

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

**Strategy for the Prevention and Alleviation of
Homelessness in Barking and Dagenham 2003 - 2008**

July 2003

Contents No	Page
1 Executive Summary	3
2 Vision and Purpose	9
3 Local and Regional Context.....	16
4 Extent, Nature and Causes of Homelessness.....	27
5 Meeting Needs: Service Provision and Plans	30
6 Meeting Future Needs – the Action Plan	35
7 Resources for Homelessness.....	45
8 Delivering the Strategy.....	46

Appendices

Appendix 1	Strategy Working Group Members
Appendix 2	Consultation
Appendix 3	National policy context, good practice guidance and other related policy initiatives
Appendix 4	Glossary of terms

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to conduct a review of homelessness locally, then to publish a Homelessness Strategy by 30 July 2003. This is the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's first Homelessness Strategy. It has been prepared in consultation with the Council's partners, providers, service users and other stakeholders. The review of homelessness is being published separately.
- 1.2 This, our first Homelessness Strategy, will aim to deal with the gaps in knowledge and services that have been identified in the review. This will enable the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to build on the positive work we have already undertaken.
- 1.3 The Council and its partners are committed to an approach towards homelessness that ensures that:
- People affected by homelessness are treated with respect, dignity and compassion
 - Information and advice are widely available, enabling service users to make informed and realistic choices about their options
 - The rights and aspirations of people affected by homelessness can be fulfilled in a range of ordinary, diverse, ways
 - Needs for care and support are met
 - Homeless people have access to good quality housing and a wide range of support services
 - Solutions to homelessness are sustainable in the long term
 - There are opportunities for social inclusion for everyone affected by homelessness
 - The assessment process is improved
 - Service users are able to influence service provision
 - Policy and planning decisions are open and transparent, and can be influenced by people affected by homelessness.

The Strategy's Aims and Objectives

- 1.4 The aims of the strategy are to:
- Prevent homelessness
 - Alleviate homelessness and prevent social exclusion
 - Eliminate, by the end of 2003, the need for anyone to sleep rough in the Borough
 - Eliminate, by 2004, the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation by families with children

- Secure joint work and service delivery by relevant agencies to provide user/needs-led services and support
 - Audit the extent of 'hidden homelessness'.
 - Implementation
- 1.5 This Strategy, which the Government requires to be a five-year plan, will be reviewed annually. The Housing Sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will have lead responsibility for ensuring delivery of the actions required by the strategy. An Action Plan for the delivery of the outcomes, identifying responsibilities for implementation, forms part of the strategy.

Regional Context

- 1.6 The strategy reflects the recommendations of the Greater London Authority's Housing Commission, set up to inquire into the capital's need for affordable homes. The recommendations made in that report will inform the Housing Strategy for London.

Local Context

- 1.7 The Homelessness Strategy reflects the Council's Community Strategy and the Community Priorities. It is also linked to a number of other strategy documents and corporate initiatives, these being:

- The Crime and Disorder Strategy
- The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- The Regeneration Strategy
- The Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Supporting People initiatives
- The Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy
- The Valuing People Housing Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities
- The Drug Strategy
- Social Inclusion initiatives
- The Quality Protects programme
- 'Tackling Teenage Pregnancy'
- The Children's Charter
- The London Domestic Violence Strategy (adopted by the Borough Council)
- The SureStart Action Plan
- Initiatives by Connexions to detect early signs of social exclusion in young people.

