



THE LONDON BOROUGH
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Tackling homelessness & Promoting housing options and solutions



Final Draft Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2012

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London Borough of Bromley

'Tackling homelessness and promoting housing options and solutions'

Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2012

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

This strategy ‘Tackling homelessness and promoting housing options and solutions’ sets out how the Council in partnership with stakeholders will tackle homelessness within the Borough of Bromley over the next four years. The Homelessness Act 2002¹ requires each authority to have a homelessness strategy to:

- prevent homelessness in the borough
- ensure that sufficient accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless
- ensure the satisfactory provision of support for people who are or may become homeless

The Strategy sets out a multi-agency approach to meeting both these duties which will be delivered by a range of partner agencies, both statutory and third sector. It lays out the current approach to tackling homelessness and identifies future priorities and areas of development on a range of homelessness issues.

The Borough of Bromley is the largest of the 33 London Boroughs, situated in the south east of the capital with a recorded population of 301,900 (2007) residents, the lowest average population density in London. The Borough has a relatively low-level density of development with 60 percent of the Borough being protected Greenbelt or Metropolitan Open Land. The area is well served with parks and open spaces. The Borough is proud of its image as a “green”, relatively affluent, outer London suburb, which offers a high quality of life for residents. In March 2007, there were 132,747 dwellings in the borough. Of those, 16,261 were housing association and 116,486 (87%) were owner/occupier or private rented. A change in 2008 to the Housing Benefit system allows Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to be paid to tenants in the private sector at standard rates according to bedroom size. The rates for June 2008 are shown below in figure 1:

Name	1 Bed Shared	1 Bed Self Contained	2 Beds	3 Beds	4 Beds	5 Beds	Valid from	Valid to
Inner South East London	£90.00	£173.08	£219.23	£276.92	£380.77	£461.77	01 Jun 2008	30 Jun 2008
Outer South East London	£80.77	£150.00	£184.62	£219.23	£300.00	£415.38	01 Jun 2008	30 Jun 2008

Figure 1: Rent Service: Local Housing Allowance - London Borough of Bromley (June 2008)²
(shown in £'s per week)

The average earnings for full time workers living in Bromley in 2007, was estimated to be £749 per week, ranking Bromley residents as having the 20th highest earnings in the National tables against the national average earnings of £552 for the country.³

The supply of affordable social housing available to let has steadily declined over the last few years and has contributed to the reported unmet homeless demand figures (Section 3.1.2 figure 5/ pg18). Homelessness derives both from an inadequate supply of social housing but often reflects wider issues, for example, when people face inherent or complex social and financial problems that make it difficult for them to sustain their accommodation.

Average	Flat	Semi	Detached	Terraced	Average price of property 2008	Average price of property 2003
Bromley	£188,159	£308,878	£552,450	£248,052	£324,385	£229,751
Bexley	£144,325	£242,073	£354,294	£201,626	£230,635	£188,536
South East Area postcode	£206,156	£376,432	£542,867	£315,884	£358,242	£211,945

Figure 2: Average houses prices in April 08 against 2003 as reported by Right Moves UK⁴

The table above shows the comparison of house prices between 2003 and 2008, there has been a considerable increase in house prices during this period. However, within 2008 the housing market has been impacted by the financial crisis in England and this has seen house prices fall progressively and a number of home owners fall into negative equity.

1.2 Reviewing our 2003 – 2008 Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on local authorities to review homelessness and formulate a Homelessness Strategy. Bromley produced its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003, detailing how Bromley would deliver services to meet local priorities and address the housing need.

In March 2007 a review of the Homelessness Strategy 2003 - 2008⁵ was published and presented to Portfolio and Development Scrutiny committee in April 2007. The review identified how the authority had delivered against the six key priorities and the strategy action plan, and identified areas requiring further development. Through consultation, stakeholders contributed their views towards the shaping of the new strategy.

Key objectives were identified as:

- homelessness prevention
- reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation
- promoting choice
- delivering practical solutions to reducing homelessness within the borough
- continuing and developing the partnership working to remove the barriers that exist to ensure that there are clear pathways for people in housing need

The stakeholders also requested that there should be more emphasis and information on the following areas which we seek to address within this strategy:

- service user consultation
- homelessness forum outcomes
- identify the homelessness options and prevention toolkit
- future plans for dealing with young people
- equality and diversity including access to services
- defining a strategy to deal with housing need from black minority ethnic (BME) communities approaching as homeless
- vulnerable adults / mental health
- offenders
- maximising the use of private stock
- the role of sheltered housing in meeting local housing support needs
- South East London Housing Partnership achievements (homelessness group)
(listed in no specific order)

1.3 Updating the Strategy 2008 - 2012

This Strategy 'Tackling homelessness and promoting housing options and solutions' supports the national legislation, good practice and the existing strategic framework in Bromley. It also seeks to build on the existing achievements from the Council's 2003 - 2008 Homelessness Strategy and its subsequent review. This Strategy update has also taken into account the, Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs)⁶ covering Homelessness and Housing Needs, which focus on the following strands of assessment:

- access, customer care and user focus
- diversity
- housing advice, homelessness prevention and options services
- homelessness services
- temporary accommodation for homeless households
- value for money

A Homelessness Strategy Steering Group was formed to expand the existing Homelessness Forum Steering Group and a number of consultation exercises undertaken across agreed themes which were identified as areas of priority:

- health inequalities
- vulnerable adults
- youth homelessness
- criminal justice
- equality and diversity

This includes:

- focus groups with service users living in temporary accommodation
- surveys undertaken face to face with existing residents in temporary accommodation on 'Access to housing, health, employment and education'

- a series of focus groups and one to one sessions with frontline staff and managers from within the Housing Division and across the wider Council to discuss key issues and ideas for improvement
- review of the services of the Housing Division
- survey of housing associations
- Housing Division customer consultation
- feedback and response from the Homelessness Strategy Review
- homelessness forum workshop feedback

1.4 Strategic objectives

The outcomes of the consultation are referred to at various contextual points within this Strategy, However from these, six strategic themes were derived, which are identified as the leading objectives to tackle homelessness within the Borough over the coming years:

1. **Prevention of homelessness** through accessible and innovative services, giving effective, timely housing advice and support to allow people to maintain their accommodation.
2. **Supporting vulnerable people** through effective assessment and co-ordinated decision making, offering more choice to independent living through suitable housing options
3. **Reduction of homelessness** through proactive partnership working, developing the range of solutions and promoting opportunities for people in housing need
4. **Reducing the use of temporary accommodation** through increasing the opportunity to access other housing sectors
5. **Improve the access, availability and quality of housing** across all tenures and types, for people in housing need
6. **Increasing life opportunities and promoting independence** for people in housing need by improving support and access to health, education and employment

Chapter 2: Strategic framework and context

2.1 National

The Government published its national strategy for tackling homelessness ('Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives'⁷) in March 2005, taking forward the plan to 'create thriving, sustainable, vibrant communities'. The Strategy sets out the Government's approach to tackling and reducing homelessness and drives forward the following key objectives:

- reduce homelessness
- prevention of homelessness
- prevention of repeat homelessness
- reduce rough-sleeping by two thirds
- halve the number of homeless households residing in temporary accommodation in the Local Authority by the year 2010
- reduce the numbers of homeless households with children in temporary accommodation overall by over 30,000 (compared with current levels) by 2016
- avoid the use of bed & breakfast accommodation
- no use of bed & breakfast accommodation for families unless in an emergency and then only for up to six weeks
- no use of bed & breakfast accommodation for 16/17 year olds by 2010 unless in an emergency

The objectives link into a number of government strategies including the Supporting People National Strategy 'Independence and Opportunity' published in 2007. The Strategy supports the role of partnership working and homelessness prevention through housing-related support services for vulnerable and excluded people. The Supporting People Programme interfaces with the homelessness prevention agenda, with an aim to reduce repeat homelessness and ensure efficient use of resources by undertaking reviews of service provision and delivery.

The Housing Corporation published 'Tackling Homelessness' in 2006⁸, to allow housing associations to take ownership of and contribute to the homelessness prevention agenda. The Corporation aims to bring cohesion between the work of local authorities, partners and housing associations in areas such as tenancy sustainment and supporting vulnerable people.

2.2 London

The Government has reinforced its commitment to place housing as a key priority in its legislative agenda with the publication of The Housing Green Paper⁹, 'Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable' announced in July 2007, and the Queen's Speech in November 2007 providing details of the Housing and Regeneration Bill and

the Planning Bill. The Draft Mayor's Housing Strategy¹⁰ for London was also published in September 2007, with however, the introduction of the new London Mayor's Housing Manifesto¹¹ the local authorities await the re-aligned housing policy.

These core strategies aim to address the housing challenges in London, outline policies to increase housing supply, improve the quality of homes and also address priorities for public investment in housing for 2008-2011. The New Mayor's vision for London will work with a number of organisations, including local authorities, to deliver 'vibrant and varied communities' through:

- more homes, more family size homes, more affordable and first time homes
- better designs, including reducing crime through design
- green homes, renewed homes, estates and areas
- tackling climate change through higher energy efficiency and lower emissions
- increase in reducing number of empty homes in the Capital
- protection for tenants in the private sector

2.3 Bromley

The Council's overarching priorities are delivered through the Building a Better Bromley (BBB)¹² vision statement and policy introduced in 2004. This derives from the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy and outlines how the Council views its responsibility to the residents and reflects an understanding of the diverse approach required to meet their differing need.

The '*Building a Better Bromley*' 2007- 2010 summary of priorities are:

- *safer communities*
- *a quality environment*
- *vibrant, thriving town centres*
- *supporting independence*
- *ensuring all children and young people have opportunities to achieve their potential*
- *an excellent council*

The longer term priorities for Bromley are set out in the Building a Better Bromley 2020 Vision, Bromley's Sustainable Community Strategy¹³ and this also identifies the key priorities issues and outcomes sought for homelessness and housing in the Borough. Bromley's previous Housing Strategy dates 2004 - 2007. The next Housing Strategy update will take into account the Mayor's London Housing Manifesto and the Housing Green Paper and will be informed by a Housing Market Assessment of Bromley and the sub-region to which fieldwork commenced in September 2008.

2.4 Local strategic partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership is the Borough's over-arching partnership. It has a broad base of local organisations, including the Council, other public sector organisations and representatives of the private and voluntary sectors. The partnership pulls together the partner organisations' strategies and plans to co-ordinate action through the Sustainable Community Strategy, the longer term strategy for the Borough which includes housing related targets. The key purpose of this is to improve the long-

term economic, social and environmental well-being and health of people who live, work shop and play in Bromley. This Strategy draws together the aims and objectives of major strategies of the local authority, health services, Community Safety Partnership and third sector and also takes into consideration the views of residents in the Borough.

Housing features as one of the seven priorities listed within the Building a Better Bromley 2020 Vision, which includes the future aims for housing and homelessness to 2010, namely:

- there is a variety of housing available for people to buy or rent with new developments reflecting the distinct environmental characteristics of the borough e.g. with higher densities in town centres and around major travel points, in turn enhancing their vibrancy and safety
- the number of people who are homeless or in temporary accommodation has been reduced and those with special housing needs are catered for
- the specific requirements for older people and others with care or mobility needs are catered for within the local housing market across all tenures
- unfit houses are improved to national standards
- energy efficiency and low carbon housing standards will be reflected in new builds
- suitable sites for new homes are available to meet identified future local needs, including the workforce needs of local businesses and public services

2.5 Corporate Performance Assessment

The Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) is a test administered by the Audit Commission on how well authorities run and deliver services to the people who live, work and do business in the Borough. The test considers whether the Council is improving on its previous year's performance against its key priorities, including public satisfaction opinion and then the Audit Commission scores the Council accordingly. (From 1st April 2009, CPA will be replaced by Corporate Area Assessments (CAA)).

In 1992, the Council transferred its housing stock to Broomleigh Housing Association, who currently own and manage over 11,400 units in Bromley. Despite a low number of performance indicators relevant to Bromley as a non-stock holding authority, with a correspondingly higher weighting on each indicator, the work of the Council's Housing Division contributed to the positive outcome of the CPA. There was considerable improvement on two key indicators fundamental to the overall CPA score: time spent in bed & breakfast and hostels and prevention of homelessness. This increased the rating of the service area from a level three to the top rating level four.

2.6 Vision statement / objectives

The overall objectives for the Housing Division are defined in the Housing Development and Strategy and Housing Needs Improvement and Efficiency (I&E) Plans and overall Housing Business Plans which all managers and staff contribute to.¹⁴

There has been an increase in consultation with partner agencies and service users to ensure that their views help to shape current and future services. The Housing I&E and

Business Plans include the actions arising from outcomes of any consultation and quality audits to ensure that they are inherent in the service delivery plans.

The current mission statement for the Housing Division focuses on:

- partnership working to maximise the delivery of decent, energy efficient and affordable housing
- providing housing advice and solutions to prevent or resolve homelessness
- promoting choice and independent living through clear and realistic housing options

The Council prepared its first Community Engagement Strategy¹⁵ in 2007 to provide a framework whereby individual residents and communities can systematically be consulted on and influence Council decisions. A number of constructive and proactive partnership arrangements have developed over the last few years that ensure the maximum capacity of resources and benefit for the authority and its service users. In the area of housing and homelessness consultation with stakeholders has improved through the establishment of the Borough's Homelessness Forum which met for the first time in September 2006 and has met at least twice a year since then.

Key partners in housing and homelessness include:

- Federation of Bromley Housing Associations
- Specialist housing and support providers
- Private sector housing providers including landlords and letting agents
- Bromley Women's Aid
- Supporting People
- Police and Probation Services
- Oxleas NHS Trust and Bromley Primary Care Trust
- Local solicitors
- Streetwise Law centre
- Bromley Churches Housing Action
- Local advocacy groups
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- LATCH Project
- iPAD
- Bromley Mind
- Shelter
- Community drug and alcohol services including the Drug Action Team
- Homelessness Directorate within the Department for Communities and Local Government
- Environmental health and Trading Standards
- Community Safety Partnership
- South East London Housing Partnership
- Outmates
- Domestic Violence Forum
- Schools and Education

The continuity and development of such partnerships are fundamental to the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy objectives.

2.7 Homelessness forum

The London Borough of Bromley established a Homelessness Forum in September 2006, with an independent chair from Bromley Churches Housing Action Group. On initiating the Forum a short consultation survey was carried out to find out how partner agencies, both statutory and voluntary, perceived homelessness in the Borough.

Within a Homelessness forum meeting session participants considered the following six vulnerable groups within the Borough as needing to have a priority focus:

1. people fleeing domestic violence
2. young people
3. people with disabilities
4. people with mental health problems
5. people with substance abuse issues
6. refugees and asylum seekers

The categories were fairly consistent with those identified as high priority client groups in the local Supporting People Strategy (2005). In 2007 the Homelessness Forum Steering Group reviewed the priority groups and considered the following as priority areas in homelessness review:

- equality and diversity
- criminal justice
- young people
- children and families
- vulnerable adults
- health inequalities

A consensus of current and future priorities and development requirements across each area have been established and further work will continue.

The Homelessness Forum to date has met primarily in a consultation capacity and has help to drive forward a proactive and practical way to resolving issues that can prevent people from accessing appropriate help, advice and support, when they find themselves in housing need. The forum meetings have been used to look at homelessness routes where issues that often can be resolved and find appropriate and more streamlined pathways to provide better outcomes for specific client groups. This has resulted in better communication between the Housing Division and other organisations/agencies. An example of this would be the work being undertaken with young people. The aim is to co-join services and provide specialist support to ensure that young people will be able to access a holistic service which is focused on meeting their diverse needs. The Homelessness Forum has been able to facilitate workshops to help to inform with presentations from the specialist Youth Advisor at the CLG and from 'Croydon HAP 25', a housing options and advice centre for young people.

The Homelessness Forum will continue to meet on a regular basis and the forum's Steering group will assist in monitoring the progress of the 'Tackling homelessness and promoting housing options and solutions' Strategy 2008 - 12 Action Plan and drive forward the key objectives.

2.8 Customer consultation

The Housing Division has undertaken a number of consultation exercises with both services users and external agencies and organisations. This has increased yearly with each housing team currently undertaking one exercise per year. Consultation and feedback is important to the process to ensure that the Council is producing strategies that stakeholders can own, work with and effectively deliver. It also ensures that services meet the needs of service users and are developed in a way that they can be accessed and understood by all. It is also important to demonstrate that service user feedback has been listened to and is helping to shape and improve current and future service delivery.

A sample of service users' views has been captured by the Bromley Homeseekers consultation survey¹⁶. This was sent out in April 2007 to approximately 4000 households on the London Borough of Bromley housing register along with approximately 700 households on the Broomleigh waiting list and a selection of major Housing Association's waiting lists in the surrounding area.

a) Of the 1222 respondents, 92% found the staff to be polite, 80% found them to be helpful and 72% of respondents found the staff informative.

b) Clients were asked their preferred method of contact to the service. Out of the people who responded to this question 894 people (76.7%) preferred the telephone. A further 240 people (20.6%) preferred in writing, 93 people (8.0%) preferred via email and 161 people (13.8%) claimed not to contact the team at all.

c) Service users were asked about accessibility to the Housing Division and how easy it was to find the Housing Division offices at the Civic Centre site. Of the 59 customers who responded to this question, as per figure 3, 81% found it either very or fairly easy. However, 19% of service users found it quite or very difficult to locate.

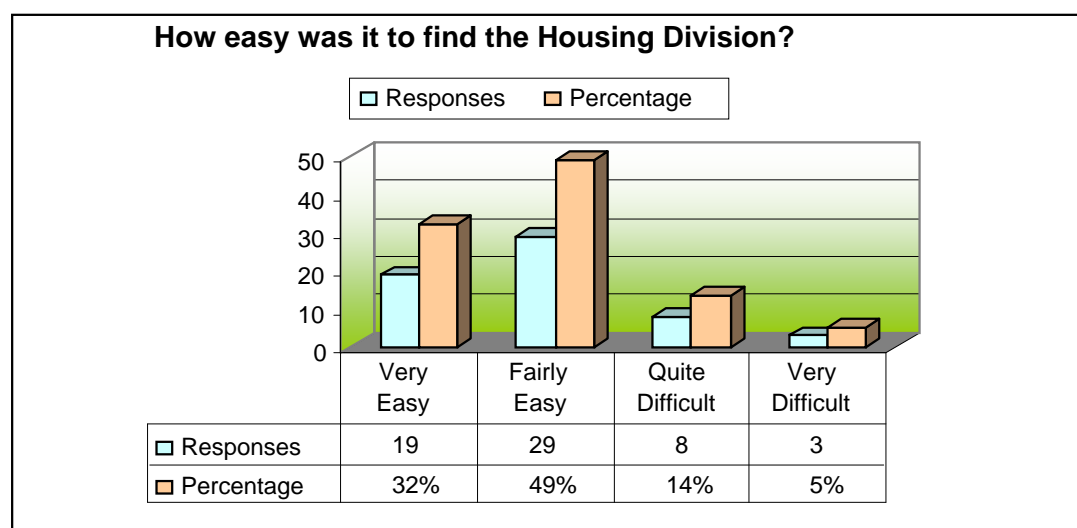


Figure 3: Access to the London Borough of Bromley Housing Division - service user response

The waiting area and interview rooms in the Housing Division have undergone refurbishment to improve customer access, catering for people with disabilities and also parents with buggies/pushchairs. A number of issues raised through inspection or

service user consultation have been responded to but further improvements are underway, including the introduction of CCTV.

Information sharing is a key component in responding to homelessness in a timely manner. The Housing Division will continue to build on protocols which detail clear lines of communication and methods of information sharing to ensure that there is a robust and responsive approach to those who present in need of assistance.

Since the Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003, the Housing Division has undergone a number of changes to ensure that the objectives and demands for the service are met. This has led to re-structuring certain areas, including the introduction of new teams and posts. The drive to prevent homelessness has meant slowly re-educating partners and service users alike. Housing staff have also been required to make many changes to the way they work and have been integral to the success of this agenda. Ultimately there was a need for service delivery to be prevention led with a heavy drive on both housing advice and options to reduce homelessness.

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Further changes are underway due to the introduction of the Borough's Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) scheme, 'Bromley Homeseekers'. CBL is a system used by councils and housing associations to let vacant properties. It is designed to be transparent and to offer applicants more choice about the options available to them. Available properties will be advertised on the Bromley Homeseekers website on a weekly basis and applicants will be able to bid (express an interest) in the properties that they meet the criteria for. The CBL scheme has been devised jointly between the London Borough of Bromley and its housing association partners. The introduction of the scheme will lead to a review of the Housing Division services, housing advice and options leaflets and website information.¹⁷ Future consultation with service user involvement will include mystery shopping and a review of housing out-of-hours emergency service is also planned.

2.9 Strategy consultation with service users

A consultation exercise undertaken in January 2008 included a focus group with service users living in temporary accommodation. The group discussed a number of aspects of housing including homelessness prevention, access to the Housing Division and communication and also allowed service users to discuss their personal homelessness experiences. The responses and service user's proposals have been subsequently responded to by the Housing Division and are recorded in Appendix 1 (page 13-15).

