

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

Homelessness **Strategy**

2008-2012

Photo © Richard Jennings

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Background

Preventing homelessness is one of seven priorities identified under the new housing strategy for 2008 to 2012. The London Borough of Richmond published its first homelessness strategy in July 2003, which provided the framework to deliver sustained reductions in homelessness.

Homelessness is the most acute aspect of housing shortage. The wider housing strategy will address the need to secure additional affordable homes within the Borough. Homelessness affects many people. In Richmond over the four years 2003/04 to 2006/07, 2,004 households claimed to be homeless and 1,001 were accepted. It is positive to note that the numbers have been steadily falling since the introduction of the homelessness strategy in 2003.

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.

Looking forward, we cannot assume that the factors that trigger homelessness will continue unchanged. There is concern that changes in the housing market arising from an uncertainty in the wider financial markets will impact on homelessness, and we need to monitor carefully the impact of Local Housing Allowances levels for new Housing Benefit claimants in the private rented sector.

Continued and effective homelessness prevention is critical to reducing homelessness and achieving the government's 2010 targets 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 and to recognise that alongside improvements in housing, holistic action is needed to tackle the causes of homelessness that relate to economic, social and personal matters.

This strategy is designed to address the key issues identified by the homeless review. To make continued progress on homelessness prevention within the Borough we recognise how essential it is that the Council and other statutory services, housing associations (HAs) and the voluntary sector work together in partnership in shaping the direction and priorities of this emerging homelessness strategy.

The Homelessness Forum needs to be strengthened to provide a focus for monitoring progress and revising the action plan on an annual basis.

By linking to the Council's housing strategy and performance monitoring framework, it is envisaged that the outcomes of the strategy will inform both the community plan and Local Area Agreement.

Progress made under the Borough's first Homelessness Strategy 2003 Achievements attained through the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2003 include:

- Directory of homelessness services published, made available on the 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 number 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
- An increase of in-house housing advice service provision

- Homelessness 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 sleepers and single homeless
- Hostel for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds built and opened at the end of 2007

Definition of homelessness

The term 'homeless households' is used in this strategy to describe households which are accepted as being owed a duty by the local authority to secure housing (statutory homeless) and those households for which there is no duty to secure housing (non-statutory homeless) but which lack secure accommodation which can reasonably be occupied.

Our Homelessness Strategy Aims

Our strategy aims to:

- Reduce homelessness
- Reduce levels of rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible
- Meet the government temporary accommodation reduction target by 2010
- End, by 2010, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation in discharging the Council's homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.

Our Underpinning Principles

- Early prevention in tackling homelessness – a key aspect of homelessness prevention is to take action at an early stage rather than to tackle the problem of homelessness as a last resort. It is better if we can help people through early advice, appropriate support, planning and a housing options approach, to meet their needs and avoid homelessness occurring.
- Empower service users through information and choice – service users require information to enable them to exercise control over their situation and so be able to make choices where possible.
- Delivering high quality and accessible services that are valued by service users – we will actively seek the views of service users, listening to concerns and seeking to improve services on a continual basis. We will look to follow best practice models developed elsewhere and seek value for money in what we do. We recognise the need to invest in our staff to deliver high quality services and we will ensure they receive training to ensure that they can work effectively and fairly.
- Services that are needs-led and reflect the diversity of homeless people – through monitoring we can objectively assess changing needs and demands and we will develop and modify services to respond to these needs. We recognise that our community is diverse and accordingly we must be aware of their needs and requirements.
- Accounting for our actions – the strategy puts forward a range of objectives and specific actions to achieve them. We will identify specific targets, some of which are government targets, against which progress can be measured. We will identify lead agencies to take priorities forward, so in that way we are accountable for our actions.

Key Priorities

- 1 Prevention of homelessness
- 2 Promote greater housing opportunities & sustained tenancies in the private rented sector
- 3 Ensure that temporary accommodation provides a 'stepping stone' to a settled home and lifestyle
- 4 Reduce & prevent homelessness amongst young people
- 5 Enable people to live independently through support
- 6 Enable access to social housing for homeless households
- 7 Promote effective partnership working

To achieve these aims we will concentrate on the following priorities. The action plan on page 15 details the specific steps we will take to monitor what we do.

1 Prevention of homelessness

In 2005 the government published a national strategy for tackling homelessness Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives. The report sought action in the following areas:

- Encouraging homelessness prevention
- Supporting vulnerable people
- Tackling its wider causes and symptoms
- Helping more people to move away from rough sleeping
- Providing more settled homes.

Our aim is to reduce homelessness overall for both statutory and non statutory homeless households.