Review of Homelessness in the Borough

- 1.8 Over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the numbers approaching the authority for assistance, and in the numbers of households judged to be non-priority, intentionally homeless, or not homeless. Overall, decisions were made in 1441 cases in 2002/3 compared to 1070 in 2001/2. Of these 595 households were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need compared to 346 in 2001/2. The increase last year is likely to have been caused by changes in the definition of priority need.
- 1.9 However, while the numbers of people approaching Barking and Dagenham for assistance has increased, the authority receives a relatively low rate of applications for assistance per thousand households compared with other authorities (the peer group selected for comparison consisted of local authorities with similar levels of deprivation as well as local authorities with relatively low rates of homelessness).
- 1.10 Households of African and Caribbean ethnic background are disproportionately represented among those accepted for assistance. This means that we have to ensure that our homelessness service is sensitive to the cultural and social needs of applicants, and that temporary and permanent housing provision includes a suitable range of accommodation types to meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.
- 1.11 In response to the increase in homeless acceptances, the authority has raised the proportion of new lettings to homeless people. However, this may have a knock-on effect on the waiting list (Housing Register) and the transfer list. As the prospect of securing social housing reduces, people may be unable to sustain insecure accommodation resulting in increased homelessness. Although the total supply of new lettings has fluctuated over the past four years, the overall trend is one of declining availability.
- 1.12 As the incidence of homelessness in the Borough has increased, the local authority's use of temporary accommodation has also increased steadily. Historically we made very limited use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The number of households placed in B&B at any one time has risen, although the scale of use is still modest in comparison with some other local authorities. Last year, greater use was made of Council stock to provide temporary accommodation, thus reducing dependence on more expensive forms of temporary provision. We have also increased our use of Private Sector Leasing (PSL), although this is limited by the fact that other Boroughs are also using PSL accommodation in Barking and Dagenham. We shall meet the government target of no families with children in B&B by 2004, except in an emergency.
- 1.13 We have noted an upward trend in the proportion of people who have been made homeless because they have been forced to leave from the

homes of friends or relatives, and because they have left privately rented or tied accommodation.

- 1.14 We have also noted that vulnerable young people form a higher proportion of acceptances than our peer group authorities.
- 1.15 Plans for the Thames Gateway area will result in change and growth in the borough and surrounding areas, and will change significantly the population profile, as well as increase the availability of social and affordable housing. Our strategy will need to evolve in responses to these changes.

Meeting the Need – Currently

- 1.16 A user survey conducted in May and June this year showed that service users were positive about the services received, and especially about the quality of housing advice. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the quality of some temporary accommodation, mostly with the Boundary Road hostel, and also with the length of stay. In particular, users with a disability considered that the temporary accommodation provided was not suitable.
- 1.17 We acknowledge that there is no specialised accommodation, nor floating support service, for substance misusers or people with HIV and Aids.
- 1.18 We are also aware that in implementing policies on rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, the Council and RSL landlords may be contributing to homelessness.

Meeting the Need – In The Future

- 1.19 The proposals which follow have been based on the recognition that:
- Homelessness should become high priority on the Local Strategic Partnership agenda
 - People, including single people, should be able to stay within their local communities
 - Services should be tailored to specific support needs
 - There should be more emphasis on the prevention of homelessness
 - There should be greater use and involvement of the private and voluntary sectors
 - User views should influence service development
 - Agencies should improve joint working and share information.
- 1.20 Our proposals for the Advice Service are to:
- Increase the number of cases where we prevent homelessness

- Provide advice services to specific groups of homeless people, through such agencies as Connexions, East Street, and Axe Street
- Offer mediation services, through Relate, to prevent the breakdown of young persons' relationships with their families
- Work with BME community leaders to understand and tackle the causes of BME homelessness
- Monitor homelessness statistics to evaluate changes in numbers and causes of homelessness, including that of non-priority cases
- Establish a database to identify repeat homelessness and monitor its causes, so as to reduce its incidence
- Reduce the number of evictions caused by rent arrears

1.21 Our proposals for joint working are to:

- Develop protocols between agencies, specifying service standards and expectations, and make these available to users
- Develop a joint housing and social services protocol for support to people in temporary accommodation
- Develop preventative and support health services for homeless people
- Develop cross-borough partnerships
- Commission a further Housing Needs Survey during 2003/4
- Produce a BME housing strategy in 2003
- Establish links with the Joint Commissioning Boards for Older People, Physical and Sensory Disabilities Services, Learning Disabilities, and Supporting People Commissioning Group
- Develop a comprehensive user involvement framework and regularly survey users
- Monitor service standards across all agencies
- Develop joint training
- Review gaps in provision for specific groups, and establish ways in which they can be bridged.

Delivering the strategy

1.22 Performance in achieving the outputs and outcomes of the Action Plan for the strategy will be monitored regularly by the Housing Sub-group and by means service scorecard monitoring. Individual service developments that are commissioned will be monitored in greater detail. Detailed service activity and performance data will also be recorded and reported. Reports on strategy progress will also cover the effectiveness of joint working arrangements such as the operation of joint working arrangements and joint training.

