



Brighter futures: Lewisham's Homelessness Prevention Strategy

2009 – 2014

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Introduction

In 2002, the government transformed the way local authorities should address and tackle homelessness. It called for local authorities to take a more strategic joined up approach in reducing the level of homelessness and putting prevention at the heart of the matter.

Since the enactment of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the publication of our last Homelessness Strategy there has been considerable developments in the field of homelessness in terms of policy and good practice coupled with significant changes in the UK's housing market caused by the economic downturn.

In the writing of this new homelessness prevention strategy we have taken onboard the challenges laid out by central government since 2003:

- From 2004, local authorities should not place homeless families with children in Bed and Breakfast for more than 6 weeks
- In January 2005 the government published their five year plan, "*Sustainable Communities, Homes for all*" setting the target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.
- In 2006, the government announced a package of measures to prevent and tackle youth homelessness including a commitment that by 2010, no 16 or 17 year olds should be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by a local authority under the homelessness legislation (except in an emergency).
- Over the course of 2006, the government issued a good practice guide for preventing homelessness and a Homelessness Strategy health check for local authorities to carry out.
- The homelessness agenda has been pushed further forward by the government in 2008 by encouraging local authorities to develop more integrated housing services which provide broader housing advice, greater housing options and better links with education, training and employment opportunities to tackle worklessness.

Our Homelessness Prevention Strategy, *Better Futures*, sets out how we will work in partnership with stakeholders to address the risk of homelessness particularly in this current climate and how we will tackle the current level of homelessness present in the borough. *Better Futures* seeks to improve the quality of life for residents, especially those in housing need, to raise their aspirations and life opportunities.

Lewisham – the borough

Stretching from the banks of the Thames, in the north, to the borders with Bromley, in the south, the 13.4 square miles of Lewisham encompass strong communities who take pride in their local areas and neighbourhoods. The boundaries run from the River Thames in the north, through inner city landscapes to leafy southern suburbs. Central London is a 15 minute train journey and the Docklands Light Railway links the borough with Canary Wharf and the city of London.

Lewisham is the third largest inner London borough in terms of population and area, with a population of 250,000 and around 114,000 households. The Greater London Authority (GLA) predicts that the overall population of Lewisham will rise by 10 %, to just over 273,000 by 2016. The population is relatively young with one in four under 19. The growth in population will be particularly concentrated in the 15-24 age range, which is expected to grow by about 21 %. The population over 60 represents one in seven in our community. The household structure of Lewisham follows from its younger than average population with 22% of all households being non-pensioner single persons and 14% single parents. Therefore, over a third of households in Lewisham contain only one adult.

Lewisham is the 15th most ethnically diverse local authority in England. Two out of every five of our residents are from a black and minority ethnic background and by 2020, the Black and Minority Ethnic population will be 45%, with particular growth in the Black African and Black Caribbean communities. There are over 130 languages spoken in the borough making links throughout London and across the world.

Lewisham contributes to the diversity and energy of London, supporting its growing economy whilst gaining significant benefits from being a part of a world class city. Lewisham's own economy, though relatively small by London standards, is well placed to grow, encouraging new enterprises and allowing existing businesses to prosper. 35,300 people both live and work in Lewisham and of this group, 8,350 work mainly at or from home. Over a third of residents have a journey time to work of 45 minutes or more but are typically only travelling between 5-10 kilometres.

Location of Lewisham within Greater London

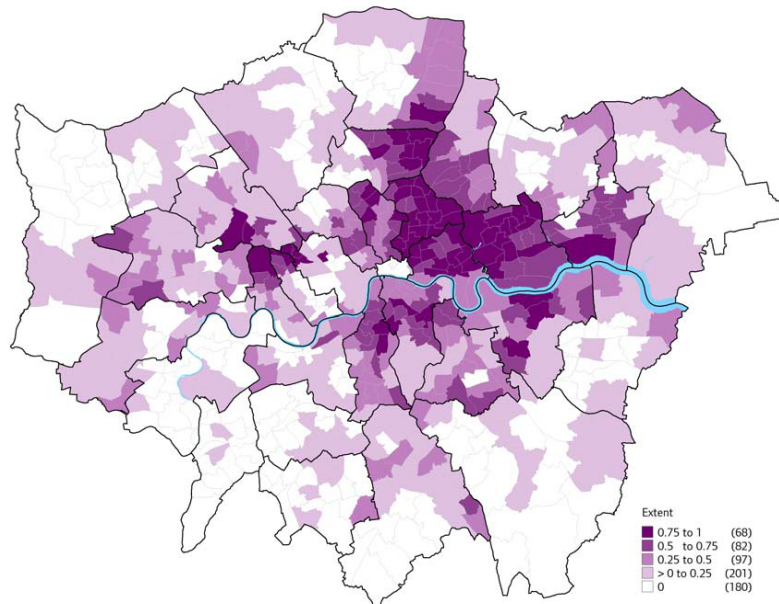


Location of Lewisham within South East sub-region

Lewisham is a borough of contrasts. Whilst it may be considered one of the more affordable boroughs in terms of housing and with more green spaces than any other borough; it is an inner London authority with widespread deprivation. Poverty continues to be a major factor with average household income well below the national average.

According to the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007), Lewisham is ranked 39 out of the 354 local authorities in England in terms of deprivation.

Extent ward level summary of IMD2007 for Greater London



Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, Indices of Deprivation 2007

Men and women in Lewisham can expect to live around 18 months less than Londoners as a whole. Lewisham has high premature mortality rates for cancer, heart disease and strokes. A third of residents in Lewisham smoke which is higher than the national average. Some 39,000 people in Lewisham (15.6%) have a long-term illness, health problem or disability. Overall mortality in Lewisham is the second highest in London and while male life expectancy is steadily increasing, women's has not improved as consistently as that of men.

Compared with London as a whole, the population of Lewisham on average has a higher percentage of people with no qualifications and a lower percentage of people with a degree qualification or above. Over 50% of the population aged over 50 years in Lewisham possess no formal qualifications. The results for the young population are much more encouraging, with over 30% of everyone aged 25-49 years having the equivalent to a degree qualification or higher.

On average, residents in Lewisham earn £27,212. Average salaries have risen by around £7,000 (30%) for those full time employees in Lewisham since 1999. The Housing Needs Survey 2007 revealed that only 19% of households had an income of over £40,000 compared with 48% of households having an income of less than £15,000 per annum. Therefore, it reveals that affordability is a key issue for many households in Lewisham.

The nature of Lewisham's housing market has altered significantly since 2001. Evidence from our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) shows that more households are living in the private rented sector, going from 14% in 2001 to nearly 30% in 2007. In 2001, 51% of households were owner-occupiers but this has dropped to 40% in 2007. The social rented sector has also fallen from 36% to 30% of households. Average house prices in Lewisham doubled between 2001 and 2008, going from £137,303 to £288,009 at the peak in April 2008.

After a long period of economic stability and robust growth, the UK economy has contracted into recession. What started as a financial slump in the American mortgage and housing markets has turned into a worldwide squeeze on credit or what we now refer to as the 'credit crunch'. In response to the tightening economic conditions and to revive the economy, the Bank of England has continually dropped interest rates and it has remained set at 0.5% in March 2009. As well as this latest cut, the Bank of England has engaged in 'quantitative easing', where £75bn will be poured into the UK's economy to boost bank lending.

The UK unemployment rate rose to 6.3% - which is up 1.1% on last year. The last time the rate was that high was in March 1998. The number of unemployed people increased by 369,000 over the past year, to reach 1.97 million (the highest figure since August 1997). The claimant count was 1.23 million in January 2009, the highest figure since July 1999. The redundancies level for the three months to December 2008 was 259,000, up 148,000 over the year. This is the highest figure since comparable records began in 1995. In Lewisham, the total number claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) was 6,440 in November 2008, this has gone up by 797 from the same month in the previous year.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) announced that mortgage lending continued to fall in January 2009. Just 23,400 mortgages were completed for all house buyers, a new record low, with only 8,900 first-time buyers able to take out home loans. The number of mortgages lent was down by 28% from December, and 52% lower than in January 2008. The average first-time buyers' down payment has now reached 24% of the value of the property they are buying, a new record. With prices continuing to fall, the dwindling number of first-time buyers are typically borrowing only £97,000, the lowest figure since the summer of 2005.

In Lewisham, the average house price in December 2008 was £242,461, which represents a 6% drop from the previous year. It has been forecast that house prices will drop a further 12% in 2009. Falls in house prices coupled with tightening mortgage lending conditions has turned more would be buyers and sellers to the rental market. Growth in new instructions has outpaces growth in tenant demand which has led to private sector rents falling generally across London and in Lewisham.

Recent repossession data from the Ministry of Justice has shown Bromley County Court issued 430 mortgage claims from October to December 2008, up by 23% from the same quarter last year. Woolwich County Court issued 329 mortgage possessions in the same period, representing a 12% increase on last year's quarter. Currently landlord possession claims at Bromley have stayed in line with last year's

figures. However, Woolwich's landlord possession have increase by 40% (556 claims) compared to the same quarter last year.

Currently, homeless applications on the basis of mortgage arrears or rent arrears has been low. Last year, they formed 6% of homelessness acceptances and so far this year it stands at 5%. However, it is likely the numbers of people presenting to the Council as homeless because of mortgage difficulties and repossessions will increase.

Even without the added pressure of the current recession, we are a borough experiencing high levels of housing need. We currently have over 14,000 people on our Housing Register needing affordable housing. Our SHMA indicates that nearly 34,000 households across Lewisham are in unsuitable housing. Unsuitable housing refers to households who are homeless or with insecure tenure, mismatch of household and dwelling size, poor amenities and conditions, and social needs. 10% (11,482) of these households are living in overcrowded conditions. We currently have just under 2000 households living in temporary accommodation. On average, only 1300 social housing lets available each year and this level of supply is not enough to meet all of housing demand as indicated by our housing register. The number of homelessness acceptances have been on the decline but the economic downturn may lead to an increase in homelessness applications in the short to medium term.

As part of our Housing Strategy, we are seeking to maximise the supply of new affordable housing and have a target of 429 additional affordable homes per year up to 2011. However, this does not keep pace with the level of demand and we have to look at other ways to manage demand. Set out below are some of the key activities we are doing:

- Preventing homelessness by carrying out more home visits, mediation, providing rent deposit incentive scheme for people to access the private rented sector
- Established the Single Homeless Intervention & Prevention team as the central assessment and referral agency for single homeless people
- Tackling overcrowding and under-occupation in housing to free up greatly needed family accommodation
- Helping residents find 'in-situ' solutions to maintain independent living – Disabled Facilities Grants to provide aids and adaptations, other loans to deal with disrepair and alterations and floating support
- Providing a flexible and broad range of housing options including the private rented sector, intermediate rent and shared ownership opportunities
- Exploring sub-regional opportunities to provide greater housing choice and availability

We recognise that many households across Lewisham have been and will continue to be impacted by the economic downturn and we are increasingly concerned that these households are struggling to pay their bills, rent and mortgages. We want to provide as much help, support and advice to enable residents to remain in their homes. We are part of the government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme to prevent the most vulnerable families losing their homes.

The Strategic Context

National

On 24th January 2005, the government published its '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*' which is their national strategy for tackling and reducing homelessness. It introduced the challenging target for local authorities to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. The strategy outlined key steps in achieving the target:

- homelessness prevention;
- providing support for vulnerable people;
- tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness;
- helping more people move away from rough sleeping; and
- providing more settled homes

Our Homelessness Prevention Strategy aligns itself with Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance (2006) which outlines how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions and apply the various statutory criteria in practice. We have carried out the government's Strategy Health Check to assist us in identifying gaps and priorities for our new Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

In 2006, the Government launched its own Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy which included a commitment to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all 16 and 17 year olds by 2010, except in emergency situations. It also aimed to improve access to homelessness mediation across the country (including family mediation for young people), so that there is a universal expectation of such services being available. Another key tenet of the Government's strategy is to establish supported lodgings schemes across the country, providing accommodation and advice for young people who can no longer stay in the family.

The Government's Green Paper, *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*, published in October 2006. It set out a radical package of proposals for change. It started with the premise that goals for children in care should be exactly the same as our goals for our own children: with secure, healthy and enjoyable childhoods as well as providing stable foundations for the rest of their lives. The Green Paper called for a transformation both in the way the care system works for children and the quality of experience they and others on the edge of entering or leaving care actually receive.

The Government, building on the green paper, published its white paper, *Care matters, Time for change* in June 2007, which set out how the government intended to improve stability and outcomes for children in care. It affirmed the importance of the corporate parent in securing good outcomes for children in care and having high expectations of every child in care, ensuring they are making good progress in school, opportunities for recreation and leisure and settled accommodation.

In May 2008, the Government published the paper, *Joint working between housing and Children's services: preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people*. This non statutory guidance aimed to assist local authorities in the

exercise of their powers and duties in respect of joint working to meet the needs of children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Regional

The Greater London Authority (GLA)

The Mayor of London supports the government's overall approach to homelessness and his commitments to addressing the problem are expressed in his initial draft Housing Strategy issued in November 2008. The Mayor is tackling homelessness by supporting boroughs and partners to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation, end rough sleeping by 2012 and ensure appropriate support and access to services. These commitments are underpinned by the Mayor's vision to raise aspirations and promote opportunity through the provision of good quality housing advice, a broad range of housing options and stronger links to education and employment and education.

Sub-regional

Lewisham is a member of the South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP), which incorporates the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Southwark. We are strongly committed to the delivery of the SELHP's Housing Strategy 2006-2010 where both homelessness prevention and reducing the use of temporary accommodation are key strategic objectives.

We attend the Homelessness Subgroup of SELHP and work with the other boroughs to formulate joint approaches to homelessness prevention and the provision of temporary accommodation. Addressing the issue of youth homelessness is a core activity of the sub-group's current work plan.

We are represented sub-regionally at London Council's meetings, CLG and a wide range of homelessness fora.

Local

Sustainable Community Strategy

Shaping our future is Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy published in 2008. The strategy looks ahead to 2020. It identifies the key challenges and opportunities that the borough and Lewisham citizens will face and looks at how we can ensure that everyone can benefit from the changes the future will bring. *Shaping our future* encompasses two guiding principles:

- reducing inequality - narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens and;
- delivering together efficiently, effectively equitably – ensuring that all citizens have appropriate access to and choice of high-quality local services

Six priorities have been identified:

- **Ambitious and achieving** – where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential
- **Safer** – where people feel safe and are able to live lives free from crime, anti-social behaviour and abuse
- **Empowered and responsible** – where people can be actively involved in their local area and contribute to inclusive, caring and supportive local communities

- **Clean, green and liveable** – where people live in affordable, high quality, adaptable housing, having access to green spaces and take responsibility for their impact on the environment
- **Healthy, active and enjoyable** – where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being, supported by high-quality health, care, leisure and cultural services
- **Dynamic and prosperous** – where people are part of vibrant and creative local communities and town centre, well connected to London and beyond.

The development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy over 2008/09 came at an opportune moment to embrace the vision, principles and strategic priorities outlined in the borough's key strategic document, the Sustainable Communities Strategy: *Shaping Our Future 2008-2020*.

'Together, we will make Lewisham the best place to live, work and learn'
Vision of Shaping our Future: Lewisham Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy in conjunction with our Housing Strategy is one of the keystone documents to deliver the ambitions set out in *Shaping our future* and plays a central role in meeting the borough's strategic priority of 'clean, green and liveable – where people are in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment'.

The Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP) is responsible for leading on the Sustainable Community Strategy. It brings together representatives from Lewisham's public, private, voluntary and community sectors to examine how, by working together, the quality of life of Lewisham's citizens can be improved. The LSP has developed the Local Area Agreement (LAA) - *Opportunity and well-being for all* which has been based on the six priorities encapsulated in *Shaping our future*. The LAA is an agreement with national government, which established 35 challenging targets that the LSP and Lewisham as a whole will have to meet. One of the 35 targets identified which the Homelessness Prevention Strategy addresses is reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation.

Housing Strategy – 'Homes for the future: raising aspirations, creating choice and meeting need' 2009-2014.