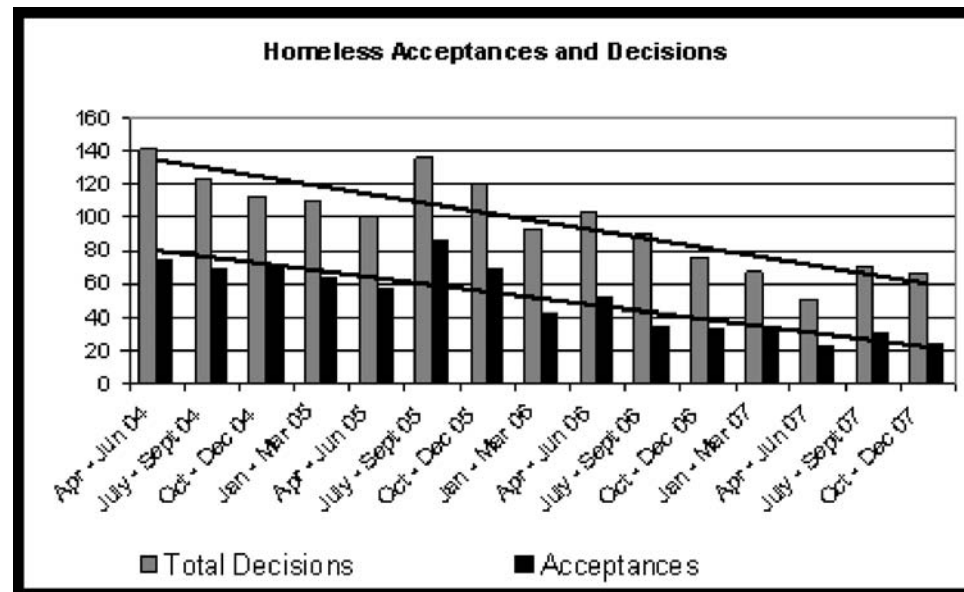
There has been a continued and steady reduction in homeless applications and acceptances. In the financial year ending March 2004, 772 households applied to the Council as homeless and 316 were deemed by the Council as being homeless, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (such as having



Sandy Lane housing development

children, a vulnerability, being pregnant) which confers a duty on the Council to secure accommodation for them. In 2006/07 there had been a significant reduction with 335 households approaching the Council of which 152 were deemed eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

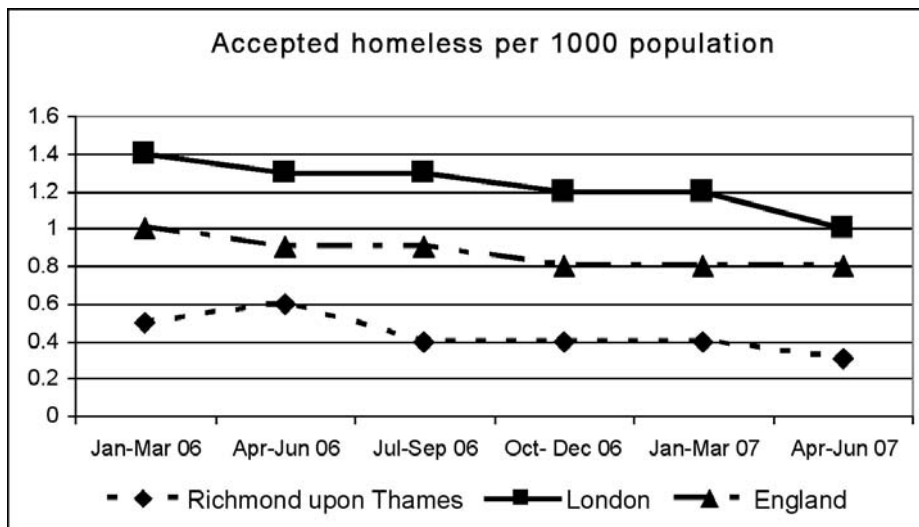
During this period a reduction in the numbers of accepted households has occurred within the Borough, in London and in England overall. However, the reduction in Richmond upon Thames has been greater.



Source: PIE homelessness returns

Another measure of homelessness is to express the numbers accepted per 1,000 population. Not only has the Borough been able to reduce its homelessness acceptances but also the relative level of homelessness is less acute than many other areas. Over a period July 2006-June 2007, Richmond upon Thames has experienced much lower levels of homelessness than the South West London sub region, London and England. Within London councils, the Borough has the second lowest acceptances per 1,000 population after Merton.

However, there are stakeholder concerns that changes in the local housing market and the introduction of Local Housing Allowances may increase homelessness. We will monitor this as part of the homelessness strategy.



Source: PIE homelessness returns

Reasons for homelessness

Over the three-year period 2004/05-2006/07, the following reasons for homelessness have been identified:

- Nearly 30% were due to parents no longer willing to accommodate their children/family
- 16% loss due to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy
- 14% due to a violent relationship breakdown with a partner
- The next most common reason was eviction due to other relatives and friends (10%).

We will continue to target action to deal with the reasons for homelessness. In cases where family evictions occur we will continue to ensure that home visits are made speedily. Mediation and other best practice approaches will be used sensitively to resolve issues where possible.

The borough's experience reflects the main reasons for homelessness as reported nationally.

Over the 3 year period 2004-2007, 44% of accepted households had 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

over 16%, followed by people with mental health problems (10.7%). Older people made up 4.5% of acceptances. Households aged 16-24 made up approximately 40% of all acceptances.

Although Richmond has low numbers of reported cases of domestic violence compared to other London boroughs it is believed that there is significant under reporting and it still accounted for 14% of homelessness for the period 04/05 to 06/07.

Homelessness can disproportionately affect ethnic minority groups. Comparing the census population as at 2001 and the ethnicity of homeless applicants between October 2004 and June 2007, it identifies that whilst the BME population comprise just 9% of the resident population, BME groups comprise just over 25% of homeless applicants.

During the period, BME groups which made a homelessness application amounted to nearly three times the proportion of BME groups in the resident population. The incidence of homelessness amongst households of a black ethnic origin was 6 times the proportion of the resident population. In the population overall nearly 60% of the black ethnic groups live in Housing Association properties and just over 30% live in privately rented accommodation. The fact that only 10% live in owner-occupied housing, which offers much greater levels of security than private renting, compared with approximately 70% white and Asian groups may explain the greater experience of homelessness.

More up to date information on the ethnic make up of the local population will assist further analysis.

	Population	Homelessness decisions
Total white	90.98%	72.95%
Total mixed	2.21%	3.9%
Total Asian	3.79%	5.52%
Total black	0.9%	10.85%
Chinese	0.75%	1.07%
Other ethnic groups	1.26%	3.91%
Not stated		1.78%

Repeat homelessness

Key to ensuring that homeless households do not experience repeat homelessness is an assessment of their needs at the first experience of homelessness, access to services and appropriate support to enable them to live independently once they have secured permanent accommodation. It is a positive feature that from April 2006 no cases of repeat homelessness have been recorded.

Non statutory homelessness

Since April 2004 non-statutory homeless households comprised 12.85% of all homeless decisions which averaged at 13 households per quarter. These households would be single people or couples with no children and having no defined vulnerability, and therefore not eligible for assistance beyond advice and signposting to suitable accommodation. Although non-statutory homeless numbers have fallen, it is still necessary to seek to prevent all groups experiencing homelessness. Also, not all homeless households will approach the Council directly and may seek their own solution or assistance from a range of local services and charitable organisations. The Review identified the need for more information about households not in priority need.

There are stakeholder concerns that services to single homeless can be improved. We will work with partners to review service delivery.

In 1998 the Prime Minister set a target that by 2002 the number of rough sleepers should be reduced by two thirds (from 1,850). The target was met in 2001 and has been sustained with a level of just under 500 in 2007. The government is committed to sustaining this target and reducing levels of rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible.

SPEAR, a local housing charity, receives funding from the council to play a key role in monitoring and working with rough sleepers through its outreach and hostel services. The target is to maintain the number of rough sleepers at five or under.



A room at a homelessness hostel

A 'Snapshot Survey' of service users undertaken over a two-week period in December 2007 identified 17 households that said they had been sleeping rough the previous night. This issue is of concern and is subject to further investigation by the Council, SPEAR and the Vineyard Project.

Mental health problems are experienced by many single homeless people, and the incidence is particularly high among people who are sleeping rough, as is substance abuse. Prevention work is needed for people leaving psychiatric hospital, and to help landlords to identify ways of preventing homelessness amongst tenants with mental health problems.

Offenders and substance misusers can find it particularly difficult to maintain accommodation and also access social housing where they have histories of rent arrears and anti-social behaviour; in some cases, policies and practices may act to keep people out of social housing even where they are trying to change their behaviour or make efforts to repay old debts.

Homelessness prevention

During the period of the previous homelessness strategy the government urged local authorities to step up their homeless prevention activities and promote a housing options approach. This has been followed in Richmond upon Thames by the Advice and Assessment team which is the first point of contact for all people in housing need, who approach the Council.

A range of homelessness prevention initiatives are undertaken that include home visits in cases involving eviction from families and friends and the availability of specialist mediation services. In 2006, 67 referrals were made, falling to 27 in 2006 and nine as at November 2007. Whilst in part this can be explained by the fall in homeless applications, we intend to review this current contract and referral processes to ensure effective mediation services are offered and to deliver value for money.

In 2006/07 the council and its partners assisted 228 households which considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice services and for which housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.¹ The target for 2007/08 is 200 cases of homelessness prevention. This target puts the Borough amongst the top three local authorities in London in reducing homelessness.

¹ Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 213

In preventing homelessness we recognise the need to have available, accessible and good quality housing advice services.

The London Housing Advice Strategy was published in 2004 and it's implementation plan in 2005. The Strategy's aims 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.

That strategy identified a series of actions in promoting housing advice which should be taken forward and will help shape our future actions:

- Clarify the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness
- Work with other housing stakeholders to tackle issues that cause homelessness

- Improve liaison between related fields of advice and support services
- Have better links, networks and referral routes.

A homelessness directory that details a wide range of housing and other relevant services has been produced but it was last updated in 2004 and it will be revised again.

We will seek to ensure that housing advice and housing options services are available and accessible especially to BME and other vulnerable groups.

'Valuing People Now – from Progress to Transformation', a cross-government consultation which covers a range of issues, including health and well-being, housing, employment, education and community inclusion affecting people with learning disabilities, was issued in December 2007. One of the report's five priorities is improved access to housing advice and provision.

Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England (2007), The Hills Report examined how housing needs can be met and highlighted the importance of integrating housing and employment advice to increase the options for tenants and contribute to a reduction in the need for temporary accommodation.

There is recognition in the Borough that action is needed to support people into employment and address financial concerns. A conference 'Improving Financial Opportunities' was held on 27 November 2007 where some 60 delegates, representing the local authority, housing associations and voluntary organisations, attended. Workshops examined the following topic areas that will provide a basis for future action:

- 1 Improving co-ordination between landlords and the Housing Benefit service
- 2 Setting up a local credit union – the way forward
- 3 Delivering employment opportunities for housing service users.

Our objectives:

Reduce homelessness by tackling the main causes of homelessness.

Reduce levels of rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible.

Improve needs information and develop co-ordinated action to deal with specific client groups facing homelessness.

Enable the delivery of good quality housing advice.

Address worklessness and where required seek to make available daytime activities to enable people to work towards independent living.

2 Promote greater housing opportunities & sustained tenancies in the private rented sector

A notable success in preventing homelessness has been to offer alternative housing options and, in particular, accommodation in the private rented sector. This includes working closely with SPEAR, a local housing charity, to assist people to secure accommodation including financial assistance.

In 2006/07 both the Council and SPEAR enabled 111 households to access the private rented sector and in the first six months of 2007/08, 94 more were assisted.

However, there is great variation in the private rented sector across the Borough's wards, with much property aimed at the professional market. Hence affordability is a key issue, particularly for those reliant on benefit, which restricts where people can live.

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. It is important that there is sufficient budget provision to ensure that the housing options approach continues to be offered.

April 2008 has seen the introduction of Local Housing Allowances (LHA) under the Housing Benefit Regime. This will require effective joint working with landlords. Its impact on rent levels and on the supply and quality of private rented accommodation will be monitored. Experience of the LHA pilots identified that money and debt advice services are likely to see an initial upsurge in enquiries due to the LHA. We will consider the implications to funding such services.

Focus groups held with service users discussed their experience of homelessness and advice services which was varied, and some of which suggests a need for service improvements. Regular consultation with service users features in our performance planning. And taking account the views of our partners, we will look to drive continual improvement.

Many landlords need help and support to enable them to comply with the requirement of being a landlord. Such services are available from the Council's private landlord advice service. In addition the Council has recognised the role that landlord accreditation can play in helping landlords and in raising standards within the sector through training, advice and positive liaison. There is a continued need to maintain and expand the Private Sector Housing Forum that brings together landlords, developers, building societies, housing associations, surveyors and various Council departments, to promote good practice in the private rented sector.

Our objectives:

Work with private sector landlords to offer good quality and well-managed accommodation to people in housing need.

Promote access and mobility for low income households entering the private rented sector.

Make available advice and support to tenants and landlords and seek to protect rights and ensure that responsibilities are observed.

Where required, make available support services that enable households to live in privately rented accommodation independently.

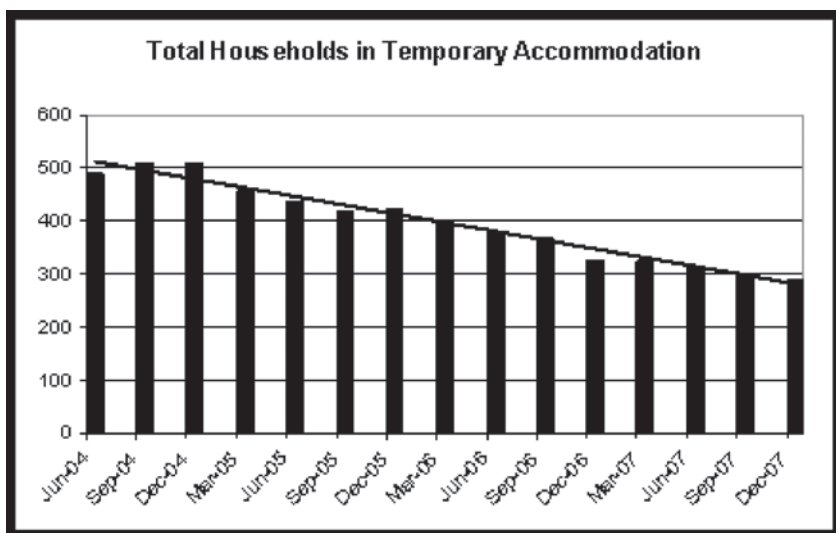
3 Ensure that temporary accommodation provides a 'stepping stone' to a settled home and lifestyle

In 2005 the government set out its requirement to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010². For the Borough this means halving the number who were accommodated in December 2004 (508 households) to 254 in 2010. By the end of June 2007 the numbers accommodated by the council had fallen to 312 which is a 38% reduction.

If the past three years' experience of reducing numbers of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation is projected forward, the Council is on target to reach the Government's 50% reduction target. The Council will continue to work to meet this target in the 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.

² Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing Lives



Source: PIE homelessness returns

There is a further government target which is not to house households with children in B&B accommodation except in an emergency, and in that case for no longer than six weeks.

The majority of homeless households are accommodated in properties leased by the Council, and HAs comprised 75% of the June 2007 total. It provides good quality self-contained accommodation. Our drive has been to focus our provision within the Borough and reduce the HA properties and this will continue. At December 2007, the stock of leased properties stood at 247, of which 25 (10%) were outside the Borough.

We will continue to monitor periods in temporary accommodation as this can affect things such as access to schooling and doctors, etc. We will continue to improve the information we provide, and our services, and consult with our service users to see where we can improve.

There is hostel accommodation in the Borough which is operated by others. We will work with our partners to improve the quality of provision and to remove the sharing of bedrooms where this occurs.

Our objectives:

Ensure that temporary accommodation, hostels and supported accommodation provided within the Borough is of good quality and well managed (seek to eliminate sharing) and there is provision for people with disabilities.

Ensure that service users receive information and assistance to access services (e.g., health services, education, access to training) when placed in temporary accommodation.

Reduce instances where homeless households lose temporary accommodation.

4 Reduce & prevent homelessness amongst young people

In the period November 2004-November 2007, 201 homelessness applications approaches were made by 16/17-year olds of which 98 were accepted as homeless.

Young people and teenage parents have been a priority of the Council. A specialist officer in the Advice and Assessment team deals with homeless young people. To assist inter-agency working, protocols are in place with Richmond Youth Offending Team and the Adolescent Resource Team. The Council has a mediation service in place with a local provider. Over three years the mediation service received 14 referrals involving young people and they enabled six to remain at home. This service will be evaluated in 2009/10 as part of the Young People's Housing Strategy Action Plan. In 2004 the Borough published housing strategies for young people and teenage parents. Both of these have been updated and are included as appendices of the Housing Strategy.

In line with the government's proposals to avoid young people being housed in B&B we will continue to secure more suitable self contained accommodation. We have just completed the provision of a four-bed supported accommodation. Other options such as supported lodgings and crash pads have been promoted by the government and we will work to make it happen locally.

On 14 November 2006 the government announced a package of measures to tackle youth homelessness, which will form key elements of our future actions.

Our objectives:

Preventing youth homelessness.

Providing appropriate accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness.

Providing a wider range of housing options and support for young people.

5 Enable people to live independently through support

The provision of housing-related support services for vulnerable and excluded people through the Supporting People programme is crucial in helping people to live independently and to reduce homelessness. The national Supporting People strategy Independence and Opportunity (2007) places the service user at the centre of its activities; seeks to build on successful local voluntary and community partnerships; and looks to future delivery of the programme through Local Area Agreements.

It is essential that we have in place good provision of supported accommodation for vulnerable homeless households. We also recognise that floating support into peoples' homes can enable them to move on from supported accommodation to live independently in their own homes. Furthermore, such services can help in preventing future homelessness.

Whilst there is a wide range of provision (supported accommodation and floating support) the opportunity to expand services will be difficult. The Supporting People budget (allocated by the government) has not been increased and indeed will remain at the same level over the coming two years. Expansion can only be achieved through efficiency savings and at the expense of less strategically relevant services.

Supporting People grant is currently ring fenced to provide the support services; however the grant will become de-ring fenced and will then form part of the area-based grant. At that time it will be important that local funding decisions which are made reflect a homeless prevention priority.

In order to meet the needs of identified vulnerable client groups we have a number of protocols in place to assist joint working. The protocols which we have to deal with young offenders aim to better meet the needs of the service users, and through planning and seeking to meet their housing needs to avoid homelessness if possible. These protocols and the need for the development of others will be reviewed.

Our objectives:

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 an ongoing programme of service needs analysis.

Monitor the impact of new services on homelessness.

Review the use of services in terms of referrals made, and acceptances and refusals to identify service gaps. Further analysis 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, e.g. where specialist intensive services, or client group knowledge are 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, e.g. low level floating support to clients experiencing substance misuse issues and with mental health needs.

Supporting People to maintain tenancies/independence that prevent homelessness.

6 Enable access to social housing for homeless households

Critical to the reduction of numbers housed temporarily is the continued availability of nominations to permanent homes. Whilst a proportion of households 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 number of households which are permanently re-housed in a specific year is greater than the number 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 Council is consistently receiving access to a substantial proportion of annual lettings of HA properties. In the past three years this has amounted to approximately 85% of all HA lettings. Since 2000/01, homeless households have taken up on average 63.2% of available nominations.

Nominations to HA dwellings			
Year	Total households taking up nominations	Homeless households in priority need taking up nominations	Homeless as % of total
2000/01	368	216	58.7
2001/02	330	212	64.2
2002/03	338	218	64.5
2003/04	396	259	65.4
2004/05	464	326	70.3
2005/06	401	242	60.3
2006/07	319	181	56.7
Total	2616	1654	63.2

Source: Richmond upon Thames HIP returns



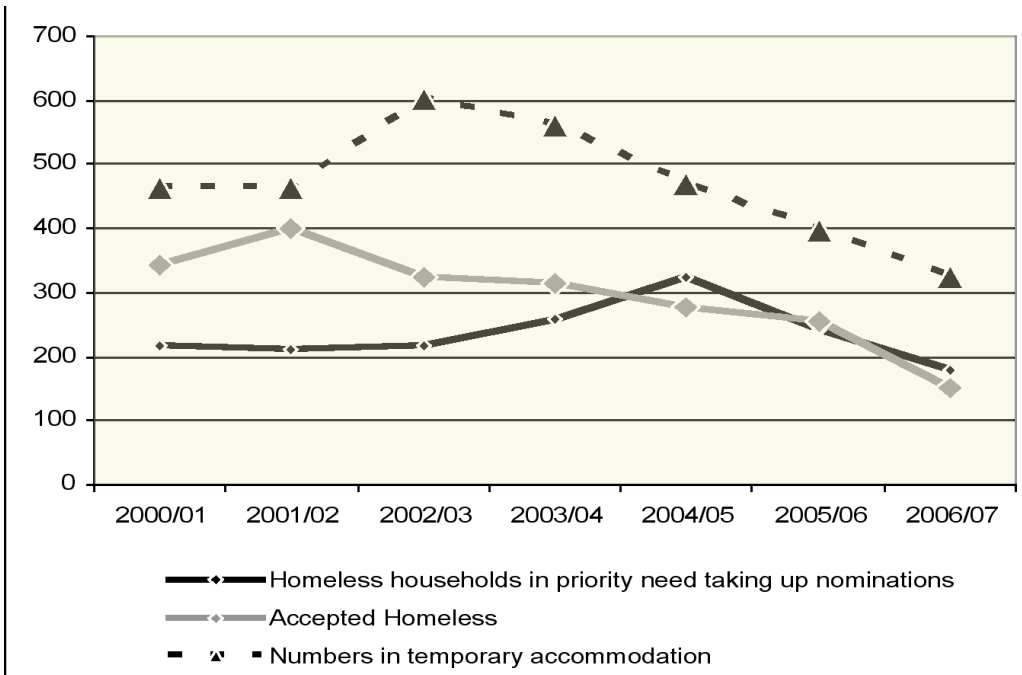
Arden Close housing development

Although nominations to homeless households have fallen over the past three years in both numbers and in percentage terms, re-housing offers broadly have been exceeding homelessness acceptances, and in that time temporary accommodation numbers have fallen.

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 may be trialed.

In 2006/07 homeless households were allocated 70% of all nominations of homes with two or more bedrooms. Such levels have been necessary to enable the council to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation.

We will continue to monitor the numbers and overall proportions of allocations made to homeless households. The limited availability of two- and three-bedroom properties explains why a large percentage of these homes are allocated to homeless households.



The existing stock profile of the largest housing associations in the Borough is heavily weighted towards bedsit and one-bedroom properties. The Local Housing Assessment (2006) estimated that 61.6% of households in the social rented sector reside in one-bed properties; 19.7% in two-bed properties; 17% in three-bed properties and 1.6% in four-bed properties.

This is reflected in the type of properties that came available for re-letting in 2006/7, where 59% of re-lets that were available to the Council, were one-bed or bedsit units. Only a few three- and four- bedroom properties become available. Thus the Council is better able to meet the needs of single person homeless households.

We recognise the importance of providing sufficient and suitable move-on accommodation (with floating support) to enable residents to live independently (when they are ready to do so) and thus to make best use of supported housing schemes and to meet the needs of new homeless households.

Overall, we will continue work to reduce homelessness and in so doing aim to reduce the proportion of offers of housing going to homeless households, and thus increase opportunities for other people in housing need, to secure accommodation via the housing register. By making offers of housing before people's circumstances become acute, we might be able to prevent some homelessness occurring.

The Government wishes to see choice-based allocation schemes operating by 2010. This will be addressed by the Council and its partners in the future. When designing such schemes, we recognise that the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness need to be taken into account. Changes to the allocation policy will be guided by the housing strategy.

Our objectives:

Make available sufficient nominations to enable the target for the reduction in numbers of households in temporary accommodation to be met and to minimise the time spent in temporary accommodation.

Ensure that the Council's housing strategy delivers homes that meet the needs of homeless households in terms of dwelling size, type and location.

Make sufficient and suitable move on accommodation available (with floating support) to enable residents to live independently (when they are ready to do so) and thus make the best use of supported housing schemes.

7 Promote effective partnership working

To the service user it is important that services are joined up, and to provide the opportunity of a single point of access and that essential services are secure, particularly from funding changes.

Our stakeholders and our neighbouring councils in the sub-region have stressed the need for improved joint working. Their views have influenced the actions we are planning, as detailed in the previous sections. To take this homelessness strategy forward it needs to be based on successful joint working between all of the agencies and organisations which can prevent and tackle homelessness in the Borough.

This requires good consultation, information sharing, promoting best practice and working collaboratively. There are operational protocols and service level agreements to assist interagency working. These will be reviewed and added to as necessary. Underpinning this work will be a desire to deliver services that are client-focussed.

The homelessness forum has been very useful in bringing parties together and the newsletter has done a great deal to share information. But we recognise that the forum needs to become more effective. Both its terms of reference, membership, and monitoring role will be reviewed.

Sub-regional working and, where appropriate, across London, is important to share best practice and to develop services to specific client groups, where cross-authority access and provision is needed.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners for contributing to the development of this strategy.



Children's playground at homelessness hostel

Our objectives:

Develop and implement the homelessness strategy based on successful joint working between all of the agencies and organisations which can prevent and tackle homelessness in the borough.

Review the terms of reference and membership of the homelessness forum to make it more effective in monitoring progress, sharing information and promoting best practice.

Where possible introduce referral protocols and service level agreements that are client focused.

Closer joint working with housing associations to prevent homelessness

Work with partners external to Richmond upon Thames including other boroughs in the South West London sub region and, where appropriate, across London.

Key Priority 1 - Prevention of Homelessness						
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
1	Record the number of cases where homelessness has been prevented (both priority and non priority households).	Quarterly	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Housing Options Project Officer (PP)	Housing Operations	Existing
2	Review the delivery of advice services to single homeless households with partners.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC) & AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Head of Housing Operations (KE) & Voluntary Sector Partnership Manager (MW)	Housing Operations, Strategy & Policy	Existing
3	Continue to monitor reasons for homelessness via P1E's to inform prevention activities.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
4	Report annually to Homelessness Forum on progress, and homelessness prevention activity.	2009/10 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
5	Review mental health discharge protocols.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
6	Reduce levels of rough sleeping. Achieve, in the first instance, a target of less than five quarterly.	2009/10 & ongoing	N/A	Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Existing
7	Complete Mental Health Accommodation Review.	2008/09	N/A	Natasha McDonald	Steps of Faith	ACS Budget
8	Produce Overcrowding Action Plan.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	CLG Grant
9	Carry out 'pathways mapping' research to help understand local reasons for the over-representation of BME households as homeless.	2008/09	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Strategy & Policy	Existing

10	Develop a BME housing strategy.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Strategy & Policy	Existing
11	Domestic Abuse – develop working arrangements with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference Panel (MARAC).	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Domestic Abuse Coordinator (JR)	Strategy & Policy	Existing
12	Domestic Abuse - Extend Safety First provision.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
13	Examine opportunities to establish an inter-agency forum where homelessness prevention amongst vulnerable tenants, in the private rented sector, can be considered.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC) & AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Head of Housing Operations (KE) & Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Housing Operations, Policy & Strategy	Existing
14	Ensure information (including leaflets and web based) is made available, reviewed on an annual basis, and is accessible to service users that explains the services available, rights and responsibilities.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Public Information Officer (EE)	Community Engagement & Inclusion	Existing
15	Engage in regular service user consultation and feed results annually into Adult & Community Services newsletter.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
16	Review & update Homelessness Directory.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Housing Options Project Officer (PP)	Housing Operations	Existing
17	Review best practice and lessons learned from the Enhanced Housing Options pilots.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Strategy & Policy	Existing

18	Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) to build on experience of 'Slivers of Time' scheme to increase work opportunities for residents.	2009/10	N/A	Carl Byrne	RHP	Existing
19	RHP, in partnership with, RACC to develop apprenticeship and employment opportunities through social enterprise projects.	2009/10	N/A	Carl Byrne	RHP	Existing
20	Report on job coach/social inclusion worker initiative.	2009/10	N/A	Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Existing
21	Awareness session for LBRUT front line staff regarding single homelessness support from SPEAR.	2009/10	N/A	Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Existing
22	Deliver training to front line staff on domestic violence and housing issues	2010/11	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing

Key Priority 2 - Promote greater housing opportunities & sustained tenancies in the Private Rented Sector						
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
23	Monitor impact of Local Housing Allowances on the Rent Deposit Scheme and produce brief summary report.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Housing Initiatives Officer	Strategy & Policy	Existing
24	Increase numbers of accredited landlords by 15.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Private Sector Housing Manager (ED)	Housing Operations	Existing
25	Identify best practice around working with vulnerable households in the private rented sector.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
26	Monitor and report cases of illegal eviction and action taken.	Quarterly monitoring from 2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Senior Advice & Assessment Officer (Kwame Gyedu-Kutuah)	Housing Operations	Existing
27	Provide Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for rent deposit scheme properties.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Private Sector Housing Manager (ED)	Housing Operations	Existing
28	Expand provision for priority and non-priority households assisted under the rent deposit scheme to assist a minimum of 200.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE) & Ed Tytherleigh	Housing Operations, SPEAR	Existing
29	Carry out research on availability and mobility issues within the private rented sector for low income households.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Strategy & Policy	Existing
30	Continue to carry out casework with landlords and tenants.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH) & Ed Tytherleigh	Housing Operations, SPEAR	Existing
31	Monitor and report on the number of households where support has prevented homelessness and enabled people to remain in accommodation 12 months after service ended.	Ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Principal Resettlement Officer (LB)	Housing Operations	Existing

32	Continue 'moving matters' drop in service for tenants renting privately.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
33	Expand rent deposit scheme for drug/alcohol misuse clients.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
34	Offer Landlord Accreditation Training twice per year (12 landlords each) ensuring the prioritisation of landlords of vulnerable tenants.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Private Sector Housing Manager (ED)	Housing Operations	Existing
35	Appoint second Resettlement Team Rent Deposit Officer.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing

Key Priority 3 - Ensure that temporary accommodation provides a 'stepping stone' to a settled home and lifestyle

No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
36	Continue to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation, taking account of government target	Ongoing (quarterly monitoring)	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
37	Complete work on time and to budget at the SPEAR hostel under the Hostels' Capital Improvement Programme.	2009/10	N/A	Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	CLG Grant
38	Carry out a review and updating of information provided for those in temporary accommodation (informed by service users' views).	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Temporary Accommodation Team Leader (AT)	Housing Operations	Existing
39	Ensure 100% households needing a resettlement support service receive the service.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Principal Resettlement Officer (LB)	Housing Operations	Existing
40	Monitor and report quarterly on evictions and abandonment from temporary accommodation to inform prevention activity.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Temporary Accommodation Team Leader (AT)	Housing Operations	Existing

Key Priority 4 - Prevent & reduce homelessness amongst young people						
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
41	Evaluate current mediation service. Ensure clear referral mechanism and monitoring & evaluation system in place.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Housing Initiatives Officer	Strategy & Policy	Existing
42	Work with Targeted Youth Support Services to develop and implement a programme of homelessness education & advice for use in schools and youth clubs.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC), AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS), AD Youth & Culture (PL)	Head of Housing Operations, Housing Initiatives Officer & Targeted Youth Support Worker (LD)	Housing Operations, Strategy & Policy, Young People's Services	Existing
43	Ensure monitoring and adequate training and awareness for housing staff and providers around BME and LGBT issues (facing young people who are homeless)	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
44	Develop a referral protocol with Children's Services and ensure all staff are trained in using the CAF.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Housing Initiatives Officer	Strategy & Policy, Education & Children's Services	Existing
45	Reduce the use of B&B accommodation for young people and ensure it is only used in case of emergency.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC), AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Head of Housing Operations (KE) & Housing Initiatives Officer	Housing Operations, Strategy & Policy	Existing
46	Work with the Youth Offending Team to ensure all young offenders are provided with suitable accommodation and support.	Ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC), AD Youth & Culture (PL)	Youth Offending Team Manager (CL) & Team Leader Housing Provision (JR/PG)	Young People's Services, Housing Operations	Existing
47	Review alternative provision of self contained supported units for young people leaving care, particularly those with high support needs.	2010/11	AD Specialist Children's Services	Leaving Care Manager (TA)	Looked After Children	Existing

48	Work with temporary accommodation providers to encourage the provision of self-contained units or accommodation.	Ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC), AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Temporary Accommodation Team Leader (AT) & Housing Initiatives Officer	Housing Operations, Strategy & Policy	Existing
49	Evaluate the need for a 4 bedroom hostel for young women in the borough.	2010/11	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
50	Contribute to work with Connexions to reduce the amount of young homeless people & those in temporary housing who are NEET (not in education, employment or training).	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations, Connections	Existing

Key Priority 5 - Enable people to live independently through support

No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
51	Ensure that any update to the Supporting People Strategy/Action Plan and any changes to SP funding priorities still reflect homelessness prevention priorities.	2010/11	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
52	Continue to review homelessness services in terms of referrals, acceptances and refusals, to identify service gaps, with needs analysis to inform future service requirements.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
53	Achieve a 'good' result in NI 143 'Proportion of offenders under probation supervision in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or license'.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
54	Develop a supported lodgings scheme/crash pad for 16-17 year old young homeless clients, possibly with a joint provider.	2010/11	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing

Key Priority 6 - Enable access to social housing for homeless households						
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
55	Produce an annual report to monitor nominations to homeless households and those residing in temporary accommodation with the view to reducing the numbers living in temporary accommodation.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Leader Housing Provision (JR/PG)	Housing Operations	Existing
56	Ensure funding opportunities (such as the Housing Corporation's Regular Market Engagement) are informed by housing and support needs of homeless households.	2009/10	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Policy & Research Manager (Housing) (DB)	Strategy & Policy	Existing
57	Through the housing assessment panel ensure vulnerable homeless households are moved into appropriate supported housing.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Leader Housing Provision (JR/PG)	Housing Operations	Existing
58	Ensure that the Council received access to all available nominations including Supported Housing nominations.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Leader Housing Provision (JR/PG)	Housing Operations	Existing
59	Consult on Choice Based Lettings.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing

Key Priority 7 - Promote effective partnership working						
No.	Action	Timescale	Lead AD	Lead Officer	Organisation	Resources
60	Review the terms of reference and membership of the Homelessness Forum.	2008/09	AD Commissioning Corporate Policy & Strategy (MS)	Housing Initiatives Officer	Strategy & Policy	Existing
61	Submission of an annual report to Homelessness Forum and consult with Forum on findings.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
62	Establish working protocol between Housing Services and Probation.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
63	Establish working protocol between Housing Services and initial response team (Children and Families).	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
64	Review joint working between Housing and Children's Services against government checklist.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
65	Continue to extend opportunities for joint training with Children's services.	2008/09	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Head of Housing Operations (KE)	Housing Operations	Existing
66	Engage with HA homelessness champions included as members of the Homelessness Forum.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
67	Monitor homelessness from HAs.	2009/10	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing
68	Contribute to sub-regional homelessness group - agree actions including sharing of best practice.	2008/09 & ongoing	AD Community Service Operations (BC)	Team Manager Advice & Assessment (JH)	Housing Operations	Existing

³ Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people May 2008 Department for Communities and Local Government Department for Children, Schools and Families

Albanian

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne recepcionin 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 مشکل دارید، لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر رجوع فرمایید تا سرویس ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود.

Gujarati

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

Polish

Je_eli masz trudno_ci ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji, prosz_pój_d do recepcji (adres jest podany poni_ej), gdzie mo_emy zorganizowa_t_umaczenie przez telefon.

Panjabi

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 ਇੰਟਰਪਿਟਰ 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 انٹریپریٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پر ترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

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