1.23 The Housing Sub-group will be responsible for producing six-monthly reports on action plan progress.

- 1.24 A user network will be developed to ensure that the user perspective informs both the development of the service and its evaluation.
- 1.25 The Housing Sub-group will produce an annual review of the strategy by March each year, in order to tie in with budgetary and other planning cycles. In order to link with other relevant strategies and plans, the six-monthly reports, annual reviews, and any relevant more detailed reports will be submitted to the relevant planning structure for information and comment.

2 VISION AND PURPOSE

- 2.1 Having a place to live is a basic human right. It is one that most of us in London take for granted. But for a number of people, having or keeping a place called home is an uncertain prospect.
- 2.2 Having an address allows us to gain access to a range of basic services from health and care workers, and to access financial services such as bank accounts and payment of benefits.
- 2.3 This homelessness strategy demonstrates our commitment to those who are some of the most socially excluded in our society.
- 2.4 The Council and its partners are determined to make the Borough a more inclusive place in which to live.

Background

- 2.5 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to conduct a review of homelessness locally, and then to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy by July 31 2003. Nationally, the government has placed a high priority on dealing with homelessness.
- 2.6 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has issued guidance to Councils which emphasises that strategies should cover the following main themes:
- The prevention of homelessness – this covers both statutory and non-statutory homelessness
 - Securing provision of sufficient accommodation
 - Securing provision of appropriate support services
 - The establishment of local objectives according to specific local demands
 - The delivery of these objectives through joint working.
- 2.7 This is Barking and Dagenham's first Homelessness Strategy and Review. It has been prepared as a working document for:
- The Council and partner agencies involved in tackling homelessness in the Borough
 - The Government Office for London, to meet statutory requirements, to highlight the changing nature of homelessness in the Borough, and the need for resources
 - For the wider community, including users of homelessness services.
- 2.8 This strategic document contains:
- Our vision, aims and objectives

- An analysis of homelessness in the Borough, the services which meet those needs, and the views of service users
- Our Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy over the next three years.

Developing the Strategy and Review

- 2.9 The strategy and review have been developed by the Council working with its partners and in consultation with service users and stakeholders. The strategy development process has been led by a multi-agency Strategy Working Group, which met regularly over a nine-month period during 2002/3. The Strategy Working Group developed this document with the assistance of HACAS Chapman Hendy consultants.
- 2.10 Milestones in the development of the strategy have been:
- An analysis of current and future homelessness in the Borough, first assessed in November 2002, updated to April 2003
 - An audit of service providers during the period November 2002 – April 2003, building on the database prepared by the Community Legal Services Partnerships
 - Consultation on the review findings and assessment of local issues for the strategy – January 2003
 - Gathering user views
 - Further consultation including publication on the Council's website (forthcoming June 2003).
- 2.11 Many new government policy proposals have been set out during the period of the strategy development, most significantly the plans for the growth of the Thames Gateway area. These plans will result in change and growth in the Borough and surrounding areas, and will change the population profile significantly. We realise that our strategy will need to evolve in response to these changes and will be updated regularly.
- 2.12 Members of the Strategy Working Group are listed in Appendix 1. Details of organisations invited to participate in the consultation process are attached at Appendix 2. The Council would like to thank all participants, and their organisations, for their commitment and support. This has been invaluable in developing the strategy and augurs well for its effective implementation.
- 2.13 The strategy has been adopted by the Council through the following corporate processes:
- Report to the Executive on 30th July 2002, which started the process.
 - Report to the Executive on 8th July 2003.

- 2.14 The strategy will be updated and revised as objectives are met and actions carried out. As a minimum there will be an annual review process to measure progress towards targets, and to identify new targets and initiatives. The Housing Sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership will have responsibility for evaluation and monitoring. We will publish the outcome of the annual review.
- 2.15 To contribute to future reviews of the Homelessness Strategy please contact us by:
- email at: housingstrategy@lbbd.gov.uk
 - phone on: 020 8227 5599/5733
 - writing to: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Housing and Health Department, Housing Strategy Division, Roycraft House, 15 Linton Road, Barking IG11 8HE
 - our web-site: www.lbbd.gov.uk

