

**REPORT:
Homelessness review**

**London Borough of
Richmond upon Thames**

MAY 2008

Albanian

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne receptionin ne adresen e shenuar me poshte ku ne mund te organizojme perkthime nepermjet telefonit.

Arabic

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

Bengali

এই প্রকাশনার অর্থ বুঝতে পারায় যদি আপনার কোন সমস্যা হয়, নিচে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় রিসেপশন-এ চলে আসুন যেখানে আমরা আপনাকে টেলিফোনে দোভাষীর সেবা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো।

Farsi

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکلی دارید لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر مراجعه نمایید تا ترتیب ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود:

Gujurati

જો તમને આ પુસ્તિકાની વિગતો સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય તો, કૃપયા નીચે જણાવેલ સ્થળના રિસેપ્શન પર આવો, જ્યાં અમે ટેલિફોન પર ગુજરાતીમાં ઈન્ટરપ્રિટીંગ સેવાની ગોઠવણ કરી આપીશું.

Polish

Jeżeli masz trudności ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji, proszę pójść do recepcji (adres jest podany poniżej), gdzie możemy zorganizować tłumaczenie przez telefon.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਪਤੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں کوئی مشکل ہے تو، براہ کرم نیچے دیئے ہوئے ایڈریس کے استقبال پر جا کر ملیئے، جہاں ہم آپ کیلئے ٹیلیفون انٹرپرائیٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پر ترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

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1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 required councils to review homelessness within their locality and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness, and to provide accommodation and support.
- 1.2 The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames published its first homelessness strategy in July 2003, which was based upon a review of homelessness in the Borough. This report is a further review of homelessness completed in line with government guidance¹. Appendix one sets out the methodology.
- 1.3 HQN was commissioned by the council to undertake the homelessness review, work with the Homeless Forum, provide a report on the homelessness review and thereafter produce a homelessness strategy following a period of consultation.
- 1.4 This review considers:
- Current and likely future levels of homelessness in the Borough
 - Services currently provided to prevent homelessness, to secure housing for homeless people and to provide them with support
 - The resources available to the council, other statutory organisations and voluntary organisations to provide services for homeless people.
- 1.5 The results of this review will form the basis for an updated homelessness strategy for London Borough of Richmond upon Thames that will be adopted in 2008.
- 1.6 Key facts:
- Homelessness affects many people. In Richmond, from 2004/05 to 2006/07, 2,004 households made a claim of homelessness and 1,001 were accepted as being owed a duty to accommodate by the council²
 - The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is located within South West London and is the only borough spanning both sides of the River Thames. At 30 June 2004, the Borough was estimated to have a population of 182,700, the seventh smallest of the 33 London authorities³
 - The 2001 census records the Borough as having the eleventh highest proportion of people aged 65 or more (13.7%) amongst London boroughs, the seventh highest proportion aged 75 or more and the fourth highest aged 85 or more
 - The number of households is projected to reach 81,238 by 2021, an increase of 6.1% over 20 years (GLA⁴ household projections)
 - It is estimated that the owner-occupied sector comprises around 55,400 homes as at March 31 2005 (70% of the total), with the private-rented sector totalling around 14,000 (approx 17%)
 - With an estimated 9,345 ((11.8%) housing association rented units in April 2005, Richmond upon Thames has one of the smallest social rented sectors

¹ Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: July 2006

² Source P1E homelessness returns

³ Source: Population Estimates Unit, ONS: Crown Copyright 2004. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland

⁴ GLA Greater London Authority

of all London boroughs. Based on 2004 figures, only Harrow, Redbridge, Kingston and the City of London have a smaller social rented sector⁵

- High house prices lead to affordability problems (the average house price at £420,952 is more than twice as high as the average for England and Wales, and about a third higher than the average for London)
- Inability of vulnerable people or excluded groups to access or maintain a home; and the need to provide Decent Homes in decent neighbourhoods
- Private renting is expensive. A survey in 2007 identified that average surveyed monthly rents for one-, two- and three-bedroom accommodation were £950, £1,190 and £1,500 respectively.

- 1.7 There is a statutory duty on local authorities to deal with homelessness households either by securing accommodation or by providing advice and assistance. Preventing and tackling homelessness along with the provision of accommodation bears a heavy financial cost on the council.
- 1.8 Apart from the obvious problem of lacking a home, it should be appreciated that homelessness compounds the social exclusion of families and individuals. Homeless people often find it difficult to access health services, education and training and can be disadvantaged in the labour market.
- 1.9 Homelessness is the most acute aspect of housing shortage. The council's housing strategy will address the need to secure additional affordable homes within the Borough and make best use of the existing housing stock.
- 1.10 It is positive that the numbers of households accepted as having a statutory duty as owed to them by the council have been steadily falling since the introduction of the homelessness strategy in 2003.
- 1.11 Continued and effective homelessness prevention is critical to reducing homelessness and achieving the government's 2010 target to halve the numbers in temporary accommodation and to end the use of bed and breakfast hotels for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. The developing homelessness strategy needs to secure the implementation of best practice initiatives that strengthen homelessness prevention. It is also appreciated that actions taken at a wider strategic level such as the Community Plan to address inequality, economic and social issues, for example, can have a positive impact on the causes of homelessness.

⁵ Housing in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames – facts and figures 2005

2 Progress on implementing the homelessness strategy 2003

- 2.1 The council's first homelessness strategy was published in 2003. This provided the strategic direction for the homeless prevention approach that has subsequently been adopted. In addition, working groups were set up to progress the development of housing strategies for young people, teenage parents and work around refugees.
- 2.2 Achievements attained through the delivery of this strategy include:
- Directory of homelessness services published, made available on website and updated
 - Production of a Homelessness Forum newsletter
 - Specific strategies established for homelessness amongst young people and teenage parents
 - Continued reduction in homelessness applications and acceptances
 - Steady reduction in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation
 - Review of existing information and leaflets
 - Production and distribution of tenants' information pack for private sector tenants
 - Adoption of in-house performance indicators measuring homelessness prevention with targets
 - In-house housing advice service provision increased
 - Homeless prevention initiatives with introduction of the mediation service, rent deposit scheme and CRI rent deposit post
 - Established Safety First project (securing the homes of victims of domestic violence)
 - Research conducted amongst landlords and letting agents regarding evictions
 - Homelessness grant funding arrangements established with SPEAR (a local housing charity) to deal with rough sleeping and single homeless
 - Hostel for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds built and opened at the end of 2007.
- 2.3 The action plan from this strategy has been reviewed as part of the review process. This has identified which actions have been achieved, which are ongoing and which have not been achieved. Some of the actions will be carried forward into the next strategy.
- 2.4 It is noted that not all aspects of the action plan were actively monitored. The arrangements for monitoring the new homelessness strategy action plan need to be more robust. It is a positive feature that the council has adopted a comprehensive performance management structure where service plans and key performance indicators relating to homelessness are subject to detailed quarterly scrutiny. Effective and ongoing monitoring of any future homelessness strategy will be a key activity.

3 Homelessness trends

Key findings

- There has been a continued and steady reduction in homeless applications and acceptances. In the three years 2003/04 to 2006/07, homeless decisions have dropped from 772 to 335 (a 57% fall) and acceptances from 316 to 152 (52% fall)
- Over a period July 2006-June 2007 Richmond upon Thames has experienced lower levels of homelessness than the South West London sub-region, London and England, expressed as acceptances per 1,000 population
- Of all London councils, the Borough has the second lowest acceptances per 1,000 population after Merton
- Between 2003/04 to 2006/07 the most common reasons for homelessness:
 - Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
 - Violent breakdown in a relationship with a partner
 - Termination of an assured shorthold tenancy
 - Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.
- This local experience reflects the main reasons for homelessness reported nationally. 44% of accepted homeless households have dependent children and nearly 13% were due to a member of the household being pregnant with no dependent children. Thereafter 16/17-year-olds comprised 16.8%, followed by people with mental health problems (10.7%). Older people made up 4.5% of acceptances

Homelessness applications and acceptances

3.1 The council published its first homeless review and homelessness strategy in 2003. In the year ending March 2004, 772 households applied to the council as homeless and 316 were deemed by the council as being homeless, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (referred to as accepted in this review) which confers a duty on the council to secure a settled home. By the end of 2006/07 there had been a significant reduction in numbers with 335 households making homelessness applications of which 152 were accepted. Accepted households fell by 51.9% between 2003/04 and 2006/07, which was a greater than the falls experienced by both London and England.

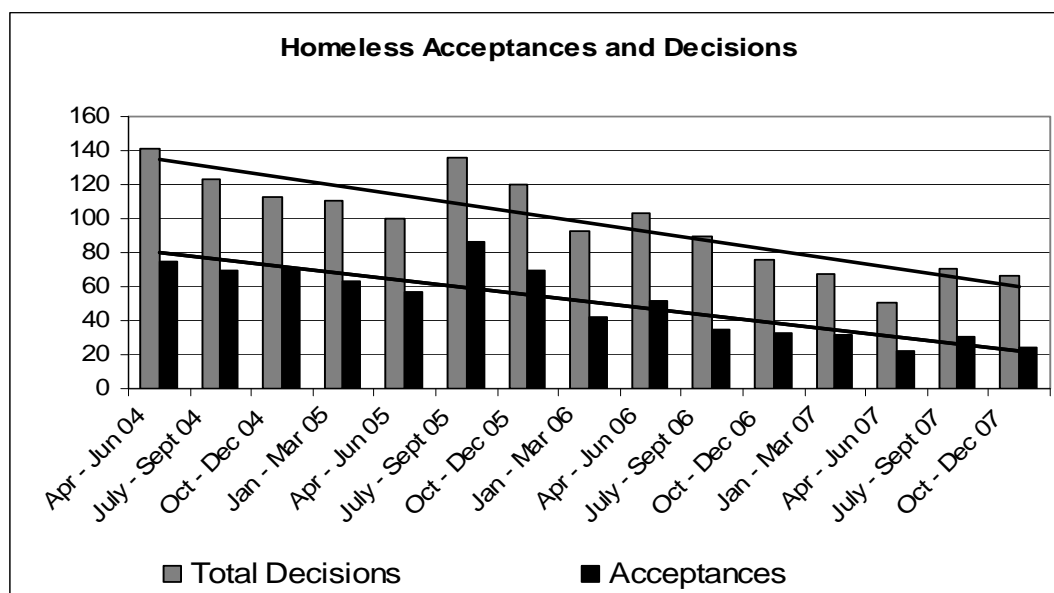
Accepted homeless households

| | England | | London | | Richmond upon Thames | |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | No | Annual % change | No | Annual % change | No | Annual % change |
| 2002/03 | 128,540 | | 29,790 | | 325 | |
| 2003/04 | 135,430 | 5.4 | 30,080 | 1.0 | 316 | -2.8 |
| 2004/05 | 120,860 | -10.8 | 26,730 | -11.1 | 279 | -11.7 |
| 2005/06 | 93,980 | -22.2 | 21,140 | -20.9 | 254 | -9.0 |
| 2006/07 | 73,360 | -21.9 | 15,390 | -27.2 | 152 | -40.2 |
| % change 2003/04 to 2006/07 | | -45.8 | | -48.8 | | -51.9 |

Source P1e returns

Homelessness decisions

3.2 The chart below shows that the trend for both decisions and acceptances from April 2004 has been downward. With the exception of the quarters September 2005, June 2006 and September 2007 the downward trend has been broadly consistent.



Source P1e returns

Comparison with other London and SW London sub-regional authorities

3.3 The Borough is within the South West London sub-region which comprises Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Wandsworth. In the 12-month period July 2006 to June 2007, only the City of London and Merton councils have recorded lower numbers of accepted households. The total for Richmond upon Thames was 122 and is significantly lower than both the sub-regional average (331) and the London average (439). In terms of accepted households per 1,000 population, the Borough is placed second overall within London's 33 councils and at 1.5 acceptances per 1,000 population is significantly lower than the sub-regional average of 3.2.

SW London sub-region acceptances per 1,000 population

| | Jan-Mar 06 | Apr-Jun 06 | Jul-Sept 06 | Oct-Dec 06 | Jan-Mar 07 | Apr-Jun 07 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Croydon | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| Lambeth | 3.8 | 2.9 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 3.0 | 1.9 |
| Merton | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Sutton | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Wandsworth | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.0 |

Source P1e return

- 3.4 Under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII, amended and extended by Homelessness Act 2002, the council when receiving a homelessness application has to establish whether the applicant is homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need, intentionally homeless and has a local connection.
- 3.5 Over the past three years and the first quarter of 2006/07, only 18 households were assessed as being ineligible. This will include asylum-seekers, people from abroad who aren't entitled to 'public funds' and those not normally resident in the UK. Although not provided with accommodation such households can receive advice and information.
- 3.6 Households who believe themselves to be homeless or at risk of homelessness (within 28 days) may not be homeless. The council, through investigation or by enforcing tenancy rights for example, identified that approximately one quarter of all applications were deemed to be 'not homeless'.
- 3.7 The percentage of accepted cases has fallen from 57.2% in 2004/05 to 41% in 2007/08 (up to December 2007).
- 3.8 Over the period investigated, an average of 6.6 households were deemed to be intentionally homeless each quarter. These applicants would have been assessed as losing their accommodation either through a deliberate act or omission. In these cases the council may be required to provide temporary accommodation but has no long-term duty to house an intentionally homeless household. It is noted that in the current year 2007/08 (till December 2007) intentionally homeless households, as a percentage of the total number of decisions made, had more than doubled compared with the previous period.

Homeless decisions

| | Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need | | Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally so | | Eligible, homeless but not in priority need | | Eligible, but not homeless | | Ineligible households | |
|----------|---|------|--|------|---|------|----------------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| 2004/05 | 279 | 57.2 | 27 | 5.5 | 60 | 12.3 | 119 | 24.4 | 3 | 0.6 |
| 2005/06 | 254 | 56.6 | 27 | 6.0 | 55 | 12.2 | 106 | 23.6 | 7 | 1.6 |
| 2006/07 | 152 | 45.4 | 21 | 6.3 | 44 | 13.1 | 110 | 32.8 | 8 | 2.4 |
| 2007/08* | 77 | 41.0 | 25 | 13.3 | 20 | 10.6 | 64 | 34.0 | 2 | 1.1 |
| Total | 762 | 52.2 | 100 | 6.8 | 179 | 12.3 | 399 | 27.3 | 20 | 1.4 |

Source P1e returns *3 quarters data till December 2007

Accepted homeless by priority need category

- 3.9 A wide range of households are accepted as homeless and as such any prevention strategy needs to focus on at risk groups. These are considered in section 5. The table below analyses the priority need category for accepted households over a three-year period from 2004/05 to 2006/07. The table presents the actual numbers

and percentages and records the primary category (it does not include the secondary category).

Households in priority need Richmond upon Thames 2004/05 – 2006/07

| | 2004/05 | | 2005/06 | | 2006/07 | | Total | |
|---|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Applicant homeless in emergency | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Households with one child | 80 | 28.7 | 78 | 30.7 | 40 | 26.3 | 202 | 28.6 |
| Households with two children | 28 | 10 | 27 | 10.6 | 16 | 10.5 | 71 | 10 |
| Households with three or more children | 21 | 7.5 | 9 | 3.5 | 9 | 5.9 | 40 | 5.7 |
| Total with children | 129 | 46.2 | 114 | 44.9 | 65 | 42.8 | 313 | 44.3 |
| Households pregnant no dependent children | 35 | 12.5 | 34 | 13.4 | 17 | 11.2 | 89 | 12.6 |
| Aged 16/17 years | 40 | 14.3 | 44 | 17.3 | 27 | 17.8 | 119 | 16.8 |
| In care and aged 18 to 20 | 4 | 1.4 | 1 | 0.4 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1.1 |
| Old age | 11 | 3.9 | 14 | 5.5 | 7 | 4.6 | 32 | 4.5 |
| Physical disability | 13 | 4.7 | 16 | 6.3 | 7 | 4.6 | 38 | 5.4 |
| Mental illness or handicap | 32 | 11.5 | 25 | 9.8 | 16 | 10.5 | 76 | 10.7 |
| Drug dependency | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.8 | 2 | 1.3 | 4 | 0.6 |
| Alcohol dependency | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.3 | 5 | 0.7 |
| Former asylum-seeker | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.1 |
| Other | 7 | 2.5 | 2 | 0.8 | 2 | 1.3 | 11 | 1.6 |
| Been in care | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 0.4 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 0.7 |
| Served in HM forces | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Been in custody/on remand | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 0.4 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 0.7 |
| Violence/threat of violence | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.3 |
| Domestic violence | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.3 |

Source P1e returns

- 3.10 Throughout the period the overall numbers of accepted households has fallen and the proportion of individual priority need groups has been broadly consistent. The largest group was households with dependent children comprising 44% of accepted cases although the proportion fell from 46.2% in 2004/05 to 42.8% in 2006/07. Whilst the overall reduction in homelessness over the three years was 54%, the reduction in the numbers of accepted households with children was slightly lower at nearly 50%.
- 3.11 Households with only one child comprised nearly two-thirds of the total number of accepted households with children. Information such as this is helpful in predicting accommodation needs.
- 3.12 Thirteen per cent of the total number of acceptances were households containing a pregnant woman with no dependent children. This has shown little variation over the three years. For 16/17-year-olds the proportion has increased slightly from 14.3% to 17.8%. Thereafter people with mental health problems comprised the next most numerous category (10.7%). People with a disability made up 5.4% of acceptances.

Accepted homeless households with children and pregnant households

| | | Households with children | | | Total with | Households where a member is pregnant and |
|---------|----|--------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|---|
| | | 1 child | 2 children | 3 or more | | |
| 2004/05 | No | 80 | 28 | 21 | 129 | 35 |
| | % | 28.7 | 10.0 | 7.5 | 46.2 | 12.5 |
| 2005/06 | No | 78 | 27 | 9 | 114 | 34 |
| | % | 30.7 | 10.6 | 3.5 | 44.9 | 13.4 |
| 2006/07 | No | 40 | 16 | 9 | 65 | 17 |
| | % | 26.3 | 10.5 | 5.9 | 42.8 | 11.2 |
| Total | No | 202 | 71 | 40 | 313 | 89 |
| | % | 28.6 | 10.0 | 5.7 | 44.3 | 12.6 |

Source P1e returns

3.13 The table below compares Richmond upon Thames with the sub-region and London for the year 2006/07. It shows that for Richmond upon Thames the proportion of:

- Households with dependent children is lower
- Households with a pregnant woman and no other dependent children is similar
- Young people is higher.

Households in priority need Richmond upon Thames, sub-region and London 2006/07 (percentages)

| 2006/07 | Richmond | Sub Region | London |
|---|----------|------------|--------|
| Applicant homeless in emergency | 0 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Households with one child | 26.3 | 31.6 | 30.6 |
| Households with two children | 10.5 | 12.8 | 13.5 |
| Households with three or more children | 5.9 | 8.5 | 9.3 |
| Total with children | 42.8 | 52.9 | 53.3 |
| Households pregnant and no other dependent children | 11.2 | 14.7 | 13.2 |
| Aged 16/17 years | 17.8 | 12.6 | 9.8 |
| In care and aged 18 to 20 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Old age | 4.6 | 2.2 | 2.7 |
| Physical disability | 4.6 | 5.5 | 6.1 |
| Mental illness or handicap | 10.5 | 6.9 | 8.5 |
| Drug dependency | 1.3 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Alcohol dependency | 1.3 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| Former asylum-seeker | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Other | 1.3 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| Been in care | 2.0 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Served in HM forces | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Been in custody/on remand | 2.0 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Violence/threat of violence | 0 | 0.6 | 1.1 |
| Domestic violence | 0 | 0.3 | 0.7 |

Source P1e returns

Reasons for homelessness

3.14 Examination of the council's homelessness returns over the three-year period April 2004 to March 2007 reveals the most common reasons for homelessness were:

- Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
- Violent breakdown in a relationship with a partner
- Termination of an assured shorthold tenancy
- Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.

3.15 Nearly 40% of all accepted homeless households lost their accommodation from both friends and from family who were unable or unwilling to accommodate them. Homelessness relating to all forms of violence comprised 17.3% of all homelessness acceptances with violent relationship breakdown being the most numerous. Loss of privately rented accommodation amounted to 17.1% of the total. In 2004/05 homelessness due to leaving an institution or care was the third most common reason and over the three years was in fifth place. The table below illustrates the main reason for homelessness in actual numbers and percentages over the three-year period. The top four in each year are highlighted.

Reasons for homelessness 2004/05 – 2006/07

| | 2004/05 | | 2005/06 | | 2006/07 | | Total | % |
|---|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate | 72 | 25.8 | 87 | 34.3 | 39 | 25.7 | 198 | 28.9 |
| Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | 25 | 9.0 | 30 | 11.8 | 15 | 9.9 | 70 | 10.2 |
| Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner | 9 | 3.2 | 11 | 4.3 | 4 | 2.6 | 24 | 3.5 |
| Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner | 37 | 13.3 | 46 | 18.1 | 16 | 10.5 | 99 | 14.5 |
| Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons | 2 | 0.7 | 4 | 1.6 | 5 | 3.3 | 11 | 1.6 |
| Racially-motivated violence | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.3 |
| Other forms of violence | 3 | 1.1 | 1 | 0.4 | 2 | 1.3 | 6 | 0.9 |
| Racially-motivated harassment | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.3 |
| Other forms of harassment | 2 | 0.7 | 1 | 0.4 | 2 | 1.3 | 5 | 0.7 |
| Mortgage arrears | 1 | 0.4 | 2 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.7 | 4 | 0.6 |
| Rent arrears on: | | | | | | | | |
| Local authority or other public sector dwellings | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.1 |
| Registered social landlord or other housing association dwellings | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2.0 | 5 | 0.7 |
| Private sector dwellings | 5 | 1.8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.7 | 6 | 0.9 |
| Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to: | | | | | | | | |
| Termination of assured shorthold tenancy | 26 | 9.3 | 31 | 12.2 | 27 | 17.8 | 84 | 12.3 |
| Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy | 10 | 3.6 | 17 | 6.7 | 6 | 3.9 | 33 | 4.8 |
| Required to leave national asylum support service accommodation | 28 | 10 | 11 | 4.3 | 8 | 5.3 | 47 | 6.9 |
| In institution or care | 29 | 10.4 | 10 | 3.9 | 11 | 7.2 | 50 | 7.3 |
| Other | 24 | 8.6 | 2 | 0.8 | 12 | 7.9 | 38 | 5.5 |

Source P1e returns

3.16 Differences can be seen when comparing Richmond upon Thames's experience with the sub-region, London and England in 2006/07. Whilst the most common reason for homeless in all areas was due to parental eviction, the sub-region, London and England had eviction from other relatives and friends in second place (Richmond was fourth). In percentage terms, in the sub-region and London, this was more than twice the level experienced by Richmond upon Thames. This may be due to Richmond on Thames visiting all such evictions and having available opportunities to secure private rented accommodation via its advice and assessment team.

Main reason for loss of last settled home for households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2006/07

| 2006/07 | Richmond upon Thames | Sub-region | London | England |
|---|----------------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate | 25.7 | 28.8 | 26.6 | 23.2 |
| Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | 9.9 | 21.3 | 22.8 | 13.9 |
| Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 6.6 |
| Violence: | | | | |
| Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner | 10.5 | 6.5 | 7.2 | 13.3 |
| Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons | 3.3 | 3.0 | 1.8 | 2.5 |
| Racially-motivated violence | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Other forms of violence | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.9 |
| Harassment, threats or intimidation: | | | | |
| Racially-motivated harassment | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| Other forms of harassment | 1.3 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.9 |
| Mortgage arrears | 0.7 | 3.4 | 1.8 | 3.6 |
| Rent arrears on: | | | | |
| Local authority or other public sector dwellings | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Registered social landlord or other housing association dwellings | 2.0 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.4 |
| Private sector dwellings | 0.7 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 1.5 |
| Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to: | | | | |
| Termination of assured shorthold tenancy | 17.8 | 10.3 | 11.7 | 14.0 |
| Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy | 3.9 | 4.9 | 5.8 | 4.9 |
| Required to leave national asylum support service accommodation | 5.3 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| Left an institution or LA care | | | | |
| Left prison/on remand | 2.6 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Left hospital | 2.0 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Left other institution or LA care | 2.6 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 1.3 |
| Other reason for loss of last settled home | | | | |
| Left HM forces | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Other reason | 7.9 | 8.7 | 8.5 | 6.8 |

Source P1e returns

3.17 The loss of an assured shorthold tenancy in the Borough in 2006/07 was the second most common reason for homelessness, as it was in England (17.8% and 14% respectively). In the sub-region and London loss of an assured shorthold tenancy was the third most common reason with 10.3% and 11.7% respectively.

Repeat homelessness

3.18 Councils have been required to monitor and seek to reduce repeat homelessness as measured by homeless households who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years. This is monitored regularly by the council as part of the performance management framework⁶. By focusing upon the causes of homelessness, making available appropriate support and housing, much can be done to prevent the household from experiencing homelessness again. In all the quarters analysed from April 2004 a maximum of four households were recorded on four occasions. However, in the last five quarters from April 2006 no repeat homelessness was recorded, which suggests that the council and partner organisations are performing well in resettling and supporting people into accommodation.

Age of accepted households

3.19 In comparing the age of accepted households over the past two years, the proportion of 16-24-year-olds has been higher than for London and England and for the age group 25-44 has been correspondingly lower. Accepted households of 65 and over in Richmond is consistently higher than that experienced in both London and England.

Age of households who were deemed to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need

| | 2005/06 | | | 2006/07 | | |
|-----------|----------------------|--------|---------|----------------------|--------|---------|
| | Richmond upon Thames | London | England | Richmond upon Thames | London | England |
| 16-24 | 39.4 | 35.6 | 39.1 | 44.1 | 38.8 | 40.7 |
| 25-44 | 43.7 | 49.8 | 47.3 | 42.1 | 48.2 | 47.4 |
| 45-59 | 10.2 | 9.4 | 9.3 | 9.2 | 8.8 | 8.7 |
| 60-64 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| 65-74 | 3.9 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 3.9 | 2.2 | 1.4 |
| 75 & over | 0.4 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.6 |

Source P1e

Stakeholder views

3.20 Stakeholders considered that the following factors could adversely impact future homelessness levels. Their views are reported in italics. The comments provided seek to place these views in context, some of which the homelessness strategy will need to take account.

⁶ BV214

- *“Further Right to Buy and continuing reduced voids levels will have a further impact on numbers on the housing register who are not being rehoused, which could impact on homeless levels, particularly parental evictions.”* Chapter 8 deals with access to permanent homes and notes the continued high demand for housing as expressed by the numbers on the housing register. It is likely that with a long wait to be offered a home through the register, households may be unable or unwilling to keep members of their family (or friends) in their home and evict them. The council has a programme to develop new affordable housing, which depending on RTB levels, may or may not ‘replace’ the rented homes sold
- *“Possible increases in numbers of refugees/migrant workers.”* If there were to be an increase in numbers from such groups seeking accommodation in the Borough, it is thought that they may compete with indigenous households, who, if unable to secure rented accommodation, may become homeless. The council will need to continue to monitor such changes
- *“Possibility of a recession in the housing market may increase mortgage repossessions.”* As a result of the ‘credit crunch’ there have been reported falls in house prices and restrictions on the availability mortgage nationally, which if continued, may impact upon homelessness. Any local effects will need to be monitored by the council and its partners
- *“Potential increase in housing association evictions due to government’s Respect agenda and clamping down on anti-social behaviour.”* Housing associations have been charged by the Housing Corporation to ensure that they minimise homelessness through their activities. Joint working between housing associations, the council and other partners is needed to ensure homelessness is prevented where possible
- *“An over-reliance on the private sector to meet housing needs which offers non-secure tenancies and a potential increase in the loss of private sector tenancies.”* The private rented sector is essential in providing accommodation for people in housing need. The council’s housing options service has successfully enabled people to secure such accommodation and prevent homelessness. The council has been able to negotiate with landlords to increase the term of assured shorthold tenancies
- *“A risk that the introduction of Local Housing Allowances could lead to a rise in homelessness. Recipients will be paid directly rather than the landlord, with the attendant risk that some individuals may spend this money on things other than rent and result in an increase in evictions in the private rented sector due to rent arrears.”* The introduction of Local Housing Allowances will need to be carefully monitored by the council, and close working with landlords, especially through the Private Landlords’ Forum, will be needed to assess its impact
- *“Housing Benefit claims were not being processed efficiently, therefore leading to rent arrears and potentially eviction and lack of trust among private sector landlords.”* The council’s Housing Benefit performance is in fact in the top quartile of all councils. Close working with landlords has priority for the council with the setting up of a

Landlords' Forum. Continued communication and addressing landlords concerns is essential in establishing mutual trust

- *"It is likely that there may be an increase in homelessness as a result of domestic violence due to an increased awareness of options."* There is evidence that the council has worked with others to publicise services to those suffering domestic violence. There is a basic need to continue to do so and if this increases the use of homeless services then this would be an acceptable consequence.

Sub-region – housing authorities

3.21 Other homelessness officers in the region were contacted to establish whether there were any regional homelessness trends and how homelessness across boundaries impacts upon services. There were four responses (from six).

3.22 A summary of issues suggests:

- A general reduction in the number of presentations with varied outturns in number of acceptances.
- There is nothing to suggest that services available in Richmond are attracting service users from other authority areas or that services in other areas attract service users outside of Richmond
- Some services record how many users access services across boundaries but not across the sub-region
- Increases in homeless due to a loss of private sector tenancies
- Increase in number of family breakdown cases.

3.23 It is noted that the council convenes a sub-regional homelessness group. There is a basic need to maintain a monitoring overview. There are opportunities to promote best practice and develop services where a sub-regional response is needed.

Strategy action points

- Maintain ongoing monitoring and analysis of homelessness
- Monitor the effects of changes in the local housing market and introduction of the Local Housing Allowance
- In the Borough the proportion of households losing private rented accommodation is greater than in both the sub-region and London, which suggests a need for targeted housing advice and other homeless prevention measures
- Over a three-year period the council has been successful in reducing homelessness at a rate greater than for London and England as a whole. There is a continued need to maintain homeless prevention initiatives and manage these to respond to any changes in the local housing market
- Extend sub-regional working on homelessness to promote best practice and develop services where a sub-regional response is needed

4 Homelessness prevention and access to housing

Key findings

- The council's advice and assessment team and other agencies provide valuable sources of housing advice
- There is a continuous need for information about services to be updated and publicised
- The council and SPEAR have been successful in enabling people in housing need to access the private rented sector. In 2006/07, 111 households took up private rented sector tenancies and in the first six months of 2007/08, 94 more were assisted
- The average cost of assisting households through the council's rent deposit guarantee scheme increased from just over £1,000 in 2006/07 to nearly £2,500 in 2007/08
- Housing Benefit thresholds are below market rents in some parts of the Borough which limits the opportunities to secure private rented accommodation
- The council, along with housing associations and the voluntary sector, through a conference in November 2007, have identified steps to address financial exclusion within the Borough

Housing advice and information/accessibility

- 4.1 Housing advice and information is provided by the advice and assessment team based at the civic centre. In addition there are other organisations external to the council that provide a range of advice services. The Citizens Advice Bureau is a key provider with offices in Richmond, Twickenham, Sheen and through its outreach services. SPEAR, a voluntary organisation, provides a wide range of services to single people including rough sleepers. There are other voluntary or community organisations that provide advice and support for the particular communities they serve.
- 4.2 Such agencies are detailed in the Directory of Homelessness Services, a substantial piece of work that was produced originally by the Homelessness Forum. In 2004 it was updated and enlarged. The value of this work was recognised by a wide range of bodies that agreed to provide funding to enable it to happen. A version of this directory is available on the council's website. There is a basic need for the information to be updated on a continual basis.
- 4.3 The provision of good quality advice and assistance is key to preventing homelessness. The Greater London Assembly's *Housing advice strategy: a partnership approach to preventing homelessness through the provision of housing advice*, was published in December 2004 along with its implementation plan in May 2005. That housing advice strategy promotes a partnership approach to bring together advice and support to prevent homelessness. The aims of the strategy are:
- To provide value for money for housing advice
 - To ensure equality and outcome for all
 - To prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
 - To protect tenants'/residents' rights
 - To promote housing options.

- 4.4 With regard to homelessness prevention its key objectives are:
- To clarify the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness
 - To work with other housing stakeholders to tackle issues that cause homelessness
 - To improve liaison between related fields of advice and support services
 - To have better links, networks and referral routes with services for those experiencing relationship breakdown.
- 4.5 The housing advice strategy recommends that housing advice should be a clear feature of local authority homelessness strategies and action plans. They should also reflect the importance of the provision of advice to owner-occupiers and long leaseholders, and the availability of independent advocacy. It is apparent that housing advice and homelessness prevention are key parts of the council's approach. The service provides advice to residents of the Borough who have a wide range of housing problems such as difficulties paying rent or mortgage, problems with a landlord or a member of their household. The service is also available to landlords. Confidential advice is given and where there is disagreement between parties they can seek to resolve them or gain access to specialist mediation services.
- 4.6 The table below shows that over a 14-month period the service dealt with nearly 1,000 service users. In over 100 cases homeless was prevented. Thirty per cent of enquires resulted in a homelessness application being taken.

Period 1 January 2007 to 27 February 2008

| | Advice | Prevent homelessness | | Total |
|-----------------|--------|----------------------|-------|--------|
| | | No | Yes | |
| Number of cases | 579 | 299 | 118 | 996 |
| % | 58.13 | 30.02 | 11.85 | 100.00 |

Source Richmond Borough Council

Richmond CAB

- 4.7 The Citizens Advice Bureau in Richmond provides a valuable source of housing advice. During the period from 1 April 2007 to 8 February 2008, Richmond CAB dealt with 2,344 new and separate housing issues, which amounts to 12.1% of their overall workload. In annual terms this would be projected to 2,732 housing issues. Due to case recording, they are unable to specify the number of clients who had housing issues. In this period they saw 5,814 clients (approximately 6,700 clients in the full year). It is estimated that as 12.1% of clients have housing issues the annual total would be in the order of 800.
- 4.8 The table below shows the breakdown of housing enquiries between 1 April 2007 and 8 February 2008. The largest sub-category of housing enquiries (28.1%) deals with problems clients have in the private sector rented property (eg, deposit, disrepair, etc). Sixteen per cent of housing issues are about either actual or threatened homelessness. 15.8% of issues relate to homelessness services and

access and provision of accommodation. In total, 31.8% of the CAB's housing enquiries are homelessness-related. This reflects 3.8% of the agency's overall workload.

CAB Richmond housing cases April 2007 to 8 February 2008

| Category | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Total new issues | % |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|------|
| Discrimination | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0.2 |
| Actual homelessness | 39 | 34 | 22 | 8 | 103 | 4.4 |
| Threatened homelessness | 94 | 95 | 56 | 27 | 272 | 11.6 |
| Local authority homelessness service | 44 | 59 | 28 | 11 | 142 | 6.1 |
| Access to and provision of accommodation | 62 | 65 | 68 | 33 | 228 | 9.7 |
| Local authority housing | 38 | 41 | 31 | 11 | 121 | 5.2 |
| Housing association property | 85 | 86 | 88 | 31 | 290 | 12.4 |
| Private sector rented property | 168 | 184 | 206 | 101 | 659 | 28.1 |
| Owner-occupier property | 67 | 55 | 47 | 31 | 200 | 8.5 |
| Environmental and neighbour issues | 46 | 77 | 48 | 30 | 201 | 8.6 |
| Other housing issues | 31 | 46 | 36 | 11 | 124 | 5.3 |

Source Richmond CAB

Agency consultation

- 4.9 Consultation with stakeholders identified concerns over the possibility of a recession in the housing market. Thus the promotion of advice to the owner - occupied sector could of advantage to those who may find themselves in difficulties. Debt and financial advice services could be required. As part of the housing strategy changes in the housing market and its impact on homelessness needs to be monitored.
- 4.10 The Homelessness Forum at its meeting in December 2007 confirmed that the ethos of homelessness prevention should be a focus of the future strategy and that they believed that prevention is embedded in their services. As such partners recognised the importance of:
- Providing clear and precise information, including advice and signposting
 - Providing suitable, safe and settled accommodation
 - Being actively involved in the maintenance of tenancies
 - Early intervention in minor tenancy issues to prevent them becoming more serious.
- 4.11 An important role of external agencies is to advocate on behalf of clients and to assist them to seek a review of a homeless decision. It is important that concerns over individual cases do not impinge upon wider working relationships. Good liaison with external agencies needs to be in place, with effective channels of communication to enable views to be freely expressed. It is suggested that protocols between the council and advice agencies, and underpinned with service agreements where grant aid is given, are essential to ensure coordinated working, identifying unmet needs and promoting homelessness prevention.

Service user consultation

- 4.12 In a survey of its service users in 2007 the council identified that the most common method of finding out about the homelessness service was through friends and family with agencies (such as the CAB) second.
- 4.13 As part of this review, three focus groups were held with service users. A cross section of service users was sought. It included single homeless who had stayed or were staying in a SPEAR hostel, residents in the council's hostels and residents in other temporary accommodation. Their views were sought on the availability of advice, their experience of the assessment process and communication with staff. The groups were small in number (ten in total attended), but because they were small, more detailed discussion and good insight was obtained. In practice a wide range of views were elicited, some very complimentary but others quite negative. As a consequence people had quite different and hence contradictory views and experiences. It is recognised that this is a small sample and people have responded based upon their individual experiences and may or may not be representative of all service users. However, it provides a useful perspective on the service and underlines the value of regular service user consultation.
- 4.14 Strengths:
- People knew where to go for advice and thought it was easy to get advice in Richmond, although one person thought advice services could be advertised more widely
 - No-one had any complaints about the quality of advice
 - The large numbers of people they help. *"It was a positive feature that they have a homeless person unit (hostel) even though they don't have enough properties"*
 - *"They keep you up to date with things"*
 - *"Helpful staff"* – indicated by three people
 - *"A lot of information and the service is excellent, first class, couldn't be better"*
 - Those who were given leaflets said they were *"good, clear and easy to understand"*
 - *"People in reception are wonderful and calm you down"*
 - Treated well and kept informed
 - However, not everyone could identify strengths.
- 4.15 Weaknesses:
- Some stated that they had not been given any leaflets or letters
 - Discussions were verbal only and not confirmed in writing
 - Not seeing the same person: *"the file isn't kept up to date"*; said that they were forced to explain their circumstances each time, which was often a painful experience
 - One person said process was not properly explained but received a decision quickly but then had to appeal
 - *"Would not talk to Housing Benefit, who were holding some of the papers"*; was required to prove their situation – protection of information legislation was cited

- Staff were unprofessional – one felt he was prejudged, another had been accused of being untruthful, when the member of staff had been given wrong information. *“Staff should understand that everyone coming there needs help and should not jump to conclusions about who they were dealing with”*
- An 18-year-old felt he was not treated with respect because he was a young person
- Not offering an interpreter when someone was struggling with English
- Lack of interest in the homeless person and not realising the effect delays and a lack of contact was having on someone’s life
- Did not receive regular contact which would have improved their experience
- Four people could not identify any weaknesses.

4.16 The government has urged councils to improve the access to service and the information they make available to service users.⁷ The council has achieved Charter Mark status, an external recognition of a positive customer service approach. The council does carry out ongoing customer satisfaction surveys and these are reported upon in the council’s performance management framework. It also has been used to assess the impact on BME and other disadvantaged groups.

4.17 One of the key tasks set by the previous homelessness strategy was to seek to reduce homelessness against the main causes of homelessness. The analysis of homelessness trends confirms that this has occurred.

4.18 A range of homelessness prevention initiatives are undertaken that include home visits in cases involving eviction from families and friends, the availability of specialist mediation services and proactive housing options service.

Mediation

4.19 Mediation was seen to be a key element in the government’s survey of local authority homelessness prevention measures.⁸ Since 2002 the council has had a contract with Mediation in Divorce to provide mediation. Procedures have been established both in terms of referrals, feedback and outcomes. The service dealt with the following:

- 2005 – 67 referrals were made – of which ten were young people – six of them received a mediation service and two remained at home
- 2006 – 27 referrals – of which two young people – one mediated further – three remained at home
- 2007 – nine referrals – two young people – one remaining at home while mediation ongoing.

4.20 The limited success in enabling people to remain in the home is a concern. Staff within the advice and assessment team felt the positive outcomes of the service were low and could be explained in part because there can be no compulsion on

⁷ Audit Commission Housing Key Lines of Enquiry

⁸ Homeless Statistics June 2007 and Local Authority Survey of Homeless Prevention, Policy Briefing 19 June CLG 2007

the parties to enter into mediation. As part of the government's drive to reduce homelessness amongst young people, it is anticipated that there may be a greater investment in mediation services. The council, with Mediation in Divorce, should examine the service to ensure effective service delivery and to maximise outcomes.

Financial inclusion

- 4.21 Homelessness compounds the social exclusion of families and individuals who often find it difficult to access education and training and can be disadvantaged in the labour market. The report by Professor John Hills, *Ends and means: the future role of social housing in England (2007)*, drew attention to the fact that social housing appears to encourage continuing high levels of worklessness.
- 4.22 There has been recent local action in the Borough. A housing conference called *Improving Financial Opportunities* was held on 27 November 2007. It was jointly organised by the council, Richmond Housing Partnership and Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust. Some 60 delegates, representing the local authority, housing associations and voluntary organisations attended and discussed practical ways in which financial deprivation might be better addressed. An initial action plan has been developed that focussed around three key areas which are identified below.

Improving the Housing Benefit service in Richmond

It was recognised that the service performs well but aspects such as job training/shadowing between the HB service and housing associations could improve joint working. The potential to share in information about tenants was seen as a way making further improvements.

Developing a local credit union was seen as a positive way in which people on benefits and low incomes can save and obtain loans. A local steering group would be established.

Employment opportunities and volunteering – when developing their resident employment strategies the housing associations were encouraged to work with Council for Voluntary Service and the Jobcentre.

Housing options – accessing the private rented sector

- 4.23 Faced with housing problems it is important for service users to understand the housing options available to them. This may include applying for accommodation through the housing register, being aware of the timescales that might be involved in securing a suitable property in their areas of choice, rights under the homelessness legislation, opportunities to secure home ownership, etc. The promotion of a housing options approach has been a strong element of advice from the government in any homeless prevention work.⁹

⁹ Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice 12 June 2006 DCLG

4.24 Housing options promotion is also reflected in the Greater London Authority's housing advice strategy. The objectives being:

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

4.25 The council has been successful in assisting people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to access the private rented sector people by providing financial support and advice to secure a tenancy. Rather than waiting for an offer of permanent housing with a wait of several years or to spend time in temporary accommodation, the scheme can provide people with a home more quickly and in areas where they may prefer to live. For convenience it is described as a rent deposit scheme but it provides rent deposit guarantees (up to the equivalent of four weeks' rent), rent in advance and can make other payments so as to secure accommodation.

4.26 In 2006/07, 78 households were assisted into the private rented sector tenancies and two, which were already in accommodation, were given financial help to remain in their home and thus prevent homelessness. The numbers assisted in moving into new accommodation the first two quarters of the current year are broadly similar to the numbers of the previous year, although those helped to remain in accommodation has increased.

Rent deposit homelessness prevention (Council)

| | New cases | Renewals | Total | Deposit | Advance | Management | Shortfall | Total |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2006/07 | | | | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Apr to June | 12 | | 12 | 7,976.63 | 9,308.00 | 1,358.26 | 1,200.00 | 19,842.89 |
| Jul to Sept | 25 | | 25 | 6,654.23 | 20,480.04 | 711.63 | | 27,845.90 |
| Oct to Dec | 22 | | 22 | 1,725 | 11,302.00 | 1,579.15 | | 16,281.15 |
| Jan to Mar | 19 | 2 | 21 | 0 | 17,290.86 | 1,753.26 | | 19,044.12 |
| Total | 78 | 2 | 80 | 16,355.86 | 56,219.56 | 5,267.17 | 1,200.00 | 80,717.59 |
| 2007/08 | | | | | | | | % |
| Apr to June | 12 | 5 | 17 | 10,316.97 | 8,153.00 | 722.89 | 0.00 | 19,192.86 |
| Jul to Sept | 22 | 4 | 26 | 22,295.00 | 12,012.88 | 2,165.59 | 280.00 | 36,753.47 |
| Oct to Dec¹⁰ | 12 | 1 | 13 | 16,355.86 | 58,380.90 | 5,402.30 | 1,200.00 | 83,014.06 |
| Total | 46 | 10 | 56 | 48,967.83 | 78,546.78 | 8,290.78 | 1,480.00 | 138,960.40 |

Source Richmond upon Thames Borough Council

4.27 The rent deposit guarantee scheme provides a number of benefits to the landlord:

¹⁰ As at 28 November 2007

- A deposit guarantee to cover any reasonable dilapidations which may occur to property as a result of non-malicious damage by tenants
- Access to a supply of tenants who have been assessed as homeless by the council and qualify for Housing Benefit
- Avoidance of lettings agents' fees and worry about where the next tenant will come from.

4.28 A similar scheme is operated by SPEAR. A grant has been made available to SPEAR to fund the work of two FTE rent deposit scheme posts. It is a positive aspect of partnership working that the staff work within the council's advice and assessment team. The scheme is designed for clients with low or no support needs and provides a free and confidential landlord advice. Numbers assisted contribute towards the local authority's performance against Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 213. SPEAR achieved its target in 2006/07 to assist 42 households to access private rented accommodation. The target requires at least 32 of these households must be new to the scheme, ie, they are not cases where existing clients renew their tenancies or relocate. In 2007/08 the target is to assist 70 households, who if assessed would have a priority need, plus 20 single homeless cases who would not have a priority need.

SPEAR new tenancies created in the private rented sector

| | New tenancies created |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2004-2005 | 38 |
| 2005-2006 | 36 |
| 2006-2007 | 43 |
| 2007-2008 (as at Nov 07) | 48 (109 people) |

Source: SPEAR

4.29 It is estimated that the private rented sector has 14,000 properties (approx 17%¹¹ of the housing stock). Over recent years the private rented sector has experienced considerable growth in available lettings with the market responding to the declining affordability of home ownership and inadequate supply in the social sector. It is understood that investors rather than primary occupiers now purchase two-thirds of new homes in London¹². However, nationally there are concerns over the stability of the housing market with signs that house price increases have stalled or fallen.

4.30 The council reviewed over 540 adverts in local papers, estates agents, property press, and a number of property and newspaper websites during one week of October 2007. The following Borough-wide averages were identified. There are considerable variations across the Borough. For a three-bedroom house in Kew the average was £2,130 and £1,160 in Whitton. Housing Benefit thresholds vary on location and range from £960 to over £1,600 for a three-bedroom property. For people who are dependent on Housing Benefit there will be some areas where it will be difficult to secure affordable accommodation.

¹¹ Source: LB Richmond upon Thames Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix, 2005

¹² Mayor of London Housing Strategy 2007

4.31 Under discretionary Housing Benefit, the council makes exceptional hardship payments to claimants whose Housing Benefit is less than their rent. There is effective liaison with the advice and assessment team which identifies cases where assistance is required. It is understood that the council makes full use of its allocated budget,

Rented accommodation Borough-wide averages

| Studio | One bed | Two bed | Three bed | Four bed |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| £820 | £950 | £1,190 | £1,500 | £2,150 |

Source Richmond upon Thames Borough Council October 2007

4.32 The Mayor's draft London housing strategy identified the following comments on the private rented sector:

- The sector could offer a more professional and responsible service to its consumers
- Despite many improvements, too many landlords still provide poor value for money, inadequate maintenance and bad management
- It is difficult for tenants with little security of tenure to act as effective consumers and they need support through statutory intervention
- New powers, through the housing health and safety rating system and the licensing of houses in multiple occupation
- High rent levels often in excess of local reference rents.

4.33 It is considered, however, that this broad view reflects a London-wide assessment. It is understood that the stock profile in Richmond is of higher quality and the local authority believes that the level of illegal evictions or 'bad' landlords is much lower. The main causes of homelessness from the private rented sector experienced in Richmond are from rent arrears, end of tenancy agreements and landlords wanting to sell the property, wanting it vacated to carry out refurbishment, wanting to move back into the property themselves or because of overcrowding of the property¹³. Occasionally landlords give the reason of wanting to sell because they believe this to be the only way to perhaps get new tenants and increase the rent. Early preventative advice can be given to tell landlords of other ways to make a small increase in the rent but keep the tenants in place.

4.34 Tenants on Housing benefit may get behind with their rent and build up arrears as a result of changes in their household income, eg., because they've changed job or moved into employment prompting a reassessment of Housing Benefit. In exceptional cases the council can help with a one-off lump sum payment of arrears in cases of genuine proven hardship, with various conditions attached, eg, payment to be made direct to the landlord, etc, to enable the arrears to be addressed and the tenant to remain in their home. Alternatively, the council helps tenants prioritise debts and agree a repayment schedule with the landlord. In these ways the landlord may avoid costs of eviction, redecoration and rent loss through void periods and costs of finding a tenant. The council through its own research has identified a range of specific actions that could improve outcomes for tenants and landlords and

¹³ Richmond Council Research into the Prevention of Homelessness in the Private Rented Sector in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

assist homelessness prevention which is has been implementing and should be continued under the homeless strategy action plan.

- 4.35 Housing Benefit can be particularly troublesome in the eyes of many landlords and many reject tenants who are receiving benefit. The Borough has recognised the importance of providing an efficient service, and performance monitoring demonstrates the service to be in the upper quartile of councils. For example throughout the year 2006/07, the service exceeded the target of 29 days for processing new claims and in March 2007 had achieved a turnaround of 27.43 days.
- 4.36 April 2008 saw the introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) which is a new way of calculating and paying Housing Benefit. Whilst information has been included on the council's website, work has also been done through the private sector landlord forum to prepare landlords for the changes. Given these changes, there should be ongoing monitoring to assess the impact that LHA might have on the supply and accessibility of private rented accommodation for those on benefit. The council has sought to learn from the experiences of the LHA pilots and identified that money and debt advice services are likely to see an initial upsurge in enquiries due to the LHA. The council may wish to consider the implications to funding such services in 2008.
- 4.37 Many landlords need help and support to enable them to comply with the requirement of being a landlord. Landlords can seek assistance from the council through the private landlord advice service. In addition the council has recognised the role that landlord accreditation can play in helping landlords and improving standards within the sector through training, advice and positive liaison. There is a Private Sector Landlords' Forum that meets twice a year bringing together landlords, developers, building societies, housing associations, surveyors and various Council departments such as Planning, Housing, Legal, Social Services and Revenue and Benefits to, amongst other things, promote good practice in the private rented sector. The Forum publishes a newsletter called *Forum Focus* at least once a year. It carries a report of the most recent meeting, articles from professionals on related matters and also information on grants and other schemes available to landlords. Copies are made available of the council's website.
- 4.38 By offering rent guarantees, landlord accreditation, and landlord and tenant support under the rent deposit scheme, the council has been able to negotiate with landlords to offer one-year tenancies rather than the usual six-month assured shorthold tenancy. The Mayor of London, in the draft housing strategy, wishes to see two-year tenancies. It is considered that if the council is to be able to secure longer tenancies, it is likely that landlords will seek additional benefits.
- 4.39 Stakeholders indicated that some landlords or agents are seeking a renewal of tenancy and imposing a cost upon the tenant (and landlord) to draw up a new tenancy. This practice is something that the council should seek to take steps to influence.

Stakeholder views

- 4.40 As part of the consultation partner agencies considered main strengths of the council's homelessness service to be:
- Commitment to the service
 - Rent deposit scheme
 - Ability to meet targets.
- 4.41 Conversely partner agencies considered the main weaknesses of the homelessness service to be:
- *“The need for improved liaison with partners and stakeholders”*. There were concerns that the Homelessness Forum, despite having been a useful means to bring people together and share information, needs to do more to improve its effectiveness and promote better joint working with local agencies and organisations
 - The council was perceived as having *“a gate-keeping approach towards homelessness with a tendency to avoid taking an application.”* No evidence was found to show that the Council was working in this manner. It is believed that relationships between the council and external organisations, which may challenge homelessness decisions through acting in an advocacy role on the part of the client, could be strained on occasions. It is vital that the opportunities for advocacy are kept open and that there are wider regular opportunities for discussion are available
 - Concerns have been raised that homeless households might be directed through the housing options approach rather than being advised that a homelessness application can be made. The council is actively enabling households in housing need to access accommodation, in line with the government's drive and believes that it is operating the legislation correctly. Although there have been meetings between agencies to discuss these concerns there is a need to hold further events to explore these issues.
 - *“The need to promote and advertise homelessness services and their accessibility”*. There is a continued need to ensure that services and information is available in a variety of forms and updated on a regular basis. It was noted as part of the original homeless action plan that external surgeries were established but they were not continued as little use was made. No specific gaps have been identified as part of this review but the council and its partners, through ongoing liaison, need to be aware of this need and review on annual basis
 - *“Lack of information on what housing options are available.”* A number of councils have established specific housing options services and include information about the various options on their websites. Although the council's website contains a link to the Housing Options website there is potential for more information to be provided
 - *“Poor communication with other council sections such as Housing Benefit.”* Whilst this is clearly a concern for one of the respondents, the review has identified that the council Housing Benefit performance is within the top quartile and the advice and assessment team, when questioned, were clear that there were good working practices and communication with Housing Benefit

- *Some saw there was a poor use of private rented sector whilst others considered that this was being promoted too much.* If the council is to meet people's housing needs and offer positive housing options service then is essential that use of the sector is maintained
- *A need to develop further mechanisms to prevent parental evictions (this is the highest cause of homelessness). It is good practice that the council visits all such cases and has access to mediation. The council is also reviewing its young person's housing strategy which will need to take on board the government's agenda to reduce homelessness amongst young people*
- *"Homelessness prevention is a recognised priority within housing service plan but the community plan does not place an emphasis on homelessness prevention, its focus is on increasing supply. It would be helpful to include homeless prevention targets within the Local Area Agreement."* This is something that needs to be considered within the context of the homelessness strategy. Best practice suggests that there is a need for the homelessness strategy, or at least some key aspects, to link into high level strategic planning and working, such as the Local Area Agreement.

Strategy action points

- Consider issues arising out of the London Housing Advice Strategy and implementation plan for inclusion in the homelessness strategy for the Borough
- The directory of homelessness services was last reviewed in 2004 and should be updated on a continual basis
- Work has begun on promoting financial inclusion, and action to address worklessness amongst homeless households should be continued
- LHA was introduced in place of Housing Benefit in April 2008. Its impact on rent levels and on the supply and quality of private rented accommodation should be monitored
- Experience of the LHA pilots identified that money and debt advice services may see an initial upsurge in enquiries due to the LHA. The council may wish to consider the implications to funding such services
- Implement actions identified by the council to improve information, support and advice that may improve management and conditions in the private rented sector
- Improve information for service users on the council's website
- Work to improve joint working with partners and stakeholders. Consider protocols and service agreements
- Service users' experience of homelessness and advice services were varied. This suggests a need for service improvements
- The council with Mediation in Divorce should examine the service to ensure effective service delivery and to maximise positive outcomes
- Consider including homeless prevention targets within the Local Area Agreement

5 At-risk groups

Review findings

- The council has a number of protocols in place to enable partners to work together
- Whilst the reported levels of rough sleeping have been at less than five people over recent years, the Snapshot Survey undertaken in December 2007 identified 17 households who said that they had been sleeping rough the previous night. This apparent rise is being investigated by SPEAR
- SPEAR has wide contact with single homeless people. During the first six months of 2007/08 they interacted with 175 single homeless people through the hostel, outreach and resettlement teams and 90 (76%) of these had a local connection
- On average the council receives 13 homeless applications per quarter from non-priority households
- It is a positive feature of the council's service towards young people that there is a specialist young persons worker in the advice and assessment team
- The council has housing strategies for young persons and teenage parents and is currently reviewing them
- Under the BVPI 225 relating to domestic violence the council has achieved each of the 11 specific goals for the past two years
- The probation service has identified in the period between October 2006 and September 2007 the probation service identified that of 188 offenders, 70 (37%) had an accommodation problem
- Black and minority ethnic households are more likely to experience homelessness

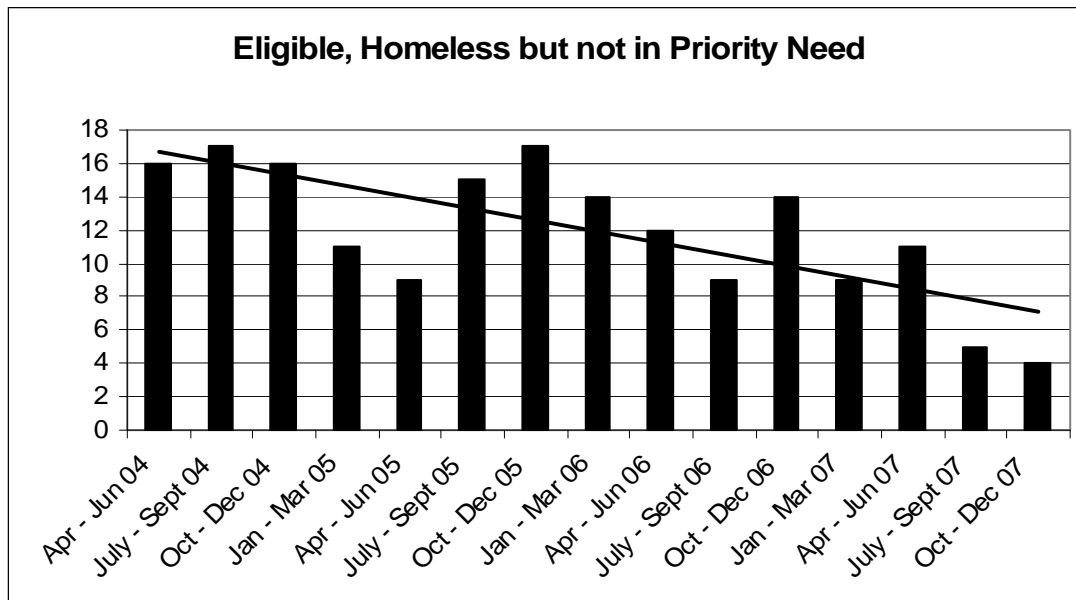
Intentionally homeless households

- 5.1 Having determined that a household is intentionally homeless there are particular concerns that those households with children might be at risk. A protocol was adopted in September 2002 which sets out a standard operating procedure between housing and Social Services regarding intentionally homeless households to ensure coordinated assessments and consideration of the welfare of the affected children. Despite this, concerns were raised during the consultation from an external organisation, which wished to see an '*improvement of the liaison between the housing department and social services regarding intentionally homeless households with children*'. Whilst no indications of such problems were identified in discussions with the advice and assessment team, it is considered that this protocol, and indeed all protocols, should be subject to regular review.
- 5.2 Within the council's advice and assessment team, the children and families housing officer has a role to secure private rented accommodation for such households. Between October 2002 and 2004, 14 intentionally homeless households were secured accommodation in the private rented sector. This work continues.

Single people/childless couples (non-priority homeless)

- 5.3 In developing the homeless strategy there is a need to consider all forms of homelessness, not solely those to whom the council has a statutory duty to secure accommodation. Over the period 2004/05 to December 2007, non-priority homeless

households comprised 12.3% of all homeless decisions and averaged at 12 households per quarter. The minimum number in any quarter was nine and peaked at 17. These households comprise single people or couples with no children and having no defined vulnerability. The chart below illustrates that there has been a downward trend in the numbers per quarter.



Source P1e returns

- 5.4 The council does not have a specific duty to secure accommodation for non-priority households but is required to provide advice and assistance. However, under the rent deposit scheme non-priority households can be assisted. The SPEAR target includes 20 non-priority households in its 2007/08 target.
- 5.5 It is thought that not all homeless households will present to the council as homeless as those not in priority need may consider themselves unlikely to receive practical assistance with housing. Many will contact other organisations and thus it is important to view other information held by them.
- 5.6 SPEAR, which provides accommodation, support, rent deposit and an outreach service to single homeless households and rough-sleepers, had contact with 175 single homeless individuals during the first six months of 2007/08. 118 were worked with intensively through the hostel, outreach and resettlement teams and 90 (76%) of these had a local connection. This is significantly more than the 16 non-priority homeless decisions that the council made during this same six-month period. It has not been possible to identify if those with whom SPEAR worked also had contact with the council's advice and assessment team. SPEAR provides a direct access hostel and other services that are unavailable in adjoining boroughs and as such it may be seen to attract service users into the locality.
- 5.7 A Snapshot Survey of 79 service users was undertaken over a two-week period in December, of people who were in contact with agencies outside the council, and 63 considered themselves to be homeless.

- 5.8 Consultation has identified stakeholder concerns that services to the single homeless could be improved, perhaps by directing all single homeless through SPEAR. Further investigation is needed as to how services to single non-priority homeless services might be best delivered.

Rough sleepers

- 5.9 The government is committed to reducing levels of rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible. The local target is to maintain the number of rough sleepers at five or under. SPEAR plays a crucial role in the Borough through its outreach and hostel services in monitoring and working with rough sleepers. During each of the first two quarters of 2007/08, SPEAR identified four people as rough sleepers. However, the December 2007 Snapshot Survey identified 17 people who said that they had been sleeping rough the previous night. Many of these clients had a range of problems including alcohol and drug abuse. Nine were identified as long-term homeless/no fixed abode. Comments from the Vineyard project identified that their client's drug and alcohol problems limits the accommodation they can access. A concern was that some clients had previously been accommodated in hostels, but having failed to observe licence conditions, were asked to leave. SPEAR is already working to address this apparent rise in rough sleeping and progress will need to be monitored.
- 5.10 Stakeholder consultation called for a greater awareness of the needs of vulnerable street homeless with an analysis of needs, particularly around alcohol and drug addiction and mental health issues. There was a request to improve relationships between the statutory sector and the voluntary sector in relation to street homelessness.

Young people

- 5.11 The duty to regard young people as having a priority need was introduced by statutory instrument in 2002.¹⁴ Acceptances of young people have remained at between 17%-18% of the total for the past two years.

¹⁴ The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002

Homeless acceptances

| 2006/07 | Aged 16/17 years | | In care and aged 18 to 20 | |
|----------------------|------------------|------|---------------------------|-----|
| | No | % | No | % |
| Croydon | 5 | 1.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 10 | 4.3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Lambeth | 106 | 14.4 | 4 | 0.5 |
| Merton | 30 | 28.0 | 1 | 0.9 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 27 | 17.8 | 3 | 2.0 |
| Sutton | 36 | 16.7 | 1 | 0.5 |
| Wandsworth | 79 | 13.4 | 5 | 0.8 |
| Sub-region | 293 | 12.4 | 14 | 0.6 |
| London | 1,562 | 10.2 | 120 | 0.8 |
| England | 5,652 | 7.7 | 732 | 1.0 |

Source P1e returns

- 5.12 Not all young people who approach the council are accepted as homeless. In the period November 2004-November 2007, of 188 assessed cases, 43 were found to be not homeless and 19 were declared intentionally homeless. In 2006/07 the percentage of young people acceptances was higher than London and England but much lower than Merton which conversely has the lowest level of homelessness (per 1,000 pop) in London. Because the numbers involved are small, care has to be taken not to draw too many conclusions. This is illustrated by the fact that ten cases were as a result of referrals from the asylum team, of which seven cases had their homelessness resolved after they had been accepted as homeless. Comparisons with others in the sub-region can be helpful in highlighting differences, and through the sub-region's homelessness group it affords the opportunity to examine practices in detail.
- 5.13 Within the advice and assessment team there is a young people's housing officer, who makes individual assessments, interviews other family members to investigate reasons for homelessness, makes referrals for mediation, and carries out work to prevent the young people becoming homeless.
- 5.14 Arrangements are in place whereby Social Services assess cases and provide support to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds where their support needs exceed the level of service that can be provided through the resettlement service.
- 5.15 It is noted that only eight care leavers were accepted as homeless over the three years 2003/04 to 2006/07. There is a range of accommodation with support that can be varied to suit needs of the individual. The support is provided either by a specialist housing association, the leaving care team and Centrepoint, which provides floating support to ten young people, (five care-leavers and five housing referrals), all of whom hold tenancies in housing association general needs accommodation. In working to avoid homelessness, the leaving care team has a quota of seven units per year to facilitate move-on.

- 5.16 For young single people who become homeless and who are not care leavers, the accommodation and support package tends to involve floating support in temporary accommodation provided by the council. There are three posts within the resettlement team to provide specialist support to young people and young teenage parents to help them maintain their accommodation and to promote independence. Between them, they have a caseload of 24, reflecting the relatively high support needs of this group.
- 5.17 The government has identified that homelessness affecting young people requires specific attention to:
- End, by 2010, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by local housing authorities in discharging their homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds
 - Improve access to homelessness mediation (including family mediation for young people), so that there is a general expectation of such services
 - Secure the provision of supported lodgings to provide accommodation, advice and mediation services for young people who can no longer stay in the family home.
- 5.18 Through Social Services the council has experience of setting up supported lodgings with four care leavers currently in placements which may prove helpful in extending housing opportunities.
- 5.19 A young person's housing strategy was published in October 2004 which subject to multi-disciplinary working via the Homelessness Forum. The council is revising the strategy for the period 2008-12 and will include the government's targets.

Teenage parents

- 5.20 The council produced a supported housing strategy for teenage parents in October 2004. The action plan covers the period from 2003 to 2008 and is in the process of being reviewed. The strategy has three broad aims:
- To ensure no teenage parent is placed in unsupported accommodation
 - To ensure supported accommodation is monitored and offers a quality service to young parents
 - To ensure that appropriate referral mechanisms are in place so that teenage pregnant partners are not a socially excluded group.
- 5.21 Teenage pregnancy is part of a ten-year national strategy to prevent teenage pregnancies and support teenage parents including local targets to reduce under-18 conceptions by 15% in 2004 and by 50% in 2010 (40% in Richmond upon Thames) An interim target was to reduce under-18 conceptions to 15% by 2004. Richmond has achieved a 3.9% reduction.
- 5.22 Ten teenage lone parents were accepted as homeless in 2004/05, four in 2005/06 and five in 2006/07. Whilst the numbers of teenage pregnant mothers or lone parents is few in number there is a need to adequately meet their individual housing and support needs. There are four units of supported accommodation for young

parents/pregnant women provided in the Borough by LIFE Housing. The council has reached agreement with Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust to provide four units of accommodation in a block that will be supported by a specialist young people's resettlement officer. As at February 2008 only two mothers under 18 were accommodated by the council in temporary accommodation

Domestic violence

5.23 In 2006/07 violent relationship breakdown was the third most common reason for homelessness. At 10.5% of accepted cases in that year, it was higher than the sub-region (6.5%) and for London (7.2%). However, there has been a significant fall in cases of 65% over the previous year. Information available does not indicate if any of the victims were men or were from a same sex relationship. It would be helpful to collect such information.

Homeless acceptances – violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner

| | No. | % of acceptances |
|---------|------------|-------------------------|
| 2004/05 | 37 | 13.26 |
| 2005/06 | 46 | 18.11 |
| 2006/07 | 16 | 10.53 |

Source P1e

- 5.24 There are two refuges in the Borough, providing a total of 15 units. Both operate at around 98% occupancy levels, highlighting the demand on these services. Both are cross-authority resources and are not just confined for use by local women and their children. The council does have a Safety First scheme (also known as sanctuary schemes) that enables domestic violence victims to remain in their homes where appropriate.
- 5.25 Under the BVPI 225 councils are asked to respond to the 11 specific goals relating to domestic violence. The council has been able to confirm that has achieved all 11 for the past two years. See Appendix two.
- 5.26 The council, working through the Community Safety Partnership and Domestic Abuse Forum, has developed a domestic violence strategy, leaflet and booklet that tell people of services available to people suffering domestic abuse. These are available on the council's website through the social services pages. Links to this information from the housing advice pages would be helpful.
- 5.27 Stakeholder consultation pointed to a wish to improve domestic violence awareness amongst council staff. As part of any training and induction for staff there is a need to ensure that they have knowledge of local service provision and have sensitivity when working with victims of abuse. A stakeholder saw that there was a "continuous failure to address the issue of women who have no recourse to public funds as a homelessness group". Within the homelessness legislation, the council is required to provide services only for those who are deemed to be eligible. However, further information regarding these concerns is needed.

Older people

- 5.28 The numbers of households which have been accepted as homeless whose priority need was defined as old age fell by 50% in 2006/07, when only seven older people were accepted as homeless. When compared with other councils in the sub-region and London, only Sutton had a higher percentage than the Borough. The council considers, given the small numbers involved, the re-housing of older homeless people into suitable accommodation such as sheltered housing does not pose a particular difficulty.

2006/07 priority need category – old age

| | No. | % |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Croydon | 4 | 1.2 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 7 | 3.0 |
| Lambeth | 12 | 1.6 |
| Merton | 2 | 1.9 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 7 | 4.6 |
| Sutton | 11 | 5.1 |
| Wandsworth | 6 | 1.0 |
| Sub-region | 49 | 2.1 |
| London | 445 | 2.9 |
| England | 1,391 | 1.9 |

Source P1e

People with disabilities

- 5.29 In 2006/07 the seven people who were accepted as homeless whose priority need was a physical disability comprised 4.6% of the total. This was down from 16 (6.3%) in 2005/06.
- 5.30 The local housing needs assessment identified that of an estimated 8,228 households in Richmond upon Thames with one or more members with identified support needs, 42.2% had a physical disability and comprised the largest group. The council seeks to ensure that homeless households with disabilities can be suitably housed, in both temporary and permanent housing, for example through the provision of wheelchair accessible accommodation. The Uxbridge Road Hostel can house disabled clients as it has some rooms and bathrooms with level access. The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants to properties deemed uninhabitable is a means whereby homelessness might be averted.
- 5.31 There is a range of services to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, including 40 places of accommodation and support services. The resettlement team provides floating support to people with mild learning disabilities and considers that there is a need for more supported accommodation for this group. There is recognition that single homeless people with mild learning difficulties such as ADHT and Asperger's struggle to do simple things such as apply for benefits and through stakeholder concerns there is the belief that there are insufficient resources to help this group. These needs should be assessed.

HIV and AIDS

- 5.32 No breakdown of homelessness information regarding people suffering HIV/AIDS is available. It is important that in the event of homelessness, such people's needs are fully assessed and they are provided with appropriate accommodation and support if required. There are specialists within the advice and assessment team, with one officer dealing with HIV/AIDS cases which improves the service given and gives greater confidentiality. There are known to be 180 to 200 people in Richmond living with HIV/AIDS. There are six units of supported accommodation meeting this client group's needs.

People with mental health problems

- 5.33 The local housing needs assessment April 2007 identified that of an estimated 8,228 households in the Borough with one or more members in an identified support needs group, 2,755 households had a mental health problem. This is the second largest incidence of people with identified support needs (33.5%).
- 5.34 Research undertaken by the council covering a period from April 2004 to February 2007 identified 107 homeless applications where households had a mental health issue (41 in 04/05, 43 in 2005/06 and 24 in 2006/07 up to February 2007). A homeless duty was accepted in approximately two-thirds of all applications. In line with the overall fall in accepted homeless, households whose priority need related to mental health problems has also fallen in number from 36 in 2004/05 to 25 in 2005/06 and 16 in 2006/07. There was little change as a proportion of total accepted cases with a range of 10.5% to 11.5%. The analysis found that nearly two-thirds of applicants were male (64%).
- 5.35 In February 2007, 12 households with mental health issues were resident in temporary accommodation, although a homelessness duty had only been accepted for nine. The remainder were live cases awaiting a decision.
- 5.36 Mental health problems are prevalent among homeless people with as many as one in five having a mental health problem and a further issue such as substance misuse.¹⁵ Research also indicates 30% to 50% of rough sleepers having mental health problems, although the Snapshot Survey identified that of 17 people who claimed to be sleeping rough, only one person admitted to having a mental health problem. Of all the 79 contacts made 11 households (nearly 14%) identified they had mental health problems.
- 5.37 Mental health problems are a concern for Probation Service clients. Of those whose circumstances were assessed between October 2006 and September 2007, all 70 who had an accommodation need were also assessed as having a mental health problem. Twenty-four (34%) were identified as being at risk of harm.
- 5.38 The council matches homeless people who have both mental health problems and support needs with vacancies in suitable supported housing schemes. This is

¹⁵ 'Mental Health and Housing' (2004), Factsheet 6, Social Exclusion Unit publication.

carried out by the multi-agency floating support panel, comprising the council, a CMHT representative and one of the housing association providers. Over a period of approximately two years ending in February 2007, the panel dealt with 72 housing nominations with 36 applicants being accepted into accommodation.

- 5.39 The council has identified a lack of suitable accommodation where homeless people with a mental health problem can be accommodated and have their health and support needs assessed. Funding has been awarded to the council to enable this project to proceed. This will involve a tender process to select the mental health hostel provider.
- 5.40 The council has identified a series of potential actions around mental health and homelessness¹⁶ which should be progressed within the homelessness strategy. It was acknowledged that there would need to be an audit of existing actions and to assess the potential and support to progress those that were not in place:
- Provide adequate levels and types of support to maintain tenancies and independent living
 - Housing associations to monitor rent arrears of vulnerable clients for changes in rent patterns and uncharacteristic defaults. Home visits recommended rather than letters to counter avoidance or illiteracy
 - Housing Benefit to develop a register of vulnerable clients and alert homeless/housing advice caseworkers when Housing Benefit renewal forms not filled in within four weeks, and offer help to complete the form
 - Ensure housing advice is available after admission to hospital if required
 - Ensure early identification of housing issues or problems to allow time for work to be carried out before discharge
 - Ensure health and social services can signpost clients to housing advice and debt advice services
 - Ensure between housing and health discussions regarding mental health clients use a process similar to NOTIFY
 - Ensure front-line housing staff understand how clients can register with GPs and refer a client to mental health and drug/alcohol services
 - Ensure health staff know how to contact housing advice, local authority housing options centres, mediation and anti-social behaviour teams
 - Ensure joint commissioning and service delivery and develop information sharing agreements/protocols.

Drug and alcohol misusers

- 5.41 The numbers accepted as homeless by the council due to drug or alcohol dependency are small, as shown by the table below.

¹⁶ Mental Health and Homelessness Briefing 2007 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Priority need due to drug or alcohol dependency

| | 2004/05 | | 2005/06 | | 2006/07 | |
|--------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Drug dependency | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.8 | 2 | 1.3 |
| Alcohol dependency | 2 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.3 |

Source P1e

- 5.42 The Snapshot Survey identified that seven households of the 79 (8.9%) had issues with drug abuse and 17(21.5%) had issues around alcohol abuse.
- 5.43 The national alcohol harm reduction strategy recognised the fact that homelessness is a key issue for people affected by drink problems, and pledged to develop integrated care pathways for the most vulnerable, those with multiple problems including homelessness as well as drug problems and mental illness¹⁷
- 5.44 The table below shows the breakdown of offenders who have drug and alcohol problems (October 2006 and September 2007). It is a concern that 74% of offenders with accommodation needs which potentially could lead to homelessness have either a drug or alcohol problem or both.

Offenders drug and alcohol problems

| Substance | Total offender population | | Accommodation needs | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | No | % | No | % |
| Drugs problem | 50 | 27% | 28 | 40% |
| Alcohol problems | 95 | 51% | 38 | 54% |
| Drugs and alcohol problems | 26 | 14% | 14 | 20% |
| Neither drugs or alcohol problems | 69 | 37% | 18 | 26% |
| Total | 188 | 100% | 70 | 100% |

Source Probation Service

- 5.45 Housing and support for drug or alcohol users has been recognised as being critical tackling their addiction. Nationally, government advice has focused on housing, Supporting People, and drugs partnerships working together, to plan to meet housing and support needs as part of care planning, and highlight the range of models of provision that are available.¹⁸ In November 2005, the Home Office, National Treatment Agency, and the ODPM jointly issued a letter to all local authorities, community safety partnerships, drug action teams, and health authorities to ask them to work together on identifying and planning to meet needs for housing and housing-related support for this group. A target, within drug

¹⁷ Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, Cabinet Office, 2004

¹⁸ Tackling drug use in rented housing: a good practice guide – Ian Robinson and Kevin Flemen, Home Office/DTLR, 2002; Drug services for homeless people – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office, and the National Treatment Agency, 2002; Housing support options for people who misuse substances: Guidance for Supporting People commissioners and officers – ODPM/Drug Strategy Directorate, Home Office, 2005; Providing for the housing needs of Drug Intervention Programme clients – a briefing for those involved in the provision of Throughcare and Aftercare services for drugs and housing need, ODPM and Home Office, 2004

treatment plans is to improve joint working on housing support services for drug misusers. It is expected that Drug Action Team (DAT) treatment plans, homelessness strategies and Supporting People strategies to be aligned and complementary, particularly within the umbrella of the local community strategy.

- 5.46 The Borough's community safety and substance misuse strategy¹⁹ stated that there are low rates of drug misuse and even amongst the drug-using population there is little evidence of extremely high-risk behaviour. The Home Office estimated that in 2003/2004 there were 685 problematic drug users in the Borough. This compares well with the neighbouring borough, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames which has a similar demographic and crime profile and has 820 problematic drug users within its borders according to the same figures. The strategy indicated increasing numbers of crack and poly drug users accessing services; in addition treatment services reported an increase in the number of drug users accessing services, who are characterised as chaotic.
- 5.47 It is important that the work to identify need is done jointly between homelessness teams, drug treatment agencies, drug action teams and Supporting People teams. Bringing together both front-line and operational management staff from those agencies will help to clarify where needs are most acute and how to resolve problems for agencies managing temporary accommodation trying to accommodate drug users. In many areas, agencies have identified the need for joint protocols with the police to give staff guidance on sharing information and on managing drug use in temporary accommodation.
- 5.48 Consultation with stakeholders identified perceived gaps in supported accommodation and a need for move-on support for those with substance misuse issues and a request that housing for drug users be a key part of a package of care. However, there is some local provision. CRI, which is a national provider of support, treatment and rehabilitation programmes for those whose lives are affected by substance misuse, crime and lack of opportunity, has a local project that has enabled 11 people to be resettled under its scheme.

Ex-offenders

- 5.49 The council has a duty to consider whether ex-offenders are vulnerable as a result of spending time in an institution. Few have been accepted as homeless by the council with only one in both 2004/05 and 05/06 and three in 2006/07.
- 5.50 However, there is a significant need to prevent homelessness from occurring within the offender population and to meet their housing needs. The Probation Service has identified that in the period between October 2006 and September 2007, of the 188 offenders, 70 (37%) had an accommodation problem. It is a concern that 40% who were resident in permanent or independent housing also had an accommodation need. This suggests the need for housing advice and housing options services as a minimum.

¹⁹ The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Community Safety and Substance Misuse Strategy 2005/08 DRAFT

5.51 With the Housing Register, 25 housing applicants gave their current tenure as prison and 119 stated that their reason for housing was due to leaving prison. The council states that it is one of the few authorities to advertise its housing services in NACRO's handbook. As a result the council receives letters from inmates due for discharge who have never lived in the Borough. Thus it would seem to be appropriate for other London authorities particularly within the sub-region, to similarly advertise their services.

Offenders' accommodation needs

| Accommodation status | Total offender population | | Accommodation needs | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | No | % | No | % |
| Permanent/independent housing | 127 | 68% | 28 | 40% |
| Bail/probation hostel | 22 | 12% | 16 | 23% |
| Supported housing | 13 | 7% | 6 | 9% |
| Transient/short-term accommodation | 18 | 10% | 13 | 19% |
| No fixed abode | 6 | 3% | 6 | 9% |
| No information | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Total | 188 | 100% | 70 | 100% |

Source Probation Service

5.52 Access to suitable housing on release from custody is a significant factor in preventing re-offending.²⁰ It reported that :

- One in three prisoners do not have settled accommodation prior to custody
- One-third of prisoners in accommodation lose their housing on imprisonment
- 20% of prisoners on release report have nowhere to stay
- 10% of short-term prisoners have reported sleeping rough
- Stable accommodation can reduce re-offending by up to 20%.

5.53 Housing provides the base from which offenders can take part in programmes of supervision, gain employment and training and reintegrate into the community. Preventing homelessness and reducing barriers to housing such as rent arrears and other debts is therefore crucial.

5.54 The resettlement strategy for London, launched in September 2005, is a three-year London wide re-offending reduction plan.²¹ Approximately 1,200 prisoners are released into London each month with more than half being discharged from prisons outside of the London region. Addressing the resettlement needs of these prisoners requires an effective multi-agency response based on meeting the specific needs of each individual offender.

5.55 The offender management pathway group (Resettlement Strategy for London) identified key recommendations and actions that need to be progressed in line with national plans to help service providers deliver a comprehensive offender management process.

²⁰ 'Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners', p94, Social Exclusion Unit, July 2002

²¹ London Resettlement Strategy London Resettlement Board September 2005

5.56 One stakeholder commented that “*Housing for ex-offenders is aligned to the regional resettlement strategy*. It is essential that the Borough is signed up and actively participates in required joint working. Already the advice and assessment team works with the Probation Service in the following manner:

- Community Safety Panel – multi-agency project consisting of housing, Probation, DAT and Look Ahead housing. The guiding principle is that some people offend to fund a drug problem. By offering floating support and accommodation linked with DAT involvement they should address offending/taking drugs and the community will be safer. Clients of the Probation Service with drug and alcohol issues are referred to the scheme, which identifies suitable candidates who are offered an assured aorthold tenancy with floating support for up to 12 months and if successful are then offered a secure tenancy through a quota scheme
- Richmond Youth Offending Team (RYOT) has an established protocol for dealing with housing referrals. The young persons housing officer attends planning meetings to agree care package for young offenders
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) support the assessment and management of the most serious sexual and violent offenders. Senior housing officers attend multi-agency meetings
- A dedicated housing officer employed by Stonham whose role it is to assist ex-offenders.

5.57 The development of a protocol between probation and housing is planned. Also consideration is being given as to which agency might take on the franchise for probation clients accommodation previously managed by community care enterprises.

Ex-service personnel

5.58 From the information available there is no indication that ex-service personnel have approached the council as homeless. Analysis of homeless acceptances over the three years 2004/05 to 2006/07 shows that no-one was accepted as being in priority need due to having served in HM Forces. However, instances of domestic violence involving the partners of forces personnel have been recorded. The Housing Register at 1 November 2007 identified that only two households on the Register were seeking housing as they were leaving the armed forces.

5.59 There have been changes in the case law and therefore responses are needed to this group. The government intends to amend the law relating to applications for both homelessness and social housing, allowing service personnel to create a local connection with the area which they are stationed or living in.

Gypsies and travellers

5.60 No homelessness amongst this group has been identified from the analysis of the council’s homelessness P1E returns. The council has amended its approach to ethnic recording and will be able to identify such households in future.

- 5.61 In terms of accommodation for this client group, there is provision for caravans in the Borough at Bishops Grove Travellers' Site Hampton, which the local development plan reported as above average for London Boroughs, and is considered to be adequate for expected needs.²²
- 5.62 A London-wide accommodation assessment of gypsies and travellers' final report is due to be published in 2008; at that time it should be reviewed for potential issues relating to homelessness.

Black and minority ethnic households

- 5.63 It is estimated (2005) that 11.1% of Richmond's population have a non-white ethnic background. This is similar to the national average but substantially lower than Greater London as a whole (30.4%). The most numerous specific ethnic minority groups in Richmond are Indian (2.8%) and Irish (2.6%) communities.
- 5.64 The table below compares the estimated percentages of the ethnic groups within the population and the ethnicity of homeless and Housing Register applicants. The homelessness data relates to decisions made by the council between October 2004 and June 2007. Unlike analysis of P1E statistics elsewhere in this review, the first two quarters for 2004/05 could not be analysed as figures were only available for total ethnic groupings. Figures relating to the Housing Register should be treated with caution as 20% did not state the ethnic origin. The population relates to estimated 2005 figures. As the data is not directly comparable only broad conclusions can be made which may identify a need for more detailed and subsequent analysis.

²² Unitary Development Plan – adopted 1 March 2005

Comparison ethnic origin population homelessness decisions and Housing Register

| | Population | | | Homeless decisions | Housing Register |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------|---------|--------------------|------------------|
| | LBRuT | London | England | | |
| White British | 75.7 | 58.2 | 84.7 | 66.0 | 60.1 |
| White Irish | 2.6 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.5 |
| White other | 10.6 | 8.8 | 3.2 | 6.1 | 2.7 |
| Total white | 88.9 | 69.6 | 89.1 | 73.0 | 64.3 |
| Mixed-race black Caribbean/white | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 0.4 |
| Mixed-race black African/white | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| Mixed-race Asian /white | 1 | 0.9 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0 |
| Mixed-race other | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 1.9 |
| Total mixed | 0.8 | 3.3 | 1.6 | 3.9 | 3.0 |
| Indian | 2.8 | 6.4 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 0.4 |
| Pakistani | 0.7 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.4 | 2.2 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Asian other | 0.8 | 2 | 0.6 | 2.7 | 5.1 |
| Total Asian | 4.7 | 12.8 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 5.7 |
| Black Caribbean | 0.8 | 4.4 | 1.2 | 3.0 | 1.6 |
| Black African | 0.7 | 5.5 | 1.3 | 7.5 | 3.1 |
| Black other | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.9 |
| Total black | 1.7 | 10.7 | 2.7 | 10.9 | 5.6 |
| Chinese | 0.9 | 1.4 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 0.3 |
| Other | 1.3 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| Not stated | | | | 1.8 | 20.5 |

Source: *population estimates for (2005)DMAG Briefing (2007) Greater London Authority, and for England ONS P1e returns – note homelessness decisions covers only October 2004 – June 2007 housing register – Council*

- 5.65 The information indicates that whilst the BME population comprises just 11% of the resident population, BME groups comprise 27% of homeless applicants. Thus BME groups who made a homelessness application amounted to nearly two-and-a-half times the proportion of BME groups in the resident population. The incidences of homelessness amongst households of a black ethnic origin were six times the proportion of the resident population. Both homeless applicants and Housing Register applicants for non-white groups are a much higher proportion than the local resident population. This analysis suggests that in designing homelessness prevention strategies there is a particular need to make services, advice and information accessible to BME groups. In terms of geographical distribution of ethnic minority households, certain groups are more predominately located in certain areas of the Borough. Asian and Asian British households are more likely to live in the Heathfield area, whilst white households are more likely than other households to live in the Mortlake/Barnes Common areas. Again this may assist in targeting any planned homelessness prevention work. However, within this context it is important to recognise that homeless overall including BME groups has fallen.
- 5.66 In 2001 nearly 60% of the black ethnic groups lived in housing association properties and just over 30% lived in privately rented accommodation. That only 10% were owner-occupiers compared with approximately 70% white and Asian groups may explain the greater likelihood of homelessness.

Ethnic origin and tenure

| Ethnic group | Owner-occupied | | Housing association | | Private Rented | | Total |
|------------------------|----------------|------|---------------------|------|----------------|------|--------|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| White | 52,269 | 72.4 | 8,190 | 11.3 | 11,773 | 16.3 | 72,232 |
| Mixed | 432 | 46.0 | 282 | 30.3 | 218 | 23.4 | 932 |
| Asian or Asian British | 1,656 | 70.0 | 209 | 8.8 | 511 | 21.5 | 2,376 |
| Black or black British | 68 | 9.6 | 415 | 58.8 | 223 | 31.6 | 706 |
| Any other ethnic group | 727 | 56.0 | 216 | 16.7 | 351 | 27.1 | 1,294 |

Source Census 2001

- 5.67 The following table shows that there is little difference between the percentages of decisions and acceptances, which indicates an equality of approach in the council's processes. It is noted that in regard to homelessness decisions the council is diligent in recording applicant's ethnic origin with few not stated.

Homelessness decisions and acceptances

| Quarterly average Apr-Jun 04 to Apr-Jun 07 incl | Total white | Total black | Total Asian | Total mixed | Total other | Not stated |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Total decisions | 955 | 128 | 91 | 39 | 94 | 16 |
| Quarterly average | 72.18 | 9.67 | 6.88 | 2.95 | 7.11 | 1.21 |
| Total acceptances | 507 | 75 | 42 | 22 | 51 | 10 |
| Quarterly average | 71.71 | 10.61 | 5.94 | 3.11 | 7.21 | 1.41 |

Source P1E

- 5.68 The Snapshot Survey returned 79 forms, only four of which where ethnicity was either not stated or there was a preference not to say. Those respondents who were white made up nearly 66% of the total forms returned. Asian groups were the next most numerous accounting for nearly 13% and then those of a black origin nearly 9%. If compared with the resident population, it is clear that BME groups have a greater incidence in this survey. Again this information suggests that BME groups are more likely to experience homeless and other housing problems.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

- 5.69 The South West London Refugee Support Project has taken on the lead role of coordinating activities to meet the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers by the voluntary sector. It is funded by the Association of London Government and has associate organisations in the boroughs of Kingston, Merton and Sutton. Its work is in two main areas:
- Counselling refugees and asylum-seekers in need of support and advice
 - A development service involving supporting programmes and projects to enable refugees and asylum-seekers to access services and integrate into the community.
- 5.70 The housing service is committed to ensuring that asylum-seekers and refugees have the support they need to fully integrate into the community. There are staff interpreters to ensure non-English speakers have an equal opportunity of service. Housing services has developed a guidance pack households placed in temporary accommodation. It holds information about how to access services from housing,

health, social services, education, as well as other services provided by voluntary and community organisations and has been translated into community languages.²³

- 5.71 Asylum-seekers who have previously been in care and are provided with a leaving care service are offered the same housing route as other care leavers. Permanent social housing is provided through the leaving care team's quota agreement with the housing department, with a range of supported housing being provided in advance of that. In 2008, 16 young people fall into this category.
- 5.72 Asylum-seekers who are currently provided with a leaving care service by virtue of their eligibility for services following the Hillingdon Judgment 2003²⁴ are referred to the advice and assessment team prior to their 18th birthday. They are provided with temporary accommodation pending allocation of permanent social housing. The leaving care team indicates that there are 41 young people in this category. Some of these young people periodically receive a service from the resettlement team (housing). In January 2008 the housing team was supporting 14 16- and 17-year-olds and five over-18-year-olds. Their clients are accommodated in the private rented sector (funded by Home Office grant) and when they reach 18 and gain refugee status they are referred to young person's officer in the homeless section. Through this route they are offered permanent accommodation.
- 5.73 New arrivals of 16/17-year-old asylum-seekers are currently received at the rate of two per month by the asylum team. They are subject to age assessments and over the past year 38% have been refused a service as unaccompanied minors. If that pattern were to continue, 15 new arrivals per year could be eligible for leaving care services. This number, however, is likely to be subject to wide variation given that external factors determine numbers of asylum-seekers arriving in the UK.
- 5.74 There are also young asylum-seekers/refugees who are looked after by the children and families leaving care team. It is important, as with any young person in the care of the council, that their housing futures are well planned, and through support much can be done to reduce the risk of homelessness occurring.

Strategy action points

- All protocols should be subject to review (each protocol to include a review date)
- The need for additional protocols to assist joint working should be assessed with stakeholders
- There are stakeholder concerns that services to single homeless can be improved, which SPEAR and the council should jointly review
- SPEAR is already working to address an apparent rise in rough sleeping – progress will need to be monitored
- When reviewing both the housing strategies for young persons and teenage parents they will need to respond to the government's agenda to prevent homelessness and support amongst young people
- The Borough has identified a range of service improvements for working with people

²³ Black & Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy 2004 – 2007

²⁴ A High Court ruling that young people provide with an accommodation and support service at 16/17 under section 17 should be seen to have been in care and therefore eligible for a leaving care service

with mental health problems which will be progressed by the mental health accommodation review

- There is a continued need for the council, community safety partnership, drug action team, and health authority to work together on identifying and planning to meet needs for housing and housing-related support for drug misusers
- A London-wide accommodation assessment of gypsies and travellers' final report is due to be published in 2008 at that time it should be reviewed for potential issues relating to homelessness
- Analysis suggests that there is a particular need to make services, advice and information accessible to BME groups.
- Ensure that Drug Action Team (DAT) treatment plans, homelessness strategies and Supporting People strategies to be aligned and complementary, and linked strategically (eg, the community plan, LAA)
- There is the belief that there is insufficient support available to help single homeless people with mild learning difficulties. These needs should be assessed
- Ensure through training and induction that staff have knowledge of local service provision and have sensitivity when working with victims of abuse
- Examine concerns regarding homeless women suffering domestic violence and who have no recourse to public funds as a group
- Stakeholder consultation called for a greater awareness of the needs of vulnerable street homeless with an analysis of needs, particularly around alcohol and drug addiction and mental health issues

6 Providing support – support services and accommodation for homeless people

Key findings

- Accommodation-based support services are available for rough sleepers
- There is supported accommodation for 12 single homeless and floating support to assist 101 people in their own homes
- There are no specific Supporting People designated services to support homeless families although the resettlement team can support families as well as single people

6.1 In March 2002 the report *More than a Roof*²⁵ set a new agenda for tackling wider homelessness problems, placing greater emphasis on preventative approaches that address the personal difficulties that cause or can be exacerbated by homelessness. Supporting People funding is key to this approach. The Supporting People strategy 2005-10²⁶ identifies priorities for future investment.

Breakdown of supply of Supporting People services in Richmond upon Thames 2004/05

| Primary client group | Accom based service | Floating support/ resettlement services | Total | % | No. of services |
|--|---------------------|---|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Frail elderly | 65 | 0 | 65 | 4.6% | 3 |
| Older people with support needs | 999 | 0 | 999 | 71.3% | 44 |
| Older people with mental health problems/ dementia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Offenders or people at risk of offending | 25 | 0 | 25 | 1.8% | 3 |
| Mentally disordered offenders | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| People with mental health problems | 85 | 49 | 134 | 9.6% | 19 |
| People with a physical or sensory disability | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0.2% | 1 |
| People with HIV/AIDS | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0.3% | 4 |
| People with learning disabilities | 85 | 0 | 85 | 6.1% | 11 |
| People with alcohol problems | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| People with drug problems | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Refugees | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Rough sleeper | 33 | 0 | 33 | 2.4% | 4 |
| Single homeless with support needs | 12 | 101 | 113 | 8.1% | 2 |
| Homeless families | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Travellers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Teenage parents | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0.3% | 1 |
| Women at risk of domestic violence | 15 | 2 | 17 | 1.2% | 3 |
| Young people at risk | 4 | 32 | 36 | 2.6% | 4 |
| Young people leaving care | 18 | 0 | 18 | 1.3% | 3 |
| Generic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Total | 1352 | 184 | 1536 | 100.0% | 102 |
| Percentage | 90.4% | 9.6% | | | |

Source Richmond upon Thames Supporting People Strategy (page 27)

²⁵ *More than a Roof* ODPM 2002

²⁶ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Supporting People Strategy 2005 –2010 March 2005

- 6.2 The table above identifies the range of services to support people either in specialist accommodation or through floating support into individual's homes is available within the Borough. The resettlement service provided by the council is the largest floating support service that works with single homelessness. There are three young person's resettlement officers and 2.5 generic officers. The team works to assist residents provided with social housing to adjust to living independently by looking after themselves and their flat or house. Resettlement serves to ensure that individuals or couples are able to sustain their tenancy. The team works with vulnerable members of the community, both young and old. These include people returning from long periods of stay in hospital perhaps due to disability or mental illness, people who have been sleeping rough on the streets, those that have been released from prison, victims of domestic violence and also young adults leaving local authority care and teenage mothers. There are close working relationships with the advice and assessment team which provide most of the referrals. The team also works with agencies such as the council's adult services and children and families departments, the Probation Service, housing associations and voluntary organisations in assessing and meeting the needs of their various client groups.
- 6.3 It is a positive feature of the council's practice in that homeless households support needs are assessed at the time of their application and referrals are made to the resettlement team. Both the staff in the advice and assessment team and the resettlement team manager pointed to good working relationships. Individuals requiring resettlement assistance are assigned a case officer who assesses the person's needs and circumstances. In determining if and where to resettle, issues such as the individual's state of physical and mental health, access to services (transport, shops, etc), availability of family support (carers) and professional assessments are taken into account. In certain circumstances, a panel made up of officers from relevant agencies is set up to monitor and assess the individual's suitability for independent living.
- 6.4 When the decision to resettle has been made, a suitable property will be identified and help provided to move in. Once settled, the individual is visited periodically to assess how they are coping where necessary, assistance and support is offered with obtaining benefits and paying utility bills. Following several assessments, a point is reached when the individual is deemed to have gained the ability and skills to live independently and manage the affairs relating to their tenancy. If at a later stage due to changes in the resident's circumstances, support may have to be resumed to prevent a breakdown of the tenancy.
- 6.5 Contact with the resettlement team indicated the following concerns:
- Based on current service demands the service manager identifies the need for an additional half post to meet needs of generic clients
 - There are difficulties in working with the Department for Work and Pensions – telephone numbers and contacts always changing as are benefits
 - Existing gaps in specialist supported housing provision for those with mental health issues should be addressed with the planned opening of a mental health assessment unit
 - Need for supported provision for people with mild learning disabilities

- There is a discretionary annual budget of £10,000 to assist people who cannot access a community care grant from the Social Fund to set up home by purchasing essential household items for clients. This is done after approaches have been made to local charities (eg, Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity). The budget has been the same amount for at least the last eight years and needs to be increased
- It is important that information reports are created to monitor performance, etc. Currently reports are done manually. Potentially access to the council's new IBS computer system might solve this problem.

6.6 Partner agencies consulted considered the gaps in support service provision to be:

- Supported housing for young people
- Lack of move-on accommodation
- Floating support – generic including private sector.

6.7 It is important that the housing and support needs for client groups are regularly assessed. The Supporting People strategy was based upon a thorough needs assessment.²⁷ Inevitably with limited funding not all needs can be met and priorities have to be identified. Given that the majority of housing association stock within the Borough is small one- and two-bed accommodation, the major limiting factor of move-on is the readiness of the individual to cope with independent living and the availability of support for those that are.

6.8 With increasing use of the private rented sector the resettlement service has been able to assist identified clients to provide help to move in and short-term assistance, with longer-term support available to enable those with a higher levels of need to maintain their tenancies. Care is taken by the advice and assessment team to avoid those who are unlikely to maintain a tenancy.

Strategy action points

The homelessness strategy must integrate with Supporting People to:

- Ensure that sufficient floating support providing active maintenance of tenancies to prevent homelessness is available to support people into independence
- Ensure that current services are strategically relevant – with ongoing service needs analysis
- Monitor the impact of new services on homelessness
- Review the use of services in terms of referrals made, acceptances and refusals to identify service gaps. Further analysis of needs to inform future service requirements
- Ensure access to high-level needs/high-risk services outside the Borough, when required, by maintaining and developing joint protocols with partner agencies, eg, where specialist intensive services or client group knowledge is required that are unavailable in Richmond such as access to specific high level domestic violence services
- Investigate opportunities for the development of generic floating support services for groups with cross-cutting needs, eg, low-level floating support to clients experiencing substance misuse issues and with mental health needs

²⁷ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Supporting People Evidence Base March 2005

7 Providing temporary accommodation

Key findings

- The numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation has continued to fall. The council is on course to reach the government's 50% reduction target (254) by 2010. From December 2004, when 508 households were accommodated, there was a 43% reduction by the end of December 2007 (290)
- Steady progress has been achieved to reduce the number of homes provided outside the Borough. At December 2007, the council's stock of leased properties stood at 247, of which 25 (10%) were out of the Borough
- The council has maintained the target to have no households with children in B&B accommodation longer than six weeks (achieved average of 1.53 weeks in quarter 3, 2007/8)

7.1 Councils are required to secure emergency temporary accommodation for certain homeless households whilst their cases are being assessed and for accepted households. The table below identifies the type of accommodation used as reported at the end of each quarter.

Richmond on Thames June 2004 – June 2007

| | Bed and breakfast | | Self-contained | | Hostel accommodation | | Women's refuges | | Private sector accommodation leased by council | | Private sector accommodation leased by RSLs | | HA assured shorthold tenancies | | Total |
|---------|-------------------|-----|----------------|-----|----------------------|------|-----------------|-----|--|------|---|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Jun 04 | 18 | 3.7 | 19 | 3.9 | 42 | 8.6 | 4 | 0.8 | 406 | 83.0 | # | # | 0 | 0 | 489 |
| Sept 04 | 15 | 2.9 | 18 | 3.5 | 45 | 8.8 | 3 | 0.6 | 420 | 82.4 | 9 | 1.8 | 0 | 0 | 510 |
| Dec 04 | 21 | 4.1 | 17 | 3.3 | 45 | 8.9 | 4 | 0.8 | 414 | 81.5 | 7 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 508 |
| Mar 05 | 23 | 5.0 | 18 | 3.9 | 44 | 9.6 | 8 | 1.7 | 338 | 73.8 | 27 | 5.9 | 0 | 0 | 458 |
| Jun 05 | 9 | 2.1 | 21 | 4.8 | 40 | 9.1 | 6 | 1.4 | 331 | 75.4 | 32 | 7.3 | 0 | 0 | 439 |
| Sept 05 | 14 | 3.3 | 25 | 6.0 | 32 | 7.7 | 6 | 1.4 | 301 | 72.0 | 32 | 7.7 | 8 | 1.9 | 418 |
| Dec 05 | 16 | 3.8 | 20 | 4.7 | 46 | 10.9 | 8 | 1.9 | 297 | 70.4 | 29 | 6.9 | 6 | 1.4 | 422 |
| Mar 06 | 16 | 4.0 | 26 | 6.6 | 41 | 10.4 | 4 | 1.0 | 279 | 70.5 | 22 | 5.6 | 8 | 2.0 | 396 |
| Jun 06 | 11 | 2.9 | 21 | 5.6 | 42 | 11.2 | 7 | 1.9 | 271 | 72.1 | 17 | 4.5 | 7 | 1.9 | 376 |
| Sept 06 | 11 | 3.0 | 17 | 4.6 | 46 | 12.5 | 1 | 0.3 | 271 | 73.6 | 15 | 4.1 | 7 | 1.9 | 368 |
| Dec 06 | 6 | 1.8 | 12 | 3.7 | 40 | 12.2 | 2 | 0.6 | 248 | 75.6 | 13 | 4.0 | 7 | 2.1 | 328 |
| Mar 07 | 9 | 2.8 | 22 | 6.8 | 43 | 13.3 | 1 | 0.3 | 232 | 71.6 | 10 | 3.1 | 7 | 2.2 | 324 |
| Jun 07 | 11 | 3.5 | 21 | 6.7 | 38 | 12.2 | 0 | 0 | 226 | 72.4 | 9 | 2.9 | 7 | 2.2 | 312 |
| Sep-07 | 11 | 3.6 | 27 | 8.9 | 40 | 13.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 215 | 71.2 | 9 | 3.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 302 |
| Dec-07 | 16 | 5.5 | 26 | 9.0 | 42 | 14.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 192 | 66.2 | 8 | 2.8 | 6 | 2.1 | 290 |
| Average | | 3.5 | | 5.2 | | 10.5 | | 0.9 | | 74.8 | | 4.0 | | 1.1 | 5940 |

Source P1e

7.2 The government has set a number of targets regarding temporary accommodation to which councils must address:

- Eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for households with children except in an emergency and thereafter not for longer than six weeks²⁸.
- End the use of B&B accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds by 2010²⁹.
- Halve the numbers in temporary accommodation by 2010 (from December 2004)³⁰.

Bed and breakfast

7.3 The Government's six week target for families with children is actively monitored, through a dedicated member of staff (B&B prevention project officer) which has resulted in a substantial improvement in performance. In 2004/5 a household with children, or pregnant, would on average have stayed nearly 18 weeks in B&B establishments. By the June 2007 that had fallen to just over one-and-a-half weeks.

7.4 It is noted that single person households stayed in B&B on average 18.4 weeks in 2006/07, which is significantly longer than households with dependent children. The council seeks to move households onto more suitable accommodation such as a leased property as quickly as possible. Young people in B&B will include those who have previously been evicted from a hostel and have been given a further chance of housing.

B&B average length of stay (weeks)

| | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 06/07 | 07/08 (to Dec 07) |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| Single persons | N/A | N/A | 10.9 | 18.4 | 21.2 |
| Households with dependent children ³¹ | 15.0 | 12.9 | 4.4 | 2.2 | 1.5 |

Source LBRuT

Hostels

7.5 The council has two hostels within the Borough, with a total of 51 rooms. The breakdown of maximum occupation rates is as follows:

Council hostel provision

| Room size | Number of units |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Single | 19 |
| Double | 21 |
| Triple | 7 |
| Family (four persons) | 4 |
| Total | 51 |

Source LBRuT

7.6 In addition, a new hostel provided in December 2007 meets the accommodation and support needs of four homeless young people (male). Since commissioning this

²⁸ ODPM March 2002

²⁹ The Communities and Local Government strategy document *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives* (published March 2005)

³⁰ Ministerial announcement 14 November 2006

³¹ BV183

accommodation it is understood that there have been more accepted female young people than males and thus provision for females should now be assessed.

7.7 Between June 2004 and December 2007 P1e returns identified a range of 32 to 46 households accommodated in hostels at the end of each quarter, with an average of 42.

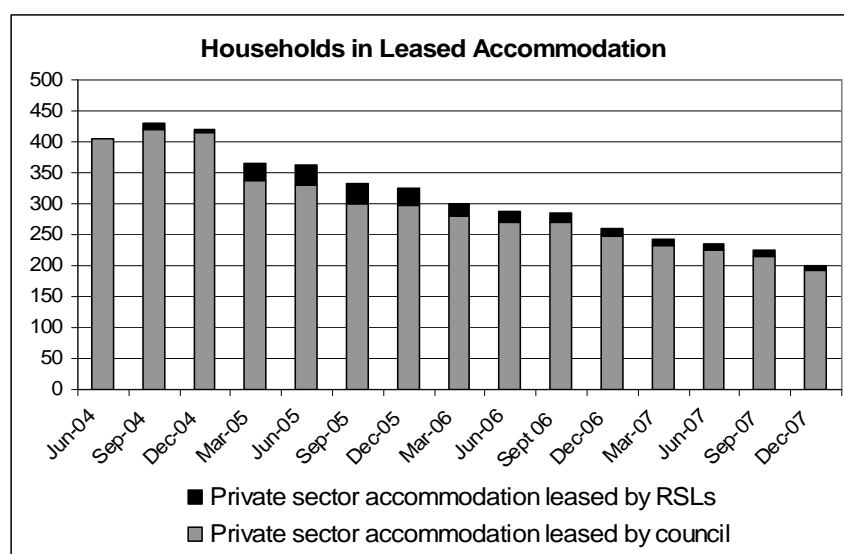
7.8 The table below shows the average length of stay in hostel accommodation. The period that single people are spending in hostels is increasing (as it is within B&B). For households with children there was a significant reduction from 2003/04 to 2005/06 but since then the period has fluctuated around 18 to 20 weeks. The ability to move people into permanent homes is dependent upon suitable vacancies becoming available (in either permanent or other temporarily accommodation) and the assessment of a household's capability to maintain independent living. There is also an element of choice for households as some wish to remain in a family room at a hostel rather than move into a leased property.

Hostels average length of stay (weeks)

| Hostel | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 06/07 | 2007/08 (to Dec 07) |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------|
| Single persons | N/A | N/A | 20.2 | 24.2 | 28.2 |
| Households with dependent children | 32.0 | 26.3 | 18.5 | 19.9 | 17.8 |

Property leasing

7.9 The council's own property leasing scheme makes up the majority of temporary accommodation used. The number of households accommodated by the leased property scheme has fallen steadily. In the past three-year period a peak was reached in September 2004 of 420 households accommodated. By the end of December 2007 this had fallen to 192. The housing association-managed scheme peaked at 32 during the two quarters ending June and September 2005 and by December 2007 had fallen to only eight households.



Source P1e returns

- 7.10 The council has been working to ensure that as many households as possible are placed within the Borough boundary. This enables links with health and children's services, schools, colleges and family and other support to be maintained. At December 2007, the council's stock of leased properties stood at 247³², 222 of which were in the Borough and 25 (10%) were out of Borough.
- 7.11 The council conducted a detailed questionnaire survey and focus group sessions in 2005 with 213 households living in temporary accommodation³³. As regards accessing health, education and support services, whilst it found that the majority were no more disadvantaged than other groups in accessing services:
- Fourteen per cent of respondents reported problems in registering with GPs, the main problem being that doctor's list were full
 - Fifteen per cent of respondents reported problems registering their children with local schools, again, the main reason being the lack of available places at local schools
 - Six per cent of respondents would like more support from social services (for example adult services), community mental health teams and other support services.
- 7.12 The survey resulted in the provision of an information pack to households who are offered a leased home to help them to access local facilities. Amendments were made to the Housing Register forms to include questions on whether households are registered with local GP and schools. It is known that children in homeless households suffer poorer mental and physical health and are more likely to have problems at school.³⁴ The council works with NOTIFY which means that when households are placed in temporary accommodation their presence is notified to health and education providers and voluntary sector to ensure that services are made available.

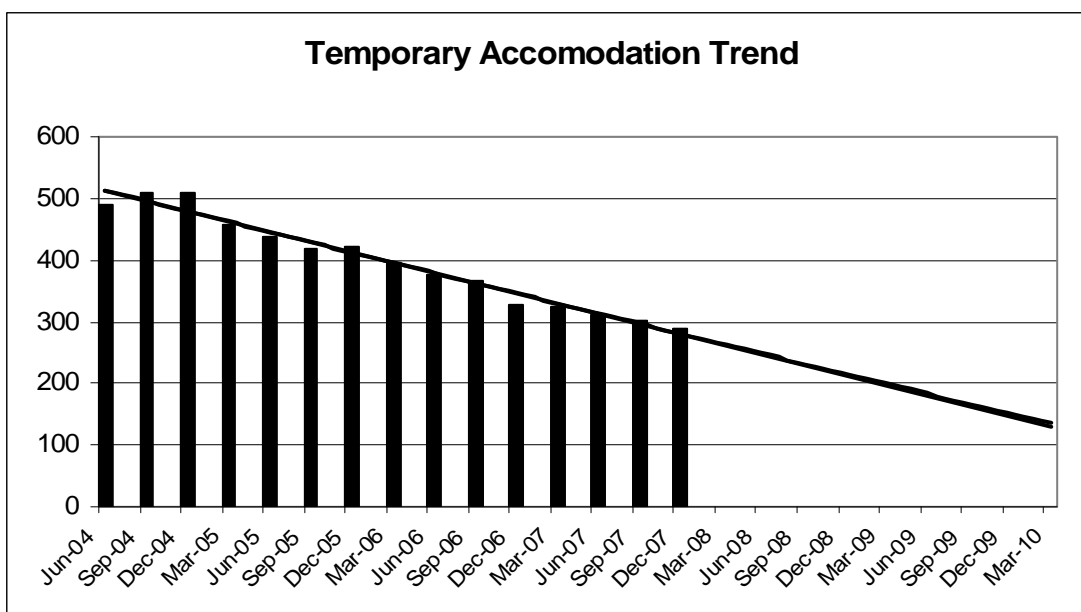
Households accommodated

- 7.13 In 2005 the government published a national strategy for tackling homelessness *Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives* which identified a specific requirement to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. For the Borough this means halving the number who were accommodated in December 2004 (508 households) to 254 in 2010. By the end of December 2007 the numbers accommodated by the council had fallen to 290 which is a 43% reduction. The council is on course to meet this 2010 target. Future progress is dependent upon continued homelessness prevention and there being no significant changes in the housing market that impact upon homelessness and the continued availability of permanent homes to meet people's long-term housing needs.

³² Source LBRuT - The number of properties exceeds the number of households accommodated as there are vacancies and there is a turnover as new properties are taken on and existing ones are handed back.

³³ The support needs of homeless households in temporary accommodation Housing Services May 2005

³⁴ Shelter, *Chance of a Lifetime: The Impact of Bad Housing on Children's Lives*, September 2006



Source P1e

7.14 Households with children placed in temporary accommodation during 2006/07 comprised over 75% of the total. In the quarter ending March 2007, lone parents were more than twice as numerous than couples with children.

Households placed in temporary accommodation 2006/07

| | | Jun-06 | Sep-06 | Dec-06 | Mar-07 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Couple with dependent children | | 113 | 110 | 82 | 79 |
| | | 30.1% | 29.9% | 25.0% | 24.4% |
| Lone parent household with dependent children | Male | 14 | 14 | 7 | 9 |
| | | 3.7% | 3.8% | 2.1% | 2.0% |
| | Female | 190 | 187 | 189 | 171 |
| | | 50.5% | 50.8% | 57.6% | 52.8% |
| One-person households | Male | 20 | 19 | 22 | 30 |
| | | 5.3% | 5.2% | 6.7% | 9.3% |
| | Female | 30 | 29 | 20 | 25 |
| | | 8.0% | 7.9% | 6.1% | 7.7% |
| All other household groups | | 9 | 9 | 8 | 10 |
| | | 2.4% | 2.4% | 2.4% | 3.1% |
| Total | | 376 | 368 | 328 | 324 |

Source P1e

Customer satisfaction

7.15 The council's 2005 survey found high levels of satisfaction from households in temporary accommodation where 70% of the sample was satisfied/very satisfied with their accommodation and 30% were either dissatisfied/very dissatisfied.

7.16 Among the reasons given for satisfaction with their property were:

- Property was of a high standard

- They were placed in a nice/quiet area
- They were happy to have a house and garden rather than a flat
- Were happy with their neighbours.

7.17 Amongst the reasons given for dissatisfaction with their property were:

- Property was too small – in particular bedroom sizes
- Property was not well-maintained by landlord
- High rent – often as high as private sector tenancies
- Inaccessible for family/friends/and school.

7.18 Households who were receiving support from the housing services resettlement team gave very positive feedback on the service they received and felt the amount of help given enabled them to prepare to move successfully into an independent and permanent tenancy.

Homeless at home

7.19 The last incidence of 'homeless at home' was recorded at the end of December 2004. Since then the P1e returns have revealed that no homeless households were accommodated in this manner.

Strategy action points

- Maintain current good performance to be well within the government's target to eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for households with children except in an emergency and thereafter not for longer than six weeks
- Work towards ending the use of B&B accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds by 2010
- Continue to work towards the temporary accommodation reduction target of 254 by 2010
- Continue to monitor periods in temporary accommodation
- Continue to improve the information provided to households in temporary accommodation
- Consult with service users on a regular basis to see where improvements to services can be made
- Assess the accommodation needs for homeless female young people
- The period that single people are spending in B&B and hostel accommodation is increasing (as it is within B&B). The reasons for this should be examined

8 Access to permanent homes

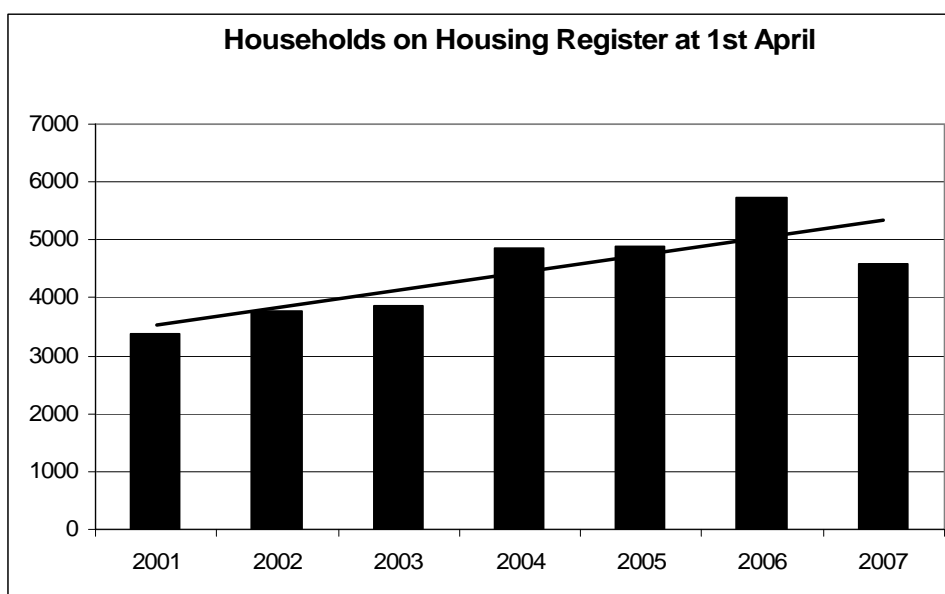
Key findings

- The council consistently receives access to a substantial proportion of annual lettings of housing association properties. In the past three years this has amounted to approximately 85% of all housing association lettings
- Overall homelessness nominations have fallen over the past three years in both numbers and in percentage terms. But for two bedrooms or larger properties, whilst the numbers of nominations has also fallen, the proportion to homeless households has risen. In 2006/07 the proportion rose to 70% of all nominations
- Homeless prevention and nominations to permanent homes has enabled the continued reduction in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation

8.1 The continued supply of affordable housing is part of the solution to reducing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation. It is the council's housing strategy that must take the lead in how it plans to manage the housing market effectively. In addition to enabling the supply of new homes, the council seeks to make best use of existing housing through the introduction of its sponsored moves scheme and through effective and speedy allocation and nomination arrangements for housing association homes (over 90% nominations are made within two days).

Housing register

8.2 Access to housing association homes is achieved by making a Housing Register application and an assessment of housing need through the published points scheme. The greater the housing need the more points will be awarded and the increased chances of being made an offer of accommodation. By offering accommodation at the right time, it can prevent people from experiencing homelessness.



Source HIP returns

- 8.3 As yet choice-based lettings has not been introduced into the Borough, although there is a government drive to offer choice in lettings of social housing by 2010 and London's mobility scheme is to be introduced in 2009. When designing such schemes the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness need to be taken into account.
- 8.4 Whilst the trend has seen a steady increase in numbers on the Housing Register from 2001 to 2006, a fall was recorded in 2007. It is understood that the council, in that year undertook a review and removed inactive cases.

Housing register

| | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | |
|---|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Households requiring one bedroom | 2,995 | 61.15 | 3,538 | 61.79 | 2,699 | 58.98 |
| Households requiring two bedrooms | 1,236 | 25.23 | 1,401 | 24.47 | 1,157 | 25.28 |
| Households requiring three bedrooms | 565 | 11.54 | 667 | 11.65 | 597 | 13.05 |
| Households requiring more than three bedrooms | 102 | 2.08 | 120 | 2.1 | 123 | 2.69 |
| Total | 4,898 | | 5,726 | | 4,576 | |

Source HIP returns

- 8.5 The ability of local housing associations to meet housing needs is ultimately dependent on the size of its stock of properties. In April 2007 there were 9,242 housing association properties in the Borough.
- 8.6 It can be seen from the table below the council is consistently receiving access to a substantial proportion of annual lettings of housing association properties. In the past three years this has amounted to approximately 85% of all housing association lettings. It is understood that the council as of right receives 75% of housing association lettings in the Borough. That this has been exceeded suggests a positive working relationship between the council and local housing associations.

Total HA lettings and LA nominations

| | 00/01 | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 06/07 |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total HA lettings ³⁵ | 476 | 345 | 393 | 434 | 547 | 470 | 375 |
| LA nominations to HA dwellings | 368 | 330 | 338 | 396 | 464 | 401 | 319 |
| % | 77.3 | 95.7 | 86.0 | 91.2 | 84.8 | 85.3 | 85.1 |

Source HIP returns

- 8.7 Homelessness nominations have over the past three years fallen in both numbers and in percentage terms.

Nominations to HA dwellings

| | 00/01 | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 06/07 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total households taking up nominations | 368 | 330 | 338 | 396 | 464 | 401 | 319 |
| Homeless households in priority need taking up nominations | 216 | 212 | 218 | 259 | 326 | 242 | 181 |
| Homeless as % of total | 58.7 | 64.2 | 64.5 | 65.4 | 70.3 | 60.3 | 56.7 |

Source HIP returns

³⁵ Including LA nominations but not transfers within or between HAs

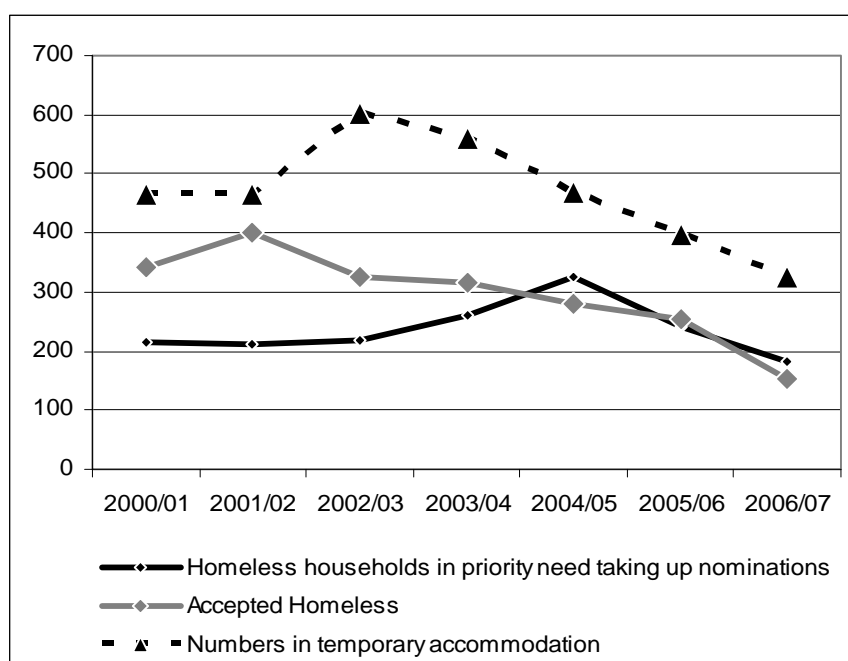
8.8 Against the overall fall in nominations, there has been a broad increase in the proportion of nominations to homes with two or more bedrooms going to homeless households. In 2006/07 homeless households were allocated 70% of the total nominations increasing from 53.2% in 2002/03.

Homeless households in priority need taking up LA nominations to HA dwellings

| | 00/01 | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 06/07 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total | 216 | 212 | 218 | 259 | 326 | 242 | 181 |
| Dwellings with two or more bedrooms | # | 123 | 116 | 168 | 226 | 148 | 127 |
| % | | 58.0 | 53.2 | 64.9 | 69.3 | 61.2 | 70.2 |

Source HIP returns

8.9 The continued availability of nominations to permanent homes is crucial in supporting the council's need to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation. Whilst a proportion of those accommodated in temporary accommodation will be placed in hostels and B&B awaiting a decision from the council as to their eligibility, and a small number will lose their accommodation through eviction, the majority will be accepted cases and awaiting a suitable offer of permanent housing. In simple terms if the numbers of households who are permanently re-housed in a year is greater than the numbers of accepted households in that year, then numbers in temporary accommodation will fall. Conversely if accepted cases exceed nominations then temporary accommodation totals will rise. The chart below shows that since 2004/05 offers have been exceeding homelessness acceptances and in that time temporary accommodation numbers have fallen. Maintaining an excess of nominations over acceptances is a vital component in the council meeting its temporary accommodation target.



Source HIP returns

8.10 As an alternative to nominations, it may be possible to discharge the council's re-housing duty in some cases by securing alternative longer-term private sector lets,

which must be acceptable to the household concerned. This is something that the council may wish to consider.

- 8.11 Stakeholders' priorities for policy improvements were to work with families on the Housing Register who need large homes and who would consider moving out of the Borough. There was concern that as there is currently no CBL system in the Borough it may adversely impact on mobility across the sub-region in relation to a supply of nominations with a consequent failing to take advantage of opportunities. Both matters should be considered by the wider housing strategy.
- 8.12 Agencies consider the priorities for service improvement, in order of priority, to be an increase in affordable housing stock, improved working relationships with housing associations and more accommodation for single people.
- 8.13 The council has a programme to deliver new affordable homes. It is noted that the greater proportion of the housing stock is suitable for small and single person households. It is thought that the consultation request for more accommodation for single people may reflect a perceived need for more supported housing projects. The council uses information gained through its housing needs survey, Housing Register and demand from homeless households to direct its enabling priorities. The Supporting People strategy implementation will also be informed by homelessness information.
- 8.14 It is apparent that the council is working with local housing associations and some are active members of the Homelessness Forum and other local initiatives. There is a basic need to ensure, however, that all housing associations which have accommodation in the Borough do work in line with Housing Corporation's direction to prevent homelessness and indeed contribute to implementing the homelessness strategy. And as with any working relationship, they should be subject to a continuous process of improvement.

Strategy action points

- Maintain an excess of nominations over acceptances to assist in meeting the council's temporary accommodation reduction target
- Examine opportunities to meet accepted households housing needs by securing longer term lets in the private rented sector
- Ensure local HAs, perhaps through homelessness champions, work closely with the council to support the objective of homelessness prevention

9 Stakeholder consultation

- 9.1 There is a wide range of housing agencies in the Borough offering services from specialist housing and support projects for the homeless to large housing associations offering general lets. A sample of the agencies were canvassed by HQN and asked about the services they offered, how they help prevent homelessness and what suggestions they had for improving the situation in the future. Consultation took place with all partners on the contact list detailed in appendix three of this report. A full copy of the questionnaire can also be found in appendix four. Nine out of 30 responded. It should be noted that nil responses were received from some of what would be considered to be key strategic partners. Telephone follow-up contact was made with some of the respondents.
- 9.2 Findings and views were considered at the Homelessness Forum meeting in December 2007 and a follow-up questionnaire was issued to ensure that all Homelessness Forum members could contribute. Six questionnaires were returned.
- 9.3 Homelessness officers in the other councils in the sub-region were contacted to establish whether there were any regional homelessness trends and how homelessness across boundaries impacts upon services. There were four responses (from six).
- 9.4 Throughout the review document, stakeholder views have been included at the appropriate sections. However, there is one key area which has not been addressed which relates to joint working.
- 9.5 There were varied levels of awareness about the Homelessness Forum and how effective it is as a strategic forum. This was discussed and it was agreed at the forum in December that the terms of reference and membership should be reviewed.
- 9.6 Stakeholders considered that the following improvements were required:
- Closer working between housing, social services and voluntary organisations
 - Improved working relationships with housing associations
 - HA's homelessness champions (especially RHP and RCHT) would help support the homeless prevention agenda
 - More awareness of how housing decisions are taken by agencies that refer people for housing issues
 - More awareness among housing staff about other agencies capabilities.
- 9.7 Interest was noted from stakeholders about how well the South West sub-regional partnership works in developing joint solutions to homelessness. It is noted the meetings of the sub-region's homelessness group are convened by the council. Interestingly homelessness officers from other authorities felt sub-regional working needs expanding and adopting homelessness strategies is good practice

Strategy action points

- Review terms of reference and membership of Homelessness Forum
- Increase opportunities for joint working and raised awareness across agencies

10 Resources

Revenue expenditure

10.1 The table below sets out the main features of the housing strategy revenue budget for the period 2006/07, 2007/08 and an estimated budget provision for the year 2008/09. The 2008/09 budget reflects the elements of the newly restructured housing service that is disaggregated across the three main sections within the new adults and community services directorate.

Housing services – revenue expenditure (figures include recharges but exclude capital financing)

| | 2006/07 £ actual | 2007/08 £ revised | 2008/09 £ estimated |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Housing strategy | 408,818 | 395,200 | 422,200 |
| Housing advice | 389,250 | 382,800 | 387,000 |
| Homelessness | 759,452 | 1,382,400 | 1,394,600 |
| Temporary accommodation | 105,926 | 259,200 | 527,600 |
| Housing Benefit payments | (1,440,928) | 179,100 | (19,000) |
| Supporting People | 88,724 | 139,700 | 240,700 |
| Residential services | 1,085,091 | 1,064,900 | 1,098,200 |
| Asylum-seekers | (158,252) | 315,200 | 349,300 |
| Total net expenditure | 1,236,080 | 4,118,500 | 4,400,600 |

Source Richmond upon Thames Borough Council January 2008

10.2 Of note the expenditure on:

- Housing advice is broadly the same across the three years
- Homelessness services in 2008/09 is approximately 80% higher than in 2006/07. The rise from 2006/07 to 2007/08 was due to an accounting adjustment of £670,000 for a reduction in the housing bad debt provision
- Temporary accommodation – whilst the numbers have fallen the budget in 2008/09 is broadly five times greater than the 2006/07 expenditure. This increase is due to a reduction of Housing Benefit subsidy of 5% in 2007/08 and which will drop by 10% more in 2008/09.

10.3 Whilst the major part of the revenue spending is met from the council's general fund, some revenue funding in the form of homelessness grant and Supporting People grant is received from the government.

Homelessness grant

| 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 295,000 | 295,000 | 315,000 | 365,000* ³⁶ | 400,000** | 400,000** |

Source Richmond upon Thames Borough Council January 2008

³⁶ * The authority received an additional £50,000 during 2007/08 as an additional in year grant from Communities and Local Government (CLG) in response to meeting temporary accommodation targets – the grant is to be used to further reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation

** CLG proposed annual amount between 2008/2011

- 10.4 The Homelessness Directorate provides the annual ring-fenced homelessness grant, received to assist homelessness prevention. The table above sets out the funding for the previous, current and future years. Much of this grant is paid to SPEAR to support services to the single homelessness
- 10.5 Supporting People expenditure is currently a ring-fenced government grant to meet the administrative costs of running the Supporting People programme. The table below identifies that the council will receive SP grant of £2.8m per year for the three-year period 2008/09-2010/11 to meet the costs of providing Supporting People services (either accommodation-based or floating support services). As there is no revenue growth proposed over the next two years, the projected overspends in 2008/09 and 2009/10 will have to be met by continued efficiency savings within the SP programme. The table below sets out the budget for the previous two years and the projected spending for the next two years based on currently agreed priorities within the Supporting People strategy 2005-2010.
- 10.6 The Supporting People grant is likely to lose its ring fence and form part of the area-based grant from April 2009. At that time it will be important that local funding decisions made reflect a homeless prevention priority.

| | 2005/06 £000s actual | 2006/07 £000s actual | 2007/08 £000s estimated | 2008/09 £000s proposed | 2009/10 £000s proposed |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| SP grant | 2,860 | 2,830 | 2,850 | 2,850 | 2,850 |
| Carry forward from previous year | (260) | 20 | (70) | 58 | 260 |
| Expenditure | 3,140 | 2,770 | 2,960 | 2,980 | 3,050 |
| Expenditure on new services | | 60 | 12 | 70 | 130 |
| Balance carried forward | 20 | (20) | 58 | 260 | 598 |

Source Richmond upon Thames Borough Council January 2008

- 10.7 The provision of new affordable homes and action to address disrepair and bring empty homes back into use are key elements in meeting the needs of people in housing need including homeless households. The housing strategy will deal with these aspects and will be informed on the needs of those who are homelessness and at risk of homelessness by the forthcoming homelessness strategy that will highlight the need for continued capital funding and investment. It is a positive feature that the council has allocated £3.7m per year for the next five years to fund the affordable housing and private sector programmes.

Strategy action point

- Through benchmarking and other analysis ensure all homelessness services are delivering value for money

Appendix one: methodology

HQN was appointed by the council to undertake the review. Its work has been overseen by a homelessness strategy group drawn from members of the council, SPEAR and Richmond Housing Partnership.

The following tasks were undertaken as part of the review:

Data analysis

The council completes quarterly government returns (P1e) on homelessness applications and decisions. This includes, for example, reasons for homelessness, household characteristics of those who have been accepted as homeless under the legislation. This type of data provides only part of the picture of homelessness and urgent housing need. Other providers were also asked to provide evidence of housing need and homelessness amongst their service users. Useful information was obtained and has been used to inform the review. The review also examined other corporate policies and strategies that have key links to homelessness services.

Snapshot Survey

In order to gain a greater understanding of homelessness and in particular non-priority homeless in the Borough a Snapshot Survey was undertaken between 3 and 16 of December 2007. The form and process was discussed and agreed with the council. Four agencies participated in the exercise recording details about people who approached their services during the survey period. Of particular interest were those people who regarded themselves to be homeless. The data arising from the survey has been included in this review. The findings confirm other information, particularly the characteristics of households who are not accepted by the council as homeless or don't approach the council for help.

Stakeholder consultation

A questionnaire was sent to 30 service providers in November 2007, seeking information about local service provision and their views on local priorities and gaps in provision regarding homelessness. The response was not as comprehensive as had been hoped for. Only nine agencies provided information.

Telephone interviews

In order to gain a greater understanding, follow-up telephone interviews were carried out with respondents to identify the role services have to play in preventing homelessness and supporting households in urgent housing need to resolve their problems. Confidential views were also sought as to what local action should be done to address homelessness and in particular what action the council should take.

Service user interviews

Focus groups were held with residents of SPEAR accommodation, residents in temporary accommodation and recent users of the homeless service who were resident in a council hostel. Although the numbers attending were restricted, issues raised were helpful in identifying potential areas for service improvement

The council has also carried out service user consultation and this information has been taken into account.³⁷

Staff

A focus group was held with staff of the advice and assessment team to ensure that the views of front-line workers were gathered. This can be particularly helpful in identifying service gaps and areas for better coordination.

Key staff within the housing service were also interviewed to gain an appreciation of service provision and areas for service improvement.

Homelessness Forum

HQN attended a meeting of the Homelessness Forum on 17 December. Priority areas identified from the data analysis and consultation were discussed at the forum. After positive debate and contributions attendees at the Forum agreed with the issues raised and made a number of useful contributions which influenced a subsequent consultation exercise. A questionnaire was issued to all members of the Homelessness Forum (as not all could attend the meeting). Only three responses were received and have been used to inform the review. For a full list of homelessness strategy group members and list of stakeholders consulted see appendix two.

³⁷ May 2005 Survey into Support Needs of Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation LBRuT, Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Service Customer Satisfaction Survey Feb 2006 LBRuT

Appendix two: BVPI 225

Under BVPI 225 councils are asked to respond to the 11 specific goals detailed below relating to domestic violence.

- i. Has the local authority produced a directory of local services that can help victims of domestic violence?
- ii. Is there within the local authority area a minimum of one refuge place per 10,000 population?
- iii. Does the local authority employ directly or fund a voluntary sector-based domestic violence co-ordinator? (For district councils of fewer than 35,000 households, the responsibility for co-ordinating domestic violence can be designated within the job description of an existing senior officer)
- iv. Has the local authority produced and adopted a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence developed in partnership with other agencies?
- v. Does the local authority support and facilitate a local multi-agency domestic violence forum that meets at least four times a year?
- vi. Has the local authority developed an information-sharing protocol and had it agreed between key statutory partners?
- vii. Has the local authority developed, launched and promoted a 'sanctuary'-type scheme to enable victims and their children to remain in their own home, where they choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed? (For smaller district authorities, of fewer than 35,000 households this can be arranged in partnership with neighbouring authorities)
- viii. Has there been a reduction in the percentage of cases accepted as homeless due to domestic violence that had previously been re-housed in the last two years by that local authority as a result of domestic violence?
- ix. Does the council's tenancy agreement have a specific clause stating that perpetration of domestic violence by a tenant can be considered grounds for eviction? (For local authorities that have transferred their housing stock, the clause should be contained in the LSVT organisations' tenancy agreement)
- x. Has the local authority funded and developed a domestic violence education pack in consultation with the wider domestic violence forum?
- xi. Has the authority carried out a programme of multi-agency training in the last 12 months covering front-line and managerial staff in at least two of the following groups: housing staff, social services staff providing services

Appendix three: homelessness strategy group and stakeholder consultation list

| Organisation | Contact (names excluded) |
|---|---|
| London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | Adviser for vulnerable pupils and ethnic minority achievement |
| Twickenham Careers Centre | Manager |
| Centrepoint | Service manager |
| Connexions | Connexions manager |
| Kingston & Richmond Law Centre | Solicitor |
| London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | YOT manager |
| London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | Leaving care manager |
| Single Persons Emergency Accommodation in Richmond | Director |
| South West London Probation Services | Senior probation officer |
| London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | Resettlement officer |
| Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust Ltd | Director |
| Hestia | |
| South West London St George's Mental Health NHS Trust | |
| Richmond Housing Partnership Limited | Assistant director |
| Richmond & Twickenham Primary Care Trust | Teenage pregnancy co-ordinator |
| Children's Specialist Services | Service manager CLAT |
| London Borough of Richmond upon Thames | Interim head of service children with disabilities |
| Ethnic Minority Advocacy Group | Manager |
| Metropolitan Police Service | Detective inspector |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | Chief executive |
| London Borough of Richmond | Domestic abuse co-ordinator |
| MID Mediation | Director |
| Look Ahead Housing | |
| Richmond Housing Partnership Limited | Premier house |

Appendix four: stakeholder questionnaire

Developing homelessness strategy 2008- 2012

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is in the process of reviewing its current homelessness strategy. As part of the review process, it has appointed HQN Limited to assist with the mapping of homelessness needs and provision in the Borough. As a key stakeholder, we are contacting your organisation in the hope that you will support this process by completing the attached questionnaire. If any of the questions do not apply to your service please leave them blank. The questionnaire may be followed up with a telephone call at a later stage.

Mapping current services survey

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Name and address of your organisation | |
| 2 | Name and position of person responding | |
| 3 | Please specify the nature of your organisation: (delete Yes/No [Y/N]) as appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity/voluntary sector Y/N • Local government Y/N • Other government, eg, probation services Y/N • Housing association Y/N • NHS Y/N • Faith-based organisation Y/N • Private sector Y/N • Other, please specify Y/N |
| 4 | For your organisation please tick one of the three statements which best describes your service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness is the main issue we deal with <input type="checkbox"/> • Homelessness is one of a number of key issues we deal with <input type="checkbox"/> • Homelessness is a minor issue we deal with <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Did you know that the council had a homelessness strategy? If yes: | Y/N |
| | Do you know what its aims were? | Y/N |
| | Were they successfully achieved? | Y/N |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| 6 | What resources do you currently allocate to homelessness in terms of staffing resources or any other funding? | | |
| 7 | Please list any other organisations you work in collaboration with to deliver the project or service | | |
| 8 | How long has your project or service been in operation? | | |
| 9 | Which client groups do you primarily work with? (Delete Y/N as appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families • Single • Both | Y/N Y/N Y/N |
| 10 | Which gender group do you specifically deal with? (Delete Y/N as appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female • Both | Y/N Y/N Y/N |
| 11 | Which age groups do you work with (please tick all that apply)? (Delete Y/N as appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people 16 to 25 years • Adults (18 years +) • Adults (25 years +) • Older people (50+) • All ages | Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N |
| 12 | How many referrals did your service receive in 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 and how many of these referrals were accepted? If you have a waiting list please indicate the total number on the list | 2005/2006: Accepted: 2006/2007: Accepted: Waiting list numbers: | |
| 13 | Please indicate which of the following groups are involved in delivering the initiative/project? (Delete Y/N as appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff • Volunteers • Homeless people | Y/N Y/N Y/N |
| 14 | What do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the homelessness service to be in Richmond? | Strengths: Weaknesses: | |
| 15 | Are you aware of the existence of the council's Homelessness Forum? If yes: Do you contribute towards it? Is it effective? Do you know what progress/achievements have been made? | | Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N |
| 16 | What are the main barriers to accessing the homelessness service for your client group? | | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 17 | What are the main contributory factors leading to homelessness for your client group? | |
| 18 | What do you consider the main priorities to be for homelessness services improvement? | |
| 19 | What do you consider to be the main gaps in service provision for homeless people in Richmond? | |
| 20 | Does your organisation have the prevention of homelessness embedded in its support/procedures? | |
| 21 | Do you anticipate any future trends or problems that may lead to an increase in homelessness for any specific client group? | |
| 22 | Which actions on homelessness would your organisation be able to lead on or assist with? | |
| 23 | Do you collect information about what your service users think about your services? If yes, how do you collect that information? | |
| 24 | Have you any plans to undertake consultation with your service users or other groups in the next 12 months? If yes, why and in what form will the consultation take place? | |
| 25 | Please outline your future plans and aspirations for the project or service in terms of your approach/organisation. | |
| 26 | Are there any things that you do that you consider to be areas of best practice? | |
| 27 | Please use this space to note any other information of relevance about your project/service | |
| 28 | Are any ethnic groups over-represented as users of your services – specifically with regard to homelessness? | |

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return the completed survey to us by **Friday 30 November 2007** using any of the contact details on the footer below to jason@hqnetwork.co.uk or by post or fax (details below) if you prefer.

If you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact Toni Burke at HQN on 01829 730098.