In response to the commitments laid out by *Shaping our future*, the level of housing need evidenced in the borough and the future aspirations of our residents, five areas have been identified in the new Housing Strategy where we need to make an impact:

- **Increase housing supply:** Despite the current drop in the market, the demand for many housing types and tenures in Lewisham continues to outstrip supply, as it does across the capital. We are therefore committed to providing enough of the right homes, in the right places, standing by our ambition to improve and increase the supply of new housing. This includes looking at innovative new ways to encourage quality development, and having clear policies on the mix of housing types and tenures required to deliver balanced and sustainable communities.
- **Widening housing choice and managing demand:** We will ensure a comprehensive range of housing types and tenures are available to local people,

giving them real housing choices that are flexible to their needs and are able to adapt to their changing circumstances. We strive to make residents' housing choices as easy as possible and is working to make movement between tenures as straight-forward as possible, by providing clear and timely information and support to those that need it, and exploring new housing options that might better suit the needs and aspirations of our residents and communities. This includes equalising opportunities across the rental sector, ensuring that no housing option restricts the life chances of those that occupy it.

- **Developing a quality private rented sector:** The private rented sector has grown significantly over the last few years and looks set to grow further. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that the sector is an attractive tenure of choice for residents. By working closely with landlords, developers and housing providers, we will ensure the sector realises its potential for providing secure, high quality, and affordable homes, and that private rented housing contributes fully to the development of sustainable local communities. Our Private Sector Strategy outlines further proposals for the development of the sector.
- **Expanding the housing offer:** A home in Lewisham should be a safe and secure base from which people can build their lives. But providing a home is not always enough to ensure the best outcomes. By joining up the social housing offer with other services such as education, training, employment and health, with our partners we are making sure that housing supports individuals and families to achieve their wider aspirations and maintain their independence.
- **Greening our homes and neighbourhoods:** We want our residents to be proud of their homes and local neighbourhoods. We will work with our partners to ensure that new homes are delivered in an environmentally sustainable fashion, preserve green spaces and contribute towards meeting the carbon challenge. We are committed to transforming existing homes to meet the energy efficiency agenda and proactively tackling the issue of fuel poverty.

The Housing Strategy addresses these strategic priorities through three themes – People, Homes and Places, Quality and Sustainability. Homelessness remains a key concern for Lewisham and the commitment to tackle homelessness and the risk of homelessness is made in our Housing Strategy. Pushing forward the homelessness agenda is a key feature in the Housing Strategy's 'People' theme which has the following aims:

- Extending choice and fairness in access to housing – delivering a real and flexible suite of housing options, ensuring that people in Lewisham are able to access the right sort of housing as and when they require it.
- Meeting need – ensuring that the most vulnerable people have access to housing and support that meets their needs and enables them to live full, independent lives.
- Promoting opportunity and aspiration - in order to expand and improve the housing options available to people, we will provide them with the tools and opportunities to make the most of what is available, particularly by supporting people into work.

Lewisham's Homelessness Prevention Strategy fully addresses the issues which lead to homelessness and it provides another tool in which the overarching priorities set out by the Housing Strategy can be truly realised.

Supporting People Strategy

The Supporting People programme offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence. It delivers high quality and strategically planned housing-related services which are cost effective and reliable, and complement existing care services. Our Supporting People Strategy is currently being refreshed and it plays an intrinsic part in the delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and the overarching Housing Strategy.

Lewisham Children & Young People's Plan 2009-2012

This is Lewisham's third Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which sets out the strategic aims for all agencies working with children and young people across Lewisham, from 2009 to 2012. This Plan focuses the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership's (CYPSP) future work on improving a number of key outcomes for our children and young people which will improve their lives and life chances. The 2009-12 Children & Young People Plan sets out what we are going to do significantly to improve outcomes further for our children and young people.

The Plan:

- restates our collective commitment to work together across all agencies, putting our children and young people first;
- establishes how partner agencies will work together to improve those outcomes that will make significant improvements to the lives and life chances of our children and young people;
- shows how our commitment to align and integrate our resources, as well as our services, will continue to be delivered through our programme of joint commissioning.

While the Plan has a focus on those children and young people most in need, it is firmly rooted in the belief that all young people living in Lewisham should have access to high quality services that are universally available. Where specialist support is required, it should be firmly embedded within widespread provision and structured around the needs of the child, young person or their family, and not those of the provider.

The Plan is underpinned by three key values:

- To put children and young people first every time
- To work with partners to be ambitious in meeting the needs and aspirations of all our children and young people
- To make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people

To make a difference to the lives of children and young people living in Lewisham and to deliver the improved outcomes set out in this plan, the partnership has identified four key areas for impact. These are the areas where we need to work together to continue to embed our practice in order to see significant improvement in outcomes in relation to our priorities over the next three years.

They are:

- Early Intervention and support for families
- Raising aspirations and closing the gaps
- Reducing child poverty and its impact
- Strengthening the positive influence of young people

While the local authority has responsibility for the Plan, it has been developed with the full involvement of all partners on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. The key theme is the development and implementation of an integrated approach to children and young people's services.

The Lewisham Children and Young People's Plan focuses on the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes of Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy & Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-being. The Plan includes commitments to support teenage parents and reduce teenage pregnancy, provide information and support about benefits, personal finance and housing to young people and reduce the number of children and young people in poor or overcrowded housing.

Homelessness Review Process

Part of the process in developing our Homelessness Prevention Strategy was to revisit the review conducted in 2003 which enabled the first Homelessness Strategy to be published and see the journey we have made over the past five years. It provided the opportunity to evaluate the impact of the first strategy and to assess how the landscape of homelessness and housing policy has changed. This has provided a firm platform for the new range of priorities contained within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

The Homelessness Review as prescribed by the Homelessness Act 2002 has to consider:

- the current and future level of homelessness in the borough
- the services provided to help prevent people becoming homeless
- the help to find accommodation and/or support for homeless people
- the resources available

Both the homelessness review and strategy must be based on the following objectives:

- Preventing homelessness.
- Ensuring that sufficient accommodation is available for those people who are or may become homeless.
- Ensuring that sufficient support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- Ensuring that support is available for people who have previously been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

Homelessness Review Methodology

The review for the new homelessness prevention strategy involved revisiting the comprehensive review undertaken in 2003 to identify current needs, service provision and present resources available. The review involved the collation and analysis of a broad range of data sources including Lewisham's Strategic Housing Market Assessment which incorporated a Housing Needs Survey which was undertaken in 2007 by Opinion Research Services. The review mapped and audited existing provision and resources.

Desktop Research

- Literature review of relevant Council and other agency strategy documents
- Demographic and socioeconomic data, and housing market, supply and demand
- Homelessness quarterly and annual returns to central government
- Lettings activities of the Council and partner RSLs
- Housing advice figures
- Housing management information
- Supporting People data
- 2001 Census Data
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) updates

Rough Sleeper Count

- The Count was carried out on 27th March 2008 and reported two incidences of rough sleeping in the borough.

Consultation Programme

- People's Day held on Saturday 12th July - residents were asked for their top housing priorities for the borough and they stated the following:
 - Increase the amount of affordable housing for those on low incomes
 - Improve estates and neighbourhoods to make them better places to live
 - Improve the quality of housing
 - Reduce the number of people living in overcrowded housing
 - Reduce homelessness
 - Take action against anti-social behaviour caused by neighbours
- Focus Groups undertaken over July/August 2008 - carried out with a range of people chosen to reflect the range of housing circumstances found and the social classes and ethnic diversity found across the borough. The main findings were:
 - Almost all participants in the consultation liked Lewisham and wanted to stay in their area
 - Many felt that there was little choice in tenure particularly for those on low incomes
 - Owner-occupation remains the tenure of choice for residents
 - Many preferred social housing to private rented accommodation due to perceived issues around security of tenure and high rents
 - Concerns were raised over the move to Choice Based Lettings and how to access and operate it
 - Widespread support for building more homes in the borough but concerns raised about density levels
 - Many tenants living on estates expressed concerns over their local environment i.e. faulty lifts and waste disposal but felt that some of these problems were caused by neighbours and not poor service from the Council
 - Concerns were raised about the fear of homeless particularly those living in the private rented sector
 - Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Council's Homelessness Service and the quality of temporary accommodation

Key findings of the Homelessness Review process

The full detail of the Homelessness Review are shown in Appendix One. Summarised below are the significant findings of the review.

- More households in Lewisham are now living in the private rented sector from only 14% in 2001 to nearly 30% of households in 2007.
- House prices in Lewisham have doubled since January 2001 from £137,000 to £288,000 in April 2008. Since then, prices have fallen by 11% to 261.056 (Nov 08) due to the economic downturn
- 17,000 households on Lewisham's Housing Register
- Significant demand for one and two bedroom properties from people on the Housing Register
- On average 1300 social housing lets a year

- 71% of homeless households had to wait two years or more to receive a permanent offer of social housing (2007/08)

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment carried out in 2007 showed that:

- 33,922 households across Lewisham were assessed as living in unsuitable housing
- 1 in 5 households in unsuitable housing is a lone parent and 1 in 10 is a single pensioner or pensioner couple
- 11,482 households were overcrowded
- 10,641 households were living in homes with major disrepair
- 41,850 households across Lewisham technically under-occupy their home
- 60% of all older households contained at least one member suffering a self reported health problem
- 32,750 households contained at least one member with a health problem of which 16% did not currently have their care or support needs met

Homelessness Statistics:

- In December 2008, 744 people approached our Housing Options Centre (HOC) for assistance of which 70% were families and 30% were single people. The number approaching has fallen by 30% from December 2007
- In 2007/08, 67% of all presentations made to the Housing Options Centre for help was because parents/relatives were no longer willing to accommodate and 13.3% was because their assured short-hold tenancy was terminated
- 812 applicants were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need in 2007/08
- In December 2008, we placed 47 homeless households in B&B accommodation compared to December 2007 when 83 households were in B&B accommodation
- In September 2006, we had 2,688 households living in temporary accommodation and by March 2009 this has now decreased to 1808 households – a drop of 49%.
- Majority of the accommodation used for temporary accommodation is provided from the Council's own housing stock

Developing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy

A recurring issue of the last homelessness review in 2003 which has been highlighted in this review is the need for good quality effective and timely advice. Advising a person at risk of homelessness on their housing options is a central feature of homelessness prevention. We want to be in the best position to enable people to retain their existing accommodation or alternatively help residents find more suitable housing solutions. We are bringing our homelessness prevention work into a single, coherent service, ensuring that people get the maximum benefit from support and reducing the burden on individuals at a difficult time in their lives.

Accommodation, the supply and the type are key issues that need to be addressed in the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. We face a major challenge in reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation but also having the right accommodation available for households requiring emergency accommodation.

It is well recognised that many people at risk of homelessness potentially have support needs which can vary considerably. Through the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, we aim to put in place tailored support for families and vulnerable people living in temporary accommodation as they travel forward into more settled accommodation and independent living.

We have also identified the need to tackle the causes of homelessness which can only be achieved if agencies work together in a coherent way. Resolving homelessness and housing need issues are not just about the provision of 'bricks and mortar' but about finding the solutions to health inequalities, social exclusion, poverty and worklessness.

Our Sustainable Community Strategy, *Shaping Our Future*, sets out how we will achieve the priority of communities being Ambitious and achieving – where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential; and being Healthy, active and enjoyable - where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being. Ambitious and achieving includes inspiring our young people to achieve their full potential and also encouraging and facilitating access to education, training and employment opportunities for all our citizens. Being healthy, active and enjoyable includes improving health outcomes and supporting people with long term conditions to live in their communities and maintain their independence. Through our Homelessness Prevention Strategy we will look to contribute to this work by promoting opportunities and independence for people in housing need.

Youth homelessness

We see too many young people approach our homelessness service for help. We want to see young people staying at home longer as we believe it improves their life chances. We will work with families and young people to see this happen. However, there are occasions where young people can not stay at home and we want to provide effective measures so young people receive appropriate support and accommodation so they are not further marginalised from society. We also want to support young disabled people who are ready to make the transition into independent

living and we will be looking at the housing options available to enable them to take this next step.

In trying to address these concerns and to raise the profile of youth homelessness, we have developed a related and focused Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Our priorities for the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy are:

- **Preventing homelessness arising where possible and promoting housing options**
- **Providing long term and sustainable housing**
- **Protecting and providing support for vulnerable adults and children who are homeless or faced with homelessness**
- **Promoting opportunities and independence for people in housing need by improving access to childcare, health, education, training and employment**
- **Reducing Youth Homelessness – this is dealt with in a related strategy document.**

Priority One: Preventing homelessness arising where possible and promoting housing options

At the heart of tackling homelessness is ensuring that effective and targeted prevention measures and early interventions are in place to deal with all types of homelessness. Communities and Local Government define preventing homelessness 'as the means to provide people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness'. Housing advice can play a crucial role in terms of helping tenants retain existing accommodation and in helping households to find new housing solutions.

Actions we will be taking:

- Making our Housing Options Centre an effective, integrates on-stop shop offering a range of choice to all residents, enabling them to resolve their housing needs
- Bringing homelessness prevention into a single, coherent service, ensuring that people
- Completing the restructure of the homelessness service to ensure prevention is at the forefront of service delivery
- Setting up a comprehensive training programme for all staff working in the homelessness service to drive up performance and improve customer care
- Developing a communications strategy for the new Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention (SHIP) team to raise awareness of the service amongst partners and potential service users
- Developing a range of easy to read publications to promote the services of the Housing Options Centre
- Ensuring vulnerable applicants are supported to use the Council's choice based lettings scheme – Homesearch
- Providing advice and support, including the mortgage rescue package, to those families who are at risk of losing their homes in the current recession
- Seeking new preventative measures to reduce the incidences of homelessness in the borough
- Improving access to the private rented sector and expanding the Rent Incentive Scheme
- Working with private sector tenants and landlords to reduce evictions
- Carrying out home visits and using mediation to prevent homelessness
- Developing protocols and work more effectively with agencies and local partners to resolve housing need
- Working with our housing partners and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to prevent homelessness occurring amongst their tenants

How will we know if we have been successful?

- Reduction in the number of people accepted as homeless
- Number of cases of homelessness prevented
- Number of home visits carried out
- Number of households accessing mediation
- Number of homeowners enabled to continue living in their properties
- Number of people assisted through the Rent Incentive Scheme
- Reduction in the number of evictions from private landlords
- Number of evictions carried out by housing providers and RSLs
- Reduction in proportion of BME households experiencing homelessness
- Number of vulnerable applicants accessing Homesearch
- Satisfaction with services received at the Housing Options Centre and SHIP

Providing good housing advice and assistance to all households threatened by homelessness

Delivering robust housing advice and prevention is at the forefront of Lewisham's homelessness service. We are transforming the service to ensure that our new approach means that prevention is not exclusively targeted towards households who are likely to meet the 'priority need' criteria but to all households where prevention is the most appropriate response. We are confident that the new structure of our homelessness service can enable the priorities of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy to be fully achieved.

We have established a comprehensive performance framework for the Homelessness Service. This framework underpins the national indicators featured in our Local Area Agreement. Stretching targets have been set for our homelessness service and close monitoring has been established through monthly performance updates to Lewisham's Strategic Housing Management Team. Good progress has also been made in developing a new IT system for the service to complement the new performance framework.

We are setting up a comprehensive training programme for all our homelessness staff. Motivated and confident staff are essential in delivering the service we think our residents need and want. We want to see people approach the Housing Options Centre (HOC) not always in times of crises but as a place where they can receive genuine help, advice and assistance to find their housing solution. We believe that investing in our staff through effective training and development opportunities can create a culture of performance. Training will be offered to our partners as we want to see greater transparency and consistency in working practices. Currently, we are working with the South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) to procure joint training with other boroughs in the field of housing and homelessness, which will not only offer value for money but facilitate the exchange of good practice.

Additional resources have been secured to enable the Housing Options Centre (HOC) to put homelessness prevention as the focal point of service delivery. Our review found that the largest number of homelessness acceptances came from people whose parents/relatives no longer wanted to accommodate them. In response to this, we have established through Supporting People funding the Single

Homelessness Intervention and Prevention Service (SHIP). SHIP is the dedicated central assessment and referral service for single people in our Homelessness Service. Single homeless people who would have previously approached the Housing Options Centre for assistance are now seen by the SHIP team. They decide through an initial assessment if supported accommodation is the most appropriate form of help. The SHIP team contributes to the prevention agenda by enabling timely access into Supporting People services. Another core activity of the SHIP team is working with people who are not eligible for supported accommodation but require advice and help to find their housing solution. The SHIP have a range of housing options and tools at their disposal to prevent homelessness. The SHIP team can signpost single people to floating support, mediation, and facilitate access to the private rented sector through our Rent Incentive Scheme (RIS).

We are very excited about the new SHIP team and good progress in preventing homelessness is being made. In supporting their work, we will be developing a Communications Strategy to promote the work they do and the new focus of our homelessness service to key agencies and partners. Our Housing Options Centre still plays a key role in advising families in housing need. An integral part of preventing homelessness is encouraging early use of advice services to find out about potential housing options. We are developing a number of easy to read publications to promote the Housing Options Centre's services.

It is evident that generally fewer vulnerable applicants are utilising our Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL), Homesearch to resolve their housing need. A commitment of the strategy is to ensure that advice and assistance is made available to vulnerable people to help them navigate the choice based letting scheme. Supporting People are funding a Homesearch Support Worker to assist vulnerable clients access Homesearch. In addition, training on Homesearch will be made available to agencies who represent vulnerable people and monitoring arrangements will be put in place to regularly evaluate the accessibility of Homesearch.

Personal debt has increased significantly in the UK with the average British household having total debts of £9,341 if mortgages are excluded. Centrepoint carried out research in 2005 and found that 82% of young homeless people were on average £1000 in debt. High levels of personal debt can impact on health, housing choice and potentially lead to greater social exclusion. Lewisham's Community Legal Services (CLS) recently conducted an advice needs analysis. It identified that advice and information was most required for housing, welfare benefits, debt and money advice. We are now revising the funding framework for the voluntary and community sector to ensure that gaps are met. We are working with statutory departments and voluntary organisations to establish a debt and welfare advice service that is widely available and easy to access for Lewisham residents.

We are part of the government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme, which was introduced in September 2008 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). They announced a £200 million package of measures designed to prevent some of the most vulnerable families losing their homes. CLG invited local authorities to fast track process and Lewisham was one of the first authorities to volunteer. The scheme was launched in January 2009 and is aimed at those who would be eligible for homelessness assistance and is subject to a range of eligibility criteria. Two

options have been devised for which the Homes and Communities Agency has sought the involvement of the housing associations that currently carry out the HomeBuy Agent role in London, for South East London this means Tower Homes, which is part of the London & Quadrant Group. The 2 options are:

- Shared equity – housing association provides an equity loan designed to reduce your monthly repayments
- Government Mortgage to Rent - a housing association will buy your home and rent it back to you

We are working with a number of households who are in mortgage difficulties, many of these we have referred to money advice and/or to their lender to discuss other options before an application to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme is considered. Since the scheme's commencement, nine households have been considered eligible for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Improving access to the Private Rented Sector

Nearly 30% of our households are living in the private rented sector and we see this tenure as an essential housing option to ease the level of housing need in the borough. Therefore, we have created and implemented Lewisham's Rent Incentive Scheme (RIS). It has been running since July 2007 and has so far, provided opportunities for 152 residents to access the private rented sector. The scheme has 3 full-time staff and in addition utilises the services of a dedicated Housing Benefit Officer based at the Housing Options Centre to fast track housing benefit applications. The following incentives are available to landlords as long as a minimum of 12 months assured shorthold tenancy is granted:

- 2 months rent in advance as standard
- Either maximum of £500 towards any arrears during the tenancy or £500 if landlord renews the tenancy after 12 month period plus fee to enable the landlord to join the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme
- Pre-checks on prospective tenants
- Fast track housing benefit payments – paid direct to the landlord

Applicants have the choice of finding their own accommodation or being given a list of potential properties.

The scheme currently has 115 landlords and eight letting agents on the database. We want to encourage more private landlords so we can offer even greater housing choice to people looking at this tenure. We are planning to run a promotions campaign to get more landlords onboard. However, we are aware that many residents have concerns about living in private rented accommodation which centred on the quality and the affordability of the accommodation. As part of our wider Housing Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Strategy we will be tackling this issues head on. We are determined to improve the condition of the private rented sector by working more effectively with landlords and ensuring they are utilising grants and loan facilities we have in place to drive up standards. We want a quality private rented sector which will provide confidence to prospective tenants accessing this tenure and assist the wider policy goal of equalising the housing offer.

We want to create sustainable communities and believe one of the best ways to achieve this is by residents living stabled and settled homes across all tenure types. It is evident through our focus groups that people are worried about the stability of living in the private rented sector. The second cause of homelessness in Lewisham is the termination of an assured short-hold tenancy, which simply is the ending of a private tenancy. As part of ensuring the Rent Incentive Scheme is successful we want to encourage private landlords to offer tenancies longer than 12 months so residents feel more secure and stable in their homes. This will also benefit landlords as there will be less turnover in their properties.

Our newly revamped Housing Options Centre will play a vital role in preventing the termination of assured short-hold tenancies. The remit of officers is to provide essential housing advice and assistance to all private sector residents in the borough, giving general advice on tenancy rights, illegal eviction, harassment, rent increases and disrepair. The restructuring of the service has enabled a new post to be developed – a Specialist Private Sector Advisor, this officer will provide support on complex private tenant and landlord disputes, particularly around sensitive issues such as racial harassment.

The Housing Option Centre with support from the Private Sector Housing Team will work with landlords to remind them of their rights and responsibilities to their properties and tenants. For example, in disrepair cases, landlords have been advised to apply for grants and loans to improve their homes.

Over 200 private landlords in Lewisham are now accredited and we have set up a Private Landlords Forum. The Forum enables us to engage with private landlords in a more co-ordinated and effective way and this ongoing dialogue with landlords means we can fully maximise access to the private sector but also assist landlords to manage their portfolio appropriately.

We want to maximise the opportunities for residents by facilitating access to the various tenure options - social rent, rent-to-buy, intermediate rental, private rental, Low Cost Home Ownership and home ownership. This creates a more flexible and responsive housing system that allows residents to move between tenures depending on their needs and aspirations.

The range of housing options available can be confusing for people. We want to help by identifying key criteria that make tenure options attractive and relevant to residents. This approach is intended to ensure that people have the right information that they need to make informed choices. Residents will be able to access the full range of tenure choices through our Housing Options Centre. As more landlords and providers are signed up to our quality standards and accreditation schemes, potential residents will have confidence that the housing option they are considering is of a good standard and tailored to their specific circumstances.

Carrying out Home Visits and Mediation

The main reasons for homelessness in Lewisham are parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate. A high number of young people make up these presentations. From April 2008 to December 2008, we have carried out over 560

home visits. Since the creation of the SHIP team, there have been 30 home visits to 16/17 year olds and 50 youth homelessness preventions. The Housing Options Centre and SHIP carries out home visits to determine homelessness but can also be an effective tool in preventing homelessness and reconciling families. We believe that for young people staying at home until they can make a planned and independent move away from home is the best approach. Mediation is another important device to address relationship breakdown and prevent homelessness, especially amongst young people. We are committed to ensuring that mediation is offered whenever appropriate i.e. where there is no risk of violence or abuse.

We recognised that staying at home is not always the safest option for young people and finding alternative accommodation is the only solution. We are determined to support young people who are placed into hostel or other temporary accommodation as we do not want to see homelessness undermine their aspirations and life opportunities. Greater detail on youth homelessness can be found in our Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy: Secure Futures.

Developing key protocols with agencies to work more effectively in resolving housing need

To prevent unnecessary homelessness we are putting in place key protocols with agencies and partners to fast track people who are in need to receive prompt assistance, support or alternative accommodation.

- ***Hospital Discharge Protocol***

Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department of Health has provided guidance for establishing a protocol for hospital admissions and discharges. The aim of the guidance is to support hospitals, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), local authorities and the voluntary sector to work in partnership and develop robust protocols for patients who are homeless or living in temporary or insecure accommodation. The overarching aim of the protocol is to ensure that no-one is discharged from hospital to the streets or inappropriate accommodation. The protocol can help reduce 'bed-blocking' and enable agencies to work with people to maintain independent lives. There is a Hospital Discharge protocol in place between the Homelessness Service and Lewisham PCT. A review of the Hospital Discharge protocol with the PCT is underway to ensure it reflects the new working practices of the Homelessness Service and identifies key personnel to monitor and implement the protocol.

- ***Social Landlords Homelessness Prevention Protocol***

Over 2007/08, the South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) developed a 'Social Landlords Homelessness Prevention Protocol'. It is an agreement between local authorities and South East London housing associations to prevent homelessness. It sets realistic ambitions for joint working in areas which directly impact on services to homeless people. It supports existing partnership working and the actions and targets set out in the Housing Corporation's strategy 'Tackling homelessness' (2006). The protocol supports the work and objectives of Lewisham's Single Homelessness & Prevention Team and Housing Options Centre to tackle homelessness in a co-ordinated and cohesive way.

The protocol focuses on areas such as tenancy sustainment and support, rent arrears and debt. All social landlords are responsible for effective housing management, including maximising rental income and enforcement of tenancy conditions. As part of the protocol, social landlords assist customers in accessing debt and housing advice services. It includes procedures to identify and offer support to vulnerable tenants within rent collection policies and procedures.

Effective housing management to prevent homelessness

We are working with our housing management providers, other Registered Social Landlords individually and through the SELHP to embed homelessness prevention in their housing management practices. It is evident that many people approach the Housing Options Centre because they have lost their tenancy through rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. We are working with our housing management providers to foster closer working between income officers and the Housing Options Centre to stop homelessness because of rent arrears. Taking a pro-active stance on rent arrears and training housing officers to provide advice on money management, benefits and debt advice is vital in the task to avoid homelessness.

The Government's strategy to develop sustainable solutions to anti-social behaviour (ASB) is based on a 'twin track' approach involving both action to address the underlying causes of problem behaviour and the use of appropriate sanctions to support and protect the wider community. With this in mind, the Government has developed '*Family Intervention Projects*' with the primary objective to stop the anti-social behaviour (ASB) of a small number of highly problematic families and restore safety to their homes and to the wider community.

Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) help families to address the causes of their behaviour, alongside supervision and enforcement tools to provide them with the incentives to change. A key worker 'grips' the family, the causes of their poor behaviour and the agencies involved with them, to deliver a more coordinated, intensive response to anti-social behaviour. Currently there are a number of pilots and we will be looking closely at the effectiveness of the project and whether, in the future, this should be an initiative we take forward with our partners.

Lewisham Homes has developed an Antisocial Behaviour Service Promise. It outlines their approach in tackling anti-social behaviour. Lewisham Homes have Tenancy plus Officers who specialise in antisocial behaviour. Lewisham Homes works with our Antisocial Behaviour Action Team (ASBAT) to deal with incidents where there are multiple victims of perpetrators and legal actions, such as ASBOs are required. We have longstanding Neighbourhood Wardens who cover Honor Oak, Catford, Lewisham, Bellingham, Downham, New Cross and Deptford. Lewisham Homes works with the wardens closely to promote community safety and reduce the fear of crime.

Central government has developed the Respect Standard for social housing landlords to sign up to. It is voluntary but gives clear standards for social housing landlords to tackle antisocial behaviour. Lewisham Homes signed up to the Respect Standard on 12 June 2007 and we will be ensuring that other housing management providers adopt this position.

One of our key housing partners is Lewisham Homes – an Arms Length Management Organisation has developed a Vulnerable Adults Policy to improve the lives of their vulnerable residents. Lewisham Homes works with their residents to enable them to remain in their homes and live as independently as possible. The policy is the mechanism by which the Council and the ALMO can work together to co-ordinate support services to allow vulnerable tenants to stay in their home.

We want to achieve to consistent working practices amongst our housing management providers in preventing and tackling homelessness and therefore we are working closely with Regenter B3 to adopt the policy.

Increasing customer satisfaction and engagement with the Homelessness Service

The government's approach to providing services for homeless households has changed significantly in the past few years. With their announcement of the target to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, local authorities were expected to place a greater emphasis on preventative services as part of their service delivery. Local authorities were expected to offer a range of housing options to enable clients to find housing solutions that meet their circumstances without the need to process a homeless application. The Housing Options Centre was set up to take this agenda forward, but progress has been slow and therefore the service is being restructured to ensure we can meet the government's priorities and targets but most importantly deliver a service that meets residents needs.

Greater accessibility and providing a comfortable and clean environment for customers and staff is critical in delivering an excellent service. The review has identified the need for a new building for the front-line aspect of the Homelessness Service and this has been actioned. We have provided £1million to relocate the Housing Options Centre into a new 'fit-for-purpose' building and we are excited about the one-stop shop approach can be developed in this new space.

We are introducing more systematic consultation with users to improve service delivery. Knowing the level of satisfaction of customers who approach the Housing Options Centre and the SHIP team, and for those households in temporary accommodation is essential in driving up service standards. Creating the SHIP team has provided us with the opportunity to revisit our current service standards. We are in the process of developing new clear and comprehensive standards based on our new proactive approach.

The SELHP Homelessness Group has commissioned Brent Homeless Users Group (BHUG) to undertake a mystery shopping exercise across the sub-region, the results of which will be presented to boroughs in May 2009. This exercise will identify areas of improvement across the region and the Homelessness Group will look to commission joint training on any common needs.

Lewisham has a Homelessness Forum which is essentially made up of statutory agencies and voluntary organisations who deliver a range of services to homeless

people. We would like to see the Homelessness Forum to become the strategic partnership body to take the Homelessness and Youth Homelessness Strategies forward. We want to strengthen the membership of the forum to reflect other agencies who can help us deliver the priorities of the Homelessness Strategies, for instance, bringing more housing associations onboard.

Priority Two: Providing long term and sustainable housing

In March 2005, the government published its national strategy for tackling homelessness, '*Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives*' which seeks to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. We are committed to meeting the government's target of reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50% to 877 households by 2010/11. We want to ensure that people are living in long term and settled homes.

A part of this which is set out in detail in our Housing Strategy is the provision of enough homes, of sufficient size, quality, accessibility and affordability, to meet the needs and aspirations of local residents, now and in the future.

Actions we will be taking:

- We will reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation
- We will work to reduce the number of overcrowded households
- We will continue to operate the Under-occupation scheme to release more family sized housing
- We will expand Homesearch to include private rented accommodation
- We will aim to deliver 859 net additional homes per year in all tenures up to 2011 in line with LAA targets (429 affordable homes)
- We will increase the number of settled homes in the private rented sector
- We will work with landlords and tenants to sustain private sector tenancies
- We will maintain high standard, quality homes, both settled and temporary.

How will we know if we have been successful?

- LAA NI 156 reduction of numbers of people in temporary accommodation
- LAA NI 154 - Net additional homes provided
- LAA NI 155 – Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- Reduction in number of overcrowded households
- Number of empty properties bought back into use
- Reduction in time spent in temporary accommodation
- Reduction in number of families in Bed and Breakfast
- Reduction in length of time families spend in Bed and Breakfast

Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation

In achieving the target of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation, we have to be realistic in recognising the size of the challenge we face. Despite the government announcing the target in 2005, the number of households in temporary accommodation continued to rise in Lewisham but have started to decline since 2007. We continue to see large numbers of people seeking assistance from the Housing Options Centre, although overall it is recognised that the number of actual homeless applications has fallen significantly in 2007/08.

We received funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to carry out home visits to every household in temporary accommodation. We started the home visits in April 2008 and they have enabled us to:

- establish if the homeless applicant is resident in the property;
- assess if the client's circumstances have changed in order to determine their housing needs;
- offer clients their temporary tenancy as permanent if they are in suitably sized accommodation to meet their needs, or if they are overcrowded by 1 bedroom and their temporary accommodation is in Lewisham's own stock;
- explain our Allocations Policy and using Homesearch to encourage households to bid. Furthermore, explain if they do not bid they will be subject to one offer under the Council's Allocations Policy;
- explain housing options available in the private rented sector

As a result of our visits, we have begun to work with some households who want to convert their temporary accommodation into a permanent offer. It has also enabled us to discharge duty on households where they are no longer resident in the properties and therefore offer that property either on Homesearch or for other re-housing purposes.

The restructuring of the Homelessness Service and the recent establishment of the Single Homeless Intervention & Prevention (SHIP) team will enable us to reduce the number of households seeking temporary accommodation. However, we will need to ensure that the portfolio of temporary accommodation meets the needs of homeless households or those at risk of homelessness. We need a sufficiently diverse range of affordable temporary accommodation so it does not act as a barrier for tenants wanting to take up employment or being able to afford their accommodation costs. Potentially, people placed in unaffordable temporary accommodation can request a review of its suitability. The cost of Private Sector Leasing accommodation can often preclude people from working as the rents are high and many tenants rely on housing benefit to cover the cost. Our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2007 found that 22.9% of households in the private rented sector claim benefit.

We are planning to work with agencies, like Jobcentre Plus to enable more households to attain employment and/or access training opportunities. We continue to monitor any changes in the Housing Benefit levels for private

sector landlords and in doing so, assess the impacts it may have on our Private Sector Leasing Scheme.

Reducing the number of overcrowded households

The SHMA revealed that 11,300 households are currently living in overcrowded housing, which is 10.2% of all households in Lewisham. However, only around 3% of households in owner occupied accommodation were overcrowded, 12% of those in social rent and nearly 18% of those in private rented housing. As many as 41,850 households (52%) technically under-occupy their property – over a third of these by two bedrooms or more. 38% of households report that they want to move, usually because their current home is too small (SHMA 2007).

Tackling this issue of overcrowding is a key concern for us. Data on our housing register indicates that there are over 1500 overcrowded households, which require 3 bedrooms or more. Overcrowded households constitute 10% of the overall housing register. Out of 256 family sized lets available last year, 252 of them went to overcrowded households. In April 2008, our existing Allocations Policy was amended to redefine overcrowding by using the bedroom standard, and have therefore increased the priority of households who are overcrowded by 2 bedrooms on the register. As a result all severely overcrowded households can bid for 60% of properties advertised via Homesearch. Current data shows that 50 overcrowded social landlord tenants and 85 applicants were rehoused since April 2008. The Allocations Policy is now being comprehensively reviewed to ensure that it complies with recent legislation, to increase transparency over the letting of social housing and ensure we are using our lets effectively.

We operate a highly effective Underoccupation Scheme which enables council tenants with more bedrooms than required to move to a smaller, more manageable homes. Council tenants are offered help and advice on viewings, disconnection and reconnection of domestic appliances, redirection of mail, removals and can offer small improvements to the new home. The Scheme allows under-occupying tenants to be given higher priority status on the housing register and they receive £200 for every bedroom given up. Tenants can ask to move to any area within the borough, subject to availability and can be considered for council accommodation including sheltered schemes and housing association properties.

In 2008/09, we were awarded £100,000 of Pathfinder Funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to enable us to address overcrowding more proactively. Almost half of the funding has been used to encourage overcrowded social housing tenants to find suitable housing in the private rented sector via the Freshstart scheme. To date, 23 overcrowded households have moved into the private rented sector, six of which were severely overcrowded. The scheme provides practical support and financial assistance to tenants through the provision of rent deposits, sourcing private sector tenancies and advising the clients on HB entitlement and making claims for Discretionary Housing payments where appropriate. We contribute £10,000 to this scheme bringing the total funding available this year to £55,000.

The other half of the Pathfinder Funding has been used to provide additional resources to our Underoccupation Scheme. We provided £50,000 additional funding for this scheme and employ one member of staff to assist under-occupying tenants move into smaller accommodation. In total, the scheme has successfully moved 86 tenants. The additional funding has been used to release 3 bedroom properties or larger and ring-fenced the voids as preference given to overcrowded social housing tenants. As a result 38 social tenants have moved into suitable accommodation and their overcrowding issues have been resolved. A procedure for 'chain moves' has recently been introduced so when the initial void is allocated to an overcrowded social tenant, the property they are vacating is ringfenced for an overcrowded social housing tenant. Therefore, on average two overcrowded households move for the cost of creating one void property.

We have bid again for Pathfinders Funding to ask for an additional funding to maximise the success achieved in 2008/09. The additional funding would be used to enabled more Freshstart moves and create higher voids via the Underoccupation Scheme. Remaining funding will be used to assist us in providing mitigation initiatives for overcrowded households i.e. additional facilities such as wash hand basins and remodeling the internal space, where appropriate, in households to provide additional space and amenities.

There are some existing homes which could be extended to better meet the needs of residents. The South East London Partnership (SELHP) has made a sub regional bid to the Targeted Funding Stream for de-conversions and extensions from 2009-2011. If the bid is successful, £4million will be shared between Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark and will enable the boroughs to offer loft conversions and extensions to overcrowded tenants in council stock.

Other programmes include prioritising overcrowded households for intermediate housing products, ensuring the suitability of new private sector leases and temporary housing, as well as improving reporting and data around the issue of overcrowding

The SELHP recruited a part-time co-ordinator in 2007 to progress under-occupation work across the five boroughs for tenants of housing associations. It is funded by Communities and Local Government and is operated by Gallions Housing Association but other housing associations are partners: Broomleigh, FamilyMosaic, Hexagon, London & Quadrant, Moat, Orbit, Presentation, Amicus Horizon and Wandle.

Freshstart is one of our largest and most successful housing relocation initiatives and we aim to enable 50 moves a year. Most moves are to vacant social housing in the north of England. As well as support and advice, we can provide the cost of removals, plus a 'Relocation Grant' of up to £500 to help with the inevitable costs of setting up a new home. We are now providing an equivalent level of support to clients relocating into private rented accommodation. As well as covering the costs of removals, the first month's rent is provided and up to the same amount as a deposit. Clients claiming Housing Benefit are thus able to pay rent while their claim is being processed.

The Council will continue to promote and expand the scheme to enable people, if desired, to move out of London.

Homesearch, the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme was introduced as a pilot in 2002 for one bedroom and studio flats and has since been rolled out to cover all sizes of accommodation. We work in partnership with ten Registered Social Landlords to enable eligible housing applicants to bid for properties available for letting. Concerns have been raised about vulnerable people accessing Homesearch easily. The Homelessness Service are developing ways to provide more support for vulnerable people to access Homesearch and funding has been granted from Supporting People to recruit a Homesearch Support Worker. To provide greater access to the private rented sector, we are starting to advertise private rented properties on the Homesearch web-site and newsletter. We are monitoring the effectiveness of this and we hope to engage more private landlords in the scheme.

Priority Three: Protecting and providing support for vulnerable adults and children who are homeless or faced with homelessness

It is well recognised that many people at risk of homelessness potentially have support needs which can vary considerably. Through the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, we aim to put in place tailored support for families and vulnerable people living in temporary accommodation as they travel forward into more settled accommodation and independent living.

Actions we will be taking:

- We will ensure that every household with children in temporary accommodation is linked with a health visitor, GP, Sure Start and Children's services
- We will establish family support services for families living in temporary accommodation
- We will work with schools and CYP to ensure that homeless children get in, stay in and succeed in school
- We will work to extend floating support to all households in need in the private rented sector and other tenures
- We will work to ensure that families are placed in appropriate temporary accommodation
- We will work with partners to improve move on accommodation from supported housing
- We will develop a Pathways approach for ex offenders to move them into independent accommodation and reduce re-offending rates
- We will continue to work with the Domestic Violence resettlement officers to provide support to victims of domestic violence

How will we know if we have been successful?

- Reduction in numbers of families in Bed and Breakfast
- Reduction in time families spend Bed and Breakfast
- Reduction in time families spend in hostel accommodation
- Number of victims of Domestic Violence receiving support
- Number of ex offenders moving into settled accommodation
- Increase in numbers moving on from supported housing

Supporting families and children

We want to improve the links between our housing partners, the homelessness service and children's services to minimise the impact of homelessness on children where families are living in temporary accommodation. It is well evidenced that families living in temporary accommodation can often feel isolated and require extra support to access services whilst a permanent offer is found or investigations into their homeless status are being made. We are developing and implementing joint protocols for referring families in temporary accommodation to Children's Centres and other associated support services so families are not marginalised and fully aware of the assistance they can receive from the local authority and other agencies. Lewisham Information and Sharing Assessment (LISA) and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are tools in which we can identify the needs of children at a much earlier stage and ensure families are linked in with the right support. We continue to train frontline staff on LISA and CAF to ensure better joint up working with colleagues and other agencies.

Currently families accommodated in our hostels receive some support from hostel staff but this is soon to be replaced with a floating support service to meet the needs of homeless households in hostels. Part of this proposal is looking at extending the provision of floating support to households in different types of temporary accommodation including the private rented sector. In line with current guidance and good practice we will be linking families in temporary accommodation into GPs, Sure Start services, children's centres and neighbourhood nurseries. We want to play a role in strengthening the strong interaction between health, housing, social care and education, particularly in Sure Start areas and supporting new initiatives such as Family Learning and the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot project which is linked to Jobcentre Plus and New Deal initiatives.

Vulnerable Adults

The Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention (SHIP) Service provides assessment and referral pathways into all supported housing for suitable single homeless people. The new service enables clients with support needs to access supported accommodation for their needs without the requirement of completing a homeless application. Floating support workers will also be placed within the SHIP team to prevent homelessness. The inclusion of floating support will have a significant impact on the number of single households in temporary accommodation (currently on average 8 single households go into temporary accommodation each week). Making the best use of supported accommodation is dependent on the ability to move people onto more settled housing once they are ready for independent living. Reducing silt-up in supported housing and increasing the number of people moved on are key issues.

We have 993 units of short-term supported housing and of these, 838 are funded exclusively by Supporting People and are available to the SHIP team for nomination. A further 155 units are jointly funded and vacancies are accessed through the Community Mental Health Team and the SHIP are responsible for managing the move on from both schemes i.e. Supporting People and the joint funded. Currently, there are no plans for any new provision of supported housing and so access is determined by the rate of

turnover. At present we have just over 250 people a year move on, at a rate of 26%.

A survey of 'move on' demand was conducted by the Supporting People Team in Summer 2007. The survey found a considerable amount of unmet demand for move on accommodation. Most people moving on from supported housing went either into Council or Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenancies. An issued identified as part of the survey was how RSLs operated the move on nominations and whether this could be contributing to a lack of move on opportunities. We will be working closely with our RSLs partners to improve 'move-on' opportunities.

The Private Rented Sector Development Project with the London Housing Foundation began in April 2008 to support the creation of resettlement pathways into the private rented sector. The pilot project tested an approach that utilises the private sector as the default resettlement option for people currently in the supported housing system. It focuses on how to increase move on from hostels and enabling individuals to access the private rented sector instead of entering the hostel system in the first place.

The 'silt-up' of supported accommodation in London is well documented and is evident in Lewisham. Silt up creates significant waste; economically due to high rents and costs of Supporting People and personally, due to the de-skilling and de-motivating nature that can occur being in the hostel system. By working with supported housing providers we can establish a coherent approach which allows the private rented sector to be a pathway into settled housing for non-priority, low support need clients who are ready to move on from supported housing. A clear nomination and allocation process will be determined and supported housing providers will revise their resettlement strategies in line with this.

The SHIP team provides a single assessment and preventative service for young single people. Three youth advice and assessment officers (jointly funded by housing and social services) are based in the SHIP team to carry out home visits and mediation for young people. The officers assess and refer them into supported housing rather than Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

We are working with the CLG Youth Homelessness advisor to develop a focused action plan for tackling Youth Homelessness as part of the review of our overall Homelessness Strategy. There is a cross Council team working on this who are looking at best practice from around the country. The Supporting People team are currently undertaking a review of young peoples supported housing services to ensure that the existing provision is meeting the support needs of young people in the borough.

Older and Vulnerable People

Lewisham's 'Ageing Well' Strategy was developed to support all older people in Lewisham 'age well' and continue to live active and independent lives. Ten per cent of residents in Lewisham are over 60, which is lower than the national average. It is estimated that nearly 16,000 people over 55 across the borough are living with a moderate or severe disability. In terms of housing

tenure, over 40% of older households own their home outright and a similar amount are in social housing. On behalf of us, Lewisham Homes currently manages 20 sheltered schemes and two extra care schemes. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment revealed that 3,000 homes across Lewisham do not currently meet the housing needs of an older member of the household due to identified health problems but the majority of older households felt their home could be adapted to suit their needs.

We are undertaking a detailed Older People's Housing Needs Assessment which is scheduled to complete in May 2009. The assessment looks at the supply of older peoples housing, the suitability of it as well as the future demand and support services required. The recommendations of the Needs Assessment regarding the suitability of the current housing stock for this clients group will be implemented to ensure the current and future needs of older people are being met.

The work of our Private Sector Housing team assists with the agenda to prevent homelessness with specific projects targeted at older and vulnerable people in Lewisham. The Staying Put project is a home improvement agency based with the Private Sector Housing team to assist older, vulnerable and disabled residents with a grant or loan application for adaptations and repairs works. The Staying Put team provides advice on availability of grants to help meet the cost of the works, arrange for detailed specifications to be drawn up, organise reputable builders to undertake the work and supervise the work on site. Over 2007/08, 42 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants were given totally £500,000. Over the next two years, 100 grants have been proposed costing £1 million.

Lewisham's Handyperson scheme is a free service which provides small repairs and adaptations to the homes of older, disabled and vulnerable residents living within the borough so they can remain living at home in a safe and independent environment. The Handyperson scheme is open to all private tenants and owner occupiers.

The SELHP have bid for further funding from the London Regional Housing Pot Targeted Funding Streams 2009-11 to continue with the Handyperson Scheme. The bid also looks to expand the Handyperson Scheme with the introduction of 'Small Decent Homes Grant' – this will be for works that are more complex but do not justify raising a loan. Coldbusters is another programme proposed as part of the bidding process. The programme will provide vulnerable households, mainly owner-occupiers with thermal comfort through insulation and heating systems. It is intended that the service in 2009-11 will be available to private landlords with tenants who are vulnerable as it is known that private rented properties tend to have a poor standard of thermal comfort.

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

People from BME communities are at disproportionate risk of social exclusion and homelessness and this is evidenced in Lewisham's homelessness statistics with nearly 50% of decisions coming from these communities. CLG commissioned research into the causes of homelessness amongst people in different BME communities and found the picture to be extremely varied and

complex. This strategy provides the opportunity to develop a more strategic approach in meeting the needs of BME households. We will be carrying out regular equalities monitoring of the homelessness service including the Housing Options Centre and SHIP to ensure that there service can be accessed easily by all. We will ensure that information on the services that are provided are available in different formats and different community languages. We want to ensure that all residents are aware of their housing options to prevent homelessness and we will work with community leaders and groups to develop communication materials that are relevant and available in the right places. We will also be looking at running more outreach surgeries as part of our goal of achieving a more integrated and proactive homelessness service.

Ex-offenders

The national population in custody on 31st May 2008 was 82,822, two per cent more than a year earlier. London Resettlement Board published the 'London Reducing Re-offending Action Plan 2007-2009' in July 2007, which outlines the London Resettlement Board's commitments in meeting the needs of offenders and reducing re-offending 2007-09. Accommodation is a key issue for released prisoners and it seeks to improve access to housing and accommodation services for offenders. Approximately one third of prisoners lose their home whilst in prison. All local prisons now have dedicated housing advisors and from April 2005 all local prisons are required to carry out housing needs assessments for every new prisoner, including those serving short sentences. This identifies those who require assistance closing down, sustaining, or transferring tenancies and Housing Benefit claims and those who need help finding accommodation for discharge.

The Supporting People programme currently funds three services for ex-offenders, two of which are for offenders suffering mental health problems and in all a total of 34 units are provided. Between June 2006 and July 2007, 157 offenders in Lewisham had accommodation problems, of these, 19 were of no fixed abode and 66 were in short term transient accommodation.

Part of the SHIP's remit is to work with ex-offenders in Lewisham to refer them, if appropriate into supported housing or signpost them to other agencies for assistance. We have developed the new Rent Incentive Scheme (RIS) to enable lower priority groups to access the initiative, which mean RIS provides a relevant housing option to ex-offenders to find accommodation in the private rented sector. It has been recommended through an update on the needs analysis for the Supporting People programme that the services for this particular client group needs to be reviewed to provide streamlined pathways into higher support services.

Drug and Alcohol Dependency

Drug use can both precede and occur as a result of homelessness. Drug use represents a profound barrier to housing or escaping homelessness but for users may act as a palliative to the problems of being homeless. We are committed to helping residents overcome substance misuse. Part of the Local Area Agreement is the inclusion of the national indicator 40: the number of drug users in effective treatment. It is anticipated that it will be 5 per cent (1418 users) in 2008/09 moving to 20% (1620 users) in 2010/11.

The Supporting People programme currently directly funds five services, which provide a total of 109 units for clients with substance misuse problems. However, a further eight services are provided for single homeless which are open to people with substance abuse. Therefore, a significant proportion of people with a substance misuse problem will be accommodated in single homelessness project. Current issues identified by the Supporting People Team are not about supply but about the way in which the services operate particularly about who can access services and the lack of move-on accommodation. A review is underway with the aim of reconfiguring the supply to meet the strategic needs of the borough and provide move-on by supporting the use of the private sector. Lewisham's Adult Drug Treatment Plan 2008/09 identifies a number of priorities relating to provision of housing:

- Ensure basic housing advice and 'sign posting' is available to all substance misuse clients to improve take-up and engagement with treatment.
- Provide opportunities for service user input into current housing services to inform future service developments
- Strengthen strategic links with Supporting People to maximise appropriate support packages for service users.
- Seek to increase appropriate accommodation spaces for substance misusing clients and substance misusing offenders.

The SHIP team plays an integral part in the reconfiguration as it will enable them to refer applicants with substance misuse to access appropriate services and support. The team works in partnership with agencies involved with substance abuse to deliver a more synchronized approach in addressing need.

Mental Health Problems

Mental health is a key concern for us and 'Promoting mental well being in Lewisham' (2002) is a strategy for how the NHS, Local Authority and the community can work together to improve mental well being of Lewisham. Our Strategic Housing Market Assessment showed that over 2% of the households surveyed were experiencing a mental health problem.

The services available for people with mental health problems compares well with other local authorities within the London area. The commissioning of mental health services is led by Lewisham Primary Care Trust and the delivery of the commissioning strategy is overseen by the Lewisham Joint Mental Health Partnership Board. There are currently 21 services for people with mental health problems which incorporates the provision of 379 accommodation units. A review of services by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) last year indicated a need to increase the number of places that offer medium level of support for people no longer requiring residential care placements. Increasing the number of step down units would release places in residential care, community hospital and challenging behaviour units. Supporting People have funded a move-on worker for a year and it is proposed to extend the post for another year to support referral and accessing appropriate accommodation.

Domestic Violence

Part of Lewisham's Local Area Agreement is the inclusion of the National Indicator 32: repeat incidents of domestic violence. No targets have been set for this year as 2008/09 will be used as the baseline figure. In 2007/08, the Housing Options Centre received 32 presentations for the reason of domestic violence. These only accounts for 5% of total presentations received in 2007/08 but this is still too many.

We have a well established Domestic Violence Forum which brings together many agencies and is maintained by the Council and provides an environment where all aspects of domestic violence are considered. The Best Value Review of domestic violence in 2004 identified that support services for victims of domestic violence were limited. In 2006/07 there were 2888 offences for domestic violence and from 2007 to date there have been 1584 offences. There are currently 89 users of the Linkline Domestic Violence service, which is a Supporting People funded service. In April 2008, the Support People programme funded Refuge to provide two Domestic Violence resettlement officers to provide support to victims so they are able to maintain their home and live a life free from abuse.

The South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP) has developed a Joint Working Agreement on Domestic Violence which outlines how the boroughs will work together to share information and good practice, ensuring that victims of domestic violence are given the highest possible service no matter what borough they live in.

The government, as part of its homelessness prevention agenda, has encouraged local authorities to set up 'sanctuaries' for victims of domestic violence in their own homes. There are many models for Sanctuary Schemes but essentially they provide a safe room within a home fitted with a number of safety measures. They are intended to provide victims with confidence and security to stay in their own home. Lewisham established its scheme in 2008 and has secured funding from Supporting People for another year. In 2010/11, the SELHP Homelessness Group will be looking into the feasibility of creating a sub-regional Sanctuary Scheme.

Lewisham Homes has developed a protocol for its tenants who are victims of Domestic Violence. We are actively working with housing management providers incorporate the protocol into their policies and procedures so there is a consistent approach in dealing with cases of domestic violence.

Priority Four: Promoting opportunities and independence for people in housing need by improving access to childcare, health, education, training and employment

We have identified the need to tackle the acute and chronic causes of homelessness which can only be achieved if agencies work together in a holistic way. Resolving homelessness and housing need issues are not just about the provision of 'bricks and mortar' but about finding the solutions to health inequalities, social exclusion, poverty and worklessness.

Actions we will be taking:

- We will work with training providers and JCP to ensure that adults have the opportunities to learn, get and keep jobs
- We will work with partners to provide access to childcare for families in hostel accommodation
- We will develop health promotion activities in hostels
- We will ensure all hostel residents are linked up with a GP

How will we know if we have been successful?

- Numbers of hostel residents signed up with GPs
- Numbers of people in temporary accommodation accessing education and training
- Numbers of people in hostel accommodation able to access childcare
- Number of health promotion activities run in hostels

Increasing access to health services to improve well-being and quality of life

The Department for Health set out to address health inequalities in '*Tackling health inequalities: A programme for action*' (2003) which highlighted key interventions such as improving poor housing to improve health outcomes. Our Housing Strategy seeks to improve the quality and sustainability of housing across all tenures. Underpinning this will be the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard in the social housing sector and in the private sector homes of our most vulnerable residents.

Guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005 (now the Department for Communities and Local Government) stated that '*it is essential that local authorities and health services work together to provide accessible and appropriate services if health inequalities and homelessness are to be tackled*'.

A strategy to tackle health inequalities in Lewisham has been developed in partnership with the PCT, the Council and other key partners. It sets out a programme for action over 2008-2010. The strategy will ensure that progress is made on areas which impact on health outcomes for local people including:

- the wider determinants of health including housing, benefits, education and employment
- teenage pregnancy
- smoking
- alcohol
- obesity
- mental health

The commitment to address health needs and health inequalities is demonstrated in Lewisham's Local Area Agreement which includes a number of improvement targets directly addressing specific health priorities and the wider determinants of health

We recognise that placing homeless families in B&B accommodation, even in emergency circumstances, can have detrimental impacts on those families. It can have damaging effects on the health and well-being of families, particularly children. Our homelessness service is forging a closer relationship with Lewisham Primary Care Trust and other health providers to link homeless families and single people into health services. We are ensuring that all families in temporary accommodation are linked up with a health visitor two weeks from when they took up the tenancy. We will ensure that residents in hostels received information on the local health services and are signed up with a GP. We will ensure that hostel staff, when carrying out assessments, identify any potential health problems and .

We have a very low incidence of rough sleeping in the borough. However, we acknowledge that rough sleepers, many of which have health problems, find it harder to access mainstream health services. Homeless people tend to access A&E to address medical concerns as they are not registered with GPs. There have been incidences where homeless people are discharged from hospital without having anywhere to go.

In 2003, the Department of Health issued guidance which was explicit about the role of hospital trusts in ensuring that homelessness is prevented for patients leaving hospital – ‘It is vital all hospitals consider the housing situation of patients to ensure that people are not discharged to inappropriate places, homeless or become homeless as a result of their stay in hospital’. It stated all acute hospitals should have formal admission and discharge policies which will ensure that homeless people are identified on admission and their pending discharge notified to relevant primary care services and to homeless service providers. We are reviewing the current Hospital Discharge Protocol due to the reconfiguration of the Homelessness Service. The Protocol will ensure that people leaving hospital have their housing and support needs assessed in time to make appropriate referrals in advance of their discharge date.

Tackling worklessness, raising aspirations and creating opportunity

The supply of social housing will face challenges in meeting demand for the foreseeable future, and pressure on allocations may increase further as demand grows and supply is impacted by a challenging development market. Efforts are being made by us, the Homes and Communities Agency, and our RSL partners, to sustain the supply of affordable housing through this period.

Nevertheless, in addition to increasing the supply of affordable housing, a new focus is required removing barriers to opportunity and employment, managing demand, and raising aspirations. Professor John Mills in his review of social housing, *‘Ends and means: the future role of social housing in England’*, emphasised the role of housing authorities in tackling worklessness amongst social housing tenants. The Government's forthcoming Housing Reform Green Paper and the new national regeneration framework make tackling worklessness a central theme. This is also a central aim of our Sustainable Community Strategy and is aligned with the work being done by the Lewisham Strategic Partnership's (LSP) Economic Development and Enterprise Board.

The mobility of residents in social housing can be affected by the housing benefit ‘trap’, low aspirations and stigmatisation, and the inaccessibility of employment. These challenges may be compounded by the difficulties faced in finding and sustaining employment through a recession. Equally, the relatively high rents and the associated housing benefit ‘trap’ of the private rented sector can undermine the ability of tenants to move into viable employment.

We are continually seeking new ways to prevent housing contributing to cycles of deprivation and worklessness, ensuring that the point entry for housing services is also the point at which other underlying barriers to employment are tackled. We intend to tackle these issues by ensuring that housing is part of the solution not the problem.

We are already working with our partners taking forward initiatives in tackling entrenched patterns of worklessness. We are exploring ways to co-locate and integrate housing services with access to training and employment services and benefits advice, improving the support available to help social housing tenants find work. These include work related services and events targeted at

particular neighbourhoods and estates, including encouraging new businesses and developments to hire local residents.

We are striving to improve the quality, availability and flexibility of childcare so that more parents and young mothers will be able to access training and employment. We are supporting people who are currently on Incapacity Benefit progress into employment, and the New Horizons project provides mentoring and support services that facilitate people entering or returning to employment. We are working to integrate these services with the social housing offer, offering not just a home, but a comprehensive and joined-up package of support.

Local housing providers are ideally placed to support this process, and have a great opportunity to engage with and support a wide range of residents who may need help and advice. We want to work closer with RSLs in future, to develop, provide and market education, training and advice to tenants, aligning statutory service provision with those additional services provided through RSLs themselves.

The development of new homes, along with the improvement of existing homes, offers an opportunity for construction training initiatives that not only have the potential to assist in reducing worklessness but can also increase the capacity of the construction industry. Apprenticeships are a government backed scheme to enable young people, especially, to access employment. The government plans are that 1 in 5 young people should follow an apprenticeship (currently the figure is less than 1 in 15). Lewisham College currently delivers around 300 apprenticeships each year working with a wide range of public and private sector employers, including Local Authorities. We have agreed to deliver a total of 100 apprenticeships by 2012 as part of the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme.

Housing providers in Lewisham such as Hyde, London and Quadrant and Phoenix, already have schemes to promote employment and training opportunities. We will use every opportunity to attract funding streams to Lewisham for these purposes. All RSLs, are expected to exploit such opportunities and we recommend affiliation to the Building Partnerships scheme in order to generate a pool of schemes that is sufficient to allow trainees to move relatively seamlessly from one site to another.

In addition to improving services and supporting opportunities for work, we will endeavour to overcome barriers that may prevent residents from entering employment. We are working with local employers to ensure that factors that often militate against social housing residents seeking work (such as child care needs, disabilities, health issues, lack of formal education or debt) are not hindrances to employability.

We are committed to meeting the child poverty pledge, including investment in early years child care, raising awareness of tax incentives for parents to take up paid employment and working to reduce the negative impact of the housing benefit system. The taper under which Housing Benefit is withdrawn remains a major barrier to work facing many residents, as it can leave residents worse off in work than out. This problem is particularly severe for private tenants on Housing Benefit and those in temporary accommodation, as their rents are

considerably higher than in the social rented sector. We want to maximise any funding that may be for initiatives to support tenants of all tenures affected by the benefits 'trap'. We are exploring the potential for the Discretionary Housing Payment to support top-up payments for those who would be worse off in work than out, and improved communication between the benefits service and other services.

Priority Five: Reducing Youth Homelessness

Greater detail on youth homelessness can be found in our Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy – *Secure Futures*, which sets out our response to addressing homelessness amongst young people and ensuring we are supporting them to reach their potential. Summarised below are the key points of *Secure Futures*.

Parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate young people is the main reason for homelessness in Lewisham. In 2003, this accounted for 53% of all homeless presentations made to Housing Options Centre and in 2007/08 it had increased to 67%. This issue is exacerbated by Lewisham having the second largest child population of all inner London boroughs, and the fact that the proportion of young people aged 16-24 will rise by 21% by the year 2016. The Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy – *Secure Futures* 2009-2014 has begun to address this concern but is strengthened by ensuring this focus is integrated within the wider Housing Strategy.

A dual approach to reducing youth homelessness and raising aspirations is required. This entails measures aimed at supporting young people to live as independently as possible, and to fulfil their potential. Scarce accommodation services are targeted at those in most need and most able to benefit from the opportunity by facilitating access to employment schemes, prioritising those in work or training for move-on accommodation, and ensuring that immediate need does not have to mean long term reliance.

Key measures to help young people to remain at home, raise their aspirations and ensure they can access a range of housing options are provided;

- Working with families and schools to prevent young people finding themselves unnecessarily homeless, improve understanding of available housing choices, and promote independent living skills and financial inclusion by educating young people on the nature and costs of different tenures
- Extending the remit of current floating support service, Lewisham Reach, to include support to people moving on into the private sector.

There is also scope for us to develop alternatives to social tenure that could prove attractive to young people, and so reduce demand for social housing. We are committed to promoting a mix of tenures that might be available to young people, particularly intermediate rented options, and working with landlords to create more flexible tenure options for young people. This includes:

- Combining more integrated support services for young people with a firmer approach to accessing temporary accommodation, including stricter rules for hostel residents.
- Increasing support for young people to enter the private rental sector, and targeting this support at those at risk of homelessness.
- Exploring with young disabled adults their housing aspirations and how the Council can help meet them
- Working with young people and the housing management providers to design individual 'life plans' encompassing the attainment of life skills, tenancy management, training and employment.

- We will explore the possibility of developing agreements with young homeless people seeking accommodation to commit to certain standards of behaviour, including staying out of trouble, observing curfews, or starting and remaining in employment, training or education. Compliance with the terms of the agreement will be taken into account when accessing move-on accommodation.

Delivery and Implementation

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is a 5 year strategy. However this strategy comes at a time of significant change in the housing market and institutional context for housing policy. The housing market and the housebuilding sector are facing unprecedented difficulties in the wake of the credit crunch, and the wider economy is in recession, creating serious challenges for policy making and delivery.

In order to ensure that the strategy is able to adapt it will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The actions falling under each of the strategic objectives are incorporated into service plans, team plans and individual performance plans and we use our performance framework to ensure they are delivered.

Throughout the plan we have identified performance measures under each of the 8 strategic objectives to enable us to measure outcomes. A number of these performance measures also feature in our LAA. Our Local Area Agreement (LAA) sets out the priorities for the borough and has been agreed between the Government, the local authority, the Local Strategic Partnership and other key partners.

Working in partnership to deliver the Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be monitored through the Sustainable Development Partnership of the LSP and Council structures, including the relevant Cabinet Member and the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Sustainable Development Partnership Board – a sub partnership group of the Local Strategic Partnership established recently to progress the priorities contained within the Regeneration Strategy, Housing Strategy and the Local Development Framework in order to meet the vision of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The following groups also have a role in monitoring the strategy:

Lewisham Homelessness Forum – group made up of statutory agencies and voluntary organisations who deliver a range of services to homeless people.

Housing & Disability Group – a group made up of council officers from social services, housing, occupational therapy and key representatives from the third sector to ensure the current housing issues, both strategic and operational, of disabled people in the borough are being met.

The performance indicators (PIs) set out in the report are also included in the Customer Services performance dashboard and reports are generated on a regular basis for the Directorate Management Team, the Executive Management team of the Council, Mayor and Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the LSP and the Sustainable Development Partnership and key partners.

Resources

Funding the Homelessness Prevention Strategy is driven by directorate strategies and policy framework documents – this includes the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. The Strategic Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's approach to the assets required to deliver excellent services to local people.

The General Fund and HRA provides revenue support to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy by funding and resourcing the strategic housing functions, of which, dealing with homelessness is one.

Below is the current estimate of General Fund and HRA resources available to support the strategic housing plans including homelessness over the next five years:

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Strategic Housing HRA *	3,659	3,455	3,445	3,627	3,627	17,813
Strategic Housing General Fund	2,928	3,445	3,427	3,411	3,394	16,605
Total	6,587	6,900	6,872	7,038	7,021	34,418

*These figures are still to be finalised.

In terms of resources explicitly for the delivering the homelessness service it is made up of £1.4 million from the General Fund and this is supported by grant funding of £190,000 from the department for Communities and Local Government, £260,000 from the Supporting People programme and funding from Private Sector Leasing (PSL). For the period 2009/10, the service received an additional £500,00 to prevent homelessness and enable the authority to achieve the temporary accommodation target by 2010. In 2010, the service will be impacted by changes to the PSL funding arrangements and the Council will ensure that future service delivery is not affected.

The Homelessness Service runs a number of initiatives to prevent homelessness and draws down resources from various funding streams to undertake this work:

	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	Total £
Rent Incentive Scheme – Families	100,000	100,000	100,000	300,000
Rent Incentive Scheme administered by SHIP (Source: SP, Probation)	50,000	50,000	50,000	150,000
Overcrowding Pathfinder (Source: CLG)	120,000	-	-	120,000

	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	Total £
Mortgage Support (Source: CLG)	85,000	-	-	85,000
Disabled Facilities Grants	707,000	707,000	707,000	2,121,000
Discretionary Grants	800,000	800,000	800,000	2,400,000
Cash Incentive Scheme	490,000	300,000	300,000	1,090,000
Total	2,352,000	1,957,000	1,957,000	6,266,000

In 2008/09, the South East London Housing Partnership received £50,000 from CLG to fund a peer education project in schools across the sub-region. St. Christopher's Fellowship will be running the project on behalf of the sub-region over 2009/10.

The SELHP has also received £60,000 grant funding from CLG for overcrowding work in 2009/10 with a further £50,000 for the sub-region to employ an overcrowding co-ordinator.

Appendix 1: Homelessness Review

In 2007, Lewisham Council commissioned Opinion Research Services to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which incorporated a comprehensive housing needs survey of 1500 households across all tenures. Lewisham's Strategic Housing Market Assessment provided robust evidence to enable the authority to develop planning and housing policies as it identifies the level of need and demand for housing.

Key housing facts

Tenure:

- More households in Lewisham are now living in the private rented sector from only 14% in 2001 to nearly 30% in 2007. Reasons given for this shift is the growth in the buy-to-let market and the affordability of the private rented sector. For example, 50% of private rented households in Lewisham occupy part of a converted dwelling
- Owner-occupation sector has fallen from 51% in 2001 to 40% in 2007
- Social rented sector also fallen from 36% in 2001 to 30% in 2007

House Prices and Rents:

- Average house prices in Lewisham have doubled since January 2001, going from £137,303 to £288,009 at the peak in April 2008.
- Since the economic downturn, the average house price in Lewisham is now £261,056 (November 2008) and it is predicted that house prices will drop a further 10% in 2009
- Average private rents in Lewisham (based on the lowest quartile) are approximately £212 per week but can increase up to £300 per week for properties which have four bedrooms or more.
- Local authority rents are lower than housing association rents

Property Size	Housing Corporation Target Rent	Local Authority Rent	Private Rent Lowest Quartile
Bedsit/1 bedroom	77.48	66.67	144.23
2 bedrooms	92.14	79.28	196.00
3 bedrooms	92.71	90.51	230.77
4+ bedrooms	103.73	101.65	300.00

- Just over one in five (22.9%) private rented households receives housing benefit. This indicates that the private rented sector is only partially being supported by income from housing benefit, with the majority of households receiving no assistance.
- Over two-thirds of social tenants in Lewisham receive full or partial housing benefit.

Housing Condition

- At the 1st April 2008, Lewisham Council housing stock was 50% non-decent.

- Our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) showed that 20.2% of all households across Lewisham reported at least one serious problem with their property (based on perception only)

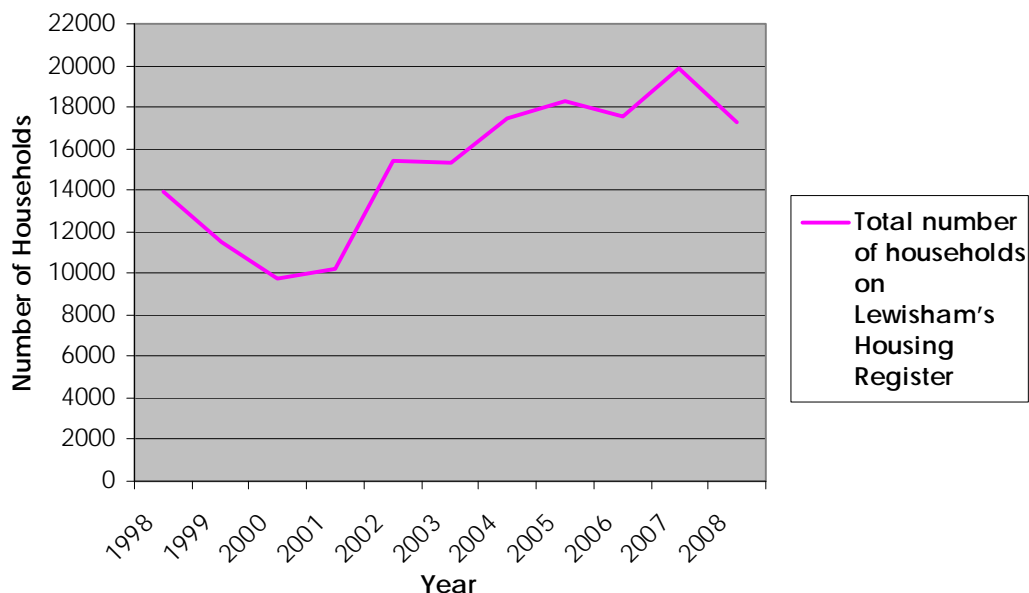
Housing Demand

In the last 2 years there has seen a sharp fall in the number of local authority properties being sold through the Right to Buy, making 2005-06 and 2006-07 the first years that the supply of new affordable housing in London exceeded losses through Right to Buy.

The loss of social housing stock in London led to almost a decade of increasing numbers of homeless households being housed in temporary accommodation by local authorities. In 2006, the numbers of households in temporary accommodation in London began to decline for the first time since 1997, however at a much lower rate of improvement than that experienced in other regions of the UK. Analysis from GLA indicates that the average length of stay in temporary housing has also increased sharply, with 62% of households in such accommodation remaining there for in excess of one year in 2006.

Lewisham's current homelessness trends are a reflection of the London picture. In 1998, there were approximately 14,000 households on Lewisham's Housing Register and the highest point was in April 2007 with 19,850 but by April 2008 this has dropped down to 17,256.

Total number of households on Lewisham's Housing Register



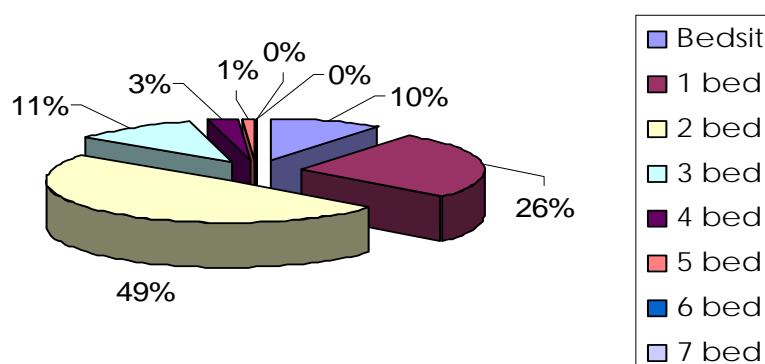
The demand for two and three bedroom properties has remained largely static over the past four years. There has been a significant drop in the demand for one bedroom properties although this is still the highest demand.

	Total on Housing register	1 bedroom need	2 bedroom need	3 bedroom need	More than 3 bed need
2004/05	18279	10037 (55%)	4691 (26%)	2641 (14%)	910 (5%)
2005/06	17535	8505 (49%)	4924 (28%)	3019 (17%)	1001 (6%)
2006/07	19850	8394 (42%)	5241 (26%)	3153 (16%)	1000 (5%)
2007/08	17256	7621 (44%)	5416 (31%)	3113 (18%)	1106 (6%)

**HSSA data*

The bed-size demand from homeless households on the Housing Register shows that nearly 50% require 2 bed room properties and 26% require a property with 4 bedrooms.

Bed size required by homeless households on Lewisham's Housing Register in 2007



Social housing in Lewisham

There has been a significant drop in the number of local authority dwellings; this is partly due to some Right-to-Buys but mostly due to Lewisham successfully transferring housing stock to housing associations in 2007/08 to meet its decent home obligations.

Year	Local Authority Dwellings	Registered Social Landlord Dwellings	Total
2005	26744	8469	35213
2006	26188	8588	34776
2007	25939	8909	34848
2008	19810	15448	35258

**HSSA data*

Over two-thirds of social tenants in Lewisham receive full or partial housing benefit. This means indicates that many would struggle to maintain their social tenancy without the support of benefits. This yet again raises the issue of affordability, even in the social rented sector.

Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord letting information from 2002-2008

There was a significant drop in the number of lettings to homeless households in 2005 as can be seen from the table below. We introduced Choice Based Lettings (CBL) for one bed households in May 2002. This was extended to larger properties in March 2005 and therefore it appears from the information below that the introduction of CBL has had a significant impact on the

numbers of households moving out of temporary accommodation. Up until May 2008, the Allocations Policy enabled homeless households to bid and refuse offers for 6 months without penalty. Changes were made to the Allocations Policy in May 2008 and we can now give one offer to a homeless household at any time from the date their application is accepted. We have also made changes to increase the proportion of properties which are offered to homeless households. Although there were only 493 lets in 2007/08, 50% of those went to homeless households and this is similar to lettings from Registered Social Landlords.

	Total new tenant Lettings (excluding transfers and mutual exchange)	Local Authority lettings to homeless**	Total RSL lettings	RSL lettings to homeless
2002/03	1085	643 (59%)	550	117 (21%)
2003/04	969	548 (57%)	523	140 (27%)
2004/05	1280	761 (59%)	684	358 (52%)
2005/06	1117	315 (28%)	522	158 (30%)
2006/07	1222	228 (19%)	512	164 (32%)
2007/08	493	246 (50%)	688	315 (46%)

**HSSA returns*

****Assumes that homeless letting are being recorded as new lettings not transfers on HSSA return**

In 2007/08, 71% of homeless households had to wait two years or more to receive a permanent offer of social housing.

Average waiting for homeless households to receive a permanent offer through Homesearch (Choice Based Lettings Scheme) in 2007/08						
Under 6 months	6 - 12 months	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5 years and above
19 (3%)	38 (7%)	98 (18%)	198 (36%)	134 (25%)	42 (8%)	16 (3%)

**From P1e Data: waiting time calculated from date into TA*

The waiting times for homeless households according to the size of property the household needs is shown in the table below. It is apparent that homeless households are waiting the longest for bed-sit accommodation (1057 days) and four bedroom properties (1499 days).

Housing applicants and transfers			Homeless Households (from date of homeless decision)	
	No. of lets	No. of days on register	No. of lets	No. of days on register
0 Bed	70	982	36	1057
1 Bed	320	848	131	854

2 Bed	202	1195	317	901
3 Bed	93	1586	135	938
4 Bed	13	851	10	1499
5 Bed	3	1598	1	1197
6 Bed	0	0	1	1034

*** Academy Data**

Migration

In 2005/06 a total of 6,770 new National Insurance numbers were issued to non-UK nationals in Lewisham. This group of workers represent around 2.7% of all people residing in the local authority. This figure relates only to employees who have received new National Insurance (NI) numbers and does not include any of their dependents. Around 15% of all new national insurance registrations in Lewisham were issued to Polish nationals. This group therefore represents around 0.4% of the total population of the authority, but the figure could be higher as this only takes into account those with a NI number. However, the number of migrant workers is still likely to have some major impact upon the housing market of Lewisham. In particular, migrant workers tend to occupy private rented dwellings which could be a factor in the growth of the private rented sector in Lewisham.

A key factor which influences how the housing market of Lewisham develops in the future is the number of current households who are seeking to move. Where these households want to move to and the type and tenure of dwellings they are seeking will shape the requirement for the future provision of housing in Lewisham. The SHMA showed that 38% of respondents wanted to move with the remaining 62% content to remain in their current property. For households wanting to move, 15% wanted to move because of their current property being too small. However, 29% of households wanted to stay in the same area.

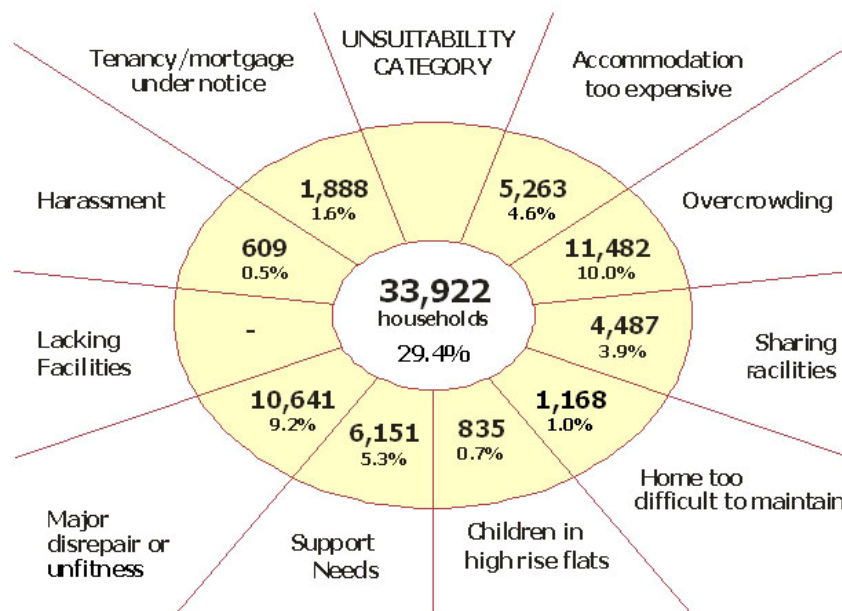
The SHMA also found that 5.5% of households had at least one member leave in the previous twelve months. Young people leaving home for the first time formed a significant group of those who left the household. Around 60% of the people who left stayed within Lewisham and around 50% of these moved into private rented accommodation.

Housing Need

The SHMA revealed that a total of 33,922 households across Lewisham were assessed as living in unsuitable housing. Unsuitable housing refers to any households that are homeless or with insecure tenure, there is a mismatch of household and dwelling size, poor amenities and conditions and social needs. This means that 29% of all established households in Lewisham are in unsuitable housing. Of the 33,922 households living in unsuitable housing, they are made up of the following tenures types and household characteristics:

- 41.2% households renting from social landlords
- 40.9% households renting privately
- 14% owner-occupiers
- One in five of all households in unsuitable housing is a lone parent
- One in ten of all households in unsuitable housing is a single pensioner or pensioner couple

However, many of these households did not need to move to resolve their housing issue as in-situ solutions could be more appropriate i.e. undertaking repairs or potentially extending the property. After discounting households whose needs do not require alternative housing provision only 10,648 households in Lewisham remain in unsuitable housing who need to move but can not afford to rent or buy market housing.



**Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment – Established households living in unsuitable housing*

The SHMA revealed that 11,300 households are currently living in overcrowded housing, which is 10.2% of all households in Lewisham. However, only around 3% of households in owner occupied accommodation were overcrowded, 12% of those in social rent and nearly 18% of those in private rented housing. As many as 41,850 households (52%) technically under-occupy their property – over a third of these by two bedrooms or more. 38% of households report that they want to move, usually because their current home is too small (SHMA 2007).

Tackling this issue of overcrowding is a key concern for us. Data on our housing register indicates that there are over 3,400 overcrowded households and 1500 of these households require 3 bedrooms or more. Overcrowded households constitute 10% of the overall housing register. Out of 256 family sized lets available, 252 of them went to overcrowded households. Lewisham's Allocations Policy is being reviewed to ensure that it complies with recent legislation and to increase transparency over letting of social home.

	Bed Size Requirement			
Banding	3	4	5	Total
A (AA)	100	45	24	169
B	325	150	20	495
C	720	152	11	883
Total	1145	347	55	1547

Overcrowded households on Lewisham's Housing Register (Sept 2008) and their bed size requirements

Black and Minority Ethnic Households:

- Variations across housing tenure – Mixed and Black Caribbean groups are more likely to be found in the social rented sector and Asian and Other White groups mainly rent privately
- Over 20% of all Black African households were overcrowded however, all BME groups were more likely to be in overcrowded accommodation compared to White British households
- All BME groups are more likely to be in unsuitable housing than White British households

Older People:

- 23.4% of all households contain at least one older member
- Over 40% of older households own their home outright, 44% are in the social rented sector and a small proportion privately rent
- 60% of all older households contained at least one member suffering a self reported health problem
- Majority of households containing older persons where there home was not meeting their housing needs due to a health problem did not need to move
- 17% of households of all older persons and 24% of households with some older persons felt that they would like to move. Majority wanted to move because the layout of their home was unsuitable or too large
- Nearly 30% of all household respondents aged over 60 years felt that it was likely they would consider moving to a bungalow in the future and nearly 20% were also likely to consider sheltered housing or a flat in a Council/Housing Association block for older people

Vulnerable Groups with support needs:

- In total 37,850 (15%) people living in Lewisham reported as having a health problem and 32,750 households contained at least one member with a health problem. Of the household members with a health problem, 16% did not currently have their care or support needs met
- 31% of households which had someone with a health problem felt that this affected their housing requirements. Of these households, 62% felt their current home did not meet their health needs
- For those households who felt that their current home does not satisfactorily meet housing needs due to health problems, 49% thought that their current home could be adapted to meet their needs whilst 14% felt that they would need to move to another home which was more suitable to their needs

Housing Requirements over the next 5 years

The SHMA shows that we require 6,775 net additional dwellings over the next five years. This is calculated by considering the number of new households in the area i.e. both newly forming households and those projected to migrate here against those properties likely to be vacated by households who are moving out of the area or following household dissolution. The requirement for social rented housing is higher than this total – with the number of households in housing need and unlikely to be re-housed within the existing housing stock in the borough projected to be 9,757 dwellings over the 5 year period.

Lewisham - Homelessness

The Housing Act 1996 Part VII (Homelessness) contains the legal duty a local authority has to individuals and families who are homeless or are threatened with homelessness. Under the Act a local authority must consider whether a homeless person is eligible for assistance; homeless; in priority need; has not made themselves intentionally homeless; and has a local connection.

Information on local housing authorities' activities under homelessness legislation is collected through the quarterly P1E return to Communities and Local Government (CLG). We have also developed a new comprehensive performance framework for the homelessness service which enables us to monitor all aspects of service delivery – temporary accommodation, household type, length of stay, approaches, decisions, reviews and prevention. As well as a new performance framework, we have developed a new team in the Homelessness Service – the Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention Team (SHIP). SHIP is the central assessment and referral service for single people with housing needs. The SHIP team will make an assessment and on that basis refer the applicant to supported housing or alternatively provide other forms of help i.e. floating support, mediation, housing advice or assistance to access the private rented sector.

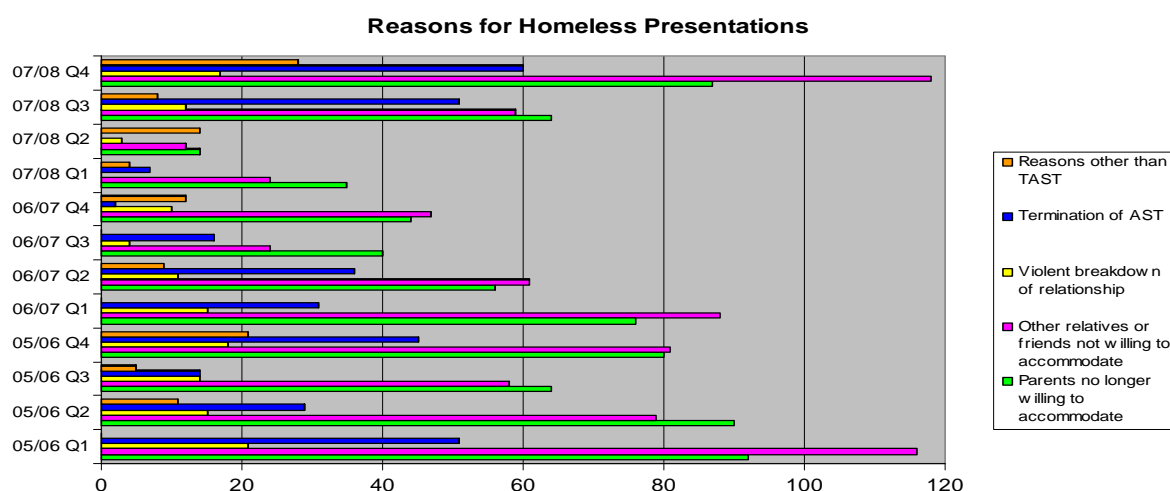
The next section of the Homelessness Strategy provides a complete analysis of the homelessness trends in Lewisham compared to the national and London picture.

Approaches to Lewisham's Homelessness Service

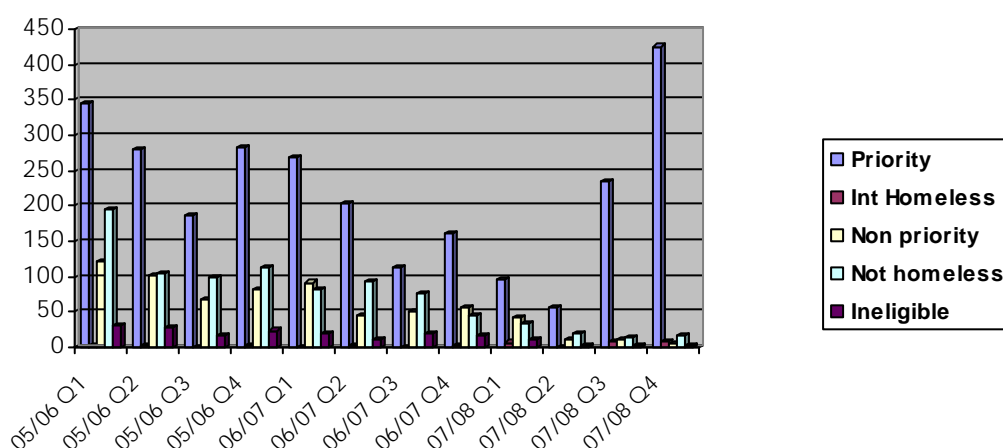
In December 2008, 744 people approached our Housing Options Centre (HOC) for assistance of which 70% were families and 30% were single people. The number approaching has fallen by 30% from December 2007. Only 4% of people approaching the HOC were from 16 and 17 year olds. Over the past year, we have placed greater emphasis on homelessness prevention activities and over 2008/09, we have prevented homelessness in 63 cases. The establishment of the Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention Team (SHIP) in August 2008 has enabled us to begin to address homelessness amongst single people more proactively and effectively. Data available from the SHIP team from September 2008, shows that they have seen 622 single people of which 15% were 16 and 17 year olds.

Main reasons for homelessness

From April 2005 until September 2007, homelessness acceptances were decreasing but in the last two quarters of 2007/08 there was a sharp increase in the number of homelessness acceptances due to a number of cases pending decisions and this has now been dealt with. The main reasons for homelessness in Lewisham are parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate. In 2003, this accounted for 53% of all presentations made to Housing Options Centre and in 2007/08 it had increased to 67%. The second most common reason for loss of last settled address was termination of an assured short-hold tenancy. In 2007/08 this accounted for 19% of presentations were in 2002/03, it accounted for 13.3%. The graph below show the reasons made for applying as homeless from April 2005 to March 2008.



Homelessness Decisions



Priority Need

The largest reason for giving priority status to a homelessness application is because the applicant has dependent children. In 2000/2001, 82% of all homelessness decisions were given priority need status and this is a similar figure for 2007/08 with 80% of homeless decisions given this status. A total of 812 applicants were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need in 2007/08. Pregnant women over the past

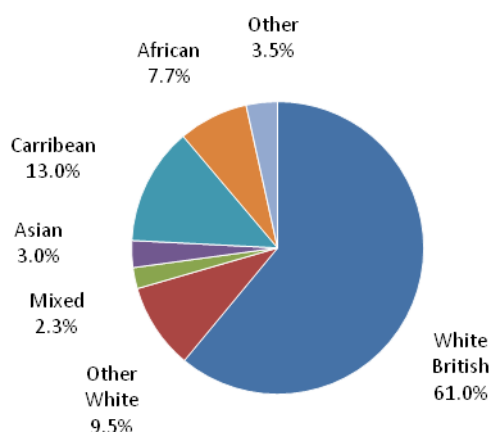
three years have accounted for nearly 20% of those given priority need status. The next highest priority need categories for 2007/08 were 16/17 year olds and applicants vulnerable by physical disability with 7% respectively and 4% from applicants vulnerable as a result of mental disability. The average time to make a decision on a homelessness application has improved significantly – in December 2007 on average we were taking 151 days to make a decision and this has fallen to 41 days in December 2008.

Applicant	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
With Dependent Children	532	392	500
Pregnant Applicant	207	140	110
16/17 years old	95	79	55
Physical disability	55	20	54
Mental illness	62	29	31
Vulnerable due to leaving custody/remand	11	16	14
Old age	27	10	12
Fleeing violence	16	5	6
18-20 year old in care	6	4	4
Alcohol dependency	1	0	1
Vulnerable due to leaving HM Forces	1	2	1
Drug dependency	4	0	0
Former asylum seeker	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to care	3	2	0
Fleeing domestic violence	5	2	0
Other	77	33	24
Total	1102	734	812

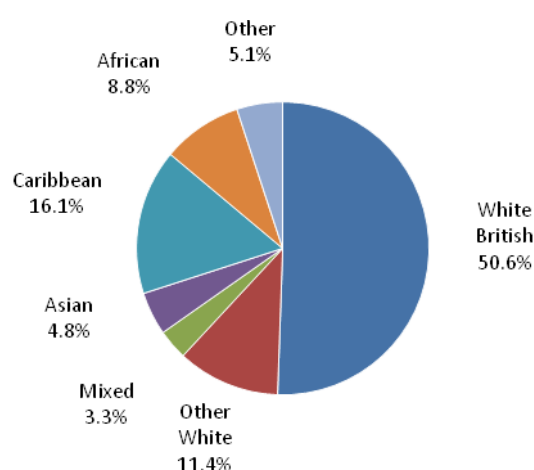
Statutory Homelessness and Ethnicity

At the time of the 2001 Census, BME households made up 39% compared to White British households with 61%. The data from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 reveals that BME households make up nearly 50% of Lewisham's population.

Ethnicity of Household Respondent 2001 (Source: UK Census of Population 2001)



Ethnicity of Household Respondent 2007 (Source: SHMA 2007)



There is still an over representation of black and minority ethnic applicants for homelessness. Black African and Caribbean households make up nearly 25% of the population and the table below shows that 49% of homelessness decisions came from this section of the community. The figures show that breakdown of ethnicity for all decisions made are consistent with the breakdown for each individual class of decision. This would suggest that there is no apparent favouring or discrimination against particularly groups in relation to decisions made.

Statutory Homeless Decisions by Ethnicity in 2007/08 (Housing Options Centre)

	White	African and Caribbean	Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	Other Ethnic Origin	Not known	Total
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	207	389	15	75	129	815
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so	5	13	0	2	4	24
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	23	34	1	5	8	71
Eligible, but not homeless	17	46	4	5	13	85
Ineligible	0	11	2	0	5	18
Total	252 (25%)	493 (49%)	22 (2%)	87 (9%)	159 (16%)	1013 (100%)

Non Priority Homelessness

In 2007/08, only 71 households in 2007/08 were found to be homeless but not in priority need. Non-priority households tend to consist of single adults or childless couples and the statutory duty of the Council is to provide advice and assistance rather than re-housing. Our homelessness service has been carrying out more home visits, putting place more robust procedures to determine eligibility and assisting customers to access the private rented sector. The Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention (SHIP) team is now working with these households who are found to be homeless but not in priority need by providing effective housing advice and assistance to find housing solutions.

Intentionally Homeless Households

Intentionally homeless households tend to consist of households who are evicted from their tenancies for breaches such a nuisance or rent arrears. In the last homelessness review there was a concern that the decisions regarding intentionality were not being reported. However, monitoring has improved in this area and in 2007/08, 24 applicants were deemed eligible, homelessness, in priority need but intentionally so which amounts to 2% of all decisions made.

Ex-offenders

Research suggests that a number of ex-offenders are likely to experience housing difficulties and are likely to re-offend if they do not find satisfactory and settled accommodation. In 2007/08, applicants vulnerable as a result of being in custody or remand accounted for only 2% of those in priority need, which is a total of 14 applicants. Providing appropriate housing and support for ex-offenders is an important part of the efforts to reduce re-offending in the borough.

Rough Sleepers & Single Homelessness

Rough sleeping in Lewisham has been historically low. In 2002/03, the official Rough Sleeper Count was one and the count carried out on 27th March 2008 showed that there were two rough sleepers in Lewisham. There is still a concern about the under-reported incidence of 'hidden' homelessness and the extent of 'sofa-surfing' where single homeless people are living insecurely on friends' sofas and floors. It is intended that the new approach to preventing homelessness and the introduction of the SHIP team will enable these households to secure appropriate accommodation and help.

Ineligible Households

The last review carried out in 2002/03 indicated that 42 households were found to be ineligible and this has more than halved compared to 2007/08 with only 18 households, 2% of all decisions made.

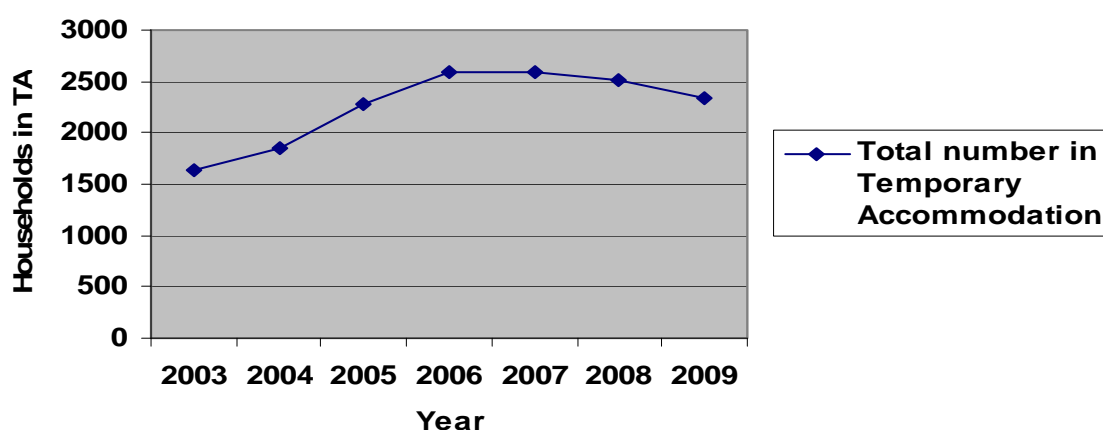
Temporary Accommodation Usage

Applicants to the Council's Housing Options Centre are placed in interim accommodation under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII – Homelessness). Placements are made where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant is homeless and in priority need.

We recognise the unsuitability of Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation for homeless households. However, increasing pressures on the service has meant that B&B accommodation has been used to resolve emergency situations. In December 2007, we had 83 households in B&B accommodation but by December 2008, we placed only 47 households in B&B accommodation. We are determined to reduce the reliance on B&B accommodation in emergencies and utilise all housing options i.e. hostels and the private rented sector to provide appropriate accommodation.

Temporary accommodation, its usage and supply, is a priority issue for our Homelessness Strategy. Local authorities are tasked with halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. For Lewisham, this means a target of 877 households in temporary accommodation by 2010/11. Numbers in temporary accommodation have continued to rise since the last Strategy was published. In 2003 there were 1640 households in temporary accommodation and by 30th June there were 2333 households in temporary accommodation. From the graph below, we are now making progress in reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation and data from December 2008 reports that we have 1995 households living in temporary accommodation.

Total number in Temporary Accommodation



The table below shows the number of households moving out of temporary accommodation in each quarter from 2005/06 until the last quarter of 2007/08.

Reason	05/06 Q1	05/06 Q2	05/06 Q3	05/06 Q4	Year end 05/06	06/07 Q1	06/07 Q2	06/07 Q3	06/07 Q4	Year end 06/07	07/08 Q1	07/08 Q2	07/08 Q3	07/08 Q4	Year end 07/08
Ceased to be eligible	3	1	3	0	7	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally homeless	1	0	0	0	1	0	9	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0
Accepted part 6 offer	147	97	72	89	405	76	74	129	195	474	147	145	126	127	545
Refused part 6 offer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accepted assured tenancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accepted qualifying offer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	151	98	75	89	413	76	86	129	195	483	147	145	126	127	545

Over the past three years, 1441 households left temporary accommodation. In 2007/08, the number of households leaving temporary accommodation was 545, which compares favourably with the numbers entering temporary accommodation which stood at 490.