Our Vision

- 2.16 Through this Strategy, the Council and its partners are committed to a long-term vision in which homelessness in Barking and Dagenham is prevented wherever possible. Our community strategy sets an overall vision for housing in the Borough based on the Community priority of 'Improving health, housing and social care'. This vision recognises that housing bears directly on the economic and social well-being of the area and recognises that the Borough must respond to the rising number of homeless people within its boundaries. This homelessness strategy builds on the Borough's overall vision for the area.
- 2.17 We aim to refute the myths, stereotypes and misunderstandings that cause the exclusion of people affected by homelessness. We aim to foster an understanding by the wider community of the needs of homeless people. We also aim to demonstrate in practice our commitment to service-user involvement.
- 2.18 This approach will require us to work from a value base that ensures that:
- All people affected by homelessness are treated at all times with respect, dignity and compassion
 - Information, advice and advocacy are widely available so that service users can make informed and realistic choices about their housing options
 - The rights and aspirations of all people affected by homelessness can be fulfilled in a range of ordinary, diverse ways within ordinary, diverse communities

- Needs for care and support are met in ways that prevent both homelessness and repeat homelessness
- People affected by homelessness have access to good quality housing and a wide range of support services.
- Solutions to homelessness are sustainable in the longer term
- Opportunities for personal, social and economic inclusion are made available to everyone affected by homelessness
- Policy and planning decisions are open and transparent, and can be influenced by people affected by homelessness
- New working practices are aimed at improving the assessment process
- Services represent value for money and meet performance targets
- Service users are able to influence service provision.

Strategy Purpose and Aims

- 2.19 The purpose of this strategy is to identify what partner agencies will do to further prevent and alleviate homelessness. It identifies the issues, challenges, programmes and resources needed to tackle homelessness in Barking and Dagenham
- 2.20 The aims and objectives of the strategy have been developed by the Strategy Working Group. They have been formulated following extensive discussions with providers and users, and a detailed analysis of the nature of homelessness in the Borough. All parties involved in developing the strategy are committed to achieving these aims and objectives.
- 2.21 The broad aims of the Strategy are to:
- Prevent homelessness
 - Alleviate homelessness and prevent social exclusion
 - Eliminate the need for anyone to sleep rough by the end 2003
 - Eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast for families with children by 2004
 - Secure joint work and service delivery by relevant agencies to provide user/needs-led services and support.
 - Audit the extent of concealed homelessness e.g. people living in insecure accommodation, or in intolerable circumstances.

Service Objectives

2.22 The principal service objectives are to:

Prevent homelessness

- Prevent households becoming homeless wherever possible, including the prevention of repeat homelessness through the provision of effective advice and support
- Ensure that social landlords fully contribute to the prevention and alleviation of homelessness, maximising measures to sustain tenancies.

Alleviate homelessness and prevent social exclusion

- Provide a cost-effective, accessible, sympathetic but robust service for people who experience homelessness
- Provide sufficient accommodation of an appropriate type for people who are, or who may become, homeless
- Meet the needs of homeless people within local communities, ensuring that work to promote equality is fully integrated into service planning and policy development.

Eliminate the need for anyone to sleep rough by the end 2003 and eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families by 2004

- Maintain the current situation that there are no rough sleepers in the Borough
- Provide alternative forms of good quality accommodation to replace the use of Bed and Breakfast.

Secure joint work and service delivery by relevant agencies to provide user/needs-led services and support

- Implement the legislative requirements for homeless services, providing the best possible service through their own staff and the work of other agencies
- Ensure that an effective homelessness casework service operates
- Demonstrate and maximise Best Value, reduce and eliminate duplication, and identify best practice within homeless services

- Ensure equality of access and service provision for all users
- Regularly audit the extent of homelessness and hidden homelessness in order to measure the success of/need to review the strategy
- Reduce or minimise potential homelessness in the long term through inter-agency working.