Service user feedback	Service user proposals	Housing Division response
<p>1</p> <p>Homelessness prevention Impose government legislation to ensure Mortgage companies deal in a more empathetic manner Case conferencing with Housing Division before housing associations go to court or evict</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients would like to see more negotiations taking place before evictions to avoid cases going to court ▪ Increase action of case conferencing before action to evict households in housing association properties, avoid court costs being added to clients accounts causing further arrears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase levels of negotiation and start to monitor levels of evictions from Housing Associations ▪ Explore mortgage rescue scheme and increase access to debt advice counselling ▪ Use meetings with Communities and Local Government to raise the issue of increase in mortgage repossessions ▪ Housing Associations operating in Bromley are reviewing their rent arrear policy in 2008 and evictions for Broomleigh were low at a total of 33 in 2007/08 which included abandonment of properties ▪ Continue to hold regular meetings with Housing associations and re-establish notification to Council of any pending or possible evictions at an early stage, so homelessness prevention work can commence
<p>2</p> <p>Housing Benefit services The services of Housing Benefit and Housing Division should be made available at the same place Improvements in performance of Housing Benefit system Benefit trap of cost of temporary accommodation, need to be aware of implications ahead of placements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One stop shop approach to both services, at least Housing Benefit Officer on site in housing to assist clients ▪ Better tracking system of correspondence ▪ Streamlining communication to ensure quicker and more efficient service ▪ Clear open information about living in temporary accommodation and full financial appraisal for clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council Accommodation strategy aims to move the Housing Benefit service onto the Civic Centre site by 2010 ▪ Explore opportunity to offer Housing Benefit sessions in Housing Division offices on certain days/times ▪ The Housing Benefit service have been awarded 4 stars following recent inspections, which takes in to account tracked changes to improvement to services provided ▪ The Council is aware of the affordability issues. Temporary accommodation (TA) by its nature is expensive however the focus on reducing TA will stop the use of the most expensive options ▪ We will review the information about living in temporary accommodation ▪ Training will be arranged for staff in giving financial appraisals ▪ We will continue to negotiate with private sector and offer incentives to secure longer tenancies for tenants
<p>3</p> <p>Housing Options Length of tenancy agreement too short with private landlords Needed more assistance to find properties Better promotion of housing options Clients were unaware that there was a scheme for those who wanted to live outside of London Debt Counselling not offered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guaranteed longer tenancy periods ▪ More assistance/advice and help during the process of looking for a private property ▪ Increased and better promotion of all housing options schemes ▪ Increase referrals to other supporting agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council accept that more assistance should be offered and will ensure that this is put in place as a matter of priority ▪ Will be trying to acquire funding to allow this to happen and ensure all staff are trained to offer all housing options ▪ Housing Options officer appointed to visit households in TA ▪ Current discussions with housing associations taking place to ascertain what Debt counselling can be offered to support tenants and LBB residents

<p>4</p> <p>Equality & Diversity</p> <p>Ensure that specialist service are involved from the outset for disabled persons moving in to Temporary Accommodation Temporary accommodation Older client felt that some officers were not always experienced and felt awkward discussing their situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involve Children’s/Adults Disability team within the assessment process and involve in case conferences to ensure best outcome for clients ▪ Reflect diversity needs in the client group of the frontline staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in joined up working with Disability teams to create a panel to look at housing need cases where there is a disability ▪ Explore possibility of multiple needs assessment ▪ We have checked the profile of workers within housing and feel it reflects the diversity of the client group; however plans are in place to train officers in specialist areas i.e. Domestic violence ▪ Improve access for service users whose first language is not English
<p>5</p> <p>Customer Service</p> <p>Improve customer service and increase customer service response levels to telephone calls etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review customer service training for Officers to ensure consistent standard of customer service from housing staff to make applying for housing a more positive experience ▪ Clear & visible guidelines on how to make compliments and complaints ▪ Service users wish to see and know about the changes implemented as a result of consultation undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rolling programme of Customer service improvement has been undertaken by all teams. However the Housing Division will review service standards with service users and ensure they are realistic to all and also clearly publish to ensure accessible to all ▪ Monitoring will take place of waiting times in reception and mystery shopping exercises will be undertaken ▪ Information on how to make compliments and complaints is currently on the reverse of all LBB letters, however this will be increased to be available in customer areas and interview rooms ▪ A formal response will be sent to all participating service users and results published on the website and in Homelessness Strategy 2008-12 to demonstrate how service user feedback will be used to influence delivery of services
<p>5b</p> <p>One Co-ordinated approach to housing – one dedicated officer throughout the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streamline process to one officer dealing with client from beginning to end of process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each housing team & its officers offer a different specialist service and therefore does not allow for this to happen. However a system will be introduced to give customers information on who they will deal with in each team
<p>5c</p> <p>Improve internal communication in housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better management & recording of information given by clients in respect of their housing application ▪ Increase file note recording so officers are aware of clients previous transactions and communication regardless of which department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This will be addressed with the introduction of a new module on the Housing IT system to record information and also one customer file system
<p>5d</p> <p>Correspondence is not always easy to understand and sometimes contains incorrect information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better management and due care taken of written correspondence and simplification to ensure clients understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Law requires that letters are written in a certain format and style. Training will be arranged for officers in to allow them to write letters which are as clear as possible in addition to the legal text that they will need to use. Quality checks of letters will also take place on a regular basis. Clients will also be invited to contact to discuss any information they don’t understand and needs explaining.

5e	<p>Letters are received much later than dated and do not always leave enough time for clients to respond within the specified timeframe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve time of correspondence reaching clients to ensure they have sufficient time frame to respond to housing letters/requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A review will take place to see what the possible delays may be and changes made to improve the timescales
6a	<p>Temporary Accommodation ‘Survival guide’ providing information for those moving in to Temporary Accommodation with health and education to be taken in to consideration when moving in to TA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide information on: local amenities, local services, emergency services, GP, Schools, Dentist, transport, education, Health, local job centre, school meals, local crèches, family support system, carers. Advice on how to deal with previous occupants correspondence / bills or arrears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A number of agencies will come together to devise a pack that will be beneficial to all households going in to temporary accommodation, taking in to consideration feedback received
6b	<p>Take in to consideration location of children’s schools when making Temporary Accommodation placements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be mindful of the affects of multiple moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of temporary accommodation does not allow for this always to happen, especially where households are placed in an emergency. Officers are aware of the need for stability and continue to do their best to ensure that moves are kept to a minimum.
6c	<p>Improve communication with clients who reside in long term temporary accommodation. Housing Associations not necessarily carrying out TA home visits and if they do, will inspect property but not necessarily ask about well being of the client or if there had been a change of circumstances Clients felt that they would like more information on waiting times for permanent property</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular contact with Housing Division required ▪ Review the services offered by Housing associations to ensure it is more customer focused ▪ Keep clients contact details up to date ▪ Housing Division to increase their contact with clients whilst they reside in long-term Temporary Accommodation ▪ Increase information availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Housing Options Officer has been assigned to visit clients residing in Temporary Accommodation ▪ This will be addressed with the housing association offering temporary accommodation ▪ Where clients provide information this will be updated and officers will be asked to ensure this happens in future ▪ We don’t have the capacity/resources to ensure this happens, however working with housing associations & other partners to see how this can be addressed ▪ The new LBB Choice Based Lettings system - Homeseekers will allow clients to access information about waiting times directly, through internet access
7	<p>Access Location of the Housing Division – improve signposting Many young people hanging around outside housing building and reception area which is found to be quite daunting at times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve signposting to the building as location is quite remote ▪ Separate area for dealing with housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We will advise the Property Division about the need to improve signage. The council will be reviewing the site and this information will included to be taken in to consideration for any future developments. ▪ The security officer located in the housing reception area should be visible and assist in controlling behaviour

Chapter 3: Prevention of homelessness through accessible and innovative services, giving effective, timely housing advice and support to allow people to maintain their accommodation.

3.1 Prevention of homelessness

One of the key drivers to meeting Government targets to reduce homelessness, repeat homelessness and reduction of use of temporary accommodation is through the actual prevention of homelessness. The Council and its partners operate a number of prevention methods including:

- early intervention
- landlord negotiation
- various forms of mediation
- home visits/tenancy sustainment
- use of Discretionary Housing Payments
- support and resettlement work
- housing advice
- referrals to specialist agencies
- sanctuary scheme
- private sector schemes
- landlords forum and training events
- securing alternative accommodation
- resolving housing benefit issues
- mediation
- prevention of harassment and illegal evictions by landlords
- homelessness prevention fund
- improving conditions in private sector by tackling disrepair
- debt advice
- debt counselling to reduce mortgage or rent arrears

The table below shows the correlation between increased homeless prevention, reducing homeless acceptances and temporary accommodation numbers.

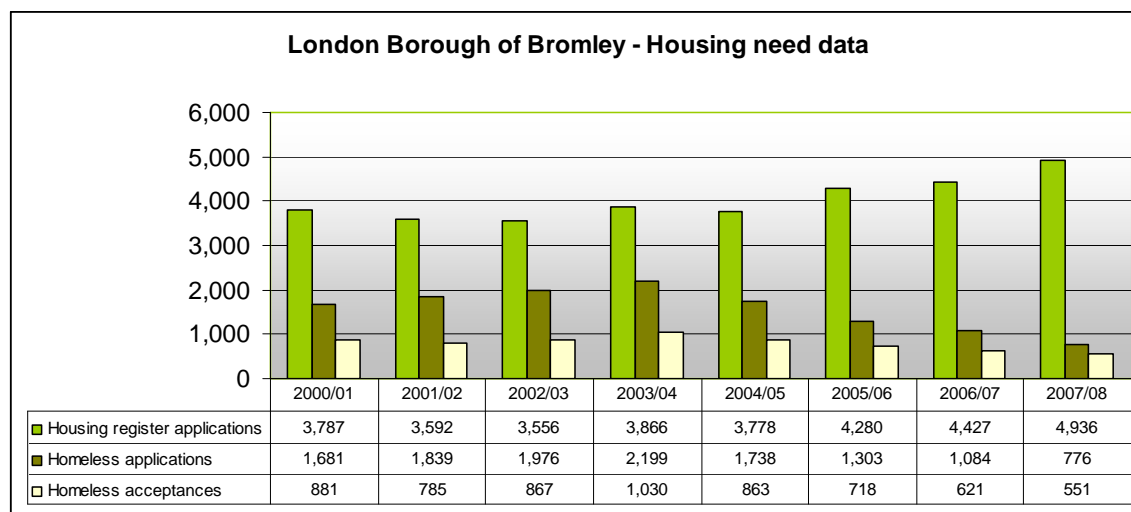


Figure 4: London Borough of Bromley - homelessness figures 2003 -2008

3.1.1 In April 2008, the CLG introduced changes to how Local Authorities record the number of cases prevented or resolved and how the prevention or resolution was achieved. The rationale given for the introduction of the new reporting is that it will enable local authorities to gain recognition for the homelessness prevention work undertaken and provide evidence at a local level and justification for continuing investment in homelessness prevention methods.¹⁸

3.1.2 The table below shows the increasing level of homelessness prevention and housing options work undertaken and the declining number of homelessness acceptances and applicants.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 forecast	2009/10 forecast	2010/11 forecast	2011/12 forecast
Housing register	4,280	4,427	4,936	4836	5316	5710	6186
Homeless applicants	1303	1084	776	683	615	650	650
Homelessness acceptances	718	621	551	410	400	390	390
Unmet homeless demand at end of year	1163	433	896	682	525	458	444
Assumed total diversions of homelessness through housing advice	N/a Already allowed for in figures for year	1054	1162	1351	1422	1432	1432

Figure 5: London Borough of Bromley - housing need figures (await figures)

3.1.3 The rise in certain groups of homelessness appears periodically and can impact significantly. The emerging credit or mortgage problems due to wider financial and political factors will mean the services will need to be able to adjust and staff trained to have sufficient skills to deal with these types of issues. The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) estimates that 45,000 homes in Britain will be repossessed during 2008. Those most vulnerable are first time buyers, those with 100 per cent or sub-prime mortgages, and those coming off fixed-rate mortgages. The Government have set out a number of proposals aimed at rescuing people in financial difficulties as a result of the current crisis. Housing departments and housing associations across the country will be the vehicle to deliver such products, within their existing resources.

HomeBuy Direct - £300m has been made available in partnership with developers to offer 30% equity loans (interest free for the first 5 years) to 10,000 households on specific new build schemes throughout the country.

Mortgage Rescue Package - a £200m scheme to provide mortgage rescue for up to 6,000 households in the country. The criteria are still to be published but would include an assessment to establish eligibility. The qualifying households would be offered the opportunity by a housing association to convert to shared ownership, shared equity or rented accommodation. Financial advice would also be offered at this point.

Income Support for mortgage interest payments - Income Support rules are being changed so it can cover interest on mortgages payments 13 weeks after a claim rather than the current 39 weeks. The change in this regulation may also have benefits for disabled households who are on benefits and who wish to access Low Cost Home Ownership.

The Council will work towards delivering such products in partnership with housing associations, SELHP and third sector organisations. There is also recognition that housing officers will need to be trained to ensure that the appropriate assessments, advice and support is given to people who become victims of the impact of the economic downturn in the financial market.

Re-shaping service provision in accordance with the evidence of presenting and possible future need is therefore planned to ensure prevention led services are available to those who need it. There are a number of pathways in which housing options will be offered, however interim arrangements, such as emergency accommodation are sometimes required whilst options are pursued. The range of housing options has to reflect the diverse needs and issues faced by people in housing need and, therefore it is necessary to ascertain as early as possible in the process the best pathway and possible outcomes for the client. The need to be proactive instead of reactive to homelessness is balanced against the decline in availability of affordable accommodation in different sectors of the housing market. There is a continuing need to manage the expectations of current and future housing applicants and to explore all opportunities open to them in terms of resolving or preventing homelessness and not just seeing social housing as the only solution to meeting their needs.

Gaps in current homelessness prevention services have been identified through the homelessness review and include the need for:

- mortgage rescue and equity release schemes
- increase in the availability of money management, debt advice and debt counselling
- increase level of practical support to help clients wishing to access in the private rented sector to find properties
- increase in floating support to vulnerable households in private sector accommodation

This strategy therefore aims to be of benefit to all homelessness groups and ensure that any future groups identified through monitoring are catered for. Increasingly we find there is a group of homeless people that do not fit into the usual clearly defined categories, due to multiple or complex needs. As the number in this group increases, the housing need becomes more transparent and this imposes the need for different approaches or pathways to respond effectively. This emphasises the requirement for flexible solutions that meet the needs of the individuals. This will include links into treatment or rehabilitation and support programmes as well as providing a gateway for people to access training or employment.

3.2 Advice and information

Housing advice has traditionally been offered not only through the Council, but also partner agencies, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Housing Division continues to offer a number of outreach surgeries at:

- Connexions
- Youth Offending Team
- Community Mental Health
- Green Parks House
- Domestic Violence – One stop shop
- Probation Services

This allows a number of vulnerable people access to housing advice and other support services in a location which is familiar and safe for them.

There is recognition of the funding issues that impact on the delivery of third sector work within the Borough. Since 2003 the Borough has seen the closure or reductions of services offering independent advice to people. Of the two, key advice centres for black minority ethnic communities within the Borough, Bromley Refugee Network closed in 2006 and Bromley Racial Equality Council closed in June 2008. Approximately 50% of the casework undertaken by Bromley Racial Equality in 2006/07 and 2007/08 was housing related enquiries for clients who suffer racial harassment and discrimination. The Citizens Advice Bureau also will be reducing their specialist housing services. This reduces the ability for the Housing Division to refer clients for specialist advice; however they are still able to offer a general advice service to those in housing need. The impact of such is recognised and the Housing Division will continue to work alongside partners to target the requirements of specific groups. This will include further development of multi disciplinary services, outreach work and surgeries, to increase accessibility of housing and homelessness advice and information over the next four years.

The key sources for obtaining information on housing matters in the Borough include:

- Council's Housing Division
- One Stop Shops / Outreach Surgeries
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Shelter
- Solicitors / Streetwise Law Centre
- Social Care Services
- Housing Associations
- Third sector organisations

3.2.1 It is our aim to continue to pursue and explore good practice and innovative ways to deliver crisis intervention in order to keep households in existing tenancies to include developing specialist floating support and tenancy sustainment for vulnerable families. Increasing homelessness prevention awareness and intervention work with partner agencies will progress alongside work with BME communities to raise the awareness of the need for early housing advice.

Advice and information about homelessness and housing options has been steadily increased on the council's website over the last eighteen months, however

consultation with staff suggests that this should be further increased to include more housing advice and signposting to a range of potential alternative housing solutions.

With the prospective increase of service users using the internet with the introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL), it is anticipated that the housing pages of the Councils website may be accessed more frequently. A snapshot of web trends¹⁹ in March 2008, show that approximately 10% of the total people accessing the London Borough of Bromley website accessed information about housing. From the maximum hits being to the front page, the next most frequently visited pages were giving information about housing associations and the Housing Register.

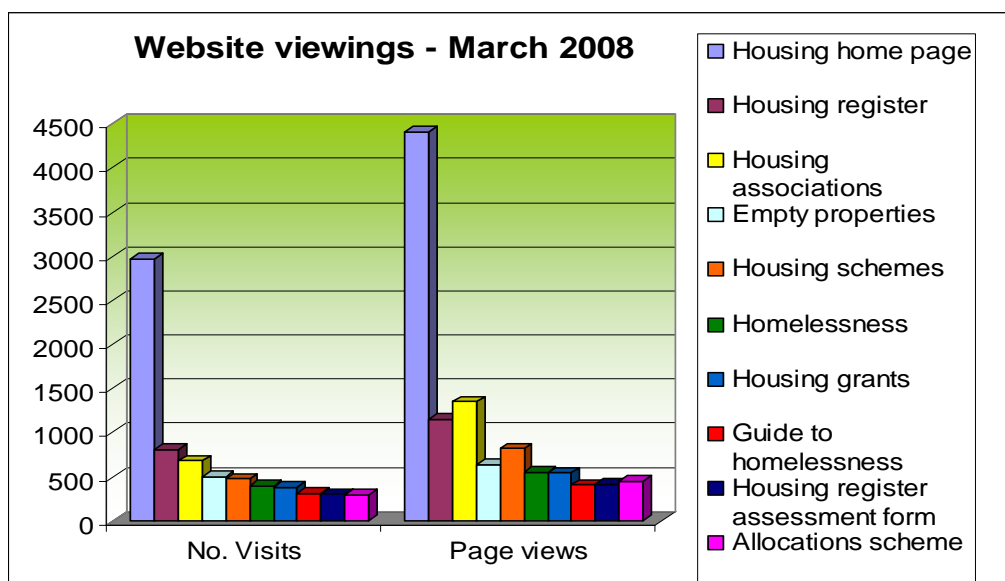


Figure 7: London Borough of Bromley website, record of visits to housing pages in March 2008

The introduction of self assessment for 'Bromley Homeseekers' (the CBL scheme) allows clients to complete a few questions and in return they will be given an estimated assessment of the band and bed size that they will qualify for if they decide to continue and join the register or to look at other options that may be available to resolve their housing situation.

3.3 Black and minority ethnic communities

Approximately 8% of the 301,900 population of Borough of Bromley belong to minority ethnic groups. The borough has a large population of Traveller families and a significant Somali refugee population, predominantly in Anerley and Penge. The number of statutory homelessness acceptance of applicants from BME applicants (non white British) in the year 2007/08 would be approximately 37.5%, demonstrating an over representation of this group.²⁰ Anecdotal evidence would suggest that rent arrears in the private sector and tenancies being terminated by landlords are the two homeless categories that BME populations are over represented. There is also a larger than average percentage in the category which has a number of miscellaneous reasons for homelessness. In these three categories BME households accounted for at least 50% of homeless acceptances.

To respond to the needs of BME communities an engagement strategy will be devised to ensure that housing advice and homelessness prevention information is more readily accessible. Enhanced recording of the homelessness data has begun to allow greater analysis in the future. The Housing Division will be able to see where any trends or inequalities may occur and ensure any unmet needs and underlying issues are addressed. With the introduction of 'Homeseekers' (CBL), there will be a data monitoring system available to provide reports across the equality strands to identify issues that arise for any particular groups. The Borough's Homelessness Forum Steering Group, which includes the Housing Division, intends to work with specialist advisors to ensure that this work is undertaken.

The Housing Division employs staff which adequately reflects the diversity of both those approaching the Council in housing need and the population of the Borough. All staff are involved in business planning through a range of surveys, discussion groups and reviews and positively contribute to the shaping of service delivery.

3.4 South East London Housing Partnership

The South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) Homelessness Group is focused on addressing key issues that occur across the five Boroughs. The Group shares good practice and benchmarking and seeks to tackle and prevent homelessness across the sub region. SELHP projects that support the work of the London Borough of Bromley since March 2007 include:

- developing a Private Rented Sector (PRS) protocol on the use of the private sector in the sub region (the protocol sets out guidelines on boroughs using PRS for PSL, rent deposit or direct lettings schemes)
- working with Communities and Local Government to deliver pilot of a private sector initiative via Pathmeads Settled Lettings
- delivering a workshop on 'Youth Homelessness' to frontline staff from a cross section of sub-regional organisations and using consultation from workshops to form action plans
- producing draft action plans for working with young people in housing need including the production of the much acclaimed 'Think! Before You Leave Home' booklet of advice and information
- working with South East London Housing Association Group (SELHAG) to produce a homelessness action plan including drafting guidance on best practice guidance 'welcome visits' and producing a directory of debt and money advice agencies in South East London.

The future work of the group will include:

- seeking to identify funding for rolling out a schools based Peer Education programme across the sub-region aimed at preventing and reducing future homelessness amongst young people building on the work of St Christopher's in Greenwich and Southwark
- progress on actions in Private Rented Sector protocol, including a sub regional publicity campaign to attract landlords to use Council letting schemes

- continue to work with Pathmeads Settled Lettings Agency – (CLG funded pilot) in piloting a lettings agency approach to cross-borough procurement
- monitoring progress of prevention of homelessness and reduction in temporary accommodation through regular data collation and reporting
- benchmarking and peer evaluation
- raising awareness of financial inclusion
- commissioning training on headline housing support and homelessness topics
- working towards a more defined approach to homelessness as a result of domestic violence
- exploring feasibility of a sub regional Sanctuary Scheme
- working with SELHAG to develop pathway for early identification of vulnerable tenants
- funding permitting, a mystery shopper exercise focusing on front line homelessness services and advice

There are many benefits to the SELHP Homelessness group. It provides a forum for managers and homelessness leads to share information and develop good practice across different areas of homelessness. Cross borough training is particularly cost effective but also allows colleagues to develop an understanding and appreciation of the diverse ways in which homelessness is being addressed in neighbouring boroughs. Notwithstanding each of the five boroughs will have its own localised housing need and demand, the key homelessness issues commonly remain the same.

3. Prevention of homelessness through accessible and innovative services, giving effective, timely housing advice and support to allow people to maintain their accommodation.

	Prevention of Homelessness	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
3.1	Review the corporate action taken to resolve the threat of illegal eviction and action to re-instate illegally evicted occupants and set up protocols.	Housing Division LBB Legal Services	Year 1- 2		
3.2	Monitoring housing association evictions	SELHP Housing Division	Year 1- 4		
3.3	Cost analysis of homelessness prevention methods to demonstrate benefits and savings and to help focus resources on the methods which produce the greatest benefits	Housing Needs Team	Year 1		
3.4	Increased mediation and housing options training for frontline staff	Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
3.5	Raising awareness of housing and homelessness issues amongst school age children with introduction & delivery of Peer Education Service	St Christopher's (SELHP)	Year 1 - 4		
3.6	Work with partner agencies to establish clear pathways with a number of possible outcomes that lead to the prevention of homelessness which meet individual needs	Housing Needs Team /Homelessness Forum	Year 1-2		
3.7	Develop a co-ordinated and quality debt and financial advice service and explore opportunity of mortgage rescue and equity release schemes information on initiatives that are being recommended by mortgage lenders in response to the possible increase in repossessions and mortgage debt	Bromley Federation of Housing Associations, (BFHA)	Year 1- 4		

3.8	Debt and financial advice training to be provided to staff to allow money management advice to be offered	SELHP	Year 1		
3.9	Review of home visits focusing on good practice guidance	Housing Division	Year 1		
3.10	Training and information provided to all key partners, including Housing Associations, Social Care, Health & Third Sector organisations on Housing advice and Housing options.	Housing Division and Environmental Health	Year 2		
3.11	Undertake appraisal of schemes to allow people to move out of London and re-launch of schemes and prepare, annual progress report	Housing Initiatives & Solutions Team	Year 1		
3.12	The mapping of housing and homelessness services across the Borough who provide help and assistance to people in need of housing advice and information, production of a <i>London Borough of Bromley Homelessness prevention Directory</i> to include support agencies	Homelessness Forum Steering Group	Year 1		
3.13	Website development to give service users housing information and advice to help them to manage their expectations and increase availability of self help options via the internet	LBB Housing Strategy team	Year 1 - 2		
3.14	Exploration of delivery of housing solutions and options through shop front style accommodation in three main areas of the Borough	Housing Management Team	Year 3 - 4		
3.15	Frontline Housing Officers trained in tenancy relations and illegal evictions	Housing Needs Team	Year 2		
3.16	Information sharing protocols initiated with partners and agencies and existing protocols reviewed	LBB Housing Needs Team / BFHA	Year 1 - 2		

3.17	Devise an engagement strategy to develop work with BME communities, to increase awareness of the homelessness prevention agenda and access to housing advice, options & solutions	Homelessness Forum/Ethnic Communities Programme	Year 1 - 2		
3.18	Increased recording and analysis of BME homelessness, housing register CBL data to feed into half year/annual Housing Division performance reports	Housing Needs Team	Year 1- 4		
3.19	Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken on all Housing Division frontline service areas and major policies	Housing Strategy Team	Year 1 - 4		

Chapter 4: Supporting vulnerable people through effective assessment and co-ordinated decision making, offering more choice to independent living through suitable housing options

4.1 Supporting people

Through the Supporting People Programme the Commissioning Body partners are working together to plan and deliver high quality housing support services to vulnerable residents in the Borough, recognising the positive influence appropriate support and housing has on people's health, well-being and the safety of our communities. The programme is committed to providing a better quality of life for vulnerable people. Housing related support should prevent problems that can lead to hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness and can help the smooth transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

There are very close links between the Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy in relation to the vulnerable groups that receive housing related support. The services offered through a number of housing support providers are imperative to the prevention of homelessness. This also includes the work of the Housing Division's Support and Resettlement teams with vulnerable adults and young people who carry out transitional support to homelessness people in temporary accommodation and then re-settlement into permanent accommodation and also offer tenancy sustainment and HAWK (offenders housing advice).²¹

The Supporting People Programme operated by the Council provides housing related support to the following groups:

- victims of domestic violence
- people with learning difficulties
- people with mental health problems
- offenders or people at risk of offending
- older people
- refugees
- people with substance misuse problems
- gypsy and travellers
- teenage mothers
- young people

In 2006 the Audit Commission carried out an inspection of the Bromley Supporting People Programme. The programme was found to be "fair" with "promising prospects". The Audit Commission made a number of recommendations for improvement and these have informed the future priorities and development required for taking this service forward.

A review of Bromley's Supporting People Strategy 2005 - 2010 has just been undertaken and provides the outcomes for the development needs which had been identified for each Supporting People client group. It also sets out clear proposals for the next three years of the programme for which fixed rate funding from the CLG has been secured.²²

Key commissioning priorities across the vulnerable groups have been identified as:

- the Council's Extra Care Strategy states that 144 additional Extra Care units are required by 2010
- older people - Brokerage Scheme extension offering assessment, information and advice service for all older people, including owner occupiers
- Foyer scheme for young people
- high level support scheme for young people and care leavers with chaotic behaviour
- teenage parents – additional floating support
- people with learning disabilities - development of a more intensive range of floating support scheme to compliment the Keyring schemes
- ex- offenders – additional dispersed units with floating support
- expand floating support services to single people and families living in all forms of temporary accommodation
- people with physical disabilities – an age appropriate Extra Care scheme

Figure 8: Supporting People Commissioning Priorities to 2011

The newly proposed aim for the Supporting People Programme 2008 – 2011 is to offer:

“Housing related support services commissioned through the Supporting People Strategy and funded through the Supporting People programme to enable people to continue to live independently and assist those living in temporary accommodation to move into independent accommodation in a planned way.”

The achievement of these aims will be measured through the delivery against targets set through national performance and outcome indicators. A focus on outcomes will be embedded throughout all areas of the programme, from service specifications to contract monitoring activities.

Commissioning of Supporting People services in future will be the responsibility of the Commissioner for the relevant client groups, for example, young people will be led by the Children and Young People's Department. It is proposed that commissioning of Supporting People services for the remaining client groups will be undertaken by the responsible departments, Housing for homeless people, Community Safety for domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, Environmental Services for Travellers. Commissioning of services for ex-offenders will be led by Probation commissioners. The Commissioning Body will appoint lead commissioners for client groups where there is no obvious lead, for example, refugees. There is also a Joint Strategic Commissioner for older people.

4.2 Children and young people

The Council, together with the Primary Care Trust and their partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors, published their first local Children and Young People's Plan in 2006. The requirement for a plan is an important element in the reform programme 'Every Child Matters', and has been a strong force locally in helping to drive forward improved integration of children's services and establishing Children's Trust

arrangements. The Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009, sets out the vision of the Council and its partners for children's services. The partners believe that improving the lives of children, young people and their families is the most important challenge they face. The PSA 14 (Public Service Agreement): *'Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success'* is a priority for the Council. By investing together in the early stages of life, they aim to ensure that the Borough's young people are kept safe and secure, have the best chances to fulfil their potential and that those facing obstacles are supported to overcome them. This vision recognises the invaluable role of parents and carers and is a key part of the Community Plan 'Building a Better Bromley'.

Children and young people are given a good start in life, have opportunities to thrive and make a safe and successful transition to adulthood. They are equipped to play their part as active and responsible individuals and citizens as well as having the necessary skills for the world of work.

Figure 9: Vision of LBB Children & Young People's Plan 2009 ²³

A needs-led approach is being developed to create a cohesive network of appropriate, accessible, early intervention and preventative family support in local communities. Priorities are effective and timely access to specialist support, building a team around vulnerable children and their families. The Council works closely with its partners to stop vulnerable children falling through the net and to ensure that all agencies meet their statutory duties through the local Safeguarding Children Board. The Housing Division are represented on the Safeguarding Children's Board and are committed to working with colleagues to achieve this objective.

The 'Every Child Matters' outcomes framework addresses every aspect of public services supporting children and young people. Two of the housing related outcomes are:

- live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- live in households free from low income

4.2.1. Joint Area Review of Children's Services (2006)

The Joint Area Review of Children's Services, published on 16 October 2007, contained a number of recommendations relating to housing issues. Under the 'Achieving Economic Well Being' outcome (graded two or "adequate") the Inspectors concluded that:

- a) satisfactory action was being taken to ensure that young people had decent housing and that the numbers living in poor accommodation had reduced
- b) it gave acknowledgement that the Council funds an independent housing advice service and a well-used Law Centre for young people
- c) schemes providing semi-independent and temporary accommodation were insufficient to meet need
- d) the time spent by families with dependent children or by pregnant women in temporary bed & breakfast accommodation was reducing, but time spent in hostels remained well above the six-week target
- e) there was a number of supported living units for teenage mothers and other vulnerable groups, but the Authority recognised that this was insufficient

- f) lone parents under 18 received satisfactory support
- g) there was a shortage of accommodation for homeless young people
- h) the Authority had plans to provide advice on accommodation as part of the new integrated Adolescent Support Service

4.3 Families

A draft copy of 'Building Better Families in Bromley' the Parenting Support Strategy 2008 - 2011 was published in May 2008 by Bromley Children and Young People Trust. It addresses the increasing pressures faced by parents in today's society and acknowledges that whilst most parents are successful in bringing up their children and a number need support to provide a positive environment for their children. The disadvantages that impact on family life will include, unemployment, overcrowded or poor quality housing, parents lack of qualifications, mental health problems or long term illness or disability, substance misuse, low family income and poverty. The strategy engages the views of a number of partners and has captured views of parents to produce an action plan to address the support needs of families which lists 11 priority areas of work.

4.4 Young people

Since the Homelessness Act 2002 the Authority has accepted and acted upon its duty to offer housing advice and support to this new priority need group. The Support and Resettlement Young Persons team (SRYP) has been set up to provide a service for all 16/17 year olds with housing issues and continue to foster good relationships with other partner agencies such as Connexions, Latch, Leaving Care Team, Youth Offending Team (YOT) etc. To build on the success of the team there is a drive to expand the service, to offer with the existing Children and Young People services and other specialist and advocacy agencies to provide a holistic and defined service. With the future aim that Housing will be responsible for commissioning Supporting People, support services which are intended to give the opportunity for a more cohesive approach to working with children, young people and their families.

The Government's homelessness strategy Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives was published in March 2005 and recognised that young people can become homeless for a wide range of often complex reasons. A number of objectives were therefore identified in reducing homelessness amongst young people through:

- preventing vulnerable young people becoming homeless, through early identification and intervention
- supporting homeless young people and those living in temporary accommodation to ensure their housing and wider support needs are met
- managing the transition of young people between temporary and settled accommodation to ensure continued access to the services they need

Since the extension of the priority groups to include young people in 2002, a review of youth homelessness recently published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (May 2008)²⁴ advises that numbers of youth homelessness have fallen in the last three years in England and Wales. It also points to disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or trauma and disruption in childhood as being key factors that lead to homelessness for young people. The review recognises the new approaches to

homelessness prevention, homeless assessment and temporary accommodation pathways by Local Authorities but also points out the continuing challenges they face in securing appropriate and affordable housing, especially for young people aged 18-24. The National Youth Homelessness Scheme and the online knowledge base sponsored by the CLG was launched in October 2007 providing an information about existing national good practice to tackle and prevent youth homelessness throughout the country. In May 2008 the CLG also launched “joint working between Housing and Children’s Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people”²⁵ The Council have begun to demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of such working. One aim of the Housing, YOT, CMHT and Leaving Care Teams is to improve access to and provision of services to young people. This has led to the agreement to develop a one-stop-shop arrangement where a more effective use of resources can result and provide a comprehensive assessment of the person’s need and a joined up approach taken to addressing those needs and/or preventing homelessness or harm. This will take the form of an Integrated Adolescence Support Service.

4.5 Teenage parents

Teenage pregnancy rates are relatively low in comparison to other London Boroughs, but there is still a significant number. Many teenage parents will be supported at home by their parents, others who cannot live at home are able to access a supported housing project. There is a drive to promote a positive relationship between the young mother and their partner where possible, to achieve the best outcomes for the whole family.

Bromley has educational provision for girls up to the age of 16 who are pregnant and for schoolgirl mothers who are unable to attend mainstream school, which is important to the future of the individual’s development. Advice and information on sexual health and contraception is actively promoted and the learning life skills programme to help young people to live independently is being delivered through the supported living schemes and floating support workers.

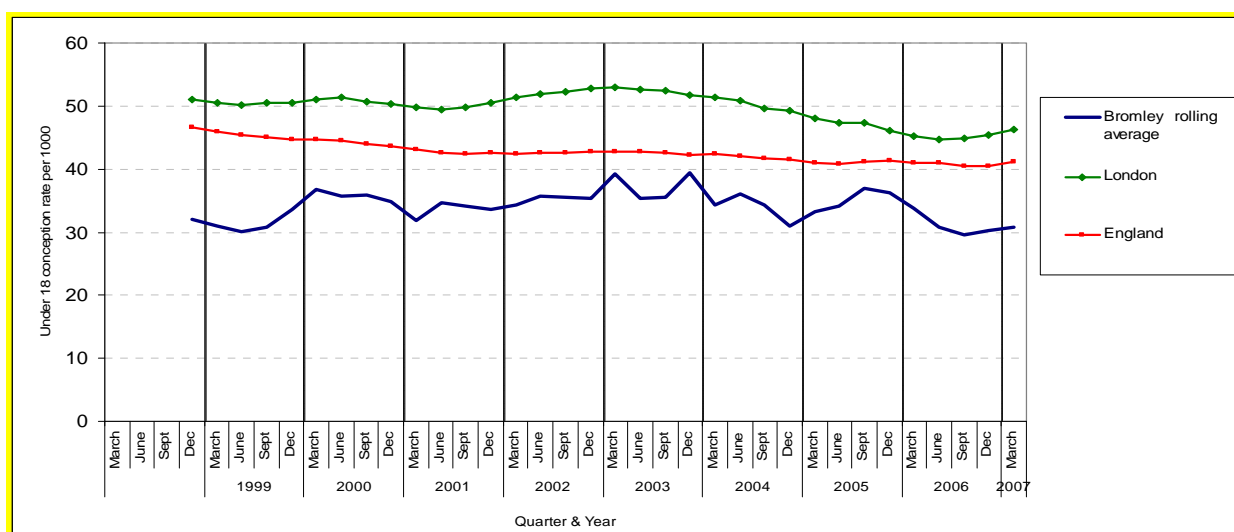


Figure 10: Teenage pregnancy rates local, regional and national comparisons (Data from Ofsted Report 2005).

4.6 The following table lists the future developments and priorities to ensure that both the local and national priorities are addressed for young people.

Draft future developments and priorities

a) Prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness through specialist and co-ordinated multi-agency one stop service for young people

- expand the services of the Support and Resettlement Young People team to include 18-25 year olds
- set up with key partners and agencies to establish an integrated service provision for young people to include access to specialist services
- establish case conferencing system for young persons with multiple needs/involvement
- ensure performance monitoring is implemented to measure outcomes and fairness of service
- improve monitoring and recording of homelessness from supported temporary accommodation and implement approach to tackle arising issues
- introduction of Common Assessment Framework for assessment of all young people
- develop strategies and protocols with the Integrated Adolescence Support Service to ensure maximised use of resources
- joint training, job shadowing and secondment placements to other teams and departments to enhance development of staff who work with young people
- continue to use information from risk factors and consultation with young people to help to shape service
- increase awareness and monitoring for domestic violence for teenage parents

b) Identify risk factors for young people becoming homeless in the Borough and devise youth homelessness prevention action plan

- review information sharing system for departments/agencies working with young people and develop clear protocols to access data
- more defined recording of issues surrounding young people becoming homeless in the Borough
- managing expectations of future homeless young people
- risk assessment introduced at initial approach
- increase involvement of young people in shaping service provision
- training for young people in money management to avoid eviction

c) Increase the standard, type and supply of housing available to young people 16-25 years

- develop a Foyer in the Borough
- review of supported housing availability to meet intensive needs of the most vulnerable client
- explore option of developing and using crash pads and respite services
- explore potential to develop a pilot scheme of shared accommodation with floating support in the private sector
- launch a saving scheme to young people to assist in obtaining a tenancy in the

private sector

- seek to develop initiatives with Housing Benefit to assist young people under 25 to access private sector accommodation
- increase floating support to teenage parents residing in temporary accommodation which addresses emotional health and well being
- regular monitoring and information of the number of teenage mothers in supported accommodation

d) Improve the access to provision of support, mentoring and training to help young people to move to independent living

- arrange for intensive support and mentoring for young people with chaotic behaviour to prepare them for holding tenancies
- explore possible expansion of floating support service to young people in independent tenancies
- improve access to work and training via Connexions and increasing monitoring of outcomes
- reduction of repeat pregnancies through special advice and education
- explore support for young people with low/mild learning disabilities
- evaluate how outcomes in support plans are measured for young people gaining life skills and improve monitoring
- increase access to health and specialist support services for young people in temporary accommodation (including sexual health, mental health awareness, healthy eating, etc)
- end the use of bed & breakfast accommodation for all 16/17 years by 2010
- access to support when required after Support and Resettlement support package ceases for young people
- widen the membership of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board to include Housing and Supporting People leads
- ensuring the delivery of provision of supported housing for teenage parents contributes to the Supporting People five outcomes, especially in terms of learning and employment

e) Establish a homelessness and crime prevention programme for parents, children and young people

- partnership working with Housing Division, Children and Young People Services, Community Safety, Youth Offending Team, Education Services etc to define structured approach to programme to include performance monitoring, funding and effective methods of delivery
- use information from risk factors and consultation with young people to assist in preparing material
- homelessness awareness training for education services and community establishments, i.e. teachers, after school workers, churches, clubs, youth workers etc
- diverting behaviour such as gang violence, bullying and anti-social behaviour
- devise parenting skills and advice course to look at managing expectations, coping mechanisms and also access to respite routes to reduce youth homelessness

4.7 Domestic violence

The second London Domestic Violence Strategy was published in November. The joint strategy between the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Association of London Government (ALG) sets out a vision as to how domestic violence should be addressed in the Capital, promoting:

- homelessness prevention
- witness protection
- increased prosecution rates for perpetrators
- support services for victims especially those with multiple and complex needs, including substance abuse

The five boroughs in the South East London Housing Partnership have agreed to develop a domestic violence protocol which ensures better outcomes for domestic violence survivors and their households.

The London Borough of Bromley has developed its Domestic Violence Forum with representatives from private, public and voluntary sector organisations such as Bromley Women’s Aid, Community Safety Partnerships, Metropolitan Police, the Housing Division and Housing Associations with the aim of reducing and preventing domestic violence and ensuring adequate support services and provision to men, women and children who suffer as a result of domestic violence. The Borough’s Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy is due to be published in October 2008.

4.7.1 In Bromley there were a total of 2,988 reported Domestic Violence crimes between April 2007 and March 2008²⁶. The table below (figure 11) shows the falling number of homeless acceptances as a result of people fleeing domestic violence between April 2003 and March 2007, with an upturn during the last 12 months. The support schemes offered in the Borough and also the homelessness prevention work undertaken by the Council and partner agencies gives more flexible opportunities to people fleeing violence. From April 2007 to March 2008 the Bromley Domestic Violence One Stop Shop was visited by 556 clients of whom 472 had children. 5% (29) of the visitors were male.²⁷

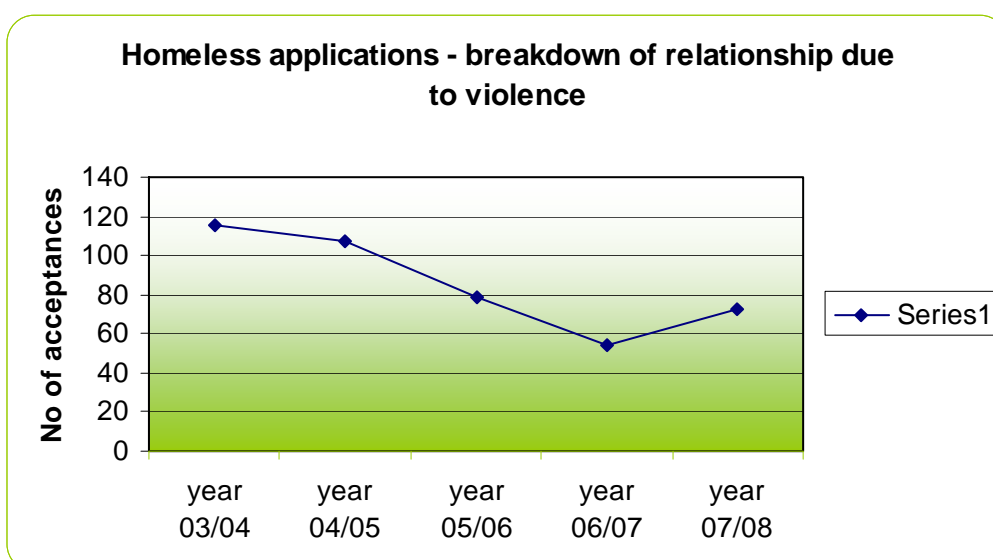


Figure 11: Homelessness acceptances due to domestic violence 2008 - 2008

4.7.2 Domestic violence has been under reported in BME communities and the government has listed areas that can be examined to see if local needs exist. This will include women with no recourse to public funds that may be enslaved in situations of domestic violence or prostitution and ‘honour’ based violence and forced marriages. The Borough’s Domestic violence One Stop Shop offers support and advice to women with no recourse to public funds, who are or have been victims or survivors of domestic violence. Further information regarding domestic violence in the Black Minority Ethnic sectors will be included in the local Domestic Violence Strategy.

The impact of domestic violence on children and young people can be significant. A key objective for the Borough is to look at ways of working with this group to ensure that there is damage limitation through safeguarding and the availability of educational and counselling programmes. It will implement interventions to improve outcomes for children and young people who have witnessed domestic violence. The availability of adequate resources and funding will be a major contributory factor to the delivery of future actions to tackle domestic violence and associated problems within the Borough.

4.7.3. MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is fully operational within the Borough, with twenty six member organisations including the Probation, most of the larger housing associations, voluntary agencies including Women’s Aid, Victim Support, Social services adult and children’s services, Bromley Hospitals, Bromley PCT and Oxleas. The group work alongside the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service to coordinate support for high risk victims and families of Domestic Violence.

The existing schemes to help people fleeing domestic violence and endorse the vision of the London Domestic Violence Strategy and the Community Safety Partnership include:

- sanctuary scheme
- freedom programme
- Bromley Women’s Aid – women’s refuges
- advice, outreach, referral services
- domestic abuse text line advice service
- Victim Support
- domestic violence one-stop shop
- multi-agency domestic violence training day
- domestic violence forum
- joint working agreement with Broomleigh Housing Association to prevent homelessness as a result of domestic violence

The provision of domestic violence education and preventative initiatives are exploring possibilities such as relationship skills training and family counselling are key objectives to supporting individuals and households. However breaking the cycle of domestic violence is also important and therefore a need exists to increase reporting of domestic violence crimes in the borough and also increase access to domestic violence perpetrator programmes to aid the reduction of violent behaviour overall.

4.8 Older people

'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society'²⁸ is visionary in terms of defining provision for the growing older population of the future. It sets out the key challenges for delivering services and maintains that the supply of a range of appropriate housing including lifetime homes and effective housing related support is necessary to meeting this need.

In 2006, the Government published the White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say' which identified four main goals to improve the care given to older people:

- better prevention and early intervention for improved health, independence and well-being
- more choice and a stronger voice for individuals and communities
- tackling inequalities and improving access to services
- more support for people with long term needs²⁹

'Putting People First'³⁰ a document published in December 2007 sets out the future of social care. It also advises of the changing demography in the population, with increase in ageing people, some with high levels of needs being balanced with finite resources. The policy advises ageing people should be able to exercise choice and also maintain dignity, whilst maintaining independence and a presence within the community. The Council have therefore, established a programme for transforming social care programme over the next few years, which is aimed at delivering services differently for Bromley residents to meet this aim.

The Vision

Older people in Bromley are able to maintain and regain their independence and lead a healthy, active life in their community. They are confident that support is available when and where they need it and services are flexible, fitting around their lives. Wherever possible they are able to determine for themselves what support they need and how they receive it.

Figure 12: LBB Vision for Older residents 2007

The number of older people aged 65 and over in Bromley in 2008 make up approximately 16 per cent of the total population. Population projections indicate the older population (over 65) in Bromley will increase by up to 11.3% by 2015 (up to 5700 people). This includes an increase of up to 13.0% of people aged over 85 (up to 1000 people) which is the age group more likely to require health and social care support. Currently over 50% of the people receiving services in Bromley are aged over 85.