Profile of Temporary Accommodation

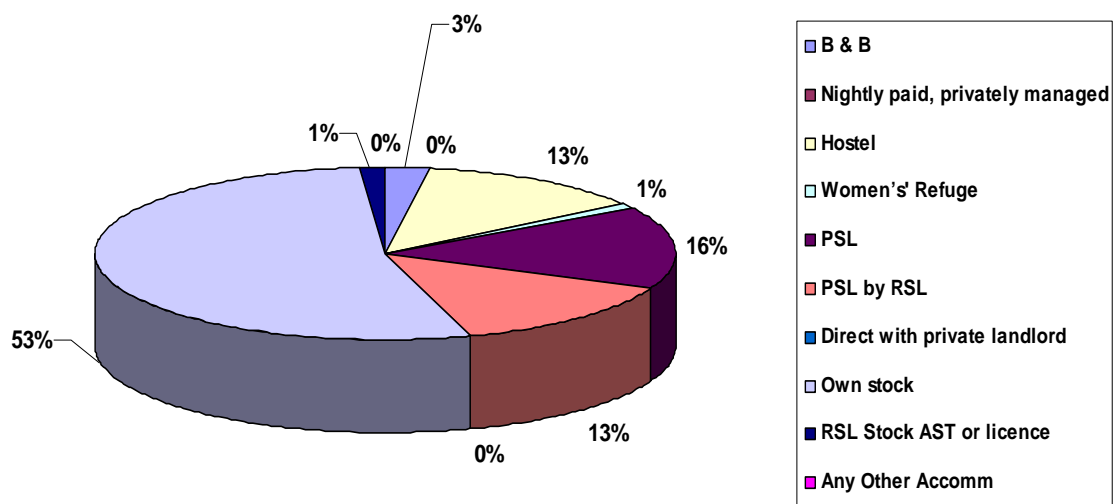
The Council uses a range of temporary accommodation. In the past two years, the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation has increased in response to emergency situations. However, households are remaining longer in Bed & Breakfast due to lack of move-on from Private Sector Leasing, hostel and Council stock properties into permanent settled accommodation.

- **Hostel Accommodation** - Lewisham Council has 364 hostel units for homeless households which provides a total of 750 bed spaces
- **Refuge for Women** – 16 households are accommodated within the women's refuges in Lewisham and outside of the borough

- **Council's Private Sector Leasing (PSL)** – Lewisham's in-house PSL scheme provides 440 units
- **Registered Social Landlords' PSL** – Lewisham has contracts with Avenue Lettings and Hyde Housing Association to provide PSL accommodation. As at 31st December 2007, there were 65 PSL properties with Avenue Lettings and 242 with Hyde Housing Association. Lewisham Council has agreed to continue using 50 Avenue Lettings properties until April 2009

Over half of the accommodation used for temporary accommodation is provided from the Council's own housing stock and just over 30 % is provided through Private Sector Leasing which can be seen in pie-chart below.

Type of Temporary Accommodation Used in 2007/08



As at the 31st March 2008, 637 applicants were deemed 'homeless at home' and 58% of these were households with dependent children or pregnant.

Lewisham Council Housing Stock

The Council no longer directly manages its housing stock. We have pursued a mixed approach in achieving decent homes which incorporates a borough-wide Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and a number of stock transfers to housing associations.

Lewisham Homes, the Council's ALMO manages the majority of our housing stock, with approximately 12,000 tenanted properties and 4,600 leaseholder properties.

Tenanted and leasehold properties in Brockley are managed by the Council's Private Finance Initiative - Regenter B3. Regenter B3 is a consortium of Pinnacle housing management, Higgins Construction and Equipe which has entered into a 30 year contract with us to manage, refurbish and maintain the properties.

In December 2007, we transferred housing stock in the south of the borough to a newly created housing association, Phoenix Community Housing. Properties in Grove Park transferred to London and Quadrant in July 2008 and Foreshore transferred to Hyde Housing Association in August 2008. In 2009, Orchard Estate and Village Court transferred to Broomleigh Housing Association. This stock will now be recorded as Registered Social Landlord for the purposes of central government records. We have entered into a contractual arrangement with all these organisations to use 5% of the total tenanted stock as temporary accommodation. The breakdown of this can be found in the table below. All future stock transfers will be obliged to follow this arrangement.

	Total Tenanted Stock	5% as Temporary Accommodation
Lewisham Homes (ALM0)	12,023	601
Regenta B3 (Brockley PFI)	1,344	67
Grove Park Stock Transfer	1,447	72
Phoenix Community Housing Stock Transfer	5,504	275
Orchard Estate & Village Stock Transfer	61	3
Lee Stock Transfer	421	21
Chrysalis (3 stock transfer areas)	2,392	120
Total	23,192	1,159

Over the past year a data cleansing exercise has been undertaken to verify the data on the clients in temporary accommodation in order to determine how many properties can be converted from temporary to permanent properties. Current arrangements with the housing providers only enable us to convert properties where the client has less than £500 arrears. Also, under the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, properties can only be offered to clients to discharge the homeless duty if they are suitable for the household.

There are a considerable number of households in accommodation which is not suitable size for their needs evidenced by the table below. We have agreed to offer households who are overcrowded by one bedroom only, their temporary accommodation as a permanent offer. However if this is refused, we cannot discharge duty as the property would be deemed to be unsuitable for them. These figures are at 31st December 2007 and do not take account of any additional properties which could now be offered to clients as a suitable offer due to the changes in the allocation policy regarding overcrowding.

	PF14	Brockley	Chrysalis	Grove Park	Lewisham Homes	Phoenix	TOTAL
Reason							
Property wrong size for household needs	24	23	24	29	329	142	571
Conversion- temporary to permanent	4	3	3	11	111	63	195
Awaiting decision	8	8	11	4	110	39	180
Decant	0	0	0	0	159	0	159
Miscellaneous reasons why property cannot be converted (medical etc)	8	8	16	11	105	4	152
No longer entitled to Temporary Accommodation	7	6	10	4	55	20	102
Unable to convert due to arrears	7	3	8	5	82		105
Total	58	51	72	64	951	268	1464

Appendix 2: Supporting People funded services

Provider	Service Name	Service Type	Units
Abbeyfield Deptford	Abbeyfield Deptford	Older People	5
Abbeyfield UK	Abbeyfield Redhouse	Older People	13
Access for Living	Access for Living	Learning Disability	26
Anchor Trust	Anchor Trust Knights Court	Older People	47
Anchor Trust	Anchor Trust Tony Law House	Older People	20
ARP	ARP 2 nd stage	Substance Misuse	22
ARP	ARP Bromley Rd 1 st Stage	Substance Misuse	13
ARP	ARP Evelyn wet schemes	Substance Misuse	8
ARP	ARP Floating Support Service	Substance Misuse	45
Aurora Options	Aurora Options Geoffrey Road	Learning Disability	2
Bourne Housing	Bourne Housing Merbury Close	Older People	39
Broadway Real Lettings	Broadway Real Lettings (private rented sector access)	Single Homeless	
Broomleigh Housing Association	Broomleigh Lambcroft & Aldersgrove Avenue	Older People	31
CARA	Cara Lewisham	Single Homeless	5
Care for Community Living (CCL) Ltd.	Care for Community Living (CCL) Ltd.	Mental Health	27
Carr Gomm	Carr Gomm Lewisham	Single Homeless	42
Carr Gomm	Carr Gomm Pepys Road	Learning Disability	6
Casa	Casa Tressillian Road Service	Learning Disability	15
Centrepont	Centrepont Breakspears TP Service	Mother & Baby	9
Centrepont	Centrepont Haberdasher House	Young People	7
Centrepont	Centrepont Mansion House	Young People	8
Centrepont	Centrepont Safer Communities Floating Support	Young People	15
Community Housing Group	CHG Teenage Parents Floating Support Service	Mother & Baby	15
Community Housing Group	CHG YP Floating Support Service	Young People	36
Dinardo Ltd.	Dinardo Ltd.: Fairway Lodge	Mental Health	46
ECHG / TRG	ECHG Lewisham Supported	Single Homeless	29
Ekaya Housing Association	Ekaya Aziza House Park Rise	Mother & Baby	8
Ekaya Housing Association (St Michaels)	Ekaya St Michaels	Mother & Baby	22
Equinox	Equinox New Cross	Mental Health	10

	Services		
Equinox	Equinox Ringstead Road	Mental Health	4
Equinox	Equinox Vesta Road Project	Mental Health	10
Family Mosaic	Family Mosaic: Honor Oak Dispersed Supported Scheme	Mental Health	12
Family Welfare Association	Family Welfare Association – Housing and Community Mental Health Service	Mental Health	16
Habinteg	Habinteg	Physical Disability	8
Hestia (3 Borough)	3 Borough HIV Floating Support Service	HIV	15
Hexagon Housing Association Ltd	Hexagon Newstead Road.	Mental Health	12
Housing 21	Housing 21 Cedar & Cinnamon Court	Older People	80
In Touch	in touch Shared Ownership Pilot	Learning Disability	1
In Touch	In Touch Shardeloes Road	Learning Disability	3
in touch (part of the Hyde Group)	in touch Lewisham Park	Mental Health	6
in touch (part of the Hyde Group)	in touch MH Floating Support	Mental Health	21
In Touch Support	In Touch Lewisham Dispersed service for older people	Older People	90
In Touch Support	In Touch Rowan Court – sheltered housing	Older People	19
In Touch Support	In Touch Young People Floating Support Service	Young People	40
Kairos	Kairos Lewisham	Substance Misuse	21
KeyRing	Keyring New Cross/Lower Sydenham	Learning Disability	18
LBL	Homeless Persons Hostels	Single Homeless	
LBL	Honor Lea Rehabilitation Services	Mental Health	55
LBL	LBL:The Mental Health Adult Placement Scheme	Mental Health	28
LBL	Linkline Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence	100
LBL	Rokeby House	Single Homeless	25
LBL CST	24 Hour & Outreach	Learning Disability	25
LBL Homeshare	LBL Homeshare Adult Placement	Learning Disability	27
LBL Linkline	LBL Linkline designated – will be entering steady state, may become block gross	Older People	1052
LBL Linkline	LBL Linkline Sheltered	Older People	530
LBL Linkline	LBL Linkline Very Sheltered	Older People	55
LBL SC&H	Leaving care Service (FS)	Young People	

LBL Sheltered	LBL Sheltered Accommodation	Older People	530
LBL Sheltered	LBL Very Sheltered Accommodation	Older People	55
LBL SHHU	Accommodation Based Service (Mental Health)	Mental Health	
LBL SHHU	Burnt Ash Hill	Single Homeless	
LBL SHHU	Dalrymple Road	Single Homeless	
LBL Staying Put	LBL Staying Put – Home improvement agency & handyman service	Older People	500
Lewisham Nexus Service	Lewisham Nexus Service	Learning Disability	33
Lewisham Park Housing	Lewisham Park Sheltered Housing Service	Older People	37
London & Quadrant	London & Quadrant Pool Court	Older People	25
London & Quadrant	London & Quadrant William Wood Court	Older People	22
London and Quadrant Supported Living	L&Q Mental Health Accommodation Based Service (PLEASE NOTE NAME TBC)	Mental Health	16
London and Quadrant Supported Living	L&Q Mental Health Floating Support	Mental Health	10
Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust	Marsha Phoenix Erlanger Road (2 nd Stage)	Young People	6
Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust	Marsha phoenix Tressillian Road	Young People	20
Metropolitan Housing Partnership	52 Breakspears Road	Mental Health	6
Metropolitan Housing Partnership	Stepforward Lewisham Community Support	Mental Health	20
Novas Group	Novas Lewisham Travellers	Travellers Services	16
Peabody Trust	Peabody Trust Leander Court	Older People	40
Penrose Housing Association	Penrose Jigsaw Floating Support	Mental Health	18
Penrose Housing Association	Penrose Jigsaw Winterstoke Rd (Core)	Mental Health	6
PLUS	PLUS accommodation based	Learning Disability	40
Quo Vadis Trust	Quo Vadis Community Group Homes	Mental Health	39
Quo Vadis Trust	Quo Vadis Independent Community	Mental Health	26
Raglan Housing Association	Raglan Blackmore House	Older People	15
Refuge	Refuge Lewisham Domestic violence	Single Homeless/Domestic Violence	40

Refuge	DV floating support	Domestic Violence	30
Royal Scottish Corporation	Royal Scottish Rothesay Court	Older People	34
Servite	Servite	Learning Disability	3
Shaftesbury Homes Arethusa	Shaftesbury Trilby Road	Young People	3
SLFHA	SLFHA Leeds Court	Older People	27
SLFHA	SLFHA Milliner Court	Older People	32
South London & Maudsley NHS Trust	SLAM Edward Street	Mental Health	13
South London & Maudsley NHS Trust	SLAM Wildfell Road and Outreach	Mental Health	5
St Christopher's Fellowship	St. Christopher's Belmont Park	Young People	14
St Christopher's Fellowship	St. Christopher's YP Lewisham Services	Young People	49
St Mungos	St Mungos Garden House	Single Homeless	22
St Mungos	St Mungos Pagnell St	Single Homeless	43
Stopover (Centrepont)	Stopover Direct Access Hostel	Young People	11
Stopover (Centrepont)	Stopover Housing Support Service	Young People	62
Stopover (Centrepont)	Stopover Medium Stay Hostel	Young People	12
Thames Reach Lewisham Reach	Thames Reach Lewisham Reach FS	Single Homeless	180
Thames Reach Supported Housing	ThamesReach Lewisham Supported Housing	Single Homeless	80
Three Cs	Three Cs dispersed	Learning Disability	38
Three Cs	Three Cs St Germain's Road	Learning Disability	4

N.B Stopover has now merged with Centrepont and L&Q services have been transferred to other providers

Appendix 3: Voluntary Organisations

The Council supports a number of voluntary organisations in the borough who assist people with housing need.

Organisation	Services
Evelyn 190 Centre	Housing advice
Age Concern	Housing, benefits & access to care advice
Deptford Church Centre	Housing advice
Lewisham Citizens Advice Centre	Housing advice
Lewisham Disability Coalition	Housing advice, Debt & Benefits advice
Lewisham Refugee Network	Housing, benefits advice
Mencap	Housing advice
The 999 Club Trust	Housing advice
Victim Support Lewisham	Housing advice

Appendix 4: Consultation Results

Focus Groups

On behalf of the Council, Community Consultants set up twelve distinct focus groups to discuss the key housing issues facing the borough. It provided an opportunity for residents to raise their concerns and identify their main priorities. Listed below are the groups:

- **Council Tenants with young families** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity with at least one partner in work.
- **Council Tenants with older families** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity with at least one child living at home aged over 16.
- **Young Professionals** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity, aged under 35 in -private rented (including some in buy to let properties)
- **Low Income in Private rented** – Mixed age, gender and ethnicity in low paid jobs or dependent on benefits living in private rented
- **Young African-Caribbean** Mixed age and gender, aged 18 - 29, any tenure.
- **Owner occupiers** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity, aged 18 - 35, first time buyers
- **Older people** Aged 60 and over, living at home (any tenure) but with disability/long term illness issues
- **Lone Parents** Women, mixed age and ethnicity who are living or have recently lived in hostels or temporary accommodation
- **People with Mental Health problems** Aged up to 65, mixed gender and ethnicity and mixed tenure. (This group was consulted through in-depth interviews conducted at the Compass Day Centre)
- **Residents from New Communities (European)** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity, people who have moved to Lewisham in the past 5 years from a European country. Any tenure
- **Residents from New Communities (African)** Mixed age, gender and ethnicity, people who have moved to Lewisham in the past 5 years from an African country. Any tenure
- **Vietnamese Residents** Aged 18 – 85, mixed gender and tenure. This group was conducted in English and Vietnamese through an interpreter.

Key findings of the focus groups

Fear of Homelessness:

- The consultation found a real fear amongst many who were renting privately that they could be evicted and forced to go through the homelessness process

Private Rented Sector:

- Participants did not see there was anything that the Council could do to stop evictions from private rented property
- The focus groups gave a very clear message back to the Council that any schemes to encourage people to opt for private rented rather than social housing would come up against strong opposition, unless they could be

offered secure tenancies. The fear of being evicted and having to live in a hostel is a very real one for many

Allocation of Council Housing

- Remains a strong belief amongst many that Council housing is a resource which should be primarily for local people
- Confusion about the bidding system for the Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme. Many participants gave examples of people who have been offered properties they had, apparently, not bid for and then being pressurised into accepting them
- General agreement that the Council needed to keep its records of tenant's cases up-to-date to ensure that people were only being matched to appropriate priorities

Tackling Homelessness

- One suggestion to combat homelessness was for the Council to operate a rent deposit scheme to enable people in hostels to rent properties in the private sector
- For some, any move into the private sector would only be considered if it eventually led to a permanent property

Council's Homelessness Service

- Participants in the Lone Parents group said that they were not treated that well by officers at the Housing Options Centre
- One of the major complaints was that clients at the Housing Options Centre always have to see the duty officer rather than someone who knows their case, which means explaining all the details again with each visit