

London Borough of Bromley Homelessness Strategy 2012-17

London Borough of Bromley HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2012-17		Final Draft 21/03/12
Section		Page
	Foreword	3
1.	Introduction	4
1.1	About this strategy	4
1.2	Current challenges	4
1.3	Context and background	5
1.4	Social rented housing and the Housing Register	9
1.5	Homeless acceptances	9
1.6	Temporary Accommodation	11
1.7	Links to other regional and local strategies	12
2.	Housing advice and homeless prevention	13
2.1	Summary	14
2.2	Housing benefit and welfare reforms	14
2.3	Accessibility of advice and outreach provision	15
2.4	Accessible information	15
2.5	Triage system: Initial assessments	16
2.6	Tenancy sustainment	16
2.7	Tackling disrepair	16
2.8	Overcrowding	17
2.9	Affordability, money & debt advice	17
3.	Housing options and access to housing	18
3.1	Summary	18
3.2	Promoting available housing options	19
3.3	Working with the private rented sector	19
3.4	Making better use of existing stock	20
3.5	Allocations policy	21
4.	Supporting vulnerable people	22
4.1	Summary	23
4.2	LBB Support & Resettlement	23
4.3	Specific support needs	24
4.4	Rough sleepers	24
4.5	Homelessness and domestic violence	25
4.6	Ex offenders	26
4.7	Drug and alcohol misuse	26
4.8	Youth homelessness	26
4.9	Older people	27
4.10	Black and minority ethnic communities	27
5.	Working in partnership to tackle the wider causes of homelessness	28
5.1	Summary	28
5.2	Assisting access to employment and training	28
5.3	Working with the South East London Housing Partnership	29
5.4	Working with Housing Associations	29
5.5	Working in partnership across all agencies	30
6.	Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, monitoring and review	31
	Contact details	41

Foreword

By the portfolio lead.

1. Introduction

1.1 About this strategy

Local Authorities are required to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. In 2008, the London Borough of Bromley produced its [Homelessness Strategy for 2008-12](#) and in the intervening years much has changed, predominantly as a result of the recent recession. Therefore, we believe that it is timely to assess our progress against the ambitions set out in our Homelessness Strategy and to ensure that we continue to deliver services that best enable us to tackle homelessness and promote effective housing options and solutions.

This strategy has been developed to support and achieve the key objectives of the Adult and Community Services Portfolio Plan to promote **choice, personalisation and independence**. Promoting independence remains a key driver of our strategy to tackle homelessness and we will continue to emphasise the empowerment of individuals so that where possible they are able to resolve their own housing and homelessness issues. This will be driven by the Housing and Residential Services Division mission which is to:

- Prevent and reduce homelessness and the numbers of households residing in temporary accommodation; support vulnerable people and encourage and empower people to resolve their own housing needs where they can.
- To deliver good quality affordable housing making the best use of existing housing stock, re-use of empty homes and improving the condition of private sector housing.
- To ensure that affordable housing is strategically allocated to best meet identified housing need.

To achieve this mission and maximise the available resources of the service, we will work efficiently, innovatively and in partnership with our key stakeholders and the community.

1.2 Current challenges

The recession has had a profound impact on the numbers of people approaching the Council's Housing Needs Service seeking advice and assistance in resolving their housing and homelessness problems. Since we produced our last Homelessness Strategy in 2008 there has been a 300% increase in the numbers of households applying to go on the Housing Register. Additionally there are now substantially less households in the borough able to obtain a mortgage or find the deposit necessary to purchase a property. At the same time, the supply of new or existing housing to offer to households in need, or to whom the Council has a statutory duty, has reduced significantly. This picture is unlikely to improve in the short or medium term; the amount of grant funding available for new social housing has been significantly reduced, there is little market housing being built and the buy to let market currently appears to be in decline.

The impact of the recession and the increasing pressure on Local Authority budgets following the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 will provide further challenges.

Welfare and Social Housing Reform

It is particularly important that this strategy takes in to account the impacts of the changes to the Housing Benefit system introduced from April 2011. Changes to welfare provision announced in the Emergency Budget in June 2010, and the Welfare Reform Bill (February 2011) will have a significant impact on many of our customers. Importantly, the Welfare Reform Bill heralds key changes to Housing Benefit (HB) and Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The most significant changes are new caps on the maximum amount of LHA that can be paid according to bedroom size (including an overall cap at the 4 bed allowance) and the calculation of LHA rates for local areas based on the 30th percentile of rental value as opposed to the previous 50th percentile, or median rental value. Both these policy changes came into effect in April 2011 and are starting to impact on the accessibility of private rented homes for households that claim housing benefit and the ability of the council to help people into the private rented sector to meet the Council's housing and homeless duties.

The Council will seek to identify and work with those who face the biggest reductions in the amount of housing benefit they receive. In total around 3000 households will receive less Housing Benefit. Where possible we will work with their landlords to help maintain tenancies.

It is also important that we take into account and monitor the potential impacts of new social housing reforms. From 2011 Housing Associations have been able to offer new Affordable Rents at up to 80% of the local housing market and offer fixed term tenancies on all their new properties and some relets, probably around 50% of vacancies of their current stock. These new rent products are likely to create affordability issues for many of our customers and changes to security of tenure may also have implications for our customers and the services which we provide. However, this will make the rent levels similar to the private rented sector so, providing people can access the private rented sector; this could have the effect of reducing demand for social rented housing.

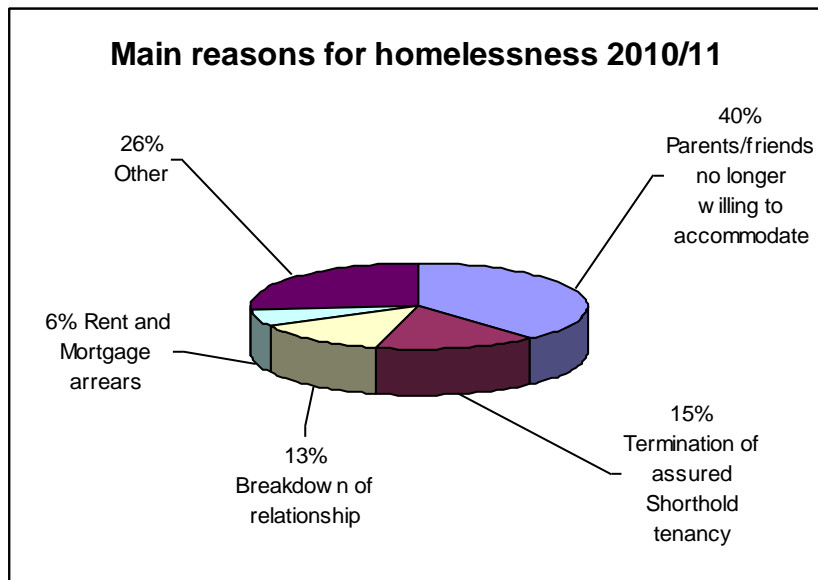
Despite the challenging environment in which we operate, we will continue to build on the achievements of the last three years by making the best use of our available resources by maximising services across the Division.

1.3 Context and background

The main causes of homelessness

Since we last updated our Homelessness Strategy in 2008, the main reasons for homelessness in Bromley have remained largely the same (*see figure 1 below*). Parents and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate remained the single most common reason for homelessness between 2007 and 2011 (*see figure 2 below*). This accounted for 38% of homelessness acceptances in the first three quarters of 2010/11. Relationship breakdown is the second most common factor, currently accounting for 16% of all homeless acceptances.

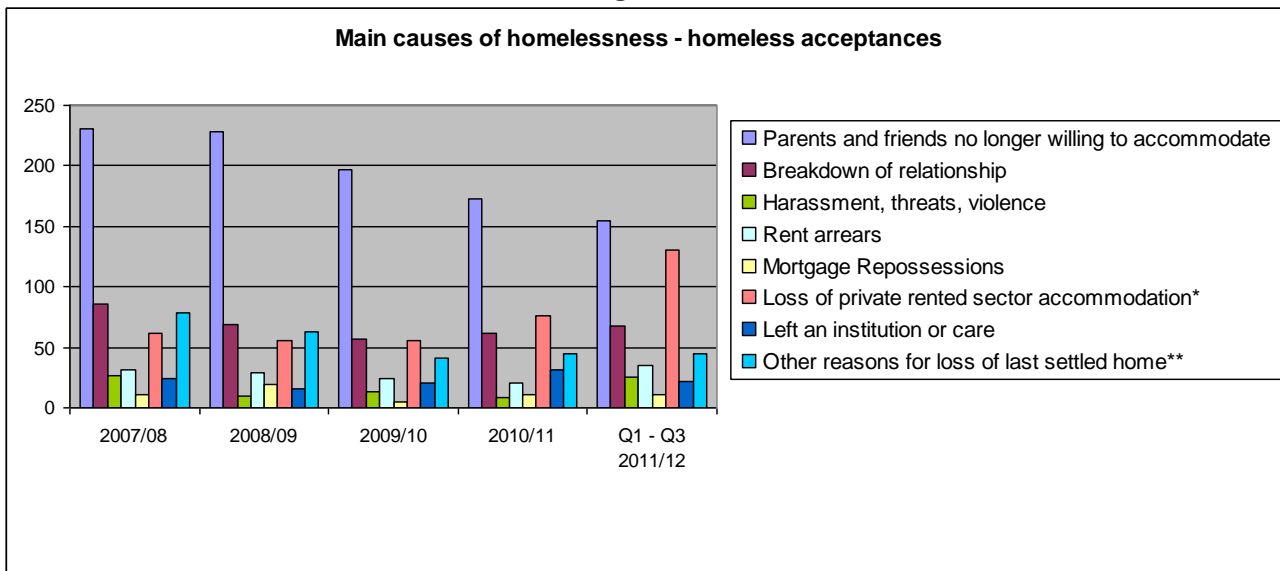
Figure 1:



Termination of Assured Shorthold tenancies and related tenancy issues account for 19% of acceptances. We are also witnessing increasing presentations from those at risk of homelessness due to mortgage and rent arrears (7% of total acceptances) reflecting the current economic climate. This underlines the importance of continuing to develop preventative strategies focused on financial information and on the private rented sector, more of which is discussed below.

Homelessness acceptances from clients leaving an institution or care have remained fairly consistent as a percentage. In the year 2010-11 this accounted for 7% of acceptances. This underlines the importance of the preventative work undertaken by the Support and Resettlement teams in the Housing Needs Service.

Figure 2:



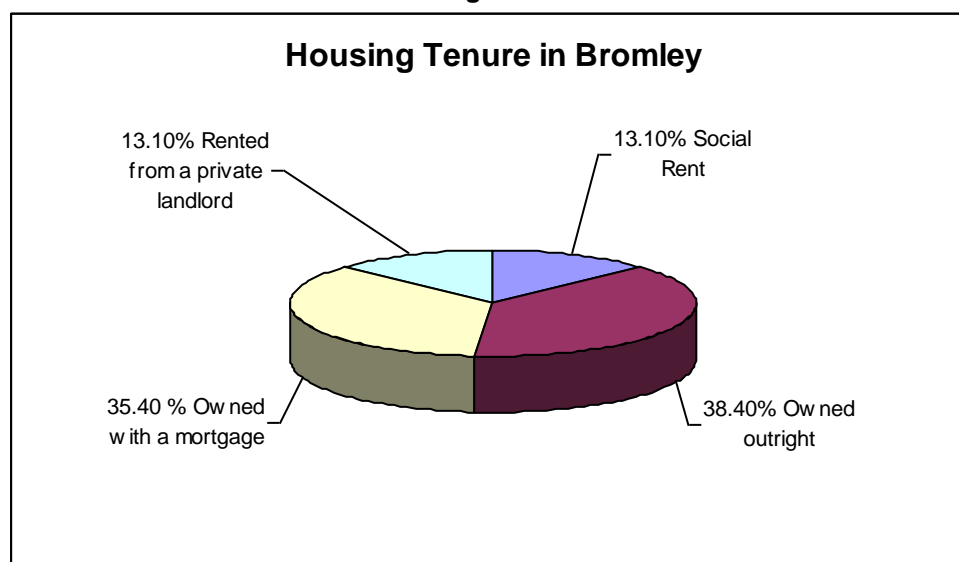
Key housing market information: Housing tenure and local housing affordability

In 2008, Opinion Research Services (ORS) undertook a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess the housing market within Bromley and in comparison with other south east London boroughs. Although the study was completed nearly three years

ago, it still provides a useful guide to the housing market in Bromley. The following references are from the SHMA unless indicated:

- Owner occupation forms the majority (74%) of the housing stock in LB Bromley;
- Between the 2001 census and the Bromley Household Survey conducted in 2008, the social rented sector has decreased from 14.3% to about 13.1%, whilst renting from a private landlord has increased from 8.6% to 13.1%.

Figure 3



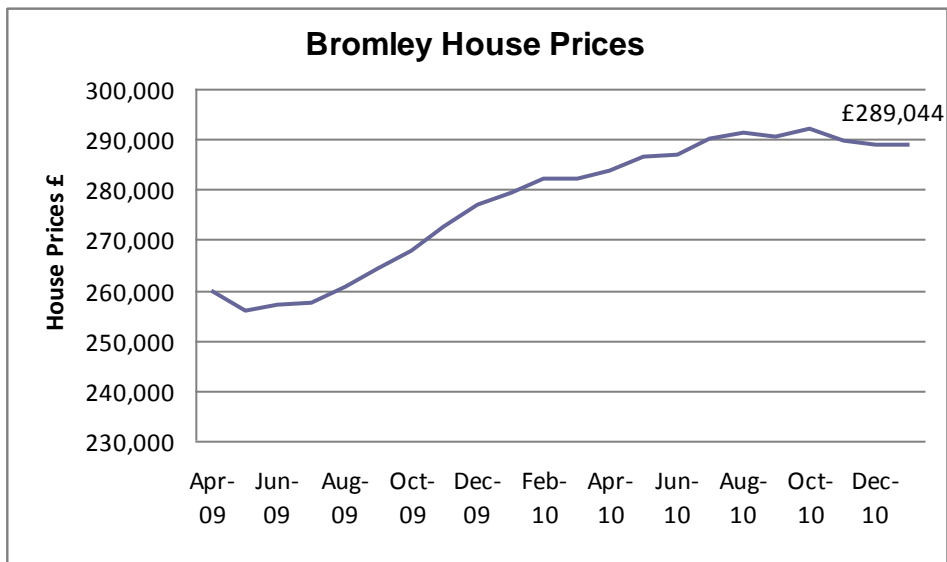
Source: LB Bromley Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008

- In 2000 the price of an average property in Bromley was around 10 times the average earnings of someone working full time in the Borough. This differential has narrowed, but is still prohibitively high. The average house price in Bromley in January 2011 was £289,044,¹ eight times the median annual income in the borough of approximately £33'909².

¹ Land Registry, April 2011

² Office of National Statistics, April 2011.

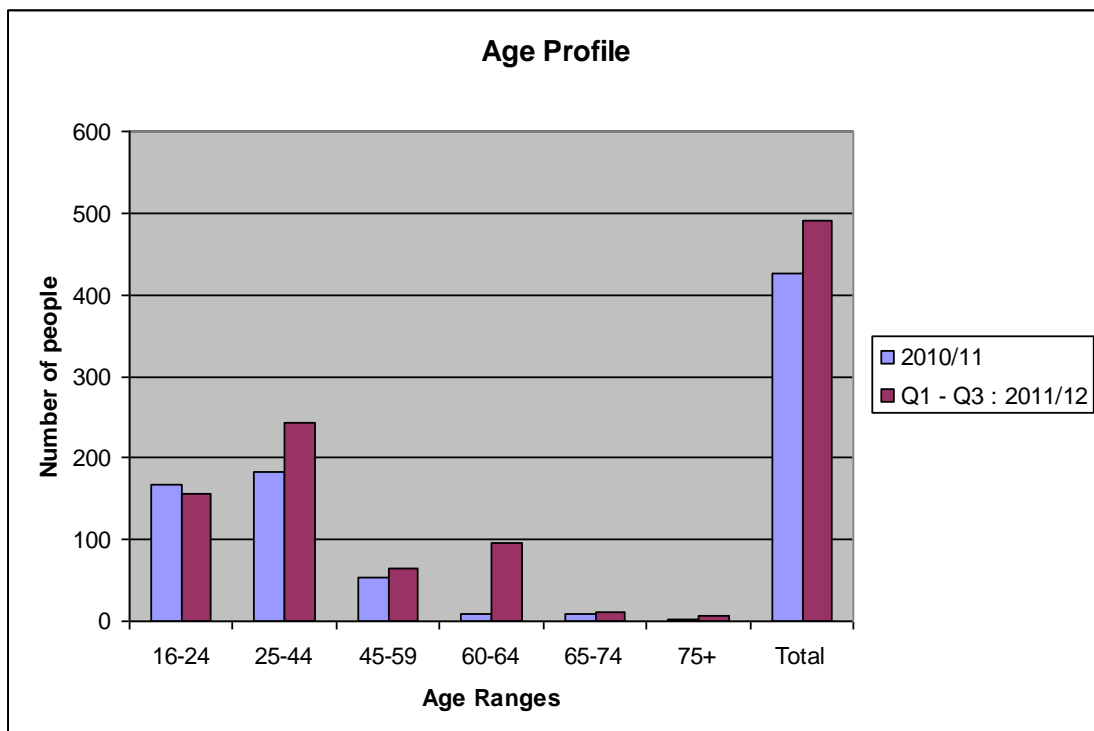
Figure 4



Source: Land Registry (April 2011)

- Around 90% of completed property sales are for properties in excess of £150,000.
- The Bromley Household Survey (2008) found that 42% of households in Bromley's rented sector claim housing benefit. 65% of social rent tenants are in receipt of housing benefit, implying that the majority of those in the social rented sector cannot afford to live in any other tenure. This compares to only around 20% of private rented tenants who claim housing benefit.
- Since our last Homeless Strategy was produced the Housing Benefit caseload in the borough has increased by nearly 10%, from 16,820 cases in April 2009 to 18,485 in April 2011 (5,605 private sector cases and 12,880 Housing Association cases).

The chart below shows the wide age range of applicants.



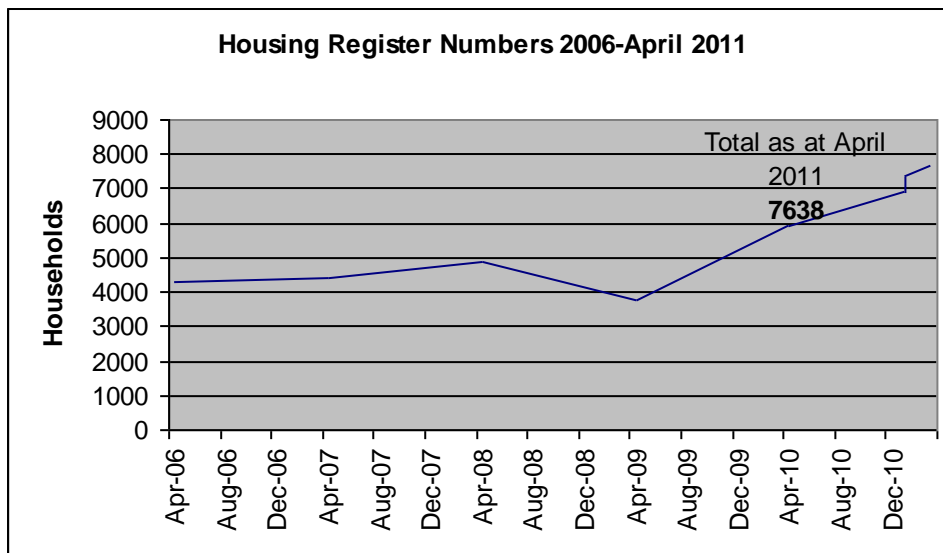
1.4 Social rented housing and the Housing Register

The decline in the number of social rented properties available to let and the inability to purchase a property or rent privately, have all contributed to a rise in the number of households on the Council's Housing Register and the number of households approaching the Council for assistance under the provisions of the homelessness legislation and the increasing numbers requiring placement into temporary accommodation. However, as seen in figure 7 below, the numbers of households in temporary accommodation have declined sharply as the Council has responded to this increased pressure by implementing a variety of preventative measures.

Between March 2008, the year in which our last Homelessness Strategy was produced, and May 2011, the number of households on the Housing Register increased from 4936 to 7638, nearly a 55% increase. This sharp increase is likely to reflect public concerns regarding the affordability and stability of private rented sector housing as well as difficulties in accessing the owner occupied market or maintaining existing mortgages. This is particularly so for low income households who anticipate that they will be unable to sustain their current accommodation for any significant period, or are unable to secure any accommodation, relying on family and friends to assist in the interim.

If housing need was to be met by simply allocating a property to any household that cannot afford to buy or privately rent, the SHMA suggests that 6,337 new social rented units would need to be provided over the next 5 years in the borough or elsewhere.

Figure 5



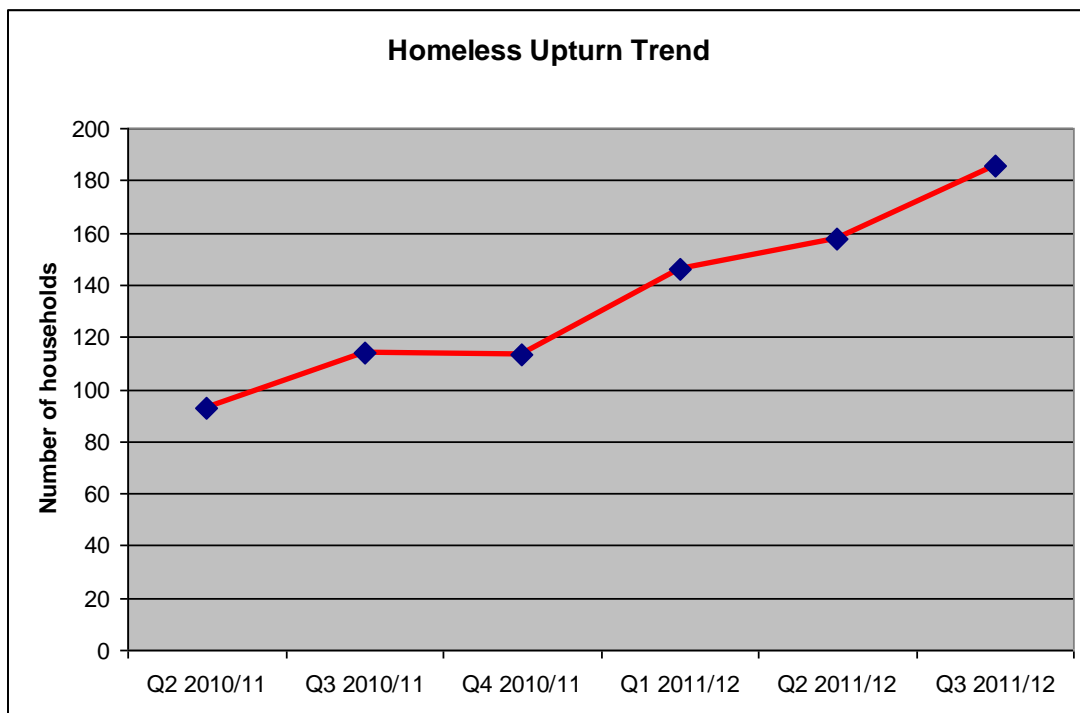
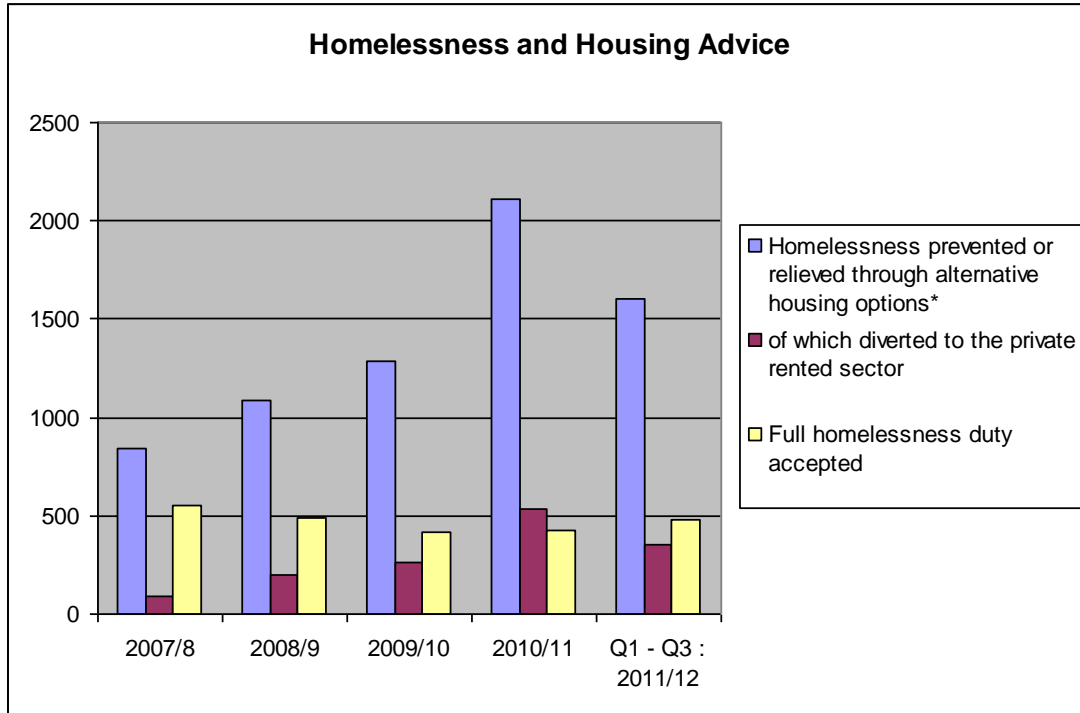
NB. The steep decline from April 2008 and subsequent rise the following year from April 2009 coincided with the introduction of Bromley Homeseekers and the corresponding re registration of all applicants.

1.5 Homeless acceptances

Over the past three years, whilst the number of households presenting at risk of homelessness has increased, the actual number of homeless acceptances have

considerably reduced. Homeless acceptances (once running at 1,000 p.a.) have declined from 551 in 2007/08 to 414 in 2009/10 a reduction of 24.86%. This decline can be attributed to the Council’s success in refocusing resources on homelessness prevention. The Council has developed a range of alternative housing options and solutions for clients; particularly focussing on those that enable clients to gain access to the private rented sector.

Figure 6:



The increased homelessness prevention and housing options work developed through the homelessness strategy has achieved year on year reductions in homelessness acceptances and the use of temporary accommodation. However like all London Boroughs, Bromley is witnessing high and increasing levels of housing need against a marked slowing up across the whole housing market. Overall the above position has resulted in more than 150% increase in the number of households presenting in housing need. This equates to more than a 1,000 additional households faced with actual homelessness and even rough sleeping. The difficulty in accessing accommodation has placed increased pressure on temporary accommodation seeing an increase in use for more than 250 families during the current financial year. This situation, which is being reported across the whole of London and the Southeast, threatens a quick reversal of the successes achieved to date. This strategy therefore focuses on ensuring the provision of tailored responses to best tackle the main causes of homelessness and difficulty in acquiring and accessing accommodation.

1.6 Temporary Accommodation

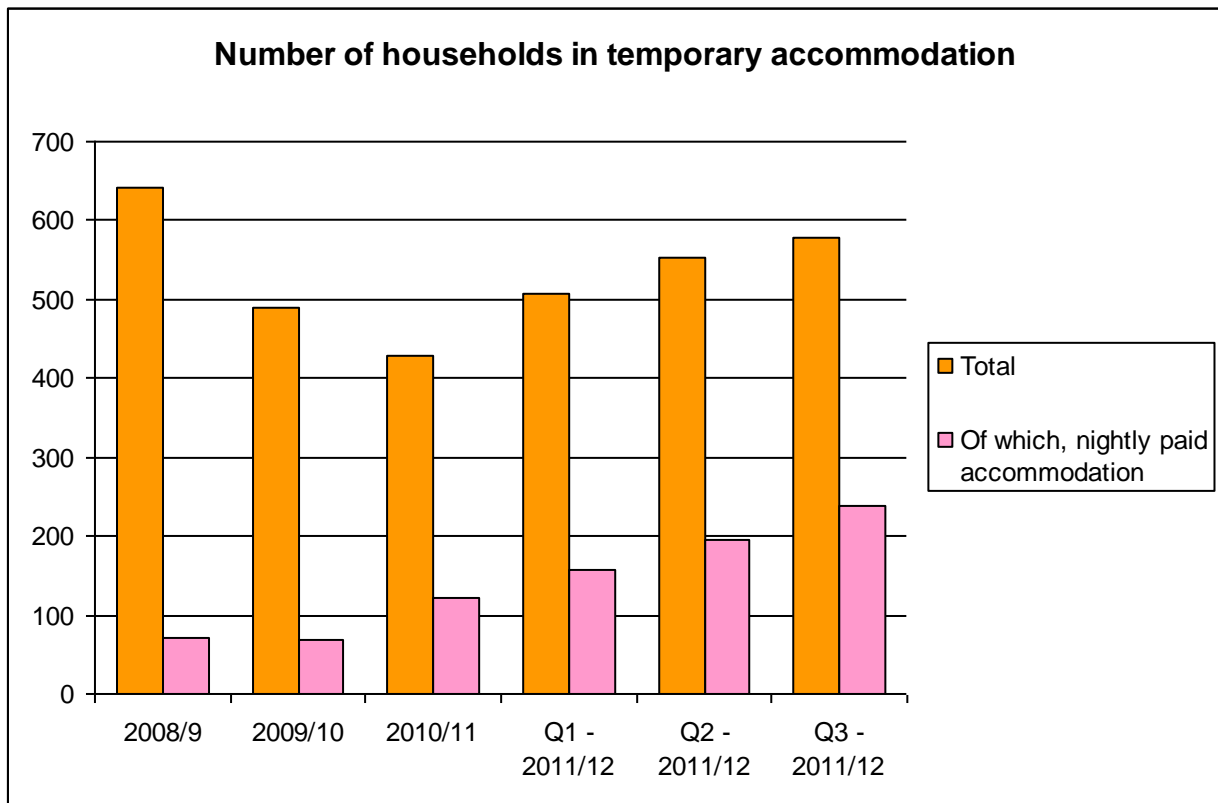
We gave a commitment in our previous Homelessness Strategy to meet the government target to halve the number of households residing in temporary accommodation by 2010 (from 987 in December 2005 to 493 by 2010). Although the number of households in temporary accommodation peaked at over 1000 early in 2006, we exceeded our this target ahead of time, achieving the lowest level of placements in 20 years.

By spring 2011 most London Boroughs, including Bromley, were reporting upward pressures on TA usage and increasing difficulty funding nightly paid and medium term TA. This is resulting on occasions where households have to be placed a significant distance out of the borough which creates a number of challenges and problems for the household.

We will continue to work towards minimising the use of nightly paid accommodation. However, where the use of temporary accommodation is inevitable, we will seek to ensure that the accommodation used is of a good quality and meets the relevant health and safety standards. We will seek to ensure that a balanced portfolio of temporary accommodation to meet current and projected need is available predominantly through our Housing Association and Private Sector Leasing schemes and that an effective supply and demand model is in place to assess future demand.

A key priority is ensuring that we continue to meet the needs of vulnerable clients, ensuring that appropriate accommodation and support is provided.

Figure 7:



1.7 Links to other local and regional strategies

- **LB Bromley's Draft Housing Strategy 2011/16**
The Council's overarching Housing Strategy which sets out the key priorities for the Housing and Residential Services Division.
- **Temporary Accommodation Reduction Strategy and Action Plan: 2006-10,**
To reduce the number homeless people or who are in Temporary Accommodation by preventative policies.
- **Empty Property Strategy 2009-11**
Sets out how the Council and its partners will be working collaboratively to bring long term empty properties back into use in order to make best use of the housing stock within the Borough.
- [Building a Better Bromley \(Sustainable Community Strategy 2009\)](#)
The Council's shared long term vision for improving quality of life in the borough.
- **Bromley Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 (and Review of the Five Year Supporting People Strategy (2008))**
- **LB Bromley's Homes and Communities Agency Borough Investment Plan (2011)**

- [Independence and Choice for Older People in Bromley: Older People Strategy 2008-2013](#)
- [The London Housing Strategy \(Greater London Authority, February 2010\).](#)
- [The Strategy of the South East London Housing Partnership 2010-14](#)

2 Housing advice and homeless prevention

Our objective: The prevention of homelessness through accessible and innovative services, giving effective, timely housing advice and support to enable people to maintain their accommodation.

We will:

- Minimise the use of temporary accommodation and meet our target not to exceed 390 placements in 2011/12 and 350 in 2012/13.
- Achieve zero use of shared facility Bed & Breakfast accommodation for families and young people under the age of 18, except in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks.
- Continue to maximise the number of households assisted to remain in their accommodation by delivering a range of homeless prevention tools: Homelessness prevented/delayed in at least 60% of approaches.
- Seek to minimise the level of repeat homelessness through effective advice and support to enable customers to sustain accommodation: Repeat homelessness not to exceed 3%.
- Ensure the effective use of mortgage rescue and possession prevention initiatives to minimise the level of homelessness arising due to rent or mortgage arrears.
- Ensure that services are delivered in a timely and accessible way, including outreach surgeries, home visiting, triage and improved customer information on our websites.
- Increase the number of people assisted through housing prevention and option schemes prior to initiating a homeless application.
- Work with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness and assist households to remain in their current accommodation. This includes offering tenancy sustainment support to assist people to remain in the private rented sector accommodation.

- **Extend the supported lodgings scheme for young people as an accommodation pathway in order to prevent homelessness.**
- **Make best use of the Discretionary Hardship Fund in order to target homelessness prevention.**
- **Review on-line and other information sources and self help mechanisms to reduce avoidable contact and approaches to the service.**

2.1 Summary

We have implemented a range of effective and targeted prevention measures and early interventions are in place to deal with all types of homelessness.

As with other London Boroughs, the number of homeless approaches to the Council significantly exceeds the supply of available social rented accommodation. Therefore, the homelessness prevention work undertaken by the Council is central to our overall homeless Strategy. Of particular importance is our early intervention work, promoting early access to housing and other advice services. Working with partner agencies that operate within the borough, we will continue to develop good quality and timely advice and information.

2.2 Housing benefit and welfare reforms

The changes to the Housing Benefit entitlement bring particular concerns and challenges for the Council and some tenants in private rented sector accommodation. For example, from April 2011, the maximum HB entitlement for a household per property size needed was reduced. In Bromley, it is estimated that around 3,500 households receive less Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit as a result. In addition, the amount deducted from C-Tax and HB entitlement for each non dependant has been increased, also from April 2011. This area is a common cause of rent arrears.

It is not clear how this change will ultimately affect tenants but a recent survey carried out by London Councils suggests that, at least in the short-term, the intention of many landlords will be to seek a new tenant rather than reduce rents to reflect the new benefit caps, whilst many prospective and existing tenants may migrate outwards from the more expensive areas of inner London.

Essentially, our homeless prevention work must be geared to pre-empt any worse case scenario of eviction and consequent homelessness. Therefore, we will profile and prioritise those tenants most vulnerable to the changes and target advice and support accordingly. At the same time, we will seek to work closely with landlords to offer advice and support so as to help mitigate any difficulties they may encounter following the various HB reforms that will take place.

From January 2012 HB entitlement for those aged 25-34 was capped at the single room rate. This is estimated to effect over 400 HB recipients with some seeing their HB reduced by over £100 per week.

One potential impact of the changes is the potential for an increase in the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) which will require more work on inspection for compliance with HMO regulations and licensing.

The Council currently supports private sector landlords in a variety of ways, and our Landlords Forum continues to be successful in enabling a dialogue between the Council and private sector landlords operating within the borough. Over the next few years we will seek to strengthen our partnership with private landlords and ensure the Private Sector can continue to provide sustainable housing solutions for our clients.

Additionally, the Council has established a project group in partnership with Housing Associations, Citizens Advice Bureau and Money Advice to track and monitor the impact of Housing Benefit and other welfare reforms on tenants.

We are also working with the local Credit Union to develop a range of options for affordable loans and savings plans to reduce rent arrears and enable tenants to save for deposits.

2.3 Accessibility of advice and outreach provision

Accessible Locations and Delivery

Housing advice in Bromley is provided not only by the Council but also partner agencies such as The Citizens Advice Bureau for which we provide direct funding. Additionally, the Housing and Residential Services Division continues to offer a number of outreach surgeries including those at:

- Connexions
- Youth Offending Team
- Community Mental Health
- Green Parks House (Part of the NHS Foundation Trust's mental health service in Bromley)
- One stop shop- Domestic Violence
- Probation Services

These surgeries provide a number of additional opportunities for residents to access housing advice in locations that are safe and accessible to service users.

Third sector advice agencies have an important role to play in providing advice and information for residents in housing need but there is an awareness that funding issues can impact on the delivery of their services. As part of this strategy, it will be necessary to regularly review the provision of advice and information that is available to clients to ensure satisfactory coverage across the Borough. We will continue to work closely with our third sector partners to ensure a joined up approach is achieved and to target the requirements of specific needs groups. This will include the further development of multi- disciplinary services, outreach work and surgeries, to increase accessibility of housing and homelessness advice and information.

2.4 Accessible information

As demand for our housing and homelessness services continue grow, it is increasingly important that we encourage and support self help.

As well as face to face advice and information, we want to ensure that good quality information is available online. The Housing Service recognises the importance of this source of information and will continue to ensure that information on the Council's website is accessible to service users and that the content is relevant, accurate and regularly updated. In addition the Council will review and update our current suite of leaflets which provide advice and guidance on a range of housing matters.

This, and the triage work mentioned below, was part of a specific piece of work carried out in the second half of 2011 to seek to minimise avoidable contact and promote more self help.

2.5 Triage system- Initial assessments

Not everybody that presents to the Council's Housing Options and Assessments Service requires a full assessment. Many people simply need to be signposted to other related services, or provided with some basic information to facilitate self help. The Initial Assessment reduces waiting times on reception, enables early determination of the type of assistance required, and by minimising avoidable contact enables the service to function effectively.

In cases where it is not necessary to complete a full assessment, other appropriate advice and support is offered, for example information packs are provided to clients to sign post them to other Housing Options.

2.6 Tenancy sustainment

Since the publication of our previous Homelessness Strategy in 2008 we have further developed good practice and innovative ways to deliver crisis intervention in order to maintain households in existing tenancies. These now include providing specialist floating support and tenancy sustainment for vulnerable families. An important part of our work with private sector landlords is ensuring timely interventions are made when problems arise. Vulnerable households particularly can be more prone to eviction through rent arrears. Consequently, we now provide visiting support to vulnerable families in the private rented sector threatened with losing their tenancies. We have also increased homelessness prevention awareness and intervention work with partner agencies.

2.7 Tackling disrepair

Improving the quality of accommodation within the private rented sector is a key part of our approach to preventing homelessness. It is important that we continue to work with private sector landlords and tenants to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each are understood to maintain tenancies and thus prevent homelessness. This will also reduce the number of enforcement action required on grounds of property condition.

The Council will continue to investigate and take appropriate action in cases of disrepair, overcrowding and unsatisfactory conditions in rented housing. We will also continue to take robust action in all cases of harassment and illegal eviction and continue to find and license Houses in Multiple Occupation and ensure their safety and standards.

2.8 Overcrowding

An important part of our advice and assistance work to avoid homelessness is working with severely overcrowded households through a range of schemes to assist in move-on or seeking to minimise the impact of overcrowding. For example, this includes advice around options to mitigate the impact of overcrowding, undertaking of minor works to resolve difficulties, through to signposting households to Housing Association schemes to assist with the provision of move on accommodation for adult children.

We will also continue to work with our Housing Association partners to identify new ways to assist tenants to pursue mutual exchange or chain move options to relieve levels of overcrowding. Given the new capital funding regime for future Housing Association development makes building 4 and 5 bed housing very difficult, this is going to be an increasingly problematic area of work.

2.9 Affordability, money and debt advice

Debt and financial exclusion is a common problem for people who approach the Council's housing service.

The recent recession and economic downturn has inevitably had an impact on credit and mortgage problems resulting in an increase in homelessness approaches. Low income households have been the most vulnerable as well as first time buyers, those with 100 per cent or sub-prime mortgages and those coming off fixed-rate mortgages. Many approaches are from people with a second loan, secured against their home, where the second lender is pursuing repossession- often for a small debt on a small loan when compared to the value of the property. The Council has undertaken a variety of initiatives to address these problems including:

- Commissioning a dedicated money advice surgery through Blackfriars Money Advice which has, to date assisted more than 160 households address their financial situation.
- Appointing a dedicated Mortgage Rescue officer to ensure full use is made of the national mortgage rescue scheme and to assist in developing additional effective local schemes and solutions.
- Development of a local Bromley-specific Mortgage Rescue Scheme to assist a small number of vulnerable households who may not be eligible for other prevention initiatives.

Current trend data shows that affordability and associated financial difficulties are likely to continue to be key contributing factors of homelessness in forthcoming years. Therefore, we will continue to review the effectiveness of the services we provide for people who are threatened with homelessness as a result of rent or mortgage difficulties and we are committed to ensuring that a suitable level of financial and debt management advice is available to assist such households.

For example, we have increased the level of funding available for homeless prevention as a result of rent or mortgage difficulties and we are currently recruiting a further officer to sit alongside the existing Mortgage Rescue Officer to specialise in assisting private rented sector tenants at risk of losing their accommodation as a result of rent arrears, particularly arising from the forthcoming changes to housing benefit.

We are also working with the Credit Union to develop a range of schemes to assist households to afford accommodation through the provision of loans and small savings plans to better protect them against future risks of homelessness.

Both these temporary officers and the resources they use along with the services of Blackfriars are, like most of our initiatives, funded through central government grant. This funding is therefore crucial to our successes and all our services and options will need to be reviewed depending on future levels of funding.

3 Housing options and access to housing

Our objective: To improve the access, availability and quality of housing across all tenures and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

We will:

- **Seek to reduce the use of nightly paid accommodation as far as possible, unless required in the short term as an emergency housing solution, and then no more than a maximum of 6 weeks.**
- **Work with landlords, letting agents and other housing providers to maximise access to the private rented sector/ alternative options.**
- **Through our Allocations Scheme ensure best use of available social housing stock to prevent homelessness and meet the highest levels of housing need.**
- **Ensure an adequate and suitable supply of temporary accommodation is available to meet need.**
- **Research and report on potential risks and benefits of developing a Social Lettings Agency.**
- **Manage expectations, meet housing need in situ wherever possible and promote self help and personal responsibility.**

3.1 Summary

We will never be able to meet all of the need for affordable housing in the borough. The supply for lettings of new and existing affordable housing stock has reduced significantly and is unlikely to increase in the short or medium term. While we will continue to work with Housing Associations and developers to deliver new affordable homes, alongside this we must continue to manage the expectations of other customers and ensure that we maximise access and availability and ensure that we maximise access and availability, not only to social rented accommodation but to other housing options also. This approach will continue to be at the forefront of our objective to meet housing need, prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

3.2 Promoting available housing options

Central to providing housing solutions and meeting housing need will be our ongoing commitment to promote a range of housing options to customers.

Advice on housing options continues to be provided even for those households to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted. Home visiting has reduced significantly the number of households and time spent in temporary accommodation. It has proven to be a successful approach, allowing for a review of household circumstances and options available. As such, this is now an established part of the initial housing options and homeless prevention and assessment process.

3.3 Working with the private rented sector

In recent years, there has been a growth in the size of the private rented sector which now accounts for around 13% of the housing market across the borough. The Private Rented Sector is increasingly important as a source of accommodation for homeless households and those in housing need. In fact, for many, this is the only realistic option especially in meeting their housing need within a reasonable timeframe.

Since 2003, the Council has assisted an increasing number of homeless households to access accommodation in the private rented sector both as a homelessness prevention route and also as a qualifying tenancy offer for households accepted as homeless to bring the Local Authority's statutory homelessness duty to an end.

The recent government consultation on social housing reform in England (Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing) stated the intention to *'legislate to give local authorities greater flexibility in bringing the homelessness duty to an end with offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant's agreement'*. Given the shortfall of social rented housing provision within the Borough, the Council would welcome the flexibility provided by a change in the current homelessness legislation to this effect.

The Council is committed to increasing access to privately rented accommodation. We will work flexibly and responsively with the Private Sector to ensure that our services meet the needs of landlords operating within the Borough and also attract new landlords to work with the service. We will continue to deliver and develop a range of flexible schemes to increase access to the Private Rented Sector.

The Council will seek to strengthen the work that we currently undertake to build relationships and trust with Private Sector landlords to increase the supply of rental properties and landlords prepared to take direct referrals or referrals through the Deposit Guarantee scheme. Our partnership work with landlords will also continue to be important in assisting households to remain in private rented sector accommodation. Importantly, we will continue to host the **Landlord's Forum** which provides an opportunity for consultation between the Council and private landlords. As referred to in Section 2 above, of particular importance is how we will work with landlords to manage the proposed changes to Housing Benefit payments and other welfare reforms that will impact upon their tenants. Our Strategy will include the development of a comprehensive package of support, advice and assistance that will seek to offset any concerns landlords may have in renting properties to homeless households and people in receipt of welfare benefits.

We believe that the London Borough of Bromley is in a position to offer a package of support and services that will be beneficial to landlords who work in partnership with us. The Council commits to offer advice and assistance, floating support, quick lettings and better liaison with the Housing Benefit service to assist landlords that choose to work with us. Further, where Landlords will charge a rent at or below the new HB caps, the landlord will be able to name the H.B. paid directly to them.

The South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) has an important role to play in engaging landlords on a sub-regional basis. The SELHP currently holds annual Landlord Conferences, which have a very large attendance, targeting estate agents and landlords with portfolios of properties which may span across neighbouring boroughs. There is also a cross Borough working group designed to share good practice and jointly explore all options to maximise access to the Private Sector. This group aims to develop a professional Letting Service for landlords and tenants that will offer a viable and credible alternative to local letting agents.

3.4 Making better use of existing stock

Given the deficit between the need for and supply of affordable housing, it is essential that we make the best use possible of existing affordable housing stock in the borough. One of the ways we can do this is by addressing overcrowding and under occupation. In common with other London Boroughs, the London Borough of Bromley experiences significant levels of overcrowding and under occupation within the social rented housing stock.

The Council is addressing these issues in a number of ways:

- **LB Bromley Under Occupation Scheme:**

We are working in partnership with local Housing Associations to provide a range of options that incentivise and enable households that are under occupying to move to more suitably sized accommodation and free up larger properties.

- **SELHP Cross Borough Moves:**

We also work the South East London Housing Partnership at a sub regional level to achieve cross borough moves.

- **Social Tenancy Fraud Initiative:**

This initiative continues to play an important in addressing overcrowding. The Council participates in a joint initiative in South East London to tackle social housing fraud. In Bromley, the initial focus has been with Affinity Sutton, the largest social housing provider in the borough. At the end of April 2011, a total of 58 properties through this initiative had been successfully recovered from fraudulent use and a number of others are in the pipeline with a number of prosecutions already in progress.

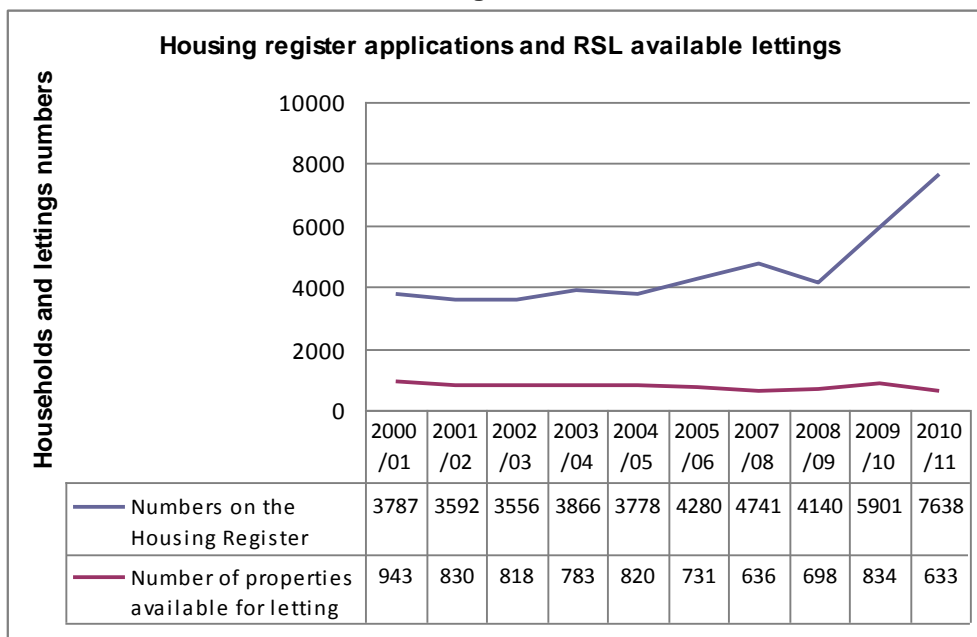
In 2011/12 the Council has worked with Affinity Sutton to share their practice with other Housing Associations in Bromley, train their staff and widen the involvement. This also included a check of all TA usage.

- **Empty Properties work:**

Long term empty properties are an important resource in relation to the overall housing supply within the Borough. We work with the community to identify and bring properties back into use and assist in letting them or securing nomination rights, thus directly preventing homelessness by providing an additional housing option. Each year we will aim to bring 30-40 such properties back into use.

3.5 Allocations policy

Figure 9



The gap between Housing Register Applications and Properties available for nomination 2000-2010.

In September 2008 the Council implemented Bromley Homeseekers, a Choice Based Lettings service. This makes public the details of all properties available to the local authority to nominate to. The system allows those on the Housing Register to view all available accommodation and to bid on the properties that they meet the criteria for. This enables the Council to offer increased choice and mobility.

Bromley Homeseekers allows customers greater access to information regarding each property that is let and assists them to make realistic choices about the properties that they bid on. It also enables customers to decide whether or not to pursue a move into social housing at all or to look at other housing options that will meet their housing needs and preferences.

However the service was introduced at a time of both financial and economic crisis and as a result we have experienced a steep increase in the number of households approaching to join the Housing Register. From an average of 30 applications per week in 2008 this has increased to around 125 applications per week in 2011. Subsequently, the number of households included on the Housing Register has increased steadily from under 4000 in 2001 to well over 7000 in 2011. The availability of lettings does fall considerably short of this demand. From 2007 to 2010 between 633 and 834 properties were let annually, therefore thousands of households accepted onto the Housing Register have failed to secure a move into social housing. In most instances only those that achieve a high priority on the Housing Register are able to secure accommodation and, even then, many of them will have waited a number of years to do so.

In light of the above we are making a number of changes to the Allocation Scheme. Principally these changes are being made to address the following key issues:

- **The mismatch between the demand for, and availability of, social housing lettings:** We will reduce the number of households included on the Housing Register to include those that have a need in accordance with the local and reasonable preference categories, as outlined in the Allocation Scheme.
- **The need to assist the process of homeless prevention:** We will encourage clients to resolve their own housing issues where possible as opposed to relying on a housing register solution.
- **Making better use of stock:** We will focus on clients who are most in need of social housing.

A copy of the full allocation scheme and scheme summary can be found at [Draft Allocation Scheme Summary 2011](#)

In order to maximise the availability of properties that can be accessed by people in housing need, we are working with Housing Associations with stock in the Borough to encourage them to open up their property registers to Bromley Homeseekers. Linked to this the Council is in the early stages of rolling out the common housing Register to all of the key Housing Associations operating in the borough.

4 Supporting vulnerable people

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

We will:

- **Continue to operate specialist surgeries for vulnerable people to maximise the effectiveness of homeless prevention work.**
- **Offer a dedicated support and resettlement service to enable vulnerable people to access and maintain accommodation.**
- **Embed the one stop approach for young people to offer a comprehensive service in order to address housing difficulties and provide support to develop independent living skills.**
- **Operate quota queues to directly assist in preventing homelessness for vulnerable people including those leaving care, people with learning disabilities.**
- **Participate in the ‘no second night’ out pilot aimed at reducing the level of rough sleeping to as near zero as possible.**
- **Offer a comprehensive support and intervention service to minimise the risk of future tenancy breakdown resulting in homelessness, hospital readmission and so on.**
- **Explore the potential to extend the winter shelter provision beyond just the winter period.**

- **Continue to ensure that adequate support services and provision are provided to all victims of domestic violence.**
- **Continue to ensure Resettlement programmes for ex offenders are in place that link housing, health and support services on prison discharge to prevent re-offending and repeat homelessness.**
- **Continue to provide supported housing with specialist programmes to assist in the rehabilitation of clients with drug and alcohol misuse problems.**

4.1 Summary

For many people who become homeless the provision of suitable accommodation is the only problem that needs to be addressed. However, many people can become homeless or threatened by homelessness because of a specific support need. For example, this can be related to a mental or physical disability or a particular circumstance such as domestic violence, a past history of offending behaviour or issues concerning drug and alcohol misuse. By properly identifying support needs, we can limit the number of people who become homeless by providing targeted, specialist support.

Our Strategy for providing support for the vulnerable homeless is closely linked to the borough's **Supporting People Strategy**. Supporting People services are offered through a number of housing support providers and are an essential resource in the prevention of homelessness in Bromley.

4.2 L.B.B. Support and Resettlement

The role of the Support and Resettlement Team is pivotal in our preventative approach to tackling homelessness. The Support and Resettlement Team was set up to assist homeless people through any emergency or temporary rehousing to a settled and sustainable housing solution. They offer floating support and brokerage to ensure that clients successfully move into their new home and have the skills and any long term support required to live independently and sustain their accommodation.

The team delivers tailored advice and preventative support for clients with specific support needs. For example, by preventing delayed discharge from hospital and readmissions. Importantly, the team is able to plan effective move-on through supported to independent living across housing sectors. For those who are unable to live fully independent lives, referrals can be made to supported housing schemes via the Support and Resettlement Team. A key to accessing support is via the mental health and substance misuse panels. This form of support and transition has also been critical in preventing repeat homelessness which can be common amongst such people.

Support and Resettlement Team: Housing Surgeries

To ensure that the housing service is meeting the needs of vulnerable people within the community, the supported housing options and assessment officer conducts a housing surgery at all of the three community mental health facilities, The Bassets House, Bromley Mind and Green Parks House Psychiatric hospital. This role is pivotal in promoting

effective joint working and in ensuring that the housing needs of vulnerable people are met in a timely, effective and efficient manner within cost constraints.

4.3 Specific support needs

Mental Health

Our approach to supporting people with mental health problems is set out in our report **'Housing and Support for Adults with Mental Health Needs in Bromley' (January 2008)**. The focus of this work is now on tenancy support. Floating support is tailored to the individual's needs with the flexibility of decreasing or increasing the support as and when required. Our work with mental health clients has been strengthened by seconding a support and resettlement worker to the Assertive Community Treatment team and Mental Health panel. The worker provides advice and support around housing options and assessment, benefit entitlements and any other issues connected with housing.

People with learning disabilities

The Housing Service assists people to move on from residential care into supported living schemes or other alternative accommodation. The Council has also been successful in delivering new affordable homes for this client group. Since we produced our previous Homelessness Strategy, the Housing Service has successfully delivered 29 new homes for people with Learning Disabilities. As of March 2011, there are also a further 20 units onsite and up to 18 new units in the development pipeline, as well as offering move on opportunities into existing accommodation.

People with physical and sensory impairments

In conjunction with housing associations we are also currently developing an accessible housing register within Bromley Homeseekers. This captures more accurate information about adapted or potentially adaptable social rented properties and categorises them against level of adaptations to make better use of this stock and reduce waiting times. This will minimise the risk of homelessness through unsuitable accommodation or delayed discharge.

We also approve approximately 140 Disabled Facilities Grant funded works a year to enable disabled people to continue to live independently in their own homes. Additionally the Handy Person scheme assists households to remain in their own property by undertaking minor repairs to the homes of disabled and older people.

4.4 Rough sleepers

Numbers of rough sleepers in the Borough have been historically low relative to most other London Boroughs although recent signs show an increase in the borough. However, there is a significant risk of increased Rough Sleeping as a result of the current economic climate and particularly the significant changes to Housing Benefit entitlement to singles aged 25 to 34. This can be witnessed by the fact that this year's winter shelter in central Bromley operated at full capacity on the majority of nights. Additionally, low numbers of visible rough sleepers masks the higher number of single non priority 'sofa surfers' or hidden homeless. Bromley is committed to responding to this in a number of ways:

Thames Reach's London Street Rescue service is currently the street outreach team that works with people sleeping rough in Bromley. They provide advice, practical support and

referrals into hostels and other support services. Furthermore, our participation in the Mayor of London's 'No Second Night Out' pilot is integral to our strategy to eradicate rough sleeping. We have recently agreed a protocol to assist in delivering this initiative; offering assistance in securing beds for verified local rough sleepers to enable initial assessment and rehousing plans to be put in place by Thames Reach.

The Council also works in partnership with the Bromley Churches Homelessness Project to provide an annual winter weather shelter, together with ongoing identification and support to any rough sleepers in order to assist them to break the cycle of rough sleeping and secure accommodation. As part of the service, the Housing Options and Assessment Team provide housing advice Surgeries at the shelters to offer tailored advice and assist in planning move-on pathways from the shelter. The aspiration of the Council is to extend the shelter provision beyond just the winter period. In addition, a quota queue has been set up within the Council's Lettings Plan to facilitate move-on to ensure ongoing availability in support schemes, together with funding for floating support and access to private sector accommodation for verified rough sleepers.

Furthermore, we have contributed to the development of a Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan in the South East London sub-region including a number of joint initiatives such as the operation of a Private Rented Sector scheme for helping Rough Sleepers into Private Rented Sector Accommodation. Details of sub-regional work on rough sleeping can be found on the [SELHP website](#).

4.5 Homelessness and domestic violence

A significant number of people become homeless as a result of domestic violence. Most but not all victims are women and are frequently accompanied by children. The **Domestic Violence Forum** in Bromley is a cross sector collaboration which includes Bromley Women's Aid, Community Safety Partnership, the Metropolitan Police, Housing Associations and the Council. The Forum aims to reduce and prevent domestic violence; ensuring adequate support services and provision are provided to all victims of domestic violence. A key aspect of this work is to ensure that victims of violence are supported to either remain safely within their home or to be able to move quickly to a safe location and rebuild their lives. Our support schemes and homelessness prevention work provides a number of options to assist people experiencing violence. This work includes:

- Domestic Violence One Stop Shop: offering free confidential support and advice across a range of issues including housing and legal advice, emotional and medical advice and support to those experiencing domestic violence.
- Sanctuary Scheme: offering options such as additional security or a safe room to allow a victim of violence to remain in their home.
- Housing Association protocols to facilitate emergency transfer moves for their tenants rather than the tenant having to go the via the homeless and TA route.
- Assistance to access women's refuges and national women's aid support lines, including a dedicated officer who specialises in the provision of expert and sensitive advice in a safe environment
- Participation in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to offer specialist housing knowledge and options for those most serious cases requiring multi-disciplinary input.

The five boroughs in the South East London Housing Partnership have also developed a Domestic Violence Protocol with the Housing Associations to help ensure better outcomes for victims of domestic violence and their households.

4.6 Ex offenders

Ex offenders leaving prison who are homeless are much more likely to reoffend. In 2007, Bromley appointed a Housing Aid Advice Worker (HAWK) in response to a very substantial gap in services that had been identified between Housing Services and ex offenders being released from prison. The HAWK worker provides a vital link to bridge the gap between the Council's Housing Service and the Probation Service, managing the housing needs of ex-offenders upon release.

Resettlement programmes for ex-offender's link housing, health and support services on prison discharge and all are vital to prevent repeat homelessness and re-offending.

The Housing Service assists ex-offenders to find settled accommodation by providing up to 20 rent deposits a year to enable access to an agreed number of private rented properties each year. Additionally up to 12 independent dispersed supported units are provided and 10 rooms for single non priority homeless ex offenders by Housing Association partners. When assessment demonstrates that clients are ready to move on, each of the tenants placed have access to the Housing Register to ensure move on.

4.7 Drug and alcohol misuse

Sustaining tenancies can be challenging for people who suffer with drug and alcohol misuse. Supported housing with specialist programmes are often essential in assisting in the rehabilitation of this group. The Support and Resettlement Team works in partnership with the Bromley Community Drug Project (BCDP). Partnership meetings at Green Parks House psychiatric hospital take place to discuss the partnership arrangements for sustaining tenancies and prevent duplication promoting a joined up, holistic approach. A quota queue arrangement exists to assist in securing long term housing solutions for clients in this category.

4.8 Youth homelessness

As with homelessness generally, prevention and early intervention is key in tackling homelessness amongst young people. Eviction from the family home or being required to leave a friend's home is the single main cause of youth homelessness and, therefore, mediation in family disputes and providing parenting support is a key preventative action taken by the Housing Service. The work the Council undertakes to educate and inform young people about the difficulties they are likely to face when leaving home before they are ready is also increasingly important.

Support & advice

The Support and Resettlement Young Person's Team provides a specialised homelessness prevention and housing service for young people with housing problems. This includes work to reconcile a young person back into the family home through to planned rehousing pathways such as supported hostel placements through a Housing Association, or a supported placement with a host family. The team works closely with partner agencies such as Connexions, LATCH, Leaving Care and the Youth Offending Team.

In all cases, where a 16 and 17 year old presents to the Council as homeless, in the first instance a resolution is sought between the young person and the parent or guardian. The Council refers young people to the South East London Mediation Service who can assist in this process. Although it is not always possible to achieve full reconciliation the process can ensure that a relationship is at least maintained between the parties and will help a young person's future progress. The Council has also now secured funding to pilot a dedicated mediation post to increase the level of reconciliation work with families.

A House of Lords Judgement in May 2009 significantly changed how Local Authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16 and 17 year olds. The case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark was a landmark decision which determined that the primary duty to a homeless 16 or 17 year old would normally be under the Children Act. In Bromley a Social Worker specialist placed within the Resettlement team enables joint assessments of young people under both the Children's and Homelessness Acts, providing a joined up first point of contact for young people and has been successful in homeless prevention.

Specialist accommodation

We currently work with providers that offer a number of Supported Housing options for young people with varying levels of support. The Council does not use Bed and Breakfast accommodation to accommodate young people and move on options are limited, therefore the service takes care to manage voids effectively and ensure appropriate turnover times.

The Council currently use LATCH host placements (supported lodgings) for young people and also operate a Safepad scheme offering initial short term supported lodgings for immediately homeless young people to enable either reconciliation back to the family home, or provide time for planned move-on

Placements for young people take in to consideration the needs of the young person to ensure that the choice of housing is appropriate and sustainable. For many young people in housing need, supported lodgings are an essential part of the progression towards independent living.

There is still an aim to develop a foyer scheme but current capital funding rules and revenue pressures-along with funding a suitable site- makes this difficult to achieve.

4.9 Older people

It is important that we maintain the supply of and access to accommodation designed for older people. In line with the Sustainable Communities Strategy aim of promoting choice and supporting independence for older people and vulnerable adults, over the past 2-3 years, the Council and its partners have worked hard to secure and deliver a range of affordable housing options for older people, particularly by delivering three new extra care housing schemes being built between 2009-2012.

4.10 Black and minority ethnic communities

Homelessness amongst black and minority ethnic (BME) communities is disproportionately high both in the Borough and at a national level. Our equalities monitoring does not reveal any particular causes of homelessness amongst BME groups. Our housing options services are designed to ensure access to BME groups and our monitoring information indicates that BME groups are not under represented proportionally in available options.

The Council will continue to monitor equalities data to ensure equal access to services continues to be maintained. We will develop a strategic approach to monitoring and using monitoring data to tailor advice.

The Council has a Gypsy and Traveller officer to work with traveller communities within the Borough and to manage the sites owned by the Council.

5 Working in partnership to tackle the wider causes of homelessness

***Our objective:* Raising aspirations, tackling social exclusion and promoting independence.**

We will:

- **Further develop our strategic links and partnering arrangements with key stakeholders to deliver holistic services for clients**
- **Continue to work closely within South East London Housing Partnership to maximise the resources for homeless prevention in the borough and improve efficiencies.**
- **Work with other departments and agencies to tackle social exclusion.**
- **Support projects in schools that educate young people about the realities of homelessness and equip them with the knowledge and life skills to plan their future housing.**
- **Work to address financial exclusion through debt advice services and support for the Bromley Credit union.**

5.1 Summary

In the first section of this strategy we highlighted the main causes of homelessness in Bromley. In addition there are also wider social problems that contribute to homelessness which need to be addressed. These wider causes can be varied, complex and commonly beyond the scope of one single agency or Council service. We recognise the importance of a holistic approach to tackling homelessness through working in partnership and making the necessary links with other agencies to address the issues that can cause and perpetuate homelessness in the borough.

5.2 Assisting access to employment and training:

Throughout this strategy, we have emphasised the need to encourage and enable our customers to help themselves in meeting their housing requirements. Worklessness is a common contributory factor in causing and perpetuating homelessness. For many people, the long term sustainability of settled accommodation will only be achieved by simultaneously tackling issues related to worklessness and providing access to employment and training. We aim to support people who are homeless or in housing need to increase their opportunities to access employment and training opportunities.

Our Housing Association partners play a key role in helping us to tackle worklessness and deliver a range of actions in this respect. For example; the 'Stepping Up' scheme, run by Affinity Sutton supports members of homeless families to access training and employment opportunities. It provides support, information, advice and guidance to suit the needs of the individual to develop skills and access to training courses or employment.

We will continue to develop the link between the Council's Housing Needs Service and advice and support around employment and training. This will include building on existing links with local advice agencies in this area. We will also monitor outcomes and evaluate which strategies and interventions are most successful in reducing worklessness amongst homeless clients.

We are also seeking to address worklessness more systematically through the retendering of our Supporting People contracts for floating support in first stage accommodation for young people. Future contractors will have contacts with employers, as a key focus of the floating support service will be to work with young people to help them achieve training, apprenticeships or employment opportunities.

The service will also be focused on looking at the wider risks to homelessness and successful tenancy sustainment, the latter which has been an integral part of floating support provided at a mother and baby unit within the Borough.

5.3 Working with the Sub Region: The South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP):

As public funding becomes increasingly scarce, the efficiencies that can be gained by working in partnership within the Sub Region are likely to become of increasing value. The Council will continue to work closely within SELHP to maximise the resources available to prevent homelessness.

The SELHP Homelessness Group is responsible for coordinating a variety of homeless prevention initiatives across the sub region. We will continue to work with SELHP to explore all options for joint working, sharing of good practice and achieving consistent standards. Of particular importance are the following key actions:

- Peer education in schools on homelessness awareness and prevention.
- The development and delivery of an annual housing association homelessness prevention action plan. The objectives of the plan include include;
 - I. Improving the service for Housing Association tenants suffering domestic abuse
 - II. Enhancing financial inclusion policies through promotion of debt advice and access to affordable credit
 - III. Improving information sharing between housing associations and support providers
- Best practice guides, such as *'Think! Before You Leave Home'* targeted at young people.
- Seeking to commission life skills training to prevent tenancy breakdown. .

5.4 Working with Housing Associations:

We will also be further developing our relationship with Housing Associations and particularly the largest stockholders (in the G15 group) as part of their homelessness pledge to prevent homelessness by developing effective preventative housing management

practices, especially in relation to the Sanctuary scheme (Domestic violence), anti-social behaviour and rent arrears.

5.5 Working in Partnership across all agencies

Not all homeless people need support other than finding secure accommodation, however many homeless people do require additional support of one kind or another, particularly vulnerable groups as already highlighted. For this reason it is important that the council works across a range of agencies to assist clients to get the support, advice and necessary skills to prevent them becoming homeless.

Health is a key area where partnership working is essential. Particularly important is ensuring that hospitals are included in care plans. The Council will continue to work with hospitals to ensure that admission and discharge procedures identify homeless people so that the relevant health and homelessness agencies are informed in good time prior to discharge.

It is important that the Housing Needs service continues to develop partnerships with a wide range of agencies and organisations in the statutory, voluntary and private sector to ensure that the support which is needed is provided. In the past Community groups and organisations such as local churches have made an invaluable contribution. Going forward the Council will work to build on these partnerships to ensure that a range of agencies are engaged in tackling homelessness and are an integral part in our strategic approach to tackling homelessness in Bromley.

6 Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

HOUSING ADVICE & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION: The prevention of homelessness through accessible and innovative services, giving effective, timely housing advice and support to enable people to maintain their accommodation.				
Commitment	Action/Milestones	Outcome: Target	Lead	Target Date
<p>Fulfil the LBB statutory duties in relation to homelessness and the provision of advice & assistance to prevent or delay homelessness wherever possible drawing on & effectively using the full range of prevention and housing option initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to maximise the number of households assisted to remain in their accommodation by delivering the range of homeless prevention tools • Ensure the effective use of the mortgage & rent arrears prevention schemes. Continue to promote & deliver the range of initiatives offered to assist customers facing mortgage or rent arrears difficulties including; full take up of the money advice service, promotion of the MRS schemes and possession prevention funds. • Maintain levels of home visiting to improve the robustness of housing assessment & assist in achieving the targets relating to homelessness prevented & delayed. • Develop early intervention work to promote early access to housing and other advice services to increase the number of people assisted through homeless prevention & housing option schemes. • Ensure that services are delivered in a timely and accessible way, including outreach surgeries, home visiting, triage and improved customer information on our website. • Make best use of the Discretionary 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness acceptances and associated placements into emergency & temporary accommodation</p> <p>Homelessness prevented/delayed in at least 60% of approaches. (at least 1000 per year households assisted in line with TA reduction plan)</p> <p>100% of housing advice surgeries attended to offer immediate advice & assistance</p> <p>Repeat homelessness minimised – not to exceed 3%</p>	<p>LBB Housing Options & Advice</p>	<p>On going throughout the life of the strategy – annual targets to be reviewed.</p>

	<p>Hardship Fund targeting homelessness prevention Obtain flexibility in the use of homelessness prevention funds to resolve or prevent homelessness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and embed homeless prevention funding schemes with the credit union to assist in preventing homelessness as a result of rent arrears and insufficient funds to access alternative housing options. 			
<p>Target Residential Services Activity to worst cases of poor private rented property conditions and HMOs to prevent homelessness and improve housing conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue investigate and resolve service requests relating to housing disrepair, overcrowding and unsatisfactory conditions in rented housing. • Take robust action in all cases of harassment and illegal eviction. • Continue to register HMOs and ensure their safety and standards 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness from prs due to disrepair.</p> <p>No of cases assisted with advice, signposting and direct intervention where appropriate.</p>	<p>Housing enforcement</p>	<p>On going throughout the life of the strategy – annual targets to be reviewed.</p>
<p>Work with landlords to ameliorate and offer a range of schemes to meet their concerns about the HB changes to improve access and sustainability of accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue partner briefings to promote early intervention • Seek to identify and work with households and individuals whom will have the biggest reductions in their HB following welfare reforms. • Undertake analysis of impact of welfare reform changes, identifying those most at risk and offering dedicated advice and support service to prevent homelessness 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness as a result of LHA changes – at least 60% assisted to remain in accommodation or assisted to access alternative housing options.</p>	<p>Options & Assessment</p>	<p>Working continuing throughout welfare reform changes up to 2014</p>

HOUSING OPTIONS & ACCESS TO HOUSING: To improve the access, availability and quality of housing across all tenures and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Commitment	Action/Milestones	Target: Outcome	Lead	Target Date
<p>Work with landlords, letting agents and other housing providers to maximise access to the private rented sector/ alternative options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continue to work in partnership with private rented sector (PRS). Landlords to assist households to remain in or access privately rented accommodation and maintain levels households assisted into the private sector. •SE commissioning of private sector access scheme for single homeless •Further build links with private landlords to increase supply of leased properties and landlords prepared to take direct referrals or referrals through the Deposit Guarantee scheme and to assist households to remain in PRS accommodation. •Review of incentive schemes in liaison with landlords to maximise take up of schemes to access prs accommodation •Maximise number of placements secured as prevention or discharge of accommodation. 	<p>Reduce the use of nightly paid accommodation as far as possible, unless required in the short term as an emergency housing solution. Increasing access to prs – target 300 assisted per year.</p>	<p>Housing Solutions /Housing initiatives and temporary accommodation teams</p>	<p>2012 -2014</p>
<p>Ensure an adequate supply of suitable temporary accommodation is available to meet need and minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Embed the new leasing scheme contract to achieve target acquisitions. •Continue to explore options for commissioning cost effective forms of temporary accommodation to minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation, including potential use of existing empty stock, former 	<p>Zero use of shared nightly paid accommodation for families unless in an emergency & then for not more than 6 weeks. Minimise number of moves between temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Housing solutions/Temporary accommodation</p>	<p>On going throughout life of the strategy. Annual targets to be reviewed</p>

	<p>PCT & residential units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to undertake a programme of visit to all clients in temporary accommodation to maximise through flow through active bidding and pursual of alternative housing options. • Embed the private sector leasing scheme contract to ensure effective acquisition and operation in line with the SLA. • Work with housing association leasing scheme providers to ensure adequate supply, management and acquisition of temporary accommodation. 			
<p>Through our Allocations Scheme ensure best use of available social housing stock to prevent homelessness and meet the highest levels of housing need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the new allocations scheme and autobanding to better align priority banding numbers to available supply and strengthen the link to maximising homelessness prevention and alternative housing options. • Implement & achieve guideline targets within the lettings plan in relation to homelessness and homelessness prevention. • Continue to work closely with RSLs to maximise assistance in relation to overcrowding & undercupption to minimise homelessness and free up family sized accommodation for newly emerging demand to make best use of stock. • Ensure effective operation of quota queues such as care leavers, learning disabilities to minimise homelessness and ensure effective 	<p>Lettings against letting plan targets</p> <p>Reduced register numbers and increase early intervention</p>	<p>Housing Solutions</p>	<p>Implementation and review 2012</p>

	<p>move-on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate quota queues to directly assist in preventing homelessness for vulnerable people. 			
Maximise the use of Empty properties to address housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the number of empty properties brought back into use and prioritise cases obtaining nomination rights for LBB to provide additional housing options accommodation supply. 	Bring 60 properties back into use per year	Home Improvement	

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE: Support vulnerable people through effective assessment & co-ordinated decision making offering more choice to independent living through suitable housing.

Commitment	Action/Milestones	Target: Outcome	Lead	Target Date
Provision of effective advice, support & tenancy sustainment to assist in move-on for vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to operate specialist housing advice surgeries for vulnerable people to maximise level of early intervention work • Offer S&R service to all vulnerable clients to ensure effective move-on and minimise level of evictions, hospital readmissions etc. • Ensure a comprehensive support & resettlement service to minimise risk of future tenancy breakdown, hospital readmission etc. • Effective operation of the accommodation panels in relation to substance misuse, Mental health etc to ensure best use of accommodation to minimise homelessness • Continue to provide the dedicated housing support 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness acceptances and associated placements into emergency & temporary accommodation</p> <p>Repeat homelessness minimised to less than 3%</p>	S&R	

	<p>worker within the ACT team to minimise the risk of tenancy breakdown for those clients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide supported housing with specialist programmes to assist in the rehabilitation of clients with drug and alcohol misuse problems 			
<p>Seek to minimise the level of homelessness for young people through effective intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed the 1 stop approach for young people to offer a comprehensive service to prevent homelessness, and offer support to address housing difficulties and gain independent living skills. Joint commissioning across SELHP through homelessness grant funding to expand emergency supported lodging scheme for young people Expand the LBB 'safepad' scheme as a move-on pathway to minimise B&B use Review the mediation services offer and pilot in-house mediation & negotiation to minimise homelessness as a result of parental exclusions Ensure successful operation of the sub-regional peer education scheme Offer effective support & resettlement service to prevent homelessness and maximise tenancy sustainment 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness acceptances and associated placements into emergency & temporary accommodation</p> <p>Homelessness prevented/delayed in at least 60% of approaches. (at least 1000 per year households assisted in line with TA reduction plan)</p> <p>Zero use of shared facility nightly paid accommodation for under 18's unless in an emergency and then for not more than 6 weeks</p>	S&R YP	2012/13

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate joint panel for effective use of supported accommodation provision. 			
Prevent rough sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively participate in the no second night out pilot to identify and address incidents of rough sleeping Ensure adequate cold weather provision Explore the potential to extend the winter shelter provision beyond just winter period Make best use of the sub-regional private rented sector scheme to assist former rough sleepers 	Reduce the level of rough sleeping to as near zero as possible.	HMT	Ongoing throughout the life of the strategy annual targets to be reviewed within local action plans
Ensure adequate support and advice for victims of domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work closely with women's refuges to ensure appropriate support and refuge provision. Monitor SELHP DV protocol and maximise the use of reciprocals to assist households feeling violence. Maximise take up of the Sanctuary scheme and review RSL participation to expand the level of support available. Actively participate in the MARAC panel to provide a partnership approach to tackling DV and preventing homelessness. 	Reduced level of homelessness as a result of domestic violence.	HMT	Ongoing throughout the life of the strategy annual targets to be reviewed within local action plans
Ensure appropriate advice	Continue to offer a dedicated	Reduced levels of homelessness	HAWK	Ongoing throughout the life of the strategy

<p>and support to ex-offenders to reduce homelessness and risk of re-offending</p>	<p>advice service via the HAWK worker situated across housing & probation</p> <p>Promote planned housing advice & options assistance prior to release</p> <p>Embed the new contracts for supported accommodation to ensure effective take up and through flow.</p> <p>Ensure take up of the agreed quota queues for RSLs and prs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure Resettlement programmes for ex offenders are in place that link housing, health and support services on prison discharge to prevent repeat homelessness and re-offending 	<p>and loss of tenancy as a result of re-offending.</p>		<p>annual targets to be reviewed within local action plans</p>
---	---	---	--	--

Working in Partnership to tackle the wider causes of homelessness: Raising aspirations, tackling social exclusion and promoting independence.

Commitment	Action/Milestones	Action/Milestones	Lead	Target Date
<p>Further develop our strategic links and partnering arrangements with key stakeholders to deliver holistic services for clients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued operation of the homelessness forum to promote partnership working to prevent homelessness and offer and range of housing solutions • Work with RSLs and Bromley Federation of Housing associations in relation to homelessness prevention and implementation • of the G15 homelessness pledge. • Support projects in schools that educate young people about the realities of homelessness and equip them with the knowledge and life skills to plan their 	<p>Improved co-ordination of services and shared understanding to reduce homelessness.</p>	<p>HMT</p>	<p>Homelessness forum to be reviewed and relaunched during 2012/13 to widen remit to consider comprehensive approach to housing across Bromley.</p>

	<p>future housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to address financial exclusion through debt advice services and support for the Bromley Credit union. • Develop schemes with Credit Union to assist with savings, deposits and arrears with rent. • Further develop our relationship with Housing Associations and particularly the largest stockholders (in the G15 group) as part of their homelessness pledge to prevent homelessness by developing effective preventative housing management practices, especially in relation to the Sanctuary scheme (Domestic violence), Anti Social Behaviour and rent arrears • Work in partnership to promote opportunities & independence for people in housing need by improving access to childcare, health, education, training and employment 			
<p>Continue to work closely within SELHP to maximise the resources of homeless prevention in the borough and improve efficiencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the homelessness & private rented sector action plans including joint commissioning opportunities in relation to single homelessness and rough sleepers. • Active representation of forums to share good practice, agree reciprocal working arrangements and maximise any opportunities for joint funding 	<p>Reduced levels of homelessness prevented or relieved.</p> <p>Increased access to the private rented sector</p>	HofHN	Commissioning to be completed during 2012/13
<p>Customer Contact: Ensure the provision of timely and accessible advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular liaison and consultation with service users to directly feed into future service developments. 	<p>Improved customer satisfaction</p> <p>Increased number fo</p>	HofHN	On-going throughout the life of the strategy with annual targets and reviewed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caller review – seeking to improve on-line and other information sources, promoting self-help and early intervention wherever possible to reduce avoidable contacts and maximise the effectiveness of homelessness prevention and housing option initiatives. • Develop the my-life portal to improve on the information and advice readily available on-line • Ensure all clients assisted into accommodation receive the information pack detailing local services, amenities, access routes etc. 	<p>customers able to access information to affect self help.</p>		
<p>Work in partnership to effectively manage risk in relation to homelessness prevention, sustainability & housing options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active contribution & support of MAPPA work & seek better working co-operation form RSLs to contribute to preventing homelessness, reducing the risk of re-offending and effectively managing risk. • Ensure all staff receive regular training in safeguarding and all protocols are adhered to. 	<p>Reduced repeat homelessness Reduced loss of tenancy as a result of offending</p>	<p>HofHN</p>	<p>Yearly review of action plan covering span of the strategy</p>

Contact details:

For further information and advice please contact:

Sara Bowrey

Head of Housing Needs Service
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Email: sara.bowrey@bromley.gov.uk

Direct Line: 020 8313 4013