There are no major trends emerging in either the homeless applications or the acceptances from people aged 65 and over in Bromley. In 2007 – 2008, 7 older people were housed and this was for a variety of reasons. There is a clear pathway to access sheltered housing and opportunities for clients to downsize to smaller properties, which can prove more economical to run and easier to maintain.

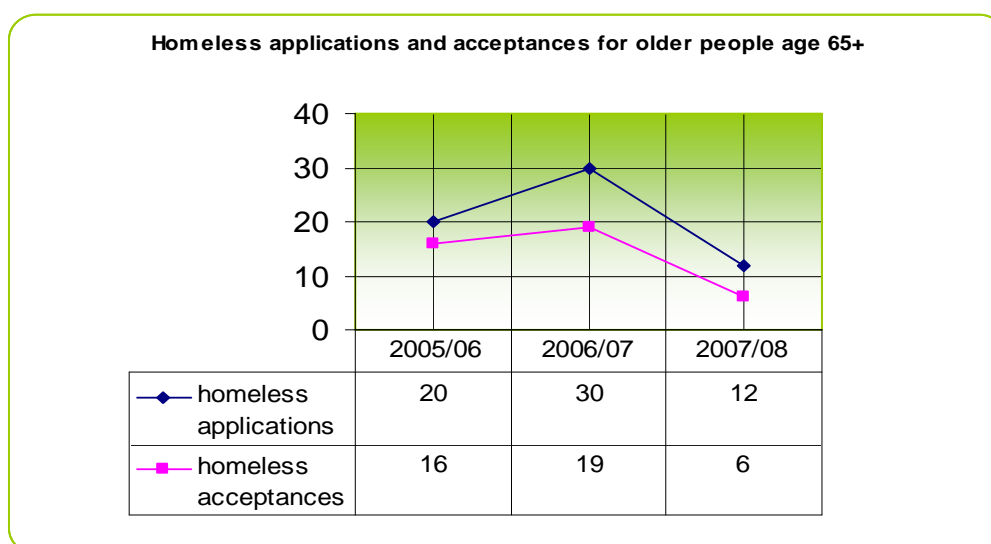


Figure 12: Homeless applications and acceptances for older people age 65+

4.8.1 Homelessness prevention

The work undertaken to prevent older people in the Borough becoming homelessness or having to leave their home prematurely include:

a) Pre-hospital discharge planning

Ensuring that all the support services and adaptations are put in place to ensure that there is smooth transition back to their home. Should housing need be identified then accommodation such as sheltered schemes are applied for through the housing register to reduce placements to temporary accommodation.

b) Support Services

There are a range of support services (care packages) that are available via assessment or which residents can apply for to assist them to remain in their own home.

c) Staying put agency

This is a Council scheme aimed at providing help and advice to older and disabled residents in deciding what home improvement work needs to be carried out, help with finding a builder, advice and assistance whilst works are in progress and in obtaining finance from a suitable source. It helps to give older people greater independence so that they can remain in their home, and the ability to make choices over their future living arrangements.

d) Warm front

This is a Central Government grant scheme designed to provide loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and central heating systems. The grant maximum is £2700 and residents have to be disabled, have a young family or be over 60 and be in receipt of a qualifying benefit. It is available to homeowners or private tenants.

e) Disabled facilities grant works

The Council currently approve approximately 140 grants a year, with a total spend of approximately £1.1m. The adaptations service is delivered via the Council's in house Home Improvement Agency. As well as providing help with completing paperwork the Agency assists applicants with obtaining quotations from reliable builders, and subsequently commissioning the works. In doing this we work closely with our colleagues in the Occupational Therapy service, and local housing associations. The future priorities are to continue to reduce the time taken to complete grant works, and to implement the proposed changes to the disabled facilities grant system.

'The Handy man scheme has grown rapidly and in 2007/08. 2249 people were assisted of these 414 were assisted to aid hospital discharges.

Health professionals and other agencies, who frequently visit people in their own homes, are in a unique position to identify vulnerable households and raise awareness of available assistance and schemes to eliminate any potential risk and improve housing conditions for vulnerable residents.'

London Borough of Bromley - Handy Man scheme

f) Handy man scheme

The Handy man scheme assists households to remain in their own property preventing unnecessary homelessness. The scheme has been running for the last 4 years and was developed in the Council's Environmental Health department following a bid for Regional Housing Grant. The aim of the scheme is to reduce accidents and falls in the home, help people remain in their own homes and facilitate timely hospital discharge. Referrals are made directly to the scheme by a wide variety of Local Authority Officers, NHS staff and voluntary agencies where they identify minor repairs or safety issues in the homes of vulnerable people. Typically works include the provision of handrails and key safes, moving furniture such as beds downstairs, dealing with trip hazards, installing lever taps, or undertaking minor repairs that typically the client may injure attempting themselves. The work is undertaken at a much earlier stage than under the Fair Access to Care Criteria. As a point of good practice the handyman also undertakes a brief survey of the property, this is used to identify non decent homes that are then referred on to different agencies to address the matters raised. The average cost of each job is in the region of £90 and there is no cost to the client.

4.82 Housing for older people

- older people in the Borough tend to be predominantly residing in owner occupation which means increasingly the development of aforementioned schemes are vital to allow this to continue to happen
- on average the Council funds or part funds around 479 people in residential care homes and 122 people in nursing homes at any one time (April 2007-March 2008). There are also private nursing homes in the boroughs
- there are currently 6 Extra Care Housing schemes, providing accommodation to 180 older people

- there are 1429 sheltered housing schemes funding older people in the Borough, which are funded through Supporting People
- Intermediate care is provided in two units. There are 40 intermediate care beds at Orpington Hospital, and 22 intermediate care beds at Elmwood Nursing Home. There are also three Community Assessment and Rehabilitation Teams (CARTs) which have capacity to provide a service to approximately 60 people at a time in their own homes
- Within the extra care housing provision there is an assessment flat and two step down flats under the provision of intermediate care.

It is important that older people have access to accommodation that is appropriate to their needs, preferably in their own homes where this is possible. When this is not an option, realising social inclusion is very important factor. The Borough aims to give older people more choice and control over the support they need which respond flexibly to circumstances of the individual. Therefore sheltered housing provision in the Borough will be developed to become a needs led provision as opposed to a 'one size' fits all service.

4.9 Mental health

A set of values for mental health service users in the Borough was agreed by the Bromley Mental Health Board (January 2007) which states:

'An individual's accommodation or housing is the foundation to delivering a service that represents value for money, puts individuals first, is socially inclusive and focuses on independence and recovery.'

A report 'Housing and support for Adults with Mental Health Needs in Bromley' was published in January 2008 as a joint strategy between partners and service users. The strategy commissioned by the Bromley Mental Health Board implements an overall model of housing and support services agreed by the Board in Jan 2007, listing 27 recommendations to improve the existing service model.³¹

Low level supported schemes will be replaced by the Tenancy support schemes from April 2009. The person centered approach allows for clients to have floating support tailored to their current needs with the flexibility of decreasing or increasing the support as when required without disrupting their settled accommodation. It is planned that the floating support will be offered through one provider which will be more efficient and effective way of streamlining the delivery of support to this client group. A new post, to offer longer term floating support has been established and will be based in the Assertive Community Treatment Team which will be funded by Supporting People.

The Support & Resettlement Team continue to work with vulnerable people in housing need. One of the challenges they face in supporting vulnerable adults with mental issues is the clients that may present with dual diagnosis, which can be split across drugs and mental health or alcohol and mental health. Both can cause chaotic behaviour, leading to disorganised lifestyles and also poor engagement to services. This can also prove very difficult to tackle without the services in place to treat both the misuse issues systematically. A Draft Dual Diagnosis Strategy is due to be published in 2008, which will aim to address the issues and also help to meet the current and future needs of this client group.

Further work will continue to ensure that individuals are placed in the most appropriate housing with support that meets their needs and wherever possible this will be within the Borough of Bromley.

4.10 People with learning disabilities

The white paper Valuing People aims to promote rights, independence and choice for people with learning disabilities. The strategy calls for health, social services and housing to work together in partnership to achieve a person centred approach to learning disability strategy and practice. This is further endorsed by more recent papers including: 'The Commissioning framework for health and well being' and 'our health our care our say'.

The Government's agenda is to:

- combat discrimination through the protection and enforcement of the legal and civil rights of vulnerable people
- increase and maintain people's independence
- support choice
- facilitate the social inclusion of marginalised groups
- work in partnership with people with learning disabilities and their families, and
- specifically address issues pertinent to the situation of minority ethnic communities

The number of adults with a learning disability in Bromley who meet eligibility criteria for access to care services increases by approximately 26 people annually. Medical advances have resulted in children, with increasingly complex needs, surviving into adulthood and ageing parents who can no longer care for their sons / daughters requiring services add to the mounting pressures.

Learning Disability Services in the Borough have been revised to meet national guidance and contribute to supporting independence, allowing people, where possible to live at home with family or in their own tenancy whilst providing meaningful day time activities within the local community. The service continues to assist people to move on from residential care into supported living schemes and seek alternatives away from residential care.

Strategy for the Learning Disabilities service 2007- 2010

To work in partnership with our providers, users and their families to modernise our overall approach to reduce reliance on long-term residential care, to modernise day opportunities, expand independent supported living options, and create an integrated effective service to people with a learning disability and their families.

Mission statement

To promote independence, give greater choice and control to service users and their families, reduce social exclusion, be less reliant on long-term residential care and promote wellbeing in all our service users.

Figure 13: Strategy for the Learning Disabilities service 2007 – 2010 ³²

There are approximately 800 adults with Learning Disabilities known to the local authority. This alone serves as an indication of the high demand for new property in the Borough. The Council funds residential care for approximately 218 people but the great majority of new services are now commissioned using supported living models of care. The joint day service between the Council and Bromley Primary Care Trust supports approximately 325 individuals. The Commissioning and Partnership Division is utilising the Care First system along with other information sources to help provide more accurate information about numbers.

4.11 Persons from abroad

The Home Office reports (2007) that there are 30 Asylum seekers living in Bromley, including dependents, which is one of the lowest populations recorded for the London Boroughs. There are no clear figures for the population of refugees living in the Borough, however it is estimated to be between 23,000 households. Both groups are vulnerable in many aspects, especially in access to services due to lack of knowledge about services available and possible language barriers. We have no record of homelessness approaches in the last three years as a result of people leaving National Asylum Support Service accommodation. However, there have been an increasing number of complex homelessness cases from people from abroad with differing status and entitlement to public resources; again numbers of acceptances recorded are negligible.³³

4.12 Gypsy and travellers

In December 2007 CLG published the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments – Guidance to assist local authorities in catering for the needs of this sector of the community and provided funding to assist Councils to undertake a survey. All London Boroughs (with the exception of Bexley) along with the Greater London Authority (GLA) carried out a joint survey between the latter part of 2007 and early 2008. The results which estimate 1,000 Gypsy and Traveler (G&T) households in Bromley were reported to the Walden's Farm and Travellers Working group in April 2008. The survey showed Bromley requiring 17 more pitches by year 2012. By meeting the pitch need in Bromley, the Council will be able to effectively meet the needs of the local G&T accommodation community. This will also allow the Council to deal more effectively with any instance of illegal encampment by Travellers.³⁴

The Council has undertaken a Local Needs Assessment to look at the needs of one of the largest ethnic minority groups within the Borough. The Council have taken back the management of the Borough's Gypsy Traveller sites in 2007 and The Draft Gypsy and Traveller health and education needs assessment (March 2008) aims to increase the knowledge about the needs of the group and also improve their access to services. The assessment also briefly researches the housing needs of local Gypsy and Travellers and initial outcomes suggest a need for transit site and the need for more settled sites in St Mary's Cray and identifies the cultural differences making it hard for some Travellers to live in brick and mortar accommodation. Feedback also suggested that young Gypsy Traveller men find it especially hard to find accommodation, as identified by the general population. Culturally young women start

a family at an earlier age than in the general population, which in effect means that they do not have the same experience.³⁵

The Housing Division works jointly with the Gypsy and Traveller Project to develop a flexible and informed approach to meeting the housing need of this group. This could include assisting with caravan costs etc.

4.13 Ex offenders

The London Reducing Re-offending Action Plan 2007-2009 was published in July 2007, by the London Resettlement Board. One of the seven pathways being specifically addressed is to “improve access to housing and accommodation services for offenders”. As of December 2007 there were 5,950 offenders in custody in London and the national prison population stood at 80,067. The London Resettlement Strategy highlights the need for appropriate accommodation to enable ex-offenders to access services and tackle substance misuse, health problems and education, training and employment as one of the main drivers to reduce re-offending rates.

In Bromley, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities link directly to the National and London Reducing Re-offending strategies and action plans which are monitored through the local area agreement by the LSP. To address the housing need of offenders a number of local arrangements currently exist:

- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
The police, prisons, probation, Housing Division and other local agencies, work together to manage the risks presented by potentially dangerous offenders. This includes ensuring the supply of and access to housing for MAPPA cases and other “high risk of harm” offenders
- regular housing surgeries, offering housing advice and options are led by Housing Division staff at both the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Probation Service offices
- the Supporting People programme fund housing related services for ex-offenders through three supported housing schemes

As a result of being imprisoned many people lose their accommodation and therefore having a planned and flexible approach to meeting housing need for offenders leaving prisons is required to prevent homelessness and keep numbers of rough sleepers to a minimum. Some offenders receive short-term sentences, and it is possible for Housing Benefit to be paid on their tenancies during the time of the sentence. Resettlement programmes that link to housing, health and support services on prison discharge will also help to prevent repeat homelessness and re-offending.

4.14 Rough sleepers

The government drive to reduce numbers of people sleeping on the streets by at least two thirds has proven to be effective, with reported numbers in England declining from approximately 1850 in 1998 to 498 found sleeping rough on any one night in 2007.³⁶

In the Borough of Bromley in 2007 the numbers of rough sleepers are consistently low. An unofficial count undertaken through the Metropolitan Police reported low numbers of transient people but settled rough sleepers within the Borough were not a common occurrence and no more than 4 people have been sighted. In supporting vulnerable people and those leaving institutions helps to keep these figures low, however there is recognition of those who choose a lifestyle of rough sleeping.

Working with people leaving institutions, such as prisons, hospitals and rehabilitation centres to ensure appropriate planning, support to access housing will assist in keeping rough sleeping figures low. Helping people to sustain the tenancies can be achieved not only through tenancy support but also by improving their life chances. Access to training and further education, work experience and employment with the correct information, help and advice to help people to live independently will also be a positive influence.³⁷

4.15 Substance misuse

The Drug Action Team commission a floating support worker who supports people whose tenancy may be at risk. Sustaining tenancies can be quite difficult for people who suffer with drug and alcohol misuse and therefore supported housing with specialist programmes are quite imperative to assist in the rehabilitation of this client group. The Drug Action Team also commissions a rent deposit scheme to assist people who are more stable to gain accommodation in the private rented sector.

The future aim of drug and alcohol rehab providers is to work with partners to develop the services available to clients to ensure a more cohesive approach is taken to meeting the needs of this client group. This will lead to a defined pathway which provides consistency for those approaching and the agencies working with them.

Sustaining tenancies can be quite difficult for people who suffer with drug and alcohol misuse and therefore supported housing with specialist programmes are quite imperative to assist in the rehabilitation of this client group. The Drug Action Team commission a floating support worker who support people whose tenancy may be at risk and also provide a rent deposit scheme to assist people who are more stable to gain accommodation in the private rented sector.

The Dual Diagnosis Strategy 2008 – 2010 is due to be published in July 2008; this will provide a framework to address the issues and needs of people with mental health problems who also use drugs and/or alcohol.

4.16 People with physical and sensory impairments

The Partnership Group for those with physical disabilities and sensory impairments and their carers is a multi-agency/stakeholder planning group set up in 2005, to build more effective strategic and operational partnerships and take the lead on integrating national and local policy in Bromley. It promotes joint working between agencies, service users and carers in the development of services with a vision that states:

‘People with physical disabilities and sensory impairments should be empowered to access inclusive services as full citizens.’

4: Supporting vulnerable people through effective assessment and co-ordinated decision making, offering more choice to independent living through suitable housing options

	Actions	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
	Supporting People				
SP4.1	Development of an accommodation Move-on Strategy which offers flexibility in length of longer term support provision	Supporting People	Year 1		
SP4.2	Reconfiguration and increase of the floating support services provided to the different vulnerable client groups throughout the Borough and annual review to measure effectiveness and outcomes	Supporting People/ S&R (Adult) Team	Year 1-4		
SP4.3	Proposal of sub-regional working to tender a framework agreement for Supporting People services, to explore opportunity and possible benefits	SELHP, Supporting People	Year 1-4		
SP4.4	Equality Impact assessment on implementation and post completion of Choice-Based Lettings to ensure safeguarding of rights of vulnerable people and to demonstrate no adverse impact	CBL Project Board, Service users/Third Sector agency	Year 1		
SP4.5	Clear procedure/practice for supporting those in temporary accommodation to move in to independent accommodation in a planned way	S&R (Adult) Team SELHP	Year 2		
	Families	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
FM4.1	Increased publicity on homelessness prevention for general public	Housing Needs Team	Year 1- 2		

FM4.2	Multi-agency Eviction Panel to include Social Services, housing, mental health, PCT, Community Safety Partnership, Housing Benefit and Housing Associations. Draw up clear criteria for referral to panel and protocol/terms of reference.	Housing Needs Team/BFHA/PCT	Year 2		
FM4.3	Contact lead officer for each housing association to assist with housing division homelessness inquiries and helping to prevent homelessness where tenants have issues with rent arrears etc	BFHA	Year 1		
FM4.4	Training for Family centre workers on housing, homelessness prevention & options and advice	BFHA / Housing Needs Team	Year 1		
FM4.5	Work with parents to identify core issues and triggers that lead to homelessness to assist with development of further prevention methods	Welcare/JusB Adolescence Service	Year 1-2		
	Domestic Violence	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
DV4.1	Secure funding to expand the domestic violence programme within the Borough of Bromley including future funding of advocacy workers post	LBB Domestic Violence Co-ordinator	Year 1		
DV4.2	Implementation of minimum standards for all agencies working with victims of domestic violence	Bromley Women's Aid	Year 2		
DV4.3	Work with Drug Action Team to establish pilot Domestic Violence One Stop Shop at Drug/Alcohol Drop-in centre	DAT /LBB D.V. Co-ordinator BAIS	Year 1-2		
DV4.5	Increase promotion in the Borough of domestic violence services especially for male victims	LBB D. V. Co-ordinator	Year 2		
DV4.6	Sign up to a sub regional domestic violence protocol via SELHP – Homelessness Group, to improve services for domestic abuse victims	SELHP Homelessness Group	Year 1		

DV4.7	Explore potential for introduction of a SELHP Sanctuary Scheme and better training of all staff about the Sanctuary Scheme	SELHP Homelessness Group	Year 1		
DV4.8	Exploration of housing associations including domestic violence as grounds for possession and ensure there is a clear procedure for dealing with domestic violence	BFHA DV Co-ordinator Housing DV Lead	Year 1-2		
	Older people	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
OP4.1	'Safeguarding Adults' training for frontline housing staff	Older People Training Lead	Year 1-2		
OP4.2	Maximise use of sheltered housing within the Borough	Supporting People Team	Year 1-2		
OP4.3	Ensure that the needs of older people are considered in CBL implementation and EIA's	Commissioning Older People Age Concern	Year 1		
OP4.4	Older People - Brokerage Scheme extension offering assessment, information and advice service for all older people, including owner occupiers	Age Concern, CAB, Independent Age	Year 1-4		
	Mental health	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
MH4.1	Develop a wider range of housing options for people with mental health needs to ensure that move on opportunities exist and an appropriate level of support is provided	Oxleas, MIND, Supporting People Team	Year 1-2		
MH4.2	Re-configuration of different types of accommodation in response to need, location and value for money	Oxleas, BFHA, Supporting People	Year 1-2		
MH4.3	Develop Move on protocol for mental health and Drug Action team clients with implementation of CBL	Bromley DAT, S&R Adult Team CBL Project lead``	Year 1		

MH4.4	Increase learning and employment opportunities for people with mental health issues who are in temporary accommodation /supported housing	MIND, Broomleigh Housing Need Team	Year 2-4		
MH4.5	Implement starter tenancies with contractual agreements for clients	BFHA	Year 2-3		
MH4.6	Protocol for dealing with Bromley Community Drug Project clients in housing need	Bromley Community Drugs Project, Housing Needs Team	Year 2		
MH4.7	Care pathway for the assessment of clients with dual diagnosis leading to joined-up working and co-ordination with Housing	Oxleas/Primary Care Trust /S&R Group Manager	Year 2		
MH4.8	Explore the possibility of establishing a crisis house	Oxleas//S&R Group Manager	Year 2-3		
MH4.9	Training for Support & Resettlement team understanding roles and responsibilities of Community Practice Nurses, through workshops and joint training, shadowing etc. clear guidelines as to the role of each team are agreed to ensure the best possible service delivery to the client	Primary Care Trust	Year 2		
MH4.10	Deliver training on housing need and options to Mental Health service to help to manage expectations of both services	Housing Need Team	Year 2		
MH4.11	Virtual notice-board for people to highlight issues which other agencies might be able to help with.	MIND Oxleas	Year 2-3		
	People with learning disabilities	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
LD 4.1	Meet the Government's target that all adults currently living in NHS provided accommodation to be transferred to provision in the independent sector by March 2010. This requires suitable, in borough, accommodation for approximately 90 people	Primary Care Trust, LD Commissioner	Year 1-3		

LD 4.2	Meet annual growth of service user numbers (26 per annum) through newly commissioned services in supported living models of care in Bromley	Primary Care Trust, L&D Commissioner	Year 1-4		
LD 4.3	Increase the supply of the supported living accommodation and care services for people with learning disabilities to meet the demands identified above and future need	LBB Planning & Development Team	Year 1-4		
LD 4.4	Develop and promote learning opportunities for all, especially older people, people with physical and learning difficulties and those with mental health needs	Relevant Commissioner	Year 1-4		
	Gypsy and Travellers	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
GT4.1	Respond to the findings of the CLG needs assessment and develop action plan for London Borough of Bromley	LBB Planning	Year 1-4		
GT4.2	Finalise and publish Draft Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment for consultation	Supporting People	Year 1		
	Offenders				
OF4.1	Promote planned housing advice and options assessment prior to release from prison, annual performance report produced	Probation HAWK	Year 1-3		
OF4.2	Review provision of accommodation for people released with monitoring tags and set up best practice model	Community Safety Hawk Supporting People	Year 2		
OF4.3	Explore best practice and innovation for housing ex-offenders in the private sector and pilot of private rented sector accommodation with floating support	Probation – Support and Resettlement, Housing Initiatives Team	Year 2-3		
OF4.4	Review of move-on accommodation available from bail hostels and find alternative accommodation to bail hostels	Probation Supporting People	Year 1-2		

OF4.5	Improve monitoring of all ex-offenders approaching for housing advice and options across equality strands increasing reporting	Probation Housing Needs Team	Year 1-4		
OF4.6	Improve access to health, rehabilitation services, education training and employment for ex-offenders	Probation S&R Adult Team	Year 2-4		
OF4.7	Initiate system to ensure that the best possible outcomes for offenders housing when sentenced, relinquish tenancies to avoid repossession or work undertaken to maintain payments via Housing Benefit/prison staff explore issues concerning impact of Local Housing Allowance on ex-offenders	HAWK Probation Liberata	Year 1-4		
	Young Offenders	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
YO4.1	Identify accommodation and support scheme for high risk ex-offenders aged 16-25	Youth Offending Team Adolescence service	Year 1-4		
YO4.2	Strategic and contingency planning prior to release for young offenders requiring specialist and supported accommodation	Youth Offending Team / Housing Needs Team / C&F	Year 1-4		
YO4.3	Analyse the data to see if rising levels of female offenders will impact on future provision needs and deal with any arising issues	Probation Supporting People	Year 1-4		
YO4.4	Establish the role of housing associations in MAPPA	BFHA	Year 1		
YO4.5	Explore inter-borough working and sharing resources/provision for ex-offenders age 16-25	Housing, YOT Social Services	Year 2-4		
YO4.6	Increase parenting skill workshops for parents of young ex-offenders and young people displaying anti-social behaviour ASB	Youth Offending Team / Community Safety Partnership	Year 2-3		
YO4.7	Introduce case conferences between the Housing Division, housing associations, Social Services etc to agree early intervention work with families displaying anti social behaviour	Adolescence Service/Safeguarding/Community Safety	Year 2		

YO4.8	Identification of gang activity in the Borough and the contribution to anti social behaviour. Preventative action put in place and annual status report issued	Community Safety BFHA	Year 1-4		
YO4.9	Increase supported lodgings schemes	Housing Needs Team	Year 2-3		
YO4.10	Introduction of a multi agency bespoke crime and homelessness prevention programme via schools	Community Safety	Year 2-4		
YO4.11	Increase access to training, work experience and employment as part of rehabilitation and produce annual performance reports	Connexions /YOT/Adolescence Service/JusB	Year 2-4		
	Rough sleeping	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
RS4.1	Training for Police officers and Town Centre Managers on housing advice and housing options, with clear signposting for people to support services	Community Safety Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
RS4.2	Develop pathways to support services for those leaving institutions to prevent homelessness	PCT/Probation	Year 1-2		
	Substance Misuse	lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
SM4.1	Clearer and flexible processes developed and operational for those leaving prison or residential rehabilitation with involvement of key partners including support agencies	Probation / Drug Interventions Programme Manager	Year 2-3		
SM4.2	Bromley Drug Action Team to commission an external consultant to conduct a substance misuse and homelessness needs assessment to provide a more in depth picture of the needs of this client group within the Borough.	DAT Co-ordinator	Year 1-2		

SM4.3	Determine the criteria to identify the lead agency in dual diagnosis clients and clear solutions and treatment pathways for those identified with a dual diagnosis	DAT Co-ordinator/ Oxleas	Year 1		
SM4.4	Develop housing pathways/solutions for clients in treatment who have no stable accommodation and explore possibility of family mediation to prevent homelessness for clients where drug/alcohol misuse leads to eviction	Housing Needs Team, DAT Co-ordinator	Year 1-2		
SM4.5	Work with Community Safety Partnership in policing of estates to reduce substance misuse and illicit dealing to reduce ASB and homelessness	Community Safety Partnership DAT Co-ordinator	Year 1-3		
SM4.6	Explore and develop with agencies and volunteer groups of prospective models of informal support and social inclusion programme to improve health and well being for this client group	Drug Reference Group	Year 1-2		
SM4.7	Access to training, work experience and employment as part of rehabilitation	Local Colleges, Drugs Action Team Broomleigh Housing	Year 1-3		
SM4.8	Agree and implement strategic representation from housing on the Joint Commissioning Group and Drug Action Team Board	Drugs Action Team Co-ordinator	Year 1		
SM4.9	Identify current work undertaken with parents with alcohol and drug problems and parents of children with alcohol problems and introduce preventative measures to stop household breakdowns.	Drugs Action Team / Social Care, Social Services	Year 1-2		
	People with physical and sensory impairments or HIV	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
PSI4.1	Information on housing options is made readily available and conveyed effectively to people with disabilities and professionals	Primary Care Trust, Bromley Disability Voice Society LBB Commissioner	Year 1-3		

PSI4.2	Register of adapted housing (social and private) established accessible through housing register	Housing Solutions Team	Year 1-2		
PSI4.3	Improve access to services from minority communities and improve their take-up of appropriate services	PD Commissioner Working group	Year 1-2		
PSI4.4	Homeless hostels – refurbishment works to include 1 or 2 wheelchair standard units	Project Lead Housing Development	Year 1-2		
PSI4.5	Develop rehabilitation (short stay) accommodation model for hospital discharge/homeless prevention and assessment/rehab before move to permanent housing	PD Commissioner / Occupational Therapy	Year 2-3		
PSI4.6	Gather evidence on disabled who could afford to buy an adapted property and look at appropriate housing solutions and introduce marketing/promotion for new models/pathways	PD Commissioner Occupational Therapy/ Housing Development	Year 1-2		
PSI4.7	Training and communication protocol of GPs, consultants, LBB and hospital GP's, care management/discharge planning team about the 'housing future' holds for the hospital patient post discharge	Primary Care Trust/ Community Links/ Bromley Disability Voice/ PD Commissioner	Year 2-4		
PSI4.8	Rehab unit for PDSI clients – in hospital/social services setting. Rehab unit for PDSI clients in housing setting	Social Services, Occupational Therapy? PD Commissioner? Environmental Services.	Year 1-4		

Chapter 5: Reduction of homelessness through proactive partnership working, developing the range of solutions and promoting opportunities for people in housing need

5.1 Whilst addressing the diverse issues that lead to homelessness, the Council acknowledges that it is not only the increased supply of housing that will resolve the issues that homeless households face. There are a number of elements to tackling homelessness which have been used to reduce the homelessness and repeat homelessness within the Borough over the last three years:

- housing advice and options
- intervention and support
- prevention
- partnerships

“Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives, a strategy for tackling homelessness” was published in April 2005 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now called the CLG). Alongside the 5 year plan, ‘Sustainable Communities Homes for all’ set out the Government's plans on reducing homelessness further and the requirement on all local authorities to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. The authority has responded positively and has consistently demonstrated a year on year reduction in numbers on both elements. This ongoing reduction through to achieving the temporary accommodation target is essential for the Council to continue to be rewarded grant funding from the CLG's Homelessness Directorate.

The Council currently receives £135,000 per annum and the majority of this funding assist the Council to deliver the housing options schemes which prevent homelessness such as mediation, private rented sector initiatives and the Sanctuary scheme.

Homelessness prevention budget	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Private sector accommodation	£ 52,980	£ 54,500	£ 54,890
CLG Grant	£ 100,000	£ 135,000	£ 135,000

Figure 15: London Borough of Bromley homelessness prevention budget 2006 – 2008 ³⁸

5.2 Homelessness reduction

The table (figure 14) shows a steady decline (approx 50%) of Homelessness acceptances between 2003 and 2007 against the causes of statutory homelessness since the last Homelessness Strategy was produced. This has been as a result of the refocusing of work on prevention, options and alternatives. Nevertheless the current four main reasons for being accepted as statutorily homeless are:

- parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
- other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate
- violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner (despite a 50% reduction in figures over the years)
- termination of assured short-hold tenancy (private rented sector)

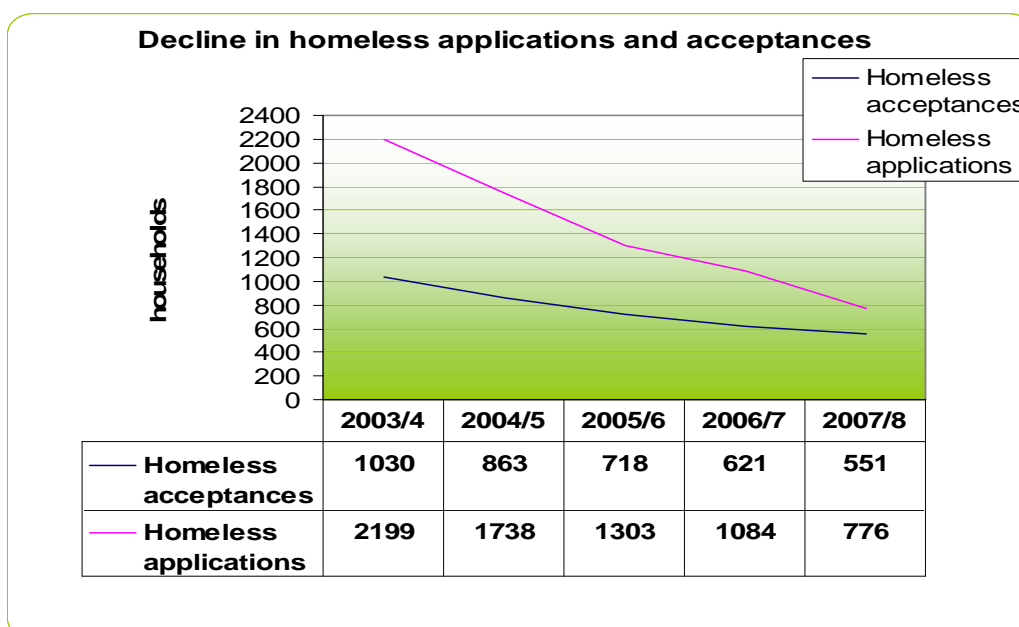


Figure 15: Decline in homeless applications and acceptances 2003 - 2008³⁹

There are a number of factors that contribute to each of the categories of homelessness and therefore, each case has to be assessed based on the individual circumstances. This allows the Housing Division to be flexible in their response, ensuring the best outcome for the individual household.

5.2.1 In April 2008 nearly 5000 households were on the Council's housing register and whilst there has been a reduction in the number of homeless applications and acceptances, the housing supply available to let to those in housing need (new developments and housing association vacancies) has decreased year on year, leaving the Council with rising numbers of households waiting for social rented housing. The Council recognises the shortfall in housing supply and is working towards meeting the housing targets for new supply which will help to address this trend.

	Housing register applications	Homeless applications	Homeless acceptances	Housing association properties available for LBB nominations	Surplus/deficit on homeless*
2000/01	3,787	1,681	881	943	+62
2001/02	3,592	1,839	785	830	+45
2002/03	3,556	1,976	867	818	-49
2003/04	3,866	2,199	914	783	-131
2004/05	3,778	1,738	785	820	+35
2005/06	4,280	1,303	718	731	+23
2006/07	4,427	1084	621	611	-10
2007/08	4,936	805	551	636	+85

Figure 16: Housing register applications, homeless applications and acceptances 2000 – 2008

These figures show the achievement in reducing homeless applications through prevention and options. The significant difference in numbers accepted compared to applications is also a tribute to the ongoing prevention and options advice after an application is made which prevents an actual acceptance.

5.3 Repeat homelessness

There have been four recorded cases of repeat homelessness in 2007/8. The low number is a top quartile performance and reflects the work of the service and generally numbers have consistently fallen since 2005/6. The availability of housing related support for vulnerable tenants funded through Supporting People, and housing associations has contributed to the reduction. The Council's Support & Resettlement teams also work with service users to ensure that vulnerable households are settled in both temporary and permanent accommodation to avoid any possible initial breakdown in tenancy.

Households with complex needs and challenging behaviour tend to suffer repeat homelessness. An increase in planned intervention work will continue to address this alongside housing association eviction protocols and increased joined up work with both Adult and Children Social Care Services and the Community Safety Unit.

BV 214	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
2005/06	3.74%	2.0%	2.4%	1.05%
2006/07	2.1%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
2007/08	0.67%	1.21%	0.0%	1.02%
Actual number of cases in 07/08	1	2	0	1

Figure 18: London Borough of Bromley - Repeat homelessness figures 2005 -2008⁴⁰

5.4 Statutory homelessness

The table below gives the overall acceptances of statutory homelessness households from April 2003 - March 2008. In some cases the applicant may have more than one reason for being homeless but only the prime reason that they state on their application is recorded for monitoring purposes.

Main reason for loss of last settled home for applicant households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	05/06	06/07	07/08
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	224	205	168
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	103	97	63
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	28	23	13
Violence			
• Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	79	54	73
• Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	9	11	4
• Racially motivated violence	4	0	3
• Other forms of violence	14	10	4
Harassment, threats or intimidation			
• Racially motivated harassment	2	2	1
• Other forms of harassment	12	10	15
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	19	28	11
Rent arrears on			
• Local authority or other public sector dwelling	3	2	0
• Registered social landlord or other housing association dwellings	8	9	5
• Private sector dwellings	21	11	27
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to			
• Termination of assured short hold tenancy	66	57	50
• Reasons other than termination of assured short hold tenancy	24	22	11
Required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation	1	0	2
In institution or care (e.g. hospital, residential home, prison, on remand etc.	28	16	24
Other (e.g. homeless in emergency, ex-HM Forces, returned from abroad, sleeping rough or in hostel)	29	64	77
Total accepted households	718	621	551

Figure 17: Reasons to cause homelessness 2003 – 2008

5.5 Trends and current issues

There are three causes of homelessness that have consistently risen since 2003 are:

- violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons
- mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)
- other (e.g. homeless in emergency, ex-HM Forces, returned from abroad, sleeping rough or in hostel (further breakdown will be carried out to establish if any specific trends exist within this category))

There are current factors which may possibly impact on homelessness figures in the future months and years which the Council and partners will need to respond to including:

5.5.1 Crime

The Metropolitan Police reported that in December 2007 there were 25,748 offences recorded for the London Borough of Bromley compared to 29,440 offences in December 2006 showing a 12.5% reduction in reported crimes. Whilst there has also been a reported decrease in reported crimes in the Borough and across the Capital, crime related incidents e.g. domestic violence, fleeing violence from associated persons, account for approx 18% of homelessness acceptances (100 of 551 in 2007/08) in the London Borough of Bromley. ⁴¹

The Borough's Crime Reduction Strategy 2008 - 2011 seeks to increase community re-assurance and promoting the fact that Bromley is a safe place to live, work and enjoy recreation. The strategy details a number of initiatives that will help to deliver the following objectives of which the outcomes in turn help to reduce homelessness within the Borough:

- reducing the levels of crime against the person
- reducing the levels of crime against property
- reducing levels of youth crime and victimisation
- reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour and nuisance
- reducing the problems caused by drugs and alcohol use⁴²

5.5.2 Mortgage repossession/debt

There has been national publicity about a possible increase in the numbers of homeless households due to mortgage arrears. The Council of Mortgage Lenders research has reported a growing increase in repossessions for mortgage arrears in England and Wales since 2004 as per figure (19) below. The Housing Division and advice agencies are seeing an increase in the number of clients with mortgage and/or debt problems in the Borough. Money management and debt advice has been identified as a service that needs to be developed within the Borough to deal with the potential issues that arise within an uncertain financial climate & credit crunch. The Council will be looking to work with housing associations to develop equity release and mortgage rescue schemes and ensure that there is provision of quality housing advice and debt advice.

This help and advice will need to be available at an early stage to housing association and private sector tenants and also owner occupiers to prevent where possible, increasing debt and loss of homes.

England & Wales	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Mortgages outstanding *	11,529,000	11,511,000	11,604,000	11,742,000	11,822,000
Taken into possession	8,500	8,200	14,600	22,400	27,100

Figure 19: *Council of mortgage lenders - Figures are estimates of arrears on first charge loans held by CML members. They do not include arrears relating to other secured lending. These estimates are based on reporting by a sample of CML members, which are then grossed up to be representative of the lending undertaken by CML members as a whole.

5.5.3 Private sector rent arrears

There has also been a recent upturn in homelessness acceptances for households with rent arrears from private sector dwellings (136% increase between April 2007 and Jan 2008), the highest figure recorded since the first Homelessness strategy was published in 2003. Future priorities and developments for working with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness include, floating support to private sector tenants and also landlord and tenant mediation. The introduction of Local Housing Allowance will increase the financial accessibility to private sector accommodation for many households and address the gap between landlord rents and the Rent Officer determinations in previous years. (Please see section 6.3 for more information about private sector accommodation)

5. Reduction of homelessness through proactive partnership working, developing the range of solutions and promoting opportunities for people in housing need

	Actions	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
5.1	Review recording of homelessness data to effectively capture peoples income source to ensure that opportunities to offer definitive housing options (such as HomeBuy) are not missed	LBB Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
5.2	Further analysis of the 'other' homelessness categories to identify and address any trends	LBB - Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
5.3	Working with housing associations to ensure prevention and reduction of homelessness is a priority in their business planning and a Homelessness champion is appointed	BFHA, SELHP Homelessness Co-ordinator	Year 1-2		
5.4	Continue to support vulnerable people in need of housing, through floating support and resettlement packages	Support and Resettlement Teams	Year 1-4		
5.5	Monitor and seek to reduce housing associations eviction rates (or at least maintain where consistently low)	Registered Social Landlords/SELHP	Year 1-4		
5.6	Intervention work with families with children who display anti social behaviour to reduce homelessness (see criminal justice)	Children and Families/YOT/ Broomleigh/BFHA	Year 1-2		
5.7	Floating support for homeless households placed in the private sector and landlord & tenant mediation services explored	LBB Housing Initiatives Team/ Supporting People	Year 1-2		

Chapter 6: Reducing the use of temporary accommodation through increasing of opportunity to access other housing sectors

6.1.1 Reducing the use of temporary accommodation

The Council endeavours to meet the Government’s challenging target to halve the number of households residing in temporary accommodation by 2010. Improving the quality of the existing accommodation as well as acquiring new housing will be fundamental to meeting this target. The Housing Division hold regular meetings with all temporary accommodation providers to ensure that any arising issues are dealt with and accommodation standards are met. This includes visits to bed & breakfast accommodation and hostel accommodation and ensuring that by March 2009 all managers and employees of bed & breakfast accommodation have current Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. It is also essential that the needs of vulnerable and special needs clients are met through appropriate accommodation and support.

The Council has been able to show a steady decline in the number of households occupying temporary accommodation as the data in the table below demonstrates. The introduction of the Council’s Temporary Accommodation Reduction Strategy⁴³ in January 2006 and careful monitoring has been integral to this success. The strategy gave three main strands of work to reduce numbers of current and future households residing in temporary accommodation which include increasing the supply of affordable housing, tackling the temporary accommodation backlog and earlier intervention work to prevent homelessness.

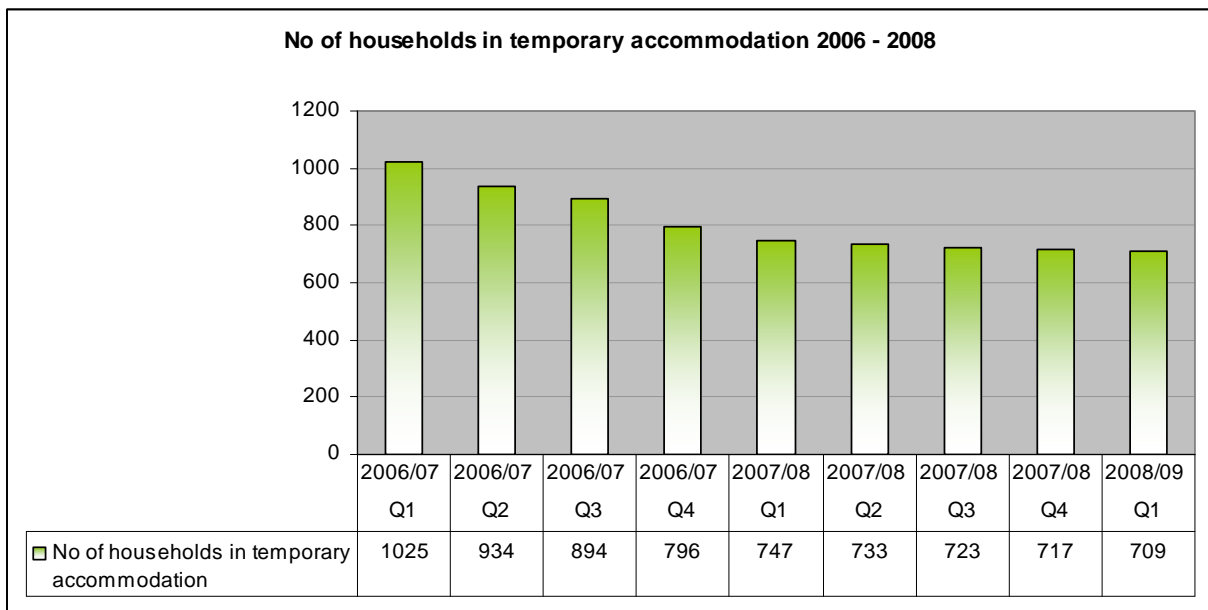


Figure 1: Declining number of households in temporary accommodation

6.1.2 Increasing the supply of affordable housing

There has been a consistent shortfall in the supply of affordable housing in Bromley since 2003 and this makes achieving the target extremely difficult. Clearly, with two years to achieve the target number in temporary accommodation, a quantum effort is still required, particularly as the reduction in numbers has slowed in the last year. To achieve the target it is going to be extremely difficult, within the resources and supply of housing available. The housing market is beginning to experience a slow down in the availability of new developments and this will inevitably impact on the outcome to meeting the reduction target. These are challenges that affect the delivery of these strands of work, but the Housing Division and partners still persevere to meet the target by continuing to maximise and make best use of the supply of a range of settled affordable housing. This includes actively working with a number of developers who in view of the current housing market wish to sell properties directly to housing associations rather than on the open market.

6.1.3 Housing initiatives

Initiatives have been implemented to reduce the current 'backlog' of households in temporary accommodation which include the appointment of a Housing Options Officer, to visit all households in temporary accommodation. The Officer provides a range of solutions, including access to the private rented sector and moves to accommodation of the householder's choice outside of London. The Officer will also encourage conversion of tenure where appropriate to allow settled clients to remain in their temporary accommodation on a permanent basis. This would mainly apply to clients in placements such as, landlord incentive scheme and housing association properties used initially on a temporary basis.

6.1.4 Intervention work to prevent homelessness

It is essential that wherever possible work commences early enough to divert or prevent homelessness for households where housing issues arise. Signposting to direct people to housing advice and information to prevent homelessness at an early stage will help to maintain the lower numbers of households in temporary accommodation. The Housing Division will support the increase prevention and options work utilising all forms of housing wherever possible by:

- increasing the number of people assisted through housing prevention and option schemes prior to making a homeless application
- working with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness and assist households to remain in their current accommodation
- building upon home visiting to extend across all homeless applications
- extend the supported lodgings scheme for young people as an accommodation pathway and thus avoid homelessness route
- making best use of discretionary hardship fund – seeking to set up a ring fenced amount accessible directly by housing for homelessness prevention
- flexibility in the use of the homelessness prevention funds to resolve or prevent homelessness

The provision of the range of housing options is almost entirely funded by Government Grants and a condition for the continued receipt of grant funding is making good progress towards the 2010 target. Any loss of grant will result in fewer options and thereby further deterioration in the progress towards the target. Providing suitable temporary accommodation continues to be a priority.

Source	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Projected targets 2006			885	700	493	Not avail	Not avail
Revised TA Reduction Plan (2008)			700	536	490	443	Not avail
Actual	987	796	717				

Figure 20: Temporary accommodation reduction targets

6.2 End of use of bed & breakfast for young people

A number of initiatives to end the use of bed & breakfast placements for 16/17 years by the year 2010 have already commenced:

6.2.1 Supported accommodation

The Council currently use LATCH host placements (supported lodgings) for young people who are accepted under the Homeless Legislation as well as for young people who are provided with negative S184 decisions. We are currently funded for 20 placements in the financial year. We currently have 35 units of supported hostels which are also used by the Leaving Care Team. Placements for young people are selected via an accommodation panel to take into consideration the needs of the young person to ensure that the choice of housing is appropriate and sustainable. For young people in housing need, supported lodgings, is an essential part of progression towards independent living. Most young people will need to learn life skills as well as being able to accept responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Further development of emergency 'supported lodgings' is planned, the placement would be used as a 'crash pad' to give a period of 'cooling off' whilst mediation would be introduced and sessions with parents or relatives arranged.

6.2.2 Foyer

On the 18th June 2008 the Executive Committee approved a 35 unit Foyer to be built in the Borough, in close proximity of Bromley town centre. This is a major achievement for the Council, its partnering housing association Broomleigh Housing association

and all the agencies advocating on behalf of young people. The proposed scheme is due to be built during 2009/10 and opening by autumn 2010. The Planning application for the Foyer was refused by DC Committee in Sept 08. If the appeal against the decision is successful this will delay start and completion by at least 6 months. However alternative sites are also being looked to ensure that the provision is made available to meet the housing need of young people in the Borough.

A Foyer aims to provide housing and support for a young person (under 25) to help them sort out problems in their lives and help them deal with their homelessness or housing need. It will also assist them to understand and learn the responsibilities of being a tenant. They will also be able to learn vital living skills including budgeting, healthy lifestyle and will have access routes to training, further education and employment.

One aim of the Housing, Youth Offending Team, Community Mental Health Team and Leaving Care Teams is to improve access to and provision of services to young people. This has led to the agreement to develop a one-stop-shop arrangement where a more effective use of resources can result and provide a comprehensive assessment of the person's need and a joined up approach taken to addressing those needs and/or preventing homelessness or harm.

6.3 Private sector accommodation

Private sector accommodation has become a major source of housing for local authorities as a gateway to reducing and preventing homelessness. One of the outcomes of the CLG 2007 Homelessness Prevention survey listed the Rent Deposit Scheme as one of the five most successful prevention measures with Local Authorities⁴⁴. In the Borough of Bromley the private sector accounts for around 10% of the housing market in 2008 compared to 7.8% in 2003*. Some of the growth would be attributed predominantly to the rise in Buy-to-Let properties within the Borough,⁴⁵ giving rise to more properties being available to rent.

Since 2003 the Council has assisted homeless families in accessing accommodation in the private rented sector initially as temporary accommodation to reduce the use of bed & breakfast accommodation to meet the 2004 target. However, private sector tenancies have increasingly been offered both as a prevention of homelessness and also as a qualifying tenancy for households accepted as homeless to bring a local authority's homelessness duty to an end. The Direct Let Scheme, Rent Deposit Scheme and Deposit Guarantee Bond Scheme are currently three housing options offered by the Council allowing households in housing need, to access private rented accommodation.

The Council continues to ensure that the private sector schemes aimed at landlords are both innovative and responsive to the changes in the housing market and legislation. At times this will require negotiations of financial incentives to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for the client, the landlord and the council. Landlords usually require some form of financial security against unpaid rent or damage to their property from prospective tenants. In the past, rent deposits have been returned to the Council by landlords, when tenants have vacated the property. However, increasingly

landlords report issues of problems with tenants, including anti-social behaviour and extensive damage to the property. This increases the amount of work required to ensure that this method of homelessness prevention is sustained by the Council.

6.4 Work with private sector landlords

From April 2007, all deposits taken by landlords in respect of private rented accommodation must be lodged in to one of the three Government approved Tenancy Deposit Schemes. This, along with the measures in the Housing Act 2004, aim to improve the safety of properties including private sector accommodation and make landlords more accountable for the maintenance, health and safety and condition of their properties. This also gives more power and support to the tenant and ensures that the Government aim for settled homes and empowering tenants is reflected in all sectors of housing.

The Council has been proactive in engaging private landlords through a range of advertising and promotional activity, including annual landlord forums and training sessions. The South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) also hold annual conferences, which have a large attendance, targeting estate agents and landlords with portfolios of properties which may span across neighbouring boroughs. These private sector schemes are now extensively used to accommodate people in housing need and this will continue to be a route that the Council will develop in order to assist the temporary accommodation reduction target to be met.

6.5 Housing Association Leasing Scheme

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have imposed a 5% cut in the level of the housing benefit caps for private sector leased properties in London since April 2007. Further subsidy reductions were implemented in 2008, with an intention to separate out the rental and management costs for private sector leased properties and pay these through separate funding streams from 2010. The indication is that the rent will be paid to the household through the Local Housing Allowance and the management costs will be paid through a separate grant direct to the local authority. However, the combined rent and management allowances are likely to be less than current rent levels.

The Council continues to work with two housing associations to ensure that temporary leased accommodation is available as a source of self-contained accommodation within the Borough for homeless households. Whilst the Council operates a Housing Association Leasing Scheme, as opposed to a Private Sector Leasing Scheme, close attention needs to be paid to the changes to Housing Benefit for the Private Sector. If the combined allowances are reduced too far then the Council's Housing Association Leasing Schemes will be too expensive against the Housing Benefit levels. In this circumstance, the only way to continue to operate the schemes would be for the Council to find a financial top up to the housing associations or for the landlords and Housing Associations to accept a reduced income; which may be unlikely. However, the Council cannot manage without the supply of some types of temporary

accommodation, so a flexible approach will be required to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

6.6 Temporary to Settled Initiative

The Council received a grant of £4m under a new initiative known as 'Temp to Settled' in May 2007. The funds assist nominated housing associations to buy properties to rent at market rents. The housing association is also enabled to invest more capital into the maintenance and improvement of the property. The scheme does not rely on ongoing revenue investment from the Council and is more cost effective than much of the current temporary accommodation in use.

Eight properties have been procured through this initiative and the nominations to these lettings have proved to be 100% successful. The Council aims to purchase a further seventy-five flats and houses in 2008-09 from the local housing market including those on new developments. In Oct 2008 a total of 29 properties had been purchased through this Initiative. The Council has also made further bids to the Housing Corporation to extend this scheme. The scheme offers a certain guarantee of stability for households and reduces the amount of potential moves that can occur when living in temporary accommodation. This long term investment initiative will add to the overall supply of permanent accommodation available to let in the borough.

6. Reducing the use of temporary accommodation through increasing of opportunity to access other housing sectors

		lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
6.1	Expansion of Broomleigh floating support service to young people in independent tenancies	Broomleigh Housing Association	Year 1-2		
6.2	Additional floating support for young parents living in temporary accommodation	Support & Resettlement (YP) Team	Year 1-2		
6.3	Extension of floating support service to people living in temporary accommodation, leasehold and bed & breakfast accommodation	Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
6.4	Extending the role of the Support and Resettlement team to offer increased support to families to sustain accommodation in the private rented sector	Support & Resettlement (Adult) Team	Year 2-3		
6.5	Regular review to ensure that scheme continues to offer value for money, including benchmarking and looking at alternative housing options and schemes	LBB Housing Needs Team/SELHP's Homelessness Group	Year 1-2		
6.6	Closely monitor developments in the changes to Housing Benefit levels for private sector landlords and calculate effects on the Council's Housing Association Leasing schemes and implement appropriate and responsive actions	Liberata	Year 1-4		
6.7	Liaise with private landlords at the end of leases to see if long term tenancies can be agreed with existing tenants as a housing option with outcomes reported annually	LBB Housing Initiative Team	Year 1-4		
6.9	Reducing the level of under occupation and overcrowding and using resulting vacancies to increase supply in line with Overcrowding Strategy	Housing initiatives Team, SELHP BFHA	Year 1-4		

		lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
6.10	Maximising opportunity through rigorous implementation of the Affordable Housing Planning Policy and, in particular, the larger sites that will be released for housing or are already in the planning system to deliver before 2010.	Housing Development, LBB/Planning Dept	Year 1-3		
6.11	Publicising of new developments including shared ownership to promote take up through Housing Option interviews and CBL	Housing Solutions Tower Homes	Year 1-4		
6.12	Publicising the temporary to permanent scheme and maximise acquisition during 2008/09. Bidding for additional funding in 2008 / London Targeted Funding Stream for Settled Homes Initiative money for 2009/10	Project Lead/ Housing Solutions Team	Year 1-3		
6.13	Implementing Choice-Based Lettings and seek to further develop initiatives with the private rented sector to re house prior to homelessness	Housing needs and initiatives and options,	Year 1-4		
6.14	Launch the common housing register - explore options for better use of stock and potential for increased nomination rights	London Borough of Bromley Holding Register	Year 1		
6.15	Developing an Extra Care Housing Scheme for social services to open in 2010. Targeting older under occupiers of social rented housing	LBB Commissioner and RSL leads	Year 3-4		
6.16	Increasing opportunities for older people to access shared ownership properties	Tower Homes Housing Solutions Team	Year 2		

Chapter 7: Improve the access, availability and quality of housing across all tenures and types for people in housing need

7.1 Government targets and objectives

The Government's Housing Green Paper (HGP) entitled 'Homes for the future; more affordable, more sustainable' was published on 23 July 2007. The Housing Green Paper which acknowledges the supply of new affordable homes has not kept pace with rising housing demand. In Feb 2008 the Land Registry reported the average house price in the Borough was £331,963, whilst, the average household's salary is approx £41K*. Overall house prices have increased in the past decade, making it more difficult for many people to access the property ladder. In the past year house prices have declined and so has the availability of mortgage products to many potential house buyers. More affordable homes to buy or rent are required, with a good supporting social infrastructure including links to employment, educational facilities, transport and healthcare.

From the framework within the "Tackling homelessness: The Housing Corporation strategy"⁴⁶ published in Nov 2006. There is a requirement for a 'Homelessness Champion at a senior level within the organisation (housing association), to promote delivery of any action plan' derived to meet the objectives of the strategy. Each housing association is a key partner in helping local authorities not only to meet the Government targets but also in preventing and responding to homelessness. The Housing Corporation expect all housing associations to understand the local strategic role that the authority plays and identifies six key objectives which define the expectations of housing associations:

- developing better partnership working with local government;
- working towards sustainable, cohesive and balanced communities where people want to live;
- preventing homelessness by promoting coherent and seamless housing allocation and management and support for tenants;
- encouraging housing associations to make better use of existing stock;
- working with Regional Housing Boards to direct investment towards improving access to housing where there is housing need; and
- promoting good practice to support associations and other landlords in raising performance standards

7.2 Working with housing associations

South East London Housing Association Group (SELHAG) and the Federation of Bromley Housing Associations are committed to ensuring that these objectives are pursued both locally and sub regionally. A number of housing associations operating in the Borough have responded with 'Homelessness Pledges' action plans, an

identified 'Homelessness champion' and also have contributed to identifying objectives within this strategy and actions.

Broomleigh Housing Association have developed two direct access housing schemes:

The 'New Generation' scheme which allows children of their existing tenants to apply directly to the association for housing
The Direct Let scheme is aimed at couples and singles earning low incomes.

7.3 Affordable housing

The Council's Affordable Housing Planning Policy and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁴⁷ (adopted March 2008) require that on sites of 10 units or more – or a given size of site – then 35% of the units/habitable rooms (whatever is the greatest) shall be provided as affordable housing. Of this housing 42% of the social rented housing and 16% of the shared ownership housing must be of 3 bed or larger and the aim is for 70% of the units to be for social renting and 30% to be for intermediate housing (shared ownership or sub market renting).

The Policy and Supplementary Planning Document covers a whole series of other matters including:

- wheelchair unit requirement
- parking requirement
- build and space standards
- green/carbon issues
- amenity space
- price payable for the units
- housing association selection
- timing of the delivery of the units

All affordable housing is required to be provided without grant unless it can be proven by the developer that there are such unusual costs or requirements or, possibly, competing planning gain, that makes the scheme unviable without grant.

In exceptional cases the Council might consider a Payment in Lieu of the affordable housing or the provision of the affordable housing on an alternative site – but the 35% policy and all other requirements will be applicable to the total number of units on both sites. Regarding the calculation of any Payment in Lieu it will be the difference between the open market value of the units and the figures laid out in the SPD – which are updated annually based on the rise in the BCIS index.

The social rented supply predicted for 2008/9 is 175 units – with similar number in the following two years. However, given proposals on certain major schemes and the current factors in the housing market this supply might be affected upwards or downwards for the following reasons:-

- Blue Circle – will provide around 300 affordable housing units over the next 5 to 8 years but timing of the delivery is still being negotiated
- regeneration of Bromley Town Centre includes some sites that will provide a few hundred affordable housing units over the next 5 to 10 years but, again, at this time delivery timetable is still under negotiation
- there are clear signs that a number of developments are slowing down or the start has been delayed, where these include affordable housing units this will result in later delivery of the affordable housing
- conversely to the previous point there are schemes where the developer has expressed interest in providing more or all of their units as affordable housing which would increase supply

All schemes which trigger the Affordable Housing Policy are referred by the Planning Department to the Housing Development Team to liaise with the Developer about the Affordable Housing element and Housing Development staff are actively involved in pre-application discussions and the whole process of the planning application through its various stages in the planning and legal services.

Other activity of the Housing Development service to assist with achieving targets in the Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Reduction strategies includes :

- close monitoring of RSL proposals for use of RCGF and DPF (monies available from stock disposal) to maximise output potential from this funding source;
- liaison with housing associations on proposals to dispose of stock to ensure that any property that could meet housing need is, as far as possible, kept in the supply and funding options pursued for any works required
- minimum of quarterly liaison meetings with developing housing associations to monitor and chase progress of developments and discuss/pursue opportunities for new developments
- regular liaison with the Housing Corporation to keep apprised of scheme progress and new development opportunities
- bidding for sources of funding – such as Settled Homes Initiative for Temp2Perm, extensions funding to address overcrowding
- Extra Care Housing funding from the Department of Health to develop a scheme much of which will be let to older people as under occupiers of social rented housing
- working with Broomleigh Housing Association on the regeneration of the rest of the Ramsden estate to consider mix and funding options to maximise the number of affordable housing units provided on the estate
- active involvement in major corporate schemes such as Blue Circle and Bromley Town Centre Regeneration which provide considerable levels of housing
- working with Planning Policy Team to ensure affordable housing needs and issues are considered

7.4 Housing provision and choice-based lettings

Since the stock transfer to Broomleigh Housing Association in 1992, the Council does not own any housing stock. Social rented housing provision within the London Borough of Bromley therefore relates to properties owned by housing associations.

The Council is committed to promoting independence and giving more choice to applicants. As part of this commitment, in September 2008 the Council introduced Bromley Homeseekers, a Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) scheme in partnership with housing associations operating within the Borough.

The scheme has been drawn up in consultation with all housing associations and will operate a common housing register as the main route into social housing in the Borough including both those applicants applying for the first time for social housing as well as existing housing associations tenants wishing to apply to transfer to alternative accommodation. Bromley Homeseekers is operated by Home Connections on behalf of the Council and its partners. Offering more choice to applicants does not mean that there will be any more properties available. The need for housing by far exceeds the supply but the single Housing Register will enable households who are in need of re-housing to maximise their opportunities for re-housing.

CBL aims to help support people to make realistic decisions about their housing. Instead of people being 'offered' a property from the limited stock available, properties will be advertised on the web and then let to the 'bidder' with the highest priority/longest waiting time. The Council will publicise the letting outcomes to help inform people about the level of priority needed and likely waiting times for particular properties. This information will also help people to be more realistic about their expectations. The Bromley Homeseekers website will also offer housing advice and information about alternative available housing solutions.

The scheme therefore aims to:

- make the process simple and transparent
- help to manage expectations and enable people to make realistic decisions about their housing
- help promote equality of opportunity in housing services
- work in partnership to meet priority needs in the borough
- give applicants more choice over where they are housed
- match housing needs with housing availability
- reduce void times
- promote sustainable communities

Additional support will be offered to those applicants who require assistance to access the new service. This includes:

- translation including immediate translation of key areas on the web and telephone lines
- automated bidding
- completion of housing register application via telephone or visits
- support staff trained to provide bidding assistance
- public access points to the website e.g. libraries, LBB offices, selection of housing associations and voluntary organisation offices etc

As part of the work to introduce CBL, the Council is also reviewing existing service level agreements (SLAs) with housing associations to ensure that these clearly set out nomination agreements, lettings policy, property letting standards and service provision standards to provide consistency across housing associations working in the Borough.

The development of the SLA incorporates good practice guidance and also links closely to the Homelessness Pledges undertaken by each housing association to assist in preventing and reducing homelessness in Bromley.

An annual report reviews the supply and allocation of housing association properties, and projections are made for each of the bands to show how the expected supply of housing for the year is intended to be distributed to best meet housing need, including agreeing a nomination percentage split between LBB and each housing association. This is called the lettings plan which is agreed with partner housing associations and it is agreed annually by the Adult and Community Services Portfolio Holder.

	Housing register applications	Homeless applications	Homeless acceptances	Housing association properties available for LBB nominations
2000/01	3,787	1,681	881	943
2001/02	3,592	1,839	785	830
2002/03	3,556	1,976	867	818
2003/04	3,866	2,199	1030	783
2004/05	3,778	1,738	863	820
2005/06	4,280	1,303	718	731
2006/07	4,427	1084	621	611
2007/08	4,936	776	551	636

Figure 21: Housing Need data 2000 - 2008 London Borough of Bromley⁴⁸

7.5 Empty homes

Bringing empty properties back into use is a key objective for local authorities. The aim of the Borough's Empty Homes Strategy (Nov 2006) is to 'Support the vision of safer and sustainable communities - increasing the supply of housing by reducing the number of empty properties.' The Strategy action plan is monitored through the Empty Homes Working Group which meets at least three times a year and also has involvement in the both the Landlord and Homelessness Forums.

In the last year (07/08) enforcement action has been increased against owners of long term empty properties with applications for 5 Empty Dwelling Management Orders in progress due to be submitted to the Rent Property Tribunal in 2008. One Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was completed in 2008 and Council resolutions for a further two resulted in their demolition, with the likely construction of between 6 - 8 units in their place. Other CPO action has resulted in two further properties being either sold or renovated, with one of these is currently undergoing conversion from a single property in to 7 flats.

Sub regional funding through the South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) is being used by the Council to assist owners, with grants and interest free loans being offered to owners of long term empty properties in return for 5 year nomination rights and 5 year leases through nominated housing associations. Currently £112,000 of external funding has been levered, which should provide 7 units of accommodation to homeless households as temporary accommodation. The SELHP has recognised the benefit of funding an Empty Property Officer and this funding is likely to continue for 2008/09.⁴⁹

Advice and assistance in relation to reliable builders, selling, grants and loans, renovating and letting empty properties is provided to owners of empty properties in the Borough to assist them to bring their properties back in to use. This will include giving information about the Council's private sector schemes, including housing association leasing. A list of people interested in purchasing empties is also held and forwarded to owners wishing to sell their properties.

7.6 Over crowding and under occupation

“Living in overcrowded accommodation can, both directly and indirectly, have a devastating effect on families. Under-achievement at school can be caused by lack of space for children to do their homework. Absence rates may be higher because of illness associated at least in part with poor living conditions. Older children may spend more time outside the home, on the streets, simply to find privacy and space. Overcrowding may exacerbate stress, depression and in the worst cases domestic violence or breakdown of relationships.”

Tackling overcrowding in England, An action plan – CLG Dec 2007

In April 2007 with the Council's involvement, Bromley Federation of Housing Associations began a pilot Under-Occupation scheme. Penge Churches Housing Association managed the project with a steering group of representatives from the Council and affiliated housing associations. Whilst the pilot scheme achieved 6 moves against its target of 10 moves within the year, 3 of the properties released were 4 bedrooms. The outcomes showed that the offer of cash was not always the incentive to make under-occupiers move and that a key reason for people agreeing to down size tended to be the location and type of reciprocal property. Many under occupiers want houses or bungalows in areas of high demand. Being flexible, by allowing payments towards a mutual exchange increased movement and also resolved an under-occupation and over crowding issue. The recommendation from the pilot was that the Housing Division would be the best organisation to drive forward the Under-Occupation Scheme with the support of a part time co-ordinator.

SELHP recruited a part time co-ordinator in 2007 to progress under occupation work on behalf of the Council's in the five boroughs. The partnership's Under Occupation Pilot Scheme is funded by Communities and Local Government and is hosted by Gallions Housing Association. The following housing associations are involved in the project: Broomleigh, Family Mosaic, Gallions, Hexagon, London & Quadrant, Moat, Orbit, Presentation, SLFHA, Ujima, and Wandle.

Releasing larger family properties in London boroughs will be a key driver to tackling overcrowding and reducing long periods in temporary accommodation for a number of households. There are a number of social issues that can arise from overcrowding, which we aim to address through the Borough's Overcrowding Strategy (June 2008). The Council along with housing associations will endeavour to be proactive in tackling over-crowding and have received funding from CLG for a (temporary) full-time post to ensure this happens. This funding will help to deliver a range of initiatives that work creatively towards resolving overcrowding including commissioning building works on existing properties to create more space.

7.8 Home ownership schemes

There are a number of Government Initiatives that are available to those who wish to purchase affordable housing. These schemes allow people to mainly access new build properties but one scheme 'Ownhome' assists purchasers to buy on the Open market. Each scheme has a differing criterion, but is mainly aimed at giving people access to Shared ownership products allowing the purchaser to pay rent on the part they do not own. Over a period of time a purchaser would be allowed to 'Staircase' allowing them to buy more shares in the property until they eventually own it. Tower Homes, offer their 'HousingOptions' products to potential clients on behalf of the local authorities in the South East of England. The current products available and offered to people in housing need include:

- First Time Buyers Initiative
- Home ownership for people with long term disabilities (HOLD)
- HomeBuy Direct
- Intermediate rent
- London Wide Initiative
- MyChoiceHomeBuy
- New Build HomeBuy
- New Build Home Buy/Shared Ownership (NHBH/SO) Re-sales
- Ownhome
- Rent to HomeBuy

7.7 Housing benefit / local housing allowance

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) replaced Housing Benefit (HB) in April 2008 and, now where a tenant is renting privately the LHA will be paid directly to the tenant. The maximum amount of Housing Benefit that can be received will be set beforehand by the Rent Service. It will not depend on the amount of rent you paid. The maximum amount received will be the same for every same-sized household in the area lived in, no matter what differences there are in the actual rent charges. There are implications that arise for both tenants and landlords with this new Housing Benefit payment scheme which may impact on homelessness figures. These include the tenant not paying the rent, leading to eviction and landlords not generally accepting this method of payment. It is too early to gauge the impact this will have, however there are safeguards for vulnerable tenants with LHA being paid direct to landlords in particular circumstances.

7. Improve the access, availability and quality of housing across all tenures and types for people in housing need					
	Actions	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
7.1	Develop an accommodation strategy, which focuses on the supply of good quality housing for both temporary and permanent housing, for all client groups (people in housing need) and best use of housing stock	Housing Needs Team	Year 1-4		
7.2	Increase awareness of the CBL scheme across the Borough to future service users	CBL Project Lead	Year 1		
7.3	Provide information on the CBL scheme about private rented accommodation available to let	Housing Initiatives	Year 2		
7.4	Equalities Impact assessment post implementation of CBL and ensure results of service user feed into future service development (Planned regular monitoring to reviewing outcomes for all groups of users)	CBL Project Lead	Year 1		
7.5	Introduction of role of a tenancy relations officer who will offer liaison and support where there are disputes between landlords and tenants	Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
7.6	Review the Private Sector schemes offered by the Council in response to the consultation undertaken with service users who have previously accessed accommodation via the Rent Deposit scheme and feedback from Housing Options Officer	Housing Initiatives	Year 2		

	Actions	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
7.7	Consultation with the key private sector landlords operating in the Borough with the aim of them helping to meet the future homelessness priorities	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1-3		
7.8	Ensuring landlords have the facility to report early warning of tenancies at risk to trigger homelessness prevention work	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1-2		
7.9	To provide more opportunity for single non-priority groups such as under 25's to access private rented accommodation. Pilot model accommodation schemes developing logistics and demonstrate value for money	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 2		
7.10	Increasing the advice, assistance and facilities offered to help existing and future service users in accessing private sector housing	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1-2		
7.11	Promotion of grants and loans for prospective landlords to secure decent homes standards, energy efficient properties and extended tenancy terms (e.g. 24 months)	Residential Services/ Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1-4		
7.12	Implement method of re-claiming financial loss from previous tenants	Housing Benefit/ Housing Initiatives	Year 1		
7.13	Finding rooms in multiple occupancy houses for single non-priority clients explore advertising in local offices and on CBL	Housing Options and Advice	Year 1-2		
7.14	Establishing private landlords who will accommodate or have accommodated vulnerable clients (i.e. with mental health issues, substance misuse, or young people)	Mind, Bromley Community Drugs Project	Year 2-3		

	Actions	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
7.15	Evaluate impact of Local Housing Allowance on claimants across the Borough and for those in housing need who are moving into the private sector and report findings	Housing Initiatives / Liberata	Year 1-2		
7.16	Consider implementing a Landlord Accreditation Scheme for LBB or joining London Landlord Accreditation scheme	Housing & Residential Services	Year 2		
7.17	Private rented sector as a move-on provision	Housing Solutions/ Initiative Team	Year 2		
7.18	Benchmarking of Rent Deposit Schemes, evaluating value for money and broadening financial and non-financial incentives to landlords	LBB Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1		
7.19	Improve ethnicity monitoring on complaints received about unfit or overcrowded accommodation by Residential Services/CBL	Residential Services	Year 1		
7.20	Improve the relationships and communication between Housing, Environmental Health, Building Control and Planning Departments to maximise the opportunities available to the Council in meeting affordable housing targets	Housing Development	Year 1		
7.21	Review of accessibility to services and availability/format of Residential Services information, ie grants, loans etc	Residential Services	Year 1		
7.22	Review of access to services for people whose first language is not English, Improve time taken to improve translation of information into different languages to improve accessibility	Housing Needs	Year 1		

	Actions	lead agency	time scale	summary of progress	progress rating
7.23	Securing nomination rights to properties through leverage of grant and loan funding, (subject to external funding).	Housing Solutions	Year 1-3		
7.24	Empty Property Working group set clear targets, increasing the number of EDMO's and new strategy developed. Innovative marketing and advertising campaigns to attract and engage landlords to bring properties in to use	Residential Services	Year 1-4		
7.25	Funding for Empty Properties officer secured beyond 2009	Residential Services	Year 1		
7.26	Promote adaptation work to provide wheel chair access, maximise use of Disabled Facilities Grant Budget to carry out adaptation to existing stock – at least 5 family homes adapted annually	Residential Services	Year 1-4		
7.28	Training for LBB Customer Service Centre staff and housing association staff so callers are signposted correctly	Housing Needs Team	Year 1-2		
7.29	further joint training/shadowing for Housing Initiatives and Environmental Health staff to improve performance of work with private sector properties	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1		
7.30	Demonstrate how service user consultation/landlords is helping to improve or contribute to service change	Housing Initiatives Team	Year 2		
7.31	Continued enforcement action in line with New Mayor's proposals	Residential Services	Year 1-4		

Chapter 8: Improving life opportunities and promoting independence for people in housing need by improving access to support, health, education and employment

8.1 Supporting independence

The Government require Housing, Health, Social Care, Children and Young People Services, Supporting people and associated departments to work in partnership with their key partners to address the support needs of vulnerable people. The Council has the overarching responsibility to ensure that there is a forum which engages stakeholders for this work to be monitored and reviewed to ensure the best possible outcomes for people who may become homeless.

The Council's vision is:

People, particularly older people and vulnerable adults, are supported to lead active, healthy and independent lives. Service is more personalised and users have greater choice, influence and control. Barriers to people maintaining their own independence are identified and removed and health and social care support are seamlessly accessible. There is more emphasis on local community and home-based provision and less on residential or institutional settings – but with all forms of care provided to a high and consistent quality. People can make informed choices to engage in healthy lifestyles and have easy access to local health facilities. People with disabilities are integrated as fully participating members of our wider community. They are able to maximise their potential, to live with dignity, and are perceived as an asset to the community, not as a burden. People live longer, healthier lives and health inequalities are reduced. Carers, families and communities are supported as key partners in achieving this vision.”⁵⁰

BBB 20/20 Vision

The needs of households who approach the authority for housing vary significantly and as a part of the initial assessment it is important to capture this information to establish the best type of housing required and whether any additional type of housing relating support is needed to support the placement.

8.2 Employment and training

The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is being introduced in Autumn 2008 as a major part of the government's 'Welfare to Work' reforms. This is an integrated contributory and means tested allowance and will replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on the grounds of incapacity and sickness. ESA has a fundamentally different approach to incapacity and a new test of capability for work which radically changes the amount of benefit sick and disabled claimants can get and how they qualify for it.

In 2006 the Council negotiated its Local Area Agreement. The Enterprise Block includes targets for the town centre, for improving skills of residents, supporting

businesses and a target to support 100 people into sustained employment from long term incapacity or lone parent related benefits. The Council is working with partners from the statutory sector, i.e. Job Centre Plus, voluntary and community organisations and local businesses. A local Fast Forward Grant Programme to help those furthest from the labour market was set up in 2006/07 and is now in its second year. Its part of the EU Global Grants programme so further rounds will be subject to the next European Social Fund programmes.

A funding bid to the London Development Agency was successful in setting up The Centre, Cotmandene Crescent and the Mottingham Community and Learning Shop via the Bromley's Children Project. These are the first and often the single point of access for a wide range of support and services to the local community in two out of the three main areas of multiple deprivation in the Borough. Services include help with job searches, access to careers advice, training and skills development, health advice and carers and support groups.

Of the 36 service users taking part in the Homelessness strategy consultation (Jan 2007), 66% stated they were not in current employment, 8% work full time and 26% work part time. When asked if they "felt that they faced any challenges in looking for employment, 58% said they did. One client commented, that *"being registered homeless has proved an issue in obtaining employment"*. This particular client reported she was told by Job Centre staff in a neighbouring borough that she would be better off waiting until she was permanently housed before seeking employment. Another respondent explained that she had *"not worked for a while and most places wont take me on with no work experience."*

Those who cared for children or family members also found it difficult to seek employment, one service user explained that she was a *"full time carer for her husband and younger children, and she had a teenager with mental health issues and couldn't work"* another explained that child care costs were financially constraining and she was *"more financially beneficial by not working."*

Figure 22: Access to Health employment and Education report – January 2008

8.3 Worklessness

The unemployment figure reported in 2007 for the London Borough was 3.4%. This evaluation demonstrates the need for active promotion of training and employment programmes to homeless households and those living in social rented housing.

A snapshot of Housing Benefit in Aug 2007, showed that 77.5% of social housing tenants claim Benefits. There is a link between homelessness and worklessness nationally, regionally and locally that needs to be understood in order to improve social integration in the drive to build sustainable communities.⁵¹

Creating and sustaining mixed income communities will be vital to the survival of the proposed affordable housing programme delivery to tackle homelessness. In November 2007, the Housing Corporation published 'Housing Associations Tackling

Worklessness'. The report examines the ethical role of housing associations in encouraging and providing opportunities for tenants to access training and employment and providing initiatives to support this.

The People into Employment Project (PIE) was set up in 2007 to deliver the Local Area Agreement employment target and includes over 20 partners from the VCS providing signposting, referrals and support to clients. Broomleigh Housing Association is delivering a back to work initiative called 'Stepping Up'. The project is based around providing employment and training opportunities for members of homeless families across Bromley, Croydon and Southwark. Participants receive access to 1:1 support from an outreach employment officer, access to employability courses, information, advice and guidance about jobs, courses and options available and assistance to seek training and employment. This is aimed at households living in temporary accommodation who are currently unemployed.

8.4 Health

Housing, providing protection from the elements and a warm, secure home, is a fundamental necessity for human health and well-being. Homeless people are among the most disadvantaged in society and generally have poorer health. Many health problems, including higher levels of illness and infection, accidental injury, behavioural and mental health problems are found in homeless people and those living in temporary accommodation. Meanwhile, children of homeless families also have lower levels of educational attainment.

A key government policy is to reduce inequalities in health as set out in "Tackling health inequalities: A programme for Action". The Programme for Action looks at the broad determinants of health and uses twelve headline indicators to track changes that affect health and well-being.⁵²

8.5 Proportion in non-decent housing

(Nationally) Between 1996 and 2006, the proportions of vulnerable private sector households and of social sector tenants living in non-decent housing (based on the fitness definition) decreased, with a narrowing of inequalities between these groups and non-vulnerable private sector households in both absolute and relative terms.

8.6 Homeless families living in temporary accommodation

Since March 2002 there has been a reduction in the number of homeless families with children in bed & breakfast accommodation and generally living in all temporary accommodation is higher than at March 2002, but numbers have been falling recently and are at their lowest since March 2003.

Primary Care Trusts are required to develop three year Local Delivery Plans in accordance with the priorities set out in the Department of Health Planning and Priorities Framework. Many of the identified priorities are areas where homeless people are particularly disadvantaged, namely:

- access to primary care
- waiting times in Accident and Emergency
- mental health services
- reduction in teenage conceptions
- better services for drug users
- reductions in health inequalities.

In Bromley the Local Area Agreement includes a mandatory target to reduce health inequalities by reducing the gap in all causes of mortality across the age ranges. Reducing health inequalities is a recognised priority for the Local Strategic Partnership. Working with partners to ensure the provision of decent homes which enhance health and doing everything possible to reduce homelessness and those having to live in temporary accommodation will be key elements in helping to meet this target.

In addition the Department of Health “Our Health Our Care Our Say” is a policy document which aims to put service users at the heart of the commissioning and delivery of services through three key concepts: Independence, Choice and Well-being. The primary impact of ‘Our Health Our Care Our Say’ on the delivery of homeless provision is through its promotion of preventative and early intervention services and focus on health implications.⁵³

Both the Department of Health and the CLG “are encouraging housing and health services to work together to improve the well-being of homeless people and to prevent homelessness. They have issued joint guidance on developing shared outcomes for people who are homeless or in temporary accommodation, including improving access to primary health care, improving substance misuse and mental health treatment and preventing homelessness through appropriate, targeted health support.”

The guidance highlights the contribution of shared housing and health actions in reducing health inequalities between communities and suggests five key positive outcomes which health and homelessness partnerships might work towards:

1. Improving health care for homeless families in temporary accommodation
2. Improving access to primary health care for homeless people
3. Improving substance misuse treatment for homeless people
4. Improving mental health treatment for homeless people
5. Preventing homelessness through appropriate, targeted health support

8.7 Local consultation

Consultations in January 2008, involving focus groups and semi-structured interviews with local people living in temporary accommodation have highlighted how vulnerable people feel when in this position. Although only gathering the views of a small percentage of people living in temporary accommodation the results were invaluable in helping to outline future priorities.

All the areas mentioned were likely to have an impact on the well-being of individuals, which could lead to stress and other illnesses. Some temporary accommodation can be of a lower standard of housing, which can also have an effect on some people's health and wellbeing. Regular visits, with referrals to support agencies and organisations can reduce isolation. When visiting, landlords and housing officers can also address any concerns the household may have with their living conditions to ensure that the quality of accommodation is of a decent standard.

There is a determination to reduce the amount of households in temporary accommodation and increase the quality of the remaining accommodation to improve the outcomes for homeless households.

Highlights for suggested areas for improvement included:

- increase in support, information and assistance when moving into temporary accommodation from changing GP to finding out who the new health visitor may be
- a requirement to work proactively with people to increase their chances of gaining employment through engagement in further education courses, training and work experience
- increase support and contact to households residing in temporary accommodation and development of referrals to support agencies for households moving into new areas
- parents/carers of children to be assisted and supported in the transition between school places when placed in temporary accommodation
- the need to lessen the impact of moving into temporary accommodation for service users by improving customer service and increasing the amount of information available at key stages in the process
- provision of information about local amenities, health and emergency services

8.8 Poverty

In March 2007 the government announced changes to benefit rules to allow people to earn more before they lose housing and council tax benefit. Together with increases to child benefit and child tax credit the changes are designed to get the government back on course to meet their target to halve child poverty by 2010.

Bromley has pockets of disadvantage which tend to be more concentrated in certain parts of the Borough, but have similar special needs. Although Bromley overall is ranked at 238th out of 354 Councils for the lowest levels of deprivation, there are significant pockets of disadvantage in at least five wards within the borough. Roughly 23% of the population live in these five wards, which are Mottingham/Chislehurst, Penge/Cator, Crystal Palace, Cray Valley East and Cray Valley West.

15,880 households claimed housing benefit in the Borough in August 2007 and the snapshot of housing benefit data reveals the 66 years category account for 26.5% of

claims, 12900 of these 15,880 (81.23%) claims from households in 6 postal areas (ward information not available at this time).

August 2007 HB claims	16 - 17 years	18 - 25 years	26 - 35 years	36 - 45 years	46 - 55 years	56 - 65 years	66 + years	Grand Total
Housing Association	30	1141	1947	2539	1627	1465	3562	12311
Non HRA	11	60	38	33	21	3	1	167
Private Sector	1	396	798	874	419	334	580	3402
Totals	42	1597	2783	3446	2067	1802	4143	15880

Figure 22: Housing Benefit claims – August 2007⁵⁴

Postal code area	BR1	BR2	BR3	BR5	SE9	SE20
Household claims	1910	1649	1760	3620	1137	2842

Figure 23: Household claims according to Postal area code⁵⁵

The Children's Fund is a central part of the Government's strategy to tackle the disadvantages and inequalities that derive from child poverty and social exclusion. The fund is targeted at supporting 5-13 year olds and focuses on developing services that support multi-agency working, including services that identify children showing early signs of difficulty. The aim is to prevent children falling into drug abuse, truancy, exclusion, unemployment and crime, and to raise aspirations and prevent underachievement.

One of the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes is 'Economic wellbeing' entailing that 'children have the right to live above the poverty threshold and to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will help them overcome socio-economic disadvantage where necessary.'

8.9 Income of households accepted for housing

An exercise was undertaken to look at the income banding of the main applicant from accepted homeless households by the authority between April 2007 and March 2008. There were 411 acceptances where income details were recorded revealing that 27.5% were claiming Income Support and a further 19% claiming Job Seekers Allowance. 13% of the applicants were either unemployed or no income source, whilst on application a number of this group of applicants would have been 16/17 years and not eligible for benefits.

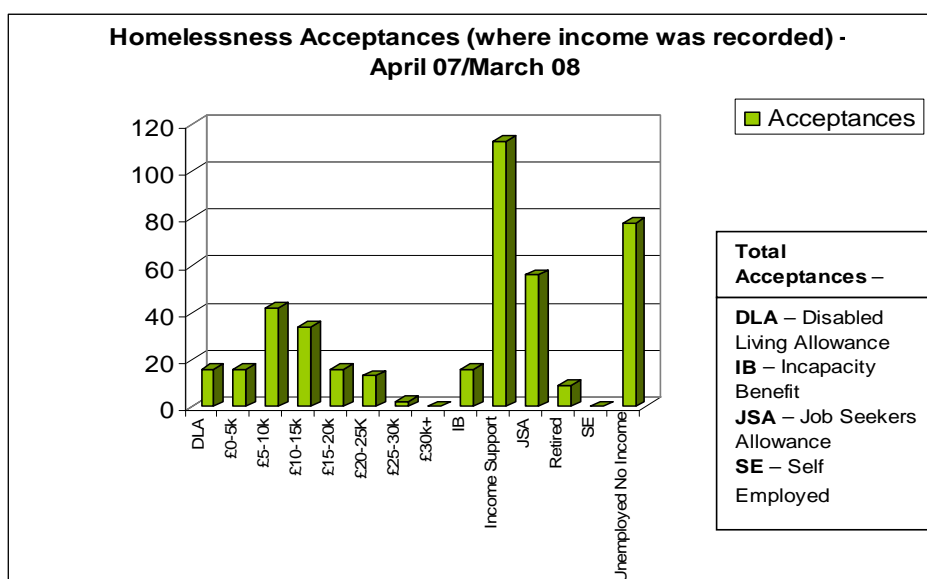


Figure 24: The income information given at time of claim may have changed by the time they have been accepted for re-housing.

8.10 Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty occurs when a household is unable to afford sufficient energy for health and comfort, commonly due to the combined effect of low household income, inadequate and expensive forms of heating and thermally inefficient housing. Lack of thermal efficiency is the most common reason why private sector homes fail to meet Decent Home standards. There are established links between fuel poverty and ill health. Improving thermal efficiency starts to tackle fuel poverty and improves the health of individuals. The commonly applied definition of a fuel-poor household is a household that needs to spend over 10% of its income on fuel to heat their home properly. The Authority is committed to helping residents achieve affordable warmth by highlighting grants and discount schemes and also offering advice on energy efficiency.

8.11 Energy efficiency commitment

Eight utility suppliers have a target from the Government to achieve energy savings. These companies offer various schemes to install loft insulation and cavity wall insulation. If residents are in receipt of a benefit, the insulation measures are usually installed free of charge and help to reduce heating costs for vulnerable households.

The Council will continue to target the most vulnerable people in the borough and those most likely to be experiencing fuel poverty with information and assistance on energy efficiency and available grants and financial help. This includes:

- older people via the PCT and Hospital, giving information through flu vaccination letters, hospitals, GPs, District Nurses and warfarin clinics.
- vulnerable people via the Handy Person Scheme
- any private rented or housing association tenant via the Environmental Health housing inspection team

- tenants via the Housing Initiatives team
- clients via voluntary sector organisations

This will include carrying out further training with social care workers, PCT, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations to enable them to recognise poorly insulated homes in their work and refer people to suitable schemes for energy efficiency etc. A Draft Domestic Energy and Affordable Warmth Strategy for the Borough is due to be published in November 2008.

8. Improving life opportunities and promoting independence for people in housing need by improving access to support, health, education and employment

		lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
8.1	To ensure that where possible accommodation used for temporary housing meets the decent homes standard and all Bed & Breakfast owners and their staff have CRB clearance	Housing Association's Housing Initiatives Team	Year 1-4		
8.2	Develop improved partnerships with Primary Care providers to ensure any changes to GP, health visitor etc is as smooth as possible	Primary Care Trust	Year 1		
8.3	To provide all households moving in to temporary accommodation with information on local health services, GP's, dentists, emergency services, local hospitals and specialist services, i.e. family planning, sexual health, counselling etc	Emergency Placements Team	Year 1		
8.4	Health visitor to visit families in temporary accommodation with one or more children aged 0-5 years, within two weeks of moving in Monitoring put in place and annual progress report produced	PCT/ Emergency Placements	Year 1-4		
8.5	Develop partnership working with community outreach centres, Children Centres, family workers, Education Welfare Workers and others to ensure local support and information is available to people moving into an area which will help to reduce stress and isolation	Health & Housing Partnership	Year 1-2		
8.6	To improve links with mental health services to provide better support for people in temporary accommodation and to support those with mental health needs and prevent repeat homelessness	S&R (Adult)	Year 1-4		

		lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
8.7	To develop partnerships with staff in community outreach centres, children centres etc to provide information and support to local people to prevent homelessness	Housing	Year 1-4		
8.8	To work with substance misuse teams to ensure the information and support for housing is available to prevent homelessness	Housing	Year 1-2		
8.9	Where possible, to limit the moves in temporary accommodation for households with children to ensure stability and permanence, until settled accommodation becomes available	Housing	Year 1-2		
8.10	Working towards reducing social exclusion or isolation for individuals and households in temporary accommodation by referring to support agencies and encouraging self-help options to improving health and wellbeing	Housing, Support and Resettlement	Year 2		
8.11	To work with housing and substance misuse teams to ensure that accurate and consistent information and support for housing is available to prevent homelessness.	Housing	Year 2		
8.12	Bromley Drug Action Team to commission an external consultant to conduct a substance misuse and homelessness needs assessment to provide a more in depth picture of the needs of this client group.	Drugs Action Team	Year 2		
8.13	Training for all frontline staff to help improve and promote healthy living	Health Improvement service	Year 2		
8.14	Referral pathways to identify opportunities and processes which can be used to target vulnerable households and reduce health inequalities	Health and Housing Partnership	Year 2-4		

		lead agency	timescale	summary of progress	progress rating
8.15	Education and training schemes and employment advice are promoted to households residing in temporary accommodation. Working with Job Centre Plus to target help for those homeless acceptances who are neither in work nor engaged, in training or education	Lifelong Learning partnership – Adult college	Year 1-2		
8.16	Training and employment information will be included in any Housing Options packs for people who present as homeless or are living in temporary accommodation	Emergency Placements	Year 2		
8.17	Officers will be trained to give a ‘Better off in work’ calculation to applicants at Housing Options interviews, including rules relating to part time work and access to benefits, including in work benefits such as tax credits	Liberata Client Services	Year 1		
8.18	Encouraging public, voluntary and private sector involvement develop a work experience programme and a targeted volunteer programme for homeless households	Stepping Up Steering group	Year 1-4		
8.19	Liaison with local partners, including the Learning and Skills Council and local learning providers, to discuss & implement learning and skills opportunities and training programmes for homeless households and staff supporting them	Stepping Up Steering group	Year 1-4		
8.20	To improve support provision for people with low literacy who are in housing need incl. basic skills awareness training before returning to work / CV etc	Lifelong Learning partnership – Adult college	Year 1-2		
8.21	Review recording of homelessness data to effectively capture peoples income source to ensure that opportunities to offer definitive housing options (such as HomeBuy) or access to employment are not missed	Housing Needs Team	Year 2-3		

Chapter 9: Moving forward

The overall Council, Housing Division and its partners remain challenged to continue to robustly tackle and reduce homelessness within the London Borough of Bromley. The action plan is devised to meet the objectives of the six priorities of the 'Tackling homelessness and promoting housing options and solutions' Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2012 and to address the needs of current and future people in housing need. The Action Plan captures main actions, future priorities and areas of development.

The future monitoring and yearly updates of the Strategy Action Plan will be managed by the Homelessness Forum Steering Group and performance improvement and development will also be guided specifically by the Housing Division. Communication with stakeholders and service users is vital to the way, in which the Council and its partners provide its homelessness prevention and housing options service and therefore will also remain a future priority.

The Housing Division will continue to publish half year and annual performance report to provide kept updates on performance targets and other specific areas of work, including Choice Based Lettings, the Foyer and Temporary to Settled initiative and Equality. Regular Homelessness Forum meetings will promote the continuous development of partnership working to ensure that there are clear pathways for people in housing need.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Homelessness Strategy 2008-12

Accepted as homeless	Client or clients accepted as 'eligible for assistance', 'unintentionally' 'homeless' and in 'priority need', and therefore owed the 'main homelessness duty'.
Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)	Anti-social behaviour includes a range of problems and covers behaviour, which is capable of causing harassment, distress or alarm to other people, including noise nuisance from a neighbour, graffiti and damage to property.
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	An assured or shorthold tenancy is the usual form of letting if you are a private tenant and your landlord is a private landlord, the tenancy began on or after 15 January 1989 and the house or flat is let as separate accommodation and is your main home.
Audit Commission	The audit commission are an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Their work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.
Automated bidding	Automated bidding is a part of the Bromley Homeseekers system. Clients who cannot bid due to special circumstances will be able to set up automatic bids for suitable properties.
Bromley Churches Housing Action	The charity's aim is "to work in accordance with Christian principles for the relief of poverty of homeless persons in the London Borough of Bromley, particularly by the provision of grants and short-term accommodation".
Bromley Homeseekers	Instead of people being 'offered' accommodation, Bromley Homeseekers will advertise available properties on a website each week. Clients will then be able to bid for suitable properties that they would like to live in. The property will then be allocated to the bidder with the highest need.
Bromley Local Strategic Partnership	The Bromley Local Strategic Partnership is an affiliation of key local organisations and the public, private and voluntary sectors representing residents of Bromley.
Bromley Mind	Bromley Mind is the main provider of community care for people with mental health problems in the Borough of Bromley including older people with dementia.
Bromley Primary Care Trust (BPCT)	PCTs receive budgets directly from Government, and are responsible for delivering local health care by locality.
Bromley Supporting People Strategy	The aim stated in the 2005 strategy is, "Through the Supporting People Strategy the Commissioning Body partners will work together to plan and deliver high quality housing support services to vulnerable residents in our community, recognising the positive influence appropriate support and housing has on people's health, well-being and the safety of our communities."
Bromley Women's Aid	Bromley Women's Aid provides safe, secure, high quality temporary accommodation and support services to women escaping domestic violence and abuse.
Broomleigh Housing Association	Bromley Council transferred all of its housing stock to Broomleigh Housing Association in 1992. As such they are the largest Housing Association in Bromley.
Building a Better Bromley (BBB)	The London Borough of Bromley's medium-term plan, which sets out priorities for the Borough in accordance with the Council's stated purpose to enhance quality of life in the Borough, and the Council's vision that Bromley remains the place where people wish to live and do business.
Children and Young People's Plan	The children and young people's plan analyses the needs of children and young people, their families and carers in Bromley and lists the aims and priorities that the Trust will work towards between 2006 and 2009.
Choice Based Lettings scheme	Choice-based lettings are a new way of allocating social housing which affords applicants with a degree of choice over the property they receive. Vacancies are advertised and applicants can 'bid' for properties of most interest to them.

Common Assessment Framework	The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a new, standardised approach to assessing children and young people's needs and deciding how they should be met. It aims to help all of us whose work brings us into contact with children and families to identify children with additional needs and intervene much earlier to help them.
Community Engagement Strategy	This Community Engagement Strategy aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities, who are informed and involved in decision-making and enable improved public services to enhance quality of life.
Community Safety Partnership	The Safer Bromley Partnership was set up in line with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that the public sector agencies, voluntary groups and businesses work together with local communities to reduce crime and improve safety.
Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)	Local authorities and government agencies in England have powers under various acts of parliament, to buy land that is not necessarily for sale by the owner. These are called 'compulsory purchase' powers and are important for local authorities and other public bodies to use in order to buy land that is needed to help deliver social and economic changes.
Connexions	Connexions is a service for 13-19 year olds, living in England and wanting advice on progressing in life. It also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities (or both).
Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA)	This is an inspection of the whole council. Some housing performance indicators play a key part in the CPA inspection.
Decent Homes Standard	The national minimum standard of decency that all social landlords should aim to meet by 2010. This also applies to homes occupied by vulnerable households in the private sector. A decent home must meet the minimum statutory standard for housing; be in a reasonable condition of repair; have fairly modern facilities and services; and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
Department for Communities and Local Government	The Central Government department that leads local Government-related policy, formerly known as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
Direct Let scheme	A scheme whereby the Council acts as an intermediary, helping clients to find private-sector accommodation.
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	Discretionary Housing Payments are short-term emergency payments. Clients have no statutory right to receive a DHP as they are awarded at the Council's discretion.
Domestic Violence One-Stop Shop	The domestic violence one stop shop is a drop in service for victims of domestic violence. The service provides help and advice for those in need. It is staffed by a police officer, a local solicitor and representatives from the Homeless Families Unit, Bromley Women's Aid and Bromley Victims Support.
Draft London Mayors Housing strategy	The draft Mayor's Housing Strategy was published on 18 September 2007. It sets out the Mayor's policies to address the range of London's housing challenges and his Strategic Housing Investment Plan, which outlines his approach to investment to support the delivery of new homes. Key aims include providing more affordable homes and more family homes, tackling climate change, helping people on low to middle incomes into home ownership and increasing housing choice and mobility.
Drug Action Team	The Drug Action Team is a partnership of key agencies within Bromley responsible for the local implementation of the Government's ten year anti-drug strategy, Tackling Drugs To Build a Better Britain which was launched in 1998.
Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)	An Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) is a procedure that allows a local council to take over the responsibility of managing a property and for ensuring it is occupied. There are a number of important safeguards to ensure that the property rights of owners are respected.
Empty Homes Strategy 2006 – 2008 published in Nov 2006	London Borough of Bromley, Empty Homes strategy which sets out how the Council and its partners will reduce the amount of properties in the Borough
European Social fund programmes	The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfill their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.

Every Child Matters	Every Child Matters is a nationwide programme of change within all services for children and young people. It aims to improve the life chances of all children and young people.
Extra Care Housing	Extra care housing benefits people who are no longer able to live in their own homes but do not need the level of support offered in a care home.
Federation of Bromley Housing Associations	Federation of local housing associations, with sub groups for Development, Special Needs, Older People's Housing and Housing Benefit.
Floating support	Floating support is provided by staff visiting people in their homes. These services are usually open to people living in different types of accommodation, including those renting council or housing association accommodation or those living in private rental accommodation.
Freedom programme	Bromley Council is the first London borough to introduce a new Freedom Programme for women who want to find out more about the reality of domestic violence and abuse. This free 12-week rolling programme runs in three different locations – Mottingham, Orpington and Penge – and covers a number of useful topics including where people suffering from this form of abuse can seek help.
Greater London Authority (GLA)	The GLA has responsibility for transport, policing, fire and emergency planning, economic development, planning, culture and environment at a London-wide level. It is made up of a directly elected Mayor and an Assembly of elected members.
Greenbelt	Green Belt as an area of largely undeveloped land, including farmland, woodland and managed recreational land which bounds the built and urban areas of London.
HomeBuy	Scheme providing purchase grants to help housing association tenants and people on low incomes to purchase a home on the open market. This replaced the Tenants Incentive Scheme.
Homeless Strategy Review	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 homeless strategy review is then an update of this document.
Homelessness Act 2002	The Act reformed the legislation on homelessness and the allocation of social housing which were the subject of extensive consultation. The Act requires local housing authorities to adopt a strategic approach to tackling homelessness.
Homelessness Directorate	In December 2001, the Government announced the establishment of a new Homelessness Directorate. The Directorate aims to ensure that homelessness is given a stronger strategic focus in the government.
Homelessness Forum	The Homelessness Forum is a meeting of organisations that work with people of all ages in need of housing whether in the role of giving support, providing services or acting as advocates. The forum meets quarterly at Bromley Council
Homelessness Strategy Group	Group formed as extension of Homelessness Steering Group to assist in developing new homelessness strategy and monitor future action plans
Housing Act 2004	The Housing Act 2004 passed new legislation on Housing over 7 main areas: housing conditions, licensing of houses in multiple occupation, selective licensing of other residential accommodation, additional control provisions in relation to residential accommodation, home information packs, other provisions about housing and supplementary and final provisions
Housing Association	Housing associations are non-profit organisations that have been approved by and registered with the Housing Corporation to own, manage and provide social housing.
Housing Business Plans	The Housing Business Plans set out the targets and goals for each team throughout the year. These are reviewed and updated quarterly.
Housing Corporation	Non-departmental public body whose role is to fund and regulate housing associations in Bromley.
Housing Market and Housing Needs Assessment	The HMA is required to update the existing Housing Needs Survey (1999, 2003) and provide a valuable evidence base for the Local Development Framework to help inform future policy development. It will provide the Borough with an appraisal of housing market conditions
Housing Register	A computerised list of people who have applied to move into social housing in the borough.

Improvement and Efficiency Plans	Plans detailing how the department carries out its business and sets out targets, risk and plans to improve and refine services
Land Registry	Land Registry is the government department responsible to the Lord Chancellor. It is responsible for keeping and maintaining the Land Register of England and Wales. They guarantee title to registered estates and provide ready access to up-to-date and guaranteed land information to enable confident dealings in property and security of title.
Landlord accreditation scheme	The London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) will provide landlords with the necessary skills to run a successful business. A partnership of landlord organisations, London Councils and university accommodation units have worked together to set up a development programme which provides Landlords with the information necessary to improve their business.
LATCH Project	Young people placed in LATCH accommodation are provided with a bedroom in an ordinary household. They will normally have access to the lounge, kitchen, toilet and bathroom facilities in the property.
Leaving Care team	The 16+ Leaving Care Team provides help and support to children and young people who have been looked after by Bromley social services and are leaving care.
Local Area Agreement	A three year agreement between Central Government and a local area. The agreement sets out priority issues for local action and what partners will deliver.
Local Delivery Plans	Local Delivery Plans (LDP) are the vehicle for NHS and Local Authorities to set out how they will take forward delivery of coordinated pathways of care in order to meet key targets within locally available resources and priorities for investment or service change. They are designed to deliver against the Health and Social Care Standards which act as planning guidelines nationally.
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	The Local Housing Allowance is a new way of deciding rent payments for people receiving Housing Benefit. It uses a flat rate allowance based on the size of the tenant's household and the area they live in.
London Borough of Bromley Homelessness Directory	A directory to be published to assist people in accessing services across the borough to prevent homelessness or signpost to support services whether public or third sector
London Councils	Formerly known as the Association of Local Government(ALG), London Councils represents local Government in London and its members include 32 London Boroughs
London Development Agency (LDA)	The London Development Agency work to deliver the Mayor's vision for London to be a sustainable world city with strong, long-term economic growth, social inclusion and active environmental improvement. They produce the Mayor's Economic Development Strategy for London, which focuses on: places and infrastructure; supporting people, encouraging business; and promoting London.
London Reducing Re-offending Action Plan 2007-2009	The London Reducing Re-offending Action Plan 2007-09 updates the London Resettlement Strategy which was published in September 2005, and the consultation document, and subsequent report, Reducing Re-offending in London: Phase Two of the London Resettlement Strategy published in September 2006 and April 2007 respectively. Through partnership delivery, the Action Plan 2007-09 is intended to help meet the needs of offenders and reduce re-offending for the London Region. The Action Plan has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), and a number of actions within the document are as a result of that assessment.
Mediation	Mediation is a form of homelessness prevention. An officer will meet with a young person and their family and discuss the issues that are causing homelessness and try to resolve them.
Metropolitan Open Land	Metropolitan Open Land applies to open spaces which are of more than local importance. It performs three valuable functions: protecting open space to provide a clear break in the urban fabric and contribute to the green character of London / protecting open space to serve the needs of Londoners outside their local area / protecting open space that contains a feature or landscape of national or regional significance.
Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements	The National Probation Service are committed to improving protection for the public and to achieve this they work in close partnership with other agencies including the Prison Service, the health services and local authority housing and

(MAPPA)	social services. These are the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
Mystery Shopping	Mystery Shopping is a performance evaluation process and a valuable tool highlighting interaction between staff and customers. An independent representative will engage frontline staff in a series of everyday circumstances to evaluate true customer service.
National Youth Homelessness Scheme	The National Youth Homelessness Scheme originated in Government's commitment to tackle and prevent youth homelessness through a number of initiatives enabling local authorities to respond to young people's needs through effective youth homelessness strategies
Oxleas NHS Trust	Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust provides mental health and learning disability services for people living in the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich, and specialist services to people living in Lewisham
PDS Committee	Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee
Probation Services	Probation services are voluntary organisations with the following aims: protecting the public, reducing re-offending, the proper punishment of offenders in the community, ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on the victims of crime and the public and the rehabilitation of offenders
Regional Housing Boards (RHBs)	Regional Housing Boards were established as part of the Sustainable Communities Plan published in February 2003. This is to ensure that housing policies would be better integrated with the regional spatial, transport, economic and sustainable development strategies and to ensure delivery of the policies set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan.
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	Social landlords, (mostly Housing Associations) who are registered with the Housing Corporation and therefore eligible for funding from them.
Rent Deposit Guarantee Bond scheme	The Deposit Guarantee Bond scheme enables clients to approach lettings agents and private landlords to find accommodation suitable to their needs. The Council provides a guarantee bond, which is in most cases equal to one month's rent, for the chosen landlord. This reassures the landlord that the client intends to reside in the property for as long as possible and will keep it in good condition.
Rent Deposit Scheme	A scheme where the Council provides a property deposit to private sector landlords on behalf of clients. The landlord then repays the deposit to the Council on completion of tenancy. If the landlord claims against the deposit, the tenant is liable to the Council.
Rough Sleeping	'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").
Safeguarding Children Board	Local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) are designed to help ensure that children are safeguarded properly by the key agencies working effectively together. They put the former area child protection committees (ACPCs) on a statutory footing. The objective of LSCBs is to coordinate and to ensure the effectiveness of their member agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
Sanctuary scheme	The Sanctuary Scheme allows families to remain in the familiar environment of their home whilst they are experiencing the problems that arise as a result of domestic violence by providing professionally installed security equipment such as a secure room with direct links to the police.
Service Level Agreements (SLA)	A service agreement between the Council and an organisation delivering on its behalf.
Shelter	Shelter's vision is that everyone should have a home - somewhere decent, safe, affordable and permanent. Shelter provides advice, support, training and campaigns against poor housing
Sheltered Housing	Sheltered Housing offers older people the opportunity to live an independent life in the community, with some support from housing association staff.
Social Housing	Housing provided either by a local authority or a housing association.
South East London Housing Association Group (SELHAG)	SELHAG is made up of representatives of those housing associations that either have an active development programme in the sub region or who manage over 500 homes in the sub region
South East London	The Partnership is made up of the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich,

Housing Partnership	Lewisham and Southwark and includes the Housing Corporation, London Councils (formerly known as the Association of London Government) and our housing association partners.
Statutory homelessness	For the purposes of this report the experience of having been accepted as owed the main homelessness duty and assisted under the homelessness legislation.
Stock transfer	Transfer of a local authority's entire stock to an RSL/RSLs. In 1992, LB Bromley's housing stock was transferred to Broomleigh Housing Association. The local authority retains some responsibilities. In Bromley's case this includes strategy/enabling, development, homelessness, allocations and private sector housing services.
Streetwise Community Law Centre	Streetwise Community Law Centre is a drop in centre designed specifically for young people. It offers advice and support from work and training to leaving home and financial advice.
Support & Resettlement teams	The London Borough of Bromley Support & Resettlement Team is split into two groups: vulnerable adults and young people.
Supporting People Programme	Offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence. It will deliver cost effective, reliable, high quality and strategically planned housing-related services, and complement existing care services. The planning and development of services will be needs led. Supporting People is a working partnership of local government, service users and support agencies.
Sustainable Communities	Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.
Temporary accommodation	Accommodation secured by a local authority for someone accepted as homeless and his or her family, until settled accommodation becomes available.
Temporary Accommodation Reduction Strategy	The Temporary Accommodation Reduction Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the CLG to set out how the London Borough of Bromley intends to meet the new statutory target to halve the number of homeless households residing in temporary accommodation by 2010.
Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme	From 6 April 2007, all deposits taken by landlords for what is called Assured Shorthold Tenancies – the vast majority of tenancies in England and Wales, must be protected by a tenancy deposit protection scheme. To avoid disputes going to court, each scheme will be supported by an alternative dispute resolution service (ADR), whose aim is to make disputes faster and cheaper to resolve.
The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity for employment. They support people getting into work and encourage setting up pensions.
Victim Support	If you are a victim of crime, victim support branches can provide information and support to the victim and their families/friends. They also can provide witness services for people going to court.
Void times	Void time is the duration that a property remains empty before being re-let to a new tenant.
Local Government White Paper	A White Paper sets out Government policy. The latest Local Government White Paper Strong and prosperous communities, published in October 2006, covered a wide range of measures to empower local government and its local partners, and to empower citizens and communities.
Youth Offending Team (YOT)	The Youth Offending Team (YOT) is made up of representatives from the Police and Probation Services, Social Services and Health and Education and works closely with the Community Safety partnership to ensure a multi-agency approach that tackles the reasons why young people offend.

Appendix 2: Homelessness Strategy 2008-12 contributors

Thank you to all those who have contributed towards this strategy via the Homelessness Forum or individual consultation. A list of the organisations that have contributed is below:

Abbeyfield Orpington Society	London Borough of Bromley - Drug Action Team
Advance UK	London Borough of Bromley - Emergency Placements
Alcohol Recovery Project	London Borough of Bromley - Environmental Health and Trading Standards
AmicusHorizon Group	London Borough of Bromley - Family Focus Team
Anerley Housing Cooperative	London Borough of Bromley - Housing and Community Regeneration
Avenue Lettings	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Development
BCHA	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Initiatives
Bromley Advocacy Project	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Needs
Bromley Baptist Advice Centre	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Options and Assessment
Bromley CAB - Housing Advice	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Provision
Bromley Community Drugs Project	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Services
Bromley Ethnic Communities Programme	London Borough of Bromley - Housing Strategy
Bromley Federation of Housing Associations	London Borough of Bromley - Joint Planning and Development
Bromley Gypsy Travellers Project	London Borough of Bromley - Leaving Care Team
Bromley PCT	London Borough of Bromley - Mottingham Community Learning Shop
Bromley PCT - Teenage Pregnancy	London Borough of Bromley - Occupational Therapy
Bromley PCT Refugee Service	London Borough of Bromley - Planning and Development
Bromley Women's Aid	London Borough of Bromley - Referrals and Assessments Team
Broomleigh HA	London Borough of Bromley - Regeneration and Renewal
Casa Support	London Borough of Bromley - Resources Directorate
Chislehurst & Sidcup HA	London Borough of Bromley - Support and Resettlement

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Connexions

Dominion Housing

English Churches Housing Group

GFS Platform

Gordon House Association

Health Improvement Service

Hexagon Housing Association

Homegroup

Home-Start Bromley

Hyde Housing Association

In Touch - Hyde Group

iPAD

Just Be

Kelsey Housing Association

Knight Frank

LATCH

London Borough of Bromley - 16+ Leaving Care Team

London Borough of Bromley - ACS Complaints

London Borough of Bromley - Adult and Community Services

London Borough of Bromley - Benefits

London Borough of Bromley - Bromley Youth Offending Team

London Borough of Bromley - Children's Social Care

London Borough of Bromley - Community Safety

London Borough of Bromley - Councillors

London Borough of Bromley - Disability Team

London Borough of Bromley - Supported Living Initiatives Team

London Borough of Bromley - Supporting People Team

London and Quadrant Housing Trust

London Magistrates' Court Support and Information service

Lookahead

Metropolitan Police

Moat Housing Association

Notting Hill Housing Group

Novas Group

Outmates

Oxleas NHS Trust

Penge Churches Housing Association

Radcliffe Housing Society

Rainer London Housing

Refugee Housing Association

Relate

Servite Houses

Shaftesbury Housing

South East London Housing Partnership

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

South London Family Housing Association

Stonham Housing Association

Streetwise Community Law Centre

Thames Reach

Appendix 3: Responses to Homelessness Strategy 2008-12 consultation

Many thanks to those who also responded to the Homelessness Strategy 2008-12 official consultation period. A list of the organisations that responded is below:

Bromley Primary Care Trust
Bromley Churches Housing Action (LATCH Project)
Citizens Advice Bureaux
Children and Family Forum
Just Be
London Borough of Bromley - Children and Young People Service
London Borough of Bromley - Drug Action Team (DAT)
London Borough of Bromley - Housing Department
London Borough of Bromley - Commissioning and Partnership
Relate Bromley
London Borough of Bromley – Adult and Community Services
London Borough of Bromley - Policy and Partnerships Team
London Borough of Bromley - Supporting People
Sheltered Housing Executive Sub-Committee, Cedarmore Housing Association Ltd

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