2.23 The strategy therefore promotes:

Partnership - this embraces statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as service users. The Council is committed to working positively with the network of homelessness voluntary organisations in the Borough;

Strategic working - to ensure that our strategy and ways of working connect with local, regional and national strategies. In particular account will be taken of the impact on sub-regional allocations, the pressures to reduce homelessness, and the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation;

Integration - to ensure that Homelessness Services work jointly and integrate with other key services such as health, social work etc;

Innovation – to develop and test new ways of working/services etc;

User orientation – to plan and deliver services which take account of the views and needs of service users;

Co-ordination - through the work of the Homelessness Strategy Working Group, to implement the strategy with partners;

Evaluation – We will monitor, review and evaluate policy and service provision and, through this, assess progress in preventing and alleviating homelessness;

Pragmatism – It is important to balance the strategic and operational demands within homelessness services. We must ensure, in particular through joint working, the integration of services where necessary, innovation, and the co-ordinated implementation of the strategy. We must always take a pragmatic approach to planning and service delivery thereby enabling continuous progress.

Implementing the Strategy

2.24 An Action Plan describing actions and timescales is included within the Strategy. Implementation of the Strategy will be reviewed annually. The Housing Sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership will have the lead responsibility for ensuring delivery of the actions required by the Strategy. It will also take responsibility for reviewing progress. This will be done in partnership with stakeholders and users.

3 LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

This section describes the local and regional context of the strategy. National policy and guidance provide the overarching principles within which local and regional strategies have been evolved. The national context, recent good practice guidance and related policy initiatives are attached at Appendix 3. These have been taken into account in the development of this strategy.

Local context

- 3.1 The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has developed its Local Strategic Partnership and is committed to working with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to meet the housing needs of the Borough.
- 3.2 The Council has adopted a number of Community Priorities to foster a preventative approach to homelessness. The priorities are:
- Promoting equal opportunities and celebrating diversity
 - Developing rights and responsibilities within the local community
 - Regenerating the local economy
 - Raising general pride in the Borough
 - Better Education and learning for all
 - Improving health, housing and social care
 - Making Barking and Dagenham cleaner, greener and safer.

The Community Strategy

- 3.3 The Council's Community Strategy is an action plan for delivering community priorities based on a full understanding of the area. It includes objectives which directly or indirectly promote the prevention of homelessness in Barking and Dagenham. The Community Strategy will seek to remove barriers currently preventing groups within the community from taking up learning opportunities and will improve access to housing, health and social care services.
- 3.4 The Homelessness Strategy is linked to a number of Barking and Dagenham strategy documents and other corporate initiatives. These are:

The Housing Strategy

- 3.5 The Housing Strategy for 2002-2006 sets out the Council's overall vision for housing in the Borough. Aspirations set out within the strategy include increasing the supply of housing, providing affordable, high quality housing across all tenures, and widening the tenure and choice of housing. The

Homelessness Strategy will be interlinked with the delivery of the Housing Strategy.

Crime and Disorder Strategy

- 3.6 The Council carried out a crime and disorder audit in 2001. It provides extensive data on the levels and patterns of crime in the Borough. A number of council tenants have been evicted from their homes as a result of antisocial behaviour. Some of these may present as homeless.
- 3.7 The Crime and Disorder Strategy covers a wide range of activities working towards reducing crime and the causes of crime. Barking and Dagenham's Community Safety Strategy is aimed at developing a long-term approach eradicating both the causes and opportunities for crime and disorder; it links with many local strategies which seek to tackle health inequalities. The Community Safety Strategy provides a three-year plan to deal with the crime and disorder problems facing the Borough. The priorities are violent crime, drugs and alcohol, and disorder. Drug and alcohol misuse is a contributory factor in violent relationship breakdown and antisocial behaviour; the second most common cause of homelessness in Barking and Dagenham. Reducing the incidence of drug and alcohol misuse is therefore likely to assist in reducing homelessness

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

- 3.8 In January 2001, the Government launched the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. One of the aims of Barking and Dagenham's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is to ensure that social inclusion underpins the goals, targets and actions adopted to alleviate deprivation in all wards.
- 3.9 The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is essential to the homelessness strategy. It provides the means through which the Borough Partnership will tackle social exclusion, bringing together the Borough's business, community and voluntary sectors. The strategy will seek to improve the ability of the community to access information and advice on benefits and welfare rights, thus assisting with the maintenance of tenancies and the prevention of homelessness.

Regeneration Strategy

- 3.10 There are a number of regeneration activities taking place in Barking and Dagenham. This includes estate action on the Gascoigne estate and major developments in Barking Reach, South Dagenham and Barking Town Centre.

- 3.11 The Council will work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and private developers to increase the supply of social housing and private homes in Barking and Dagenham. As the Homelessness Strategy demonstrates, lack of supply inevitably leads to rising levels of homelessness.

Private Sector Housing Strategy

- 3.12 As part of the overall strategic housing responsibility, which covers residents in all tenures including the private sector, the Council has produced a Private Sector Housing Strategy. This clearly sets out a number of initiatives aimed at supporting the private sector in Barking and Dagenham. These are:

- The accredited landlord scheme
- A joint landlords' forum with Havering and Redbridge
- Houses in multiple occupation notification schemes
- An empty property strategy, to reduce the number of empty properties
- Improving home security
- Advice and assistance on housing matters.

Supporting People

- 3.13 Since April 2003, Supporting People has introduced a new structure for the funding and commissioning of housing related support. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham produced a shadow strategy in 2002. This will have an impact on groups requiring housing related support, including homeless people.
- 3.14 Supporting People will bring a number of opportunities to develop floating support and other housing support services. This will enable the Council, through partnership arrangements with specialist agencies, to provide tenancy support services for people in mainstream housing, thereby preventing homelessness.

Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy

- 3.15 The Council recognises the need to challenge homelessness and to encourage black and minority ethnic homeless people to access mainstream and specialist services. The Council will produce a BME Housing Strategy in 2003. This is also part of the implementation plan of the Housing Strategy.
- 3.16 The BME Strategy will focus on identifying BME housing needs and aspirations and will establish the extent and precise nature of problems experienced by BME groups in Barking and Dagenham. The Strategy will

take account of the Homelessness Review and will reinforce the Council's priority to promote equal opportunities.

Valuing People - Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities.

- 3.17 In response to the Government's Valuing People agenda, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham produced a local strategy for people with learning disabilities. One of the objectives of the strategy is to meet the housing needs of people with learning disabilities living with older carers. They may eventually become homeless as a result of the death or incapacity of their carers.
- 3.18 The strategy acknowledges the need to plan ahead with people living with older carers by providing information and advice on housing services and options. An action plan is included in the Valuing People Strategy to develop 60 units of floating support services; a preventative service for people requiring support to maintain their tenancies.

Social Inclusion Initiatives

- 3.19 The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has established a Social Inclusion Policy Commission, the terms of reference of which reflect the commitment to tackle and prevent homelessness. The Homelessness Strategy will contribute to the development of social inclusion strategy for the Borough.
- 3.20 A number of initiatives are aimed at improving local services and will help to tackle the problem of rising numbers of homeless people in Barking and Dagenham. These include the Connexions, Sure Start, and Quality Protects programmes.

Quality Protects Programmes

- 3.21 Quality Protects is a Government initiative aimed primarily at improving the life chances of children and young people who are looked after by local authorities, including young people leaving care.
- 3.22 Barking and Dagenham has developed a service strategy for children and families. It is aimed at ensuring that young care leavers and their families are adequately prepared and supported by comprehensive support services. The goal is to develop early intervention and preventative services through a range of accommodation options for care leavers, including supported lodgings and supported housing.

- 3.23 There is a further plan to develop a family support strategy in order to ensure that every child in Barking and Dagenham has a safe and secure childhood and can move on to be as successful as possible in their lives.

Sure Start

- 3.24 This programme has a broad range of objectives linked to the Government's commitment to reduce child poverty. It is expected that achieving the aims of Sure Start could help to prevent homelessness when children become young adults.
- 3.25 One of the main targets of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy in Barking and Dagenham is to deliver the Sure Start action plan in the Thamesview, Marksgate, Abbey and Gascoigne wards by 2004.

Connexions

- 3.26 Part of the information and advice service provided by Connexions is designed to reduce homelessness by ensuring that young people in Barking and Dagenham are aware of where they can access housing advice locally. The emphasis will be on detecting early signs of social exclusion and preventing circumstances deteriorating.

Teenage Pregnancy

- 3.27 "Tackling Teenage Pregnancy: A Strategy for Barking and Dagenham" outlines the commitment to work in partnership with young people to enable them to make informed life choices. In Barking and Dagenham these values are reflected in the Community Priorities which include improving health, housing and social care. Central to this is the understanding that a better environment will promote healