downward spiral from a structured, disciplined environment to living on the street.
- 1.4 There will be short to medium term management, partnership and financial interventions that can help ameliorate the negative impacts that people threatened with homelessness are experiencing, and ideally prevent homelessness itself.
- 1.5 However, the key to reducing long term homelessness is dependent on increasing supply from all segments of the housing market, using all the resources and expertise that is available. This will include drawing on accommodation in the private rented sector both in the borough and outside it. It will also involve the Council and its Private Registered Partners issuing fixed term tenancies – between two and five years - which offer the opportunity for the Council to periodically review households' needs in a way that secure and assured tenancies do not allow for.
- 1.6 In conclusion, the Council anticipates homeless approaches to the Council will remain at significant levels and it is important that the work of the Council's Housing Options teams continues to be efficient and effective, working closely with its private partners in the process. This Homelessness Strategy sets out how that approach will be achieved in practice.

## **2. Reviewing the Council and its Partners' Approach to Homelessness Prevention**

### **Evidence Base Headline Findings**

2.1 Drawing on the information set out in Annex 2, the following headline findings can be highlighted:

- The number of homelessness approaches reached a peak of 2,891 in 2008/09 reducing to 2,521 in 2010/11.
- The majority of homelessness approaches since 2007/08 have been from non-white ethnic backgrounds
- Approaches from the 16-24 year old age cohort has slightly risen from 668 in 2007/08 to 730 in 2010/11, reaching a peak of 1,001 approaches in 2008/09. Approaches from the 25-44 year old cohort in 2007/08 totalled 1,136 increasing to 1,281 in 2010/11 which included a peak of 1,371 approaches in 2008/09
- The number of approaches from pensioner age (65+ year old) is a relatively small cohort of 60 (2.7% of total) in 2007/08 up to 67 in 2010/11 (2.7% of total)
- Of 2,225 approaches in 2007/08, 252 (11.3%) were accepted as homeless. Of 2,521 approaches in 2010/11, 164 (6.5%) were accepted as homeless
- The large majority of reasons for accepted homelessness were exclusions from the parental/relative's home; loss of rented accommodation; and violence related relationship breakdown
- The largest cohort of homelessness acceptances were female lone parents
- The priority need for those accepted as homeless were 126 (50% of accepted total) for a dependent child (or children) in 2007/08 and 91 (55% of accepted total) in 2010/11. Other acceptances included applicant or partner pregnant; applicant aged 16/17 years old; and, other vulnerable categories.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation had fallen from 1,200 households in 2007/08 to 888 in 2010/11. However, by December 2011 (i.e., end of 2011/12 Q3), the number had risen to 968 households
- Within the temporary accommodation total figure, use of private sector and housing association sector housing was in decline with a relatively minor increase in bed & breakfast accommodation
- The number of homelessness preventions was 554 in 2007/08 and 546 in 2010/11

2.2 In conclusion, the above information indicates that the Council has been relatively effective in addressing homelessness approaches, using a range of sources of temporary accommodation to house those in need. The cohorts of homelessness approaches tended to be from the younger age groups; from ethnic minority backgrounds; acceptances skewed towards those approaches featuring a child's or children's needs; applicant or partner pregnant; applicant

in the 16/17 age group cohort; with a minority of applicants from 'Other' vulnerable groups. Despite there being some variations, it is worth noting that homeless approaches to the Council peaked in 2008/09 when the 'credit crunch' impact was at its peak. Given the continuing economic uncertainty, homeless approaches and associated interventions can be expected to at least remain at current levels and may increase.

### **Reviewing Joint Working**

- 2.3 The Council has longstanding working relationships with private registered providers (i.e., housing associations) in the borough. Since the beginning of 2008, over twenty private registered providers have provided over 850 social rented homes, a large proportion of which have been used to meet homeless need. These same organisations provide a range of supported housing services which play a vital role in both preventing and reducing homelessness.
- 2.4 In meeting temporary accommodation need, private registered providers have worked closely with the Council to generate leasing solutions which have assisted in providing support where social housing nominations are unavailable to meet need. Such joint working has involved procuring housing from the private rented sector both in and outside the borough's boundaries. With housing benefit caps being fully implemented from January 2012 and the expected implementation of the Universal Credit caps from 2013 onwards, it is expected that these kinds of innovative working relationships will be delivered in increasingly challenging circumstances. In 2011, where the potential impact of the Housing Benefit caps was expected to have a negative impact on leasing schemes, the Council assembled the HB Assist Team drawing on funding from (the Department of) Communities and Local Government (CLG) to provide the following for affected residents:
- Dedicated Housing Options and Housing Benefit advice
  - Dedicated property procurement assistance
  - Floating Support for residents who require it
  - Resettlement support for residents moving to alternative properties
  - Removals assistance where necessary
  - Other support and assistance, as determined on a household-by-household basis.
- 2.5 The effectiveness and efficiency of the Housing Options Service's work will continue to be heavily dependent on continuing and building on joint working with Adult Social Care and Children's Services borough staff and other agencies. With the advent of tri-borough working, the opportunities for sharing good practice and improving performance are that much greater.

### **Good Practice in Meeting Homelessness Demand**

- 2.6 Set out below are a number of approaches that the Council has adopted to meet homelessness in the borough. Where possible, the Council will seek to mainstream recent years' good practice described below to ensure that future

homelessness applicants gain from the broader Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity approach.

### **Placement and Assessment Team for Homeless Singles (PATHS)**

- 2.7 PATHS was created in 2007 to improve prevention of homelessness and offer tangible housing options to the borough's single homeless population. Single homeless people often have multiple support needs in addition to a housing need such as substance misuse, mental health and offending. The team acts as a central gateway into all supporting people funded accommodation based and floating support in the borough.
- 2.8 Through access to supported housing and floating support, PATHS has made a very real contribution to the reduction in numbers of single homeless people in temporary accommodation. However, this does not just deliver on reducing these numbers. By offering tangible supported housing options alongside any statutory assessment as appropriate, PATHS gets vulnerable people into services that should stop them revolving through repeated cycles of homelessness, with all the social and economic benefits that this brings both to the individual and the wider community. It is clear from experience that people would often become homeless repeatedly because they had not addressed their support needs and were not equipped to manage a tenancy.

### **Homeless 16 & 17 year olds**

- 2.9 In May 2009 the Supreme Court ruled that the housing and welfare needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds should be met through s20 of the Children's Act 1989 and not through the Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as was common practice. In response to this ruling Housing Options and Children's Services worked very closely to develop a joint working protocol to support 16 and 17 year olds to return or remain at home if it is safe and appropriate to do so. PATHS has two Children's Services social workers based in the team who carry out initial assessments jointly with housing and ensure that the young person experiences a 'seamless' assessment service between the departments. When a young person does need to be accommodated, we have developed a clear supported housing pathway to ensure that they are given focussed support to develop their independent living skills and their wider needs such as access to employment, education and training. This model has been very successful in returning young people home and we are now considering ways in which this approach can be widened on a tri-borough basis.

### **Offenders**

- 2.10 Probation and Drug & Alcohol services jointly fund a post in PATHS who assesses the housing needs of the borough's offenders and substance misusing offenders. The borough's approach to Integrated Offender Management (IOM) recognises that accommodation is key to reducing offending and substance misuse rates. Access to defined supported housing

pathways for key cohorts of offenders assists partner agencies to address these behaviours with individuals.

### **Annual Lettings Plan**

- 2.11 The 2010/11 Annual Lettings Plan to date set aside a quota of homes for need groups such as children leaving care; people with supported housing needs who require accommodation in order to leave temporary supported accommodation; and the homeless themselves. In certain situations, the Council will make 'direct' offers to applicants, where they are unable or unwilling to 'bid' for homes using the Council's choice based lettings scheme, *Locata*.

### **Spring Cottage Teenage Pregnancy Unit**

- 2.12 After working closely with the Council's Teenage Pregnancy Unit a decision was made in 2007/08 that safe and secure housing for a number of homeless teenage pregnant women and young mothers was required. Discussions were held with Supporting People who agreed to set up a contract with a support provider and one of our hostels, Spring Cottage, was converted to set up the unit.
- 2.13 Since its inception Spring Cottage has had almost 100% occupancy. Referrals are made from Housing Options Families team and the support provider ensures move-on when tenants are able to live independently. All homeless pregnant teenagers are housed into Spring Cottage and none are left to fend for themselves in an unsupported environment. There is 24 hour support provided and help is provided with welfare benefits, parenting skills, budgeting skills and independent living.

### **Housing and Employment Project**

- 2.14 The Housing and Employment Project aimed to provide a housing and employment function and tackle worklessness in the borough. This scheme derived from the Council's involvement with the West London Housing and Employment link Project which received funding from the Government to promote employment across the 7 West London boroughs. The project comprised of two complementary service offers: the Job Brokerage Service and the Lone Parent Housing and Employment Initiative (LPHE):
- The Job Brokerage Service provided employment-focused advice, guidance and practical support to workless residents in temporary accommodation. The project ran from October 2008 through to March 2011
  - The LPHE initiative was set up to provide tailored support to the significant numbers of unemployed lone parents living in temporary accommodation who wanted to move into permanent housing and escape the poverty trap of long-term benefits. The scheme helped these clients find and sustain employment from August 2008 to March 2011

- 2.15 Together the services - branded as the Housing and Employment Project - aimed to link employment and housing support for clients with multiple and complex support needs. The close proximity of both housing and employment support enabled clients to receive a unique, seamless service where staff were able to assist with benefit issues, housing problems and childcare needs.
- 2.16 The project focused on supporting workless residents living in temporary accommodation helping them to find work. Typically the client group had multiple and complex support needs and required tailored and intensive support to help them compete in the labour market. At the time of introducing the Job Brokerage element of the project and delivering this in-house, the recession took hold. Competition for all jobs in London was very high, requiring project staff to work intensively and creatively with their clients.
- 2.17 The LPHE initiative built up strong relationships with a wide range of organisations in order to effectively refer clients onto skills and employment provision, volunteering opportunities and work placements. With the introduction of the Job Brokerage element of the service to the project clients were referred to external skills and employment providers between April 2008 and March 2011 were 2008/09 – 323; 2009/10 – 106; 2010/11 – 117.
- 2.18 The Housing and Employment project provided a service that worked with 461 workless residents who were in housing need and successfully placed 98 into employment. As a result 48 eligible lone parents were re-housed. LBH&F piloted this unique service in a difficult economic period where competition for jobs was high.
- 2.19 H&F were instrumental in setting up the scheme, writing the bid and were the highest achievers throughout the project. The final evaluation of the WL HELP scheme stated that:

*'The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has the best conversion rate of project starts into jobs, with 38% of starts moving into work and on effectiveness of referrals and outreach activities'*

### **Hammersmith & Fulham's Housing Options Service**

- 2.20 The Council's homelessness prevention work is managed by the Housing Options and Advice Service, part of the Housing and Regeneration Directorate. Established in 2004, the service is currently based in a central and accessible location on King St W6, providing a comprehensive range of advice and support for any person experiencing a difficulty with their housing as well as offering advice on low cost home ownership.
- 2.21 The service includes advice for 16 and 17 year olds; family support for expectant mothers and lone parents; 'floating' support and home visits for vulnerable people; survivors of domestic violence; support for tenants in the private rented sector; and asylum seekers.

- 2.22 Additional services include employment support for jobseekers; advice on reducing under occupation and overcrowding; home visits and outreach work where necessary; advice on mortgage rescue.
- 2.23 Other Council teams play a crucial role in both preventing homelessness but also ensuring that specific needs are taken account of when a household's circumstances are being considered. For example, the Environmental Health team is responsible for licensing houses in multiple occupation, ensuring that they are safe and fit to occupy. The Housing Benefit team ensure that eligible benefits are paid to tenants or landlords to help with residents' housing costs. The Supporting People service provide a wide range of services to vulnerable people, helping them access housing related support.
- 2.24 The Council's Children's Services and Adults' Services teams have responsibilities towards their respective client groups which often have a housing dimension, particularly where people's quality of life is impacted by issues such as overcrowding; problems with wheelchair access; and, adapting homes for older people's use. Consequently, there is considerable joint working between the Council teams to help ensure effective and efficient outcomes for both the Council and the residents themselves.
- 2.25 The Council also enjoys a close working relationship with its not for profit Private Registered Partners (previously known as Registered Social Landlords and also as housing associations) who provide a range of general needs housing services for people requiring affordable housing for rent. In addition, they provide a range of services, often funded by the Council's Supporting People programme, for people with particular housing needs requiring additional 'support' services.

### **Future 'direction of travel'**

- 2.26 To understand the full breadth of the Council's proposed approach, this Homelessness Strategy should be read in the context of other Housing Change documents, specifically the Council's Housing Strategy; Housing Allocation Scheme; and Tenancy Strategy. With the new freedoms and flexibilities available to local housing authorities, the Council intends to change its approach to its housing options services to deliver its housing responsibilities in a way that reflects the three strands below. As part of the wider Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity approach, the Council is seeking to achieve a change in expectation in what the Council will and won't do for customers in a transparent fashion.
- 2.27 Each of the Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity documents reflect the themes of a housing approach based on personal responsibility that is fair, realistic and affordable as does this document. By personal responsibility is meant that housing applicants take greater responsibility for their own actions and their future. By fair, is meant an accessible approach that does not discriminate against particular need or equality group; by realistic, an approach that is based on the 'real world' housing choices that are available to

people; and, by affordable, a housing approach that is both affordable for the Council to provide and for customers to pay for.

2.28 Reflecting on the information set out in the evidence base described above (and the Housing Strategy Evidence base) and the likely 'direction of travel' for future affordable housing, the following points can be made:

- Affordable housing for rent will primarily come from registered providers' (i.e., local authority and housing association) existing homes that become available for letting. By this is meant where existing accommodation becoming available for re-let due the death of the former tenant, abandonment, eviction or the voluntary relinquishing of the tenancy
- The large majority of newly built housing for rent will be on 'Affordable Rents' which will charged at up to 80% of market levels. Up to 50% of the above mentioned housing for rent that is re-let will be on Affordable Rents
- Most new tenancies granted by registered providers (i.e., local authority and housing association) will be for fixed terms (See Tenancy Strategy for more detail).
- There is expected to be a reduction in the amount of locally available temporary accommodation, particularly large family accommodation, where leases are not renewed
- Due to rising local private rents and the change in the Local Housing Allowance methodology, the private rented sector outside the borough will be increasingly used both to meet the Council's statutory homelessness duties and other housing obligations
- The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit caps are likely to present difficulties for larger families to locate or stay in the borough where the head of household is not in work
- Uncertainties over how the Universal Credit system will be implemented, particularly direct payments to tenants, may prove to be a disincentive to landlords to house homeless households in the future
- Where homelessness prevention work reduces in its effectiveness then the possibility of increased homelessness approaches should be expected

2.29 In that context, the Council will be adopting a Homelessness Strategy approach based on personal responsibility that is fair, realistic and affordable. This will translate into an approach that sets out clearly what the Council is able to do, without unrealistically raising applicants' expectations. For example, where an accepted homeless household's need is for a four bedroom home, this housing need is more than likely to be 'discharged' into the private rented sector, possibly outside the borough, if it is a new application. In tandem, the Council will not be maintaining a Housing Register

application for such a household because it would have met its homelessness duty through use of the private rented sector property, providing the tenancy is reasonably secure and meets Government regulations that are expected to be published in late 2012.

- 2.30 The Council will be working with private rented sector agencies to procure the necessary housing to meet its future housing requirements. The Council expects temporary accommodation that historically it has accessed, particularly housing association and private sector leased stock to reduce in the short, medium and long term. One of the key drivers for this expected decline is the anticipated impact of the Housing Benefit Caps from January 2012 and the wider impact of the imposition of the Universal Credit caps from October 2013.
- 2.31 Reference is made at the beginning of this Homelessness Strategy to the Government's May 2012 *Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – Consultation* which set out how the Government expected local authorities to consider the suitability of private sector rented accommodation for homeless people regarding both its quality and its location. Additional considerations are the lengths of tenancy on offer and its cost. In advance of the final Homelessness Order being published, the Council will prepare a procedure note, setting out how it intends to implement its approach to discharging its homelessness duty using private rented housing.

### **3. 2012 – Year of Housing Change**

#### **2011 Localism Act**

- 3.1 The Act provides the basis for councils to use a range of freedoms and flexibilities previously not available to help deliver its strategic housing objectives. Specific actions the Council intends to undertake include the adoption of flexible tenancies; allowing only applicants who meet the 'reasonable preference' to be registered with the Council; from the reasonable preference groups, giving greater priority to applicants who have a local connection and are making a community contribution; adopting a more managed approach to lettings, dispensing the current choice based lettings approach. The proposed changes are set out in the Tenancy Strategy; Housing Allocation Scheme; and Housing Strategy documents.
- 3.2 The potential advantage of the new approach being adopted by the Council is to enable applicants who are homeless (or threatened with homelessness) to receive a more flexible, responsive and efficient service. One specific change that the Council is limiting the circumstances in which homeless applicants will qualify for an allocation of social housing through the Housing Allocation Scheme. Where applicants have a local connection and are making a community contribution, then it will be possible that affordable accommodation for rent on a flexible or other tenancy will be allocated.

## **The Mayor of London's Revised London Housing Strategy**

- 3.3 The Council expects the Mayor to publish his final statutory Housing Strategy in 2012 which broadly reflect the policies set out in his December 2011 revised document. The London mayor's strategic document highlights a number of policies designed to ensure the homeless receive adequate access to accommodation. Policies 1.2A - 1.2L set out in the *Access to Rented Housing* sections (See Annex 3 for detail). The policies include:
- 1.2A Within the overall objective of meeting housing need, boroughs are encouraged to make use of their new flexibilities to ensure that local priority groups have access to social housing, in particular to incentivise work and volunteering and to promote mixed and balanced communities while continuing to meet the needs of people in reasonable preference categories.
  - 1.2B The presumption is that boroughs will seek to discharge their homelessness duty within their local area, always considering the specific needs of households to remain in the locality
  - 1.2C Boroughs should ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between offers of accommodation for homeless households in the private rented and social rented sectors
  - 1.2D Where the homelessness duty is discharged into the private rented sector, landlords are encouraged to offer tenancies that are for a longer period than the statutory minimum where appropriate, and boroughs are encouraged to use only those landlords with a recognised accreditation
  - 1.2E All boroughs should make full use of existing and future systems that monitor cross-borough temporary accommodation placements, urgent moves and discharge of homelessness duty, and that help to ensure that all households housed out of borough have access to services
- 3.4 The final document will be a statutory document which the Council's Housing Strategy will need to be in general conformity with. By default, this Homelessness Strategy will similarly need to be in general conformity with the Mayor's document.
- 3.5 In terms of the key sections identified above, the Council expects its own approach to broadly conform with policy objectives set out above and those more fully set out in Annex 3. The Council is committed to giving greater access to social housing for local priority groups in order to incentivise work and volunteering and promote wider mixed balanced sustainable communities objectives, as per Policy 1.2A of the Mayor's Revised Housing Strategy. Additional policies referred to above make extensive reference to ensuring that households are, where possible, able to remain in the locality. Regarding Policy 1.2C, striking a reasonable balance between homelessness applicants receiving private rented housing and social housing, the Council will seek to achieve that objective but will seek to give greater priority to those homeless applicants who are making a community contribution.

- 3.6 The Council will be limited in its ability to let large family accommodation to homeless households who have high bedroom requirements, i.e., three bedrooms or more, as these housing types are limited in supply in the affordable housing sector and increasingly unaffordable (in terms of benefit entitlement) in the private rented sector.

### **Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity Work Programme**

- 3.7 This Homelessness Strategy is one of a number of documents that make up the Council's Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity work programme. Taken together, these documents – the Housing Strategy; Housing Allocation Scheme; and Tenancy Strategy - represent the Council's wider policy approach designed to take full advantage of the freedoms and flexibilities granted to local housing authorities following the passing of the 2011 Localism Act.

## **4. Future Work Priorities**

### **Theme 1 – Preventative Action – Identifying and Helping Need Groups**

- 4.1 The Council will continue to provide a comprehensive housing options service focusing on its preventative role as well as meeting its statutory homelessness obligations.
- 4.2 The Council will seek to ensure that each homeless approach it receives is dealt with in a consistent, fair and inclusive manner, taking account of any factors such as disability, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other equality groups. Where homelessness is accepted, the Council will continue to work closely with its Registered Provider partners - both the Council in its landlord role and housing associations – to develop and implement housing solutions. Where possible, approaches will be tailored to meet the specific needs of groups that have suffered from homelessness in the past, but it will not always be possible to meet all applicants' aspirations.
- 4.3 The Council is obliged to give 'reasonable preference' to eligible and qualifying homeless households. This cohort of reasonable preference is the first one of five set out below which feature in the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme:
- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act including people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need
  - People who are owed a duty by an housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s192(3)
  - People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
  - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability

- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, whose failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)
- 4.4 More detail on how the Council manages its Housing Register and prioritises applicants for accommodation can be found in the Housing Allocation Scheme.
- 4.5 Based on the evidence base and the Council's experience, homelessness approaches can continue to be expected in the future from the following need groups: family exclusions (including young pregnant women/lone parents); young people (including care leavers); people with dependency issues; rough sleepers including ex-armed services personnel; victims of domestic violence; asylum seekers and people with no recourse to public funds; residents with mobility issues; ex offenders; elderly people including those suffering from dementia; and, managing the impacts of Assured Shorthold Tenancies and leasing schemes that are ending. Whilst approaches can be expected to increase, this does not necessarily mean any commensurate increase in homelessness acceptances. Specifically on the issue of rough sleepers, the council is supportive of the Mayor of London's 'No Second Night Out' initiative and his rough sleeping reduction target for the capital. We will continue to work with all partner organisations to reduce rough sleeping on our streets.

**Action:** Hammersmith & Fulham Council will continue to provide an accessible, fair and inclusive Housing Options Service to the homeless and those threatened with homelessness. The initial focus will be on preventative action whilst ensuring that the Council meets its statutory obligations to consider homelessness approaches.

## **Theme 2 – Housing Allocation Scheme and Flexible Tenancies**

- 4.6 The Council's approach to managing housing need and aspiration are set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme. The Tenancy Strategy sets out the Council's proposed approach to flexible tenancies and the affordable rent regime.
- 4.7 Both of these documents set out in tangible terms the change the Council intends to make in its housing approach. One particular change that homeless applicants can anticipate is the ending of an obligation on the Council to provide a social housing offer. The Council will seek to discharge its homelessness obligations to an applicant whether through a private rented tenancy or other form of accommodation, although this will not preclude consideration of affordable housing available from registered providers. The above mentioned Housing Allocation Scheme sets out how households making a community contribution will be awarded additional preference for accommodation.
- 4.8 The Council will make clear at all points of the process that in the event of a homeless acceptance, this will not lead to an automatic grant of a tenancy

from a registered provider (i.e., either the Council or a housing association), even after temporary accommodation has been granted. Where a tenancy is granted by a Registered Provider this is very likely to be on a fixed term basis.

**Action:** Hammersmith & Fulham Council will proactively publicise its new Housing Allocation Scheme and flexible tenancy regime to all applicants seeking accommodation through a homeless approach.

### **Theme 3 - New Housing Supply**

- 4.9 The Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy – its key local planning document – adopted in October 2011 makes reference in Policy H4 to housing needs that should be protected and new supply provided when seeking to meet residents' needs and aspirations. Whilst the Council's affordable housing preference is for low cost home ownership, there will be some instances where affordable rent housing will be required for people with care and support needs (see last bullet point below).
- 4.10 Core Strategy **Policy H4: Meeting Housing needs** states that the council will work with house builders to increase the supply and choice of high quality residential accommodation that meets local residents' needs and aspirations. In order to deliver this:
- There should be a mix of housing types and sizes in development schemes, especially increasing the proportion of family accommodation. The precise mix in any development will be subject to the suitability of the site for family housing in terms of site characteristics, the local environment and access to services.
  - All new build dwellings should be built to "Lifetime Homes" standards with 10% to be wheelchair accessible, or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users.
  - Applications for HMOs and hostels will be considered in the light of their contribution to the range of housing in the borough and their impact on the locality and its character; and
  - Housing for people who need care and support must be protected, and, subject to continuing need, applications for new developments where there is an established local need will be supported.
- 4.11 In addition, mindful of the accepted trend of people living longer, more work will be required to develop and manage housing options for older people. Bespoke housing products and housing schemes are potential options. A pressing, identified strategic need is the provision of more accommodation for older people with dementia (including early onset of). This will involve the development of more local 'Extra Care' with nursing options that will enable older people to live in secure, safe and warm environments in reasonably close proximity to friends, family and community networks. In some instances, given the shortage of land for development, this may include the redevelopment of existing elderly housing to deliver that objective.

- 4.12 In tandem with the above requirement, the Council is undertaking a review of its own sheltered housing stock with a view to potentially increasing the supply of Extra Care accommodation with nursing options. The Housing Strategy identifies the need to adopt a strategic housing and health approach which effectively meets the local needs of vulnerable, disabled and elderly residents. This will necessarily include reference to homeless people.

**Action:** The Council will monitor on an ongoing basis the provision of housing for people who need care and support and consider where new service provision and housing products are needed and similarly where such existing provision and products should be discontinued.

#### **Theme 4 - Future Service Delivery**

- 4.13 As part of the Council's medium term financial strategy, it is seeking to ensure that all services provided by the Council provide value for money. This will include:

- **Streamlining the Housing Options Service** – this will include re-orientating service provision to homeless applicants and other customers seeking housing advice to reflect the changes proposed in this Homelessness Strategy and other *Housing Change* documents, specifically the Housing Allocation Scheme. It will also reflect the streamlined service that the Council intends to provide in the future, with clear guidelines setting out what the Council will and will not do.
- **New ways of working** – building on existing cross division and directorate joint working, the Housing Options division will draw on experience and expertise from tri-borough arrangements. There will be homeless applicants with both acute housing need but also other unrelated needs, e.g., where a child or children are involved; where an applicant has one or more dependency issues; where homes may require particular specific adaptations for accommodation. The Housing Options Division will continue to develop its joint working approach to ensure outcome are maximised for both customers and the Council and its partner agencies.
- **Working with Private Registered Providers** – The Council intends to work more closely with Private Registered Providers (principally housing associations) in seeking to ensure that housing options are maximised. This will include tracking outcomes from nomination agreements; exploring 'chain lettings' opportunities to maximise use of available accommodation; making sure current housing services for particular need groups (as identified in Annex 2) are receiving effective and efficient services.
- **Accommodation Procurement Strategy and Use of the Private Rented Sector for Homeless Households** – The cost of affordable private rented accommodation in the borough is increasing and with the

full implementation of the housing benefit caps and the Universal Credit regime that will follow in 2013, it is likely that some accommodation currently used by some homeless households will cease to be available for temporary purposes. The Council will be procuring accommodation outside the borough (including outside London) in order to meet its future housing obligations. Whilst there is some use of bed and breakfast accommodation, the Council intends to limit its use. As referenced elsewhere, the Council intends to ensure that a homeless approach is not considered a direct route to affordable rented accommodation and that private rented housing will be used to discharge its homelessness duties, having regard to Government regulations when finalised.

**Action:** The Council will develop a workplan which will be published setting out how and over what timeline it intends to deliver the objectives set out above.

## **Annex 1 – References**

1. Webpage describing the Council's homelessness prevention guidance:

[http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Housing/Housing\\_advice/Homelessness/21900\\_Homelessness\\_prevention.asp](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Housing/Housing_advice/Homelessness/21900_Homelessness_prevention.asp)

2. LBHF Housing Allocation Scheme (July 2009) Second Edition
3. Mayor of London's A Revised London Housing Strategy – Initial Proposals (Aug 2011)

## Annex 2 – Homelessness Strategy - Evidence Base

### Homelessness Strategy

Name	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 8	2008/9	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/12 (up to Dec11)
<b>Approaches</b>	2264	2208	2059	2454	2225	2891	2612	2521	1718
<b>Approaches by Ethnicity</b>									
White Total					835	1077	992	1031	720
Black Total					743	1014	933	897	592
Asian Total					187	205	203	212	141
Mixed Total					106	165	215	170	113
Other Total					153	193	205	167	122
Not Stated					201	237	64	44	30
Total					2225	2891	2612	2521	1718
<b>Approaches by Age</b>									
0-15					4	3	1	6	1
16-24					668	1001	876	730	455
25-44					1136	1371	1239	1281	903
45-59					308	404	373	375	273
60-64					49	49	62	64	35
65-74					46	49	47	46	33
75 & Over					14	14	12	17	9
Unknown					0	0	2	2	9
Total					2225	2891	2612	2521	1718
<b>Acceptances</b>	644	653	430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Acceptance by ethnicity:</b>									
White Total	189	223	152	176	80	62	50	66	51
Black Total	254	237	151	150	102	65	60	62	61
Asian Total	31	39	35	29	23	13	14	12	9
Mixed Total	0	0	0	19	14	9	24	10	4
Other Total	69	73	54	42	22	10	8	14	7
Not Stated	101	81	38	27	11	13	0	0	0
Total	644	653	430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Acceptance by Age:</b>									
16-24			170	176	114	71	59	42	38
25-44			219	216	106	81	77	92	65
45-59			35	42	20	16	11	23	20
60-64			3	2	3	2	2	1	1
65-74			3	6	9	2	7	3	5
75 & Over			0	1	0	0	0	3	3
Total			430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Acceptance by Household Type:</b>									
Couple with children			89	61	30	21	22	23	18
Male Lone Parents			8	11	13	4	4	3	3
Female Lone Parents			196	203	104	85	85	70	63

*Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity - Homelessness Strategy*

Male Lone Person			69	77	59	33	26	32	35
Female Lone Person			60	80	41	28	16	34	13
Other inc couples			8	11	5	1	3	2	0
Total			430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Homeless Reason Breakdown:</b>									
Excluded Parents/Relative	313	315	226	233	135	89	78	60	61
Loss of Rented Accommodation	124	125	92	89	42	34	30	44	37
Relationship Breakdown - Violence related	57	91	46	53	23	23	33	20	12
Relationship Breakdown - Non Violence related	11	10	5	7	11	6	2	4	2
Rent/Mortgage Arrears	10	7	3	10	5	5	1	2	3
Ex-Institution of Care	28	16	13	5	2	5	2	9	2
Consolidated Other Reasons	101	89	45	46	34	10	10	25	15
Total	644	653	430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Priority Need Breakdown:</b>									
Dependent child(ren) in household	351	372	247	256	126	97	94	91	79
Applicant or partner pregnant (no children)	52	90	50	45	22	13	17	5	5
Applicant aged 16/17	108	68	69	65	57	27	23	9	3
Vulnerable (Other)	133	123	64	77	47	35	22	59	45
Total	644	653	430	443	252	172	156	164	132
<b>Households in TA by Accommodation Type (as at 31st March - apart from 2011/12 where as at 31st Dec)</b>									
Bed & Breakfast	214	139	70	64	51	39	26	51	71
Daily Annexe	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Housing Association Leased	651	644	517	423	333	300	303	263	239
Private Sector Leased	480	595	672	652	558	494	411	409	458
LBHF Stock	436	421	361	309	205	161	135	150	189
Assured Shorthold Letting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
Voluntary Sector Hostels	0	26	47	60	48	30	2	6	2
Total	1781	1825	1667	1509	1200	1024	877	888	968
<b>Preventions</b>			450	530	554	609	721	546	365
<b>Homeless Permanent Rehoused (HLP Rehoused)</b>					435	281	255	201	128
<b>Approach Reasons (went live May09)</b>									
Disrepair								18	8
Domestic violence								232	151
Ex offender								165	143
Excluded Parents, Family or Friends								751	474
Illegal eviction								6	8
Landlord and tenant dispute								13	4
Landlord harassment								1	0
Left institutional accommodation								15	20
Medical unsuitable								46	25
Mortgage arrears								7	9
Neighbour dispute								9	1
Notice to vacate premises								610	464
Other harassment								62	40
Other reason for approach								293	188

*Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity - Homelessness Strategy*

Overcrowding								87	34
Pest infestation								4	0
Possession order/bailiffs warrant								61	43
Racial harassment								3	0
Relationship breakdown - spouse/partner								52	35
Rent arrears/ affordability								86	72
Total								2521	1719
<b>Current Accommodation on Approach (went live May09)</b>									
Assured shorthold RSL tenancy								18	47
Assured tenancy PRS								85	35
ASTPRS - assured shorthold tenancy PRS								533	444
Bare license host is LA tenant								598	312
Bare license host is owner occupier								73	43
Bare license host is private tenant								177	108
Bare license host is RSL tenant								141	78
Bare license host other accom type								146	206
Contractual licensee								62	34
Freehold owner occupier								13	3
Hospital patient								40	42
LBHF probationary tenancy								1	0
LBHF secure tenancy								47	24
Leasehold owner occupier								13	13
NASS provided accommodation								11	1
Other accommodation type								188	84
Other local authority tenancy								33	15
Prison inmate								33	72
Resident landlord								2	1
Secure or assured RSL tenancy								48	24
Street homeless								259	133
Total								2521	1719

**Annex 3 – Mayor of London – Revised London Housing Strategy Consultation  
Draft (Dec 2011)**

**Renting a home: policies**

**Access to rented housing**

- 1.2A Within the overall objective of meeting housing need, boroughs are encouraged to make use of their new flexibilities to ensure that local priority groups have access to social housing, in particular to incentivise work and volunteering and to promote mixed and balanced communities while continuing to meet the needs of people in reasonable preference categories.
- 1.2B The presumption is that boroughs will seek to discharge their homelessness duty within their local area, always considering the specific needs of households to remain in the locality.
- 1.2C Boroughs should ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between offers of accommodation for homeless households in the private rented and social rented sectors.
- 1.2D Where the homelessness duty is discharged into the private rented sector, landlords are encouraged to offer tenancies that are for a longer period than the statutory minimum where appropriate, and boroughs are encouraged to use only those landlords with a recognised accreditation.
- 1.2E All boroughs should make full use of existing and future systems that monitor cross-borough temporary accommodation placements, urgent moves and discharge of homelessness duty, and that help to ensure that all households housed out of borough have access to services.
- 1.2F The Mayor will set up a joint monitoring committee with boroughs, to monitor discharge of homelessness duty.
- 1.2G Housing associations should have full regard to borough tenancy strategies, where these are in conformity with the London Housing Strategy.
- 1.2H Social landlords should continue to abide by the principles set out in 'Partners in Meeting Housing Need', the protocol for determining the proportions of housing association lettings available to local authority nominees<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2I Unauthorised occupancy in the social rented sector should be addressed.
- 1.2J Social landlords are encouraged to promote employment and training opportunities to applicants and people wishing to transfer.
- 1.2K The Mayor will work with the boroughs and the Department for Work and Pensions to monitor the government's Housing Benefit reforms.

1.2L The Mayor's London Rents Map will be enhanced and promoted, so that better information on rent levels is available to those seeking a home in the private rented sector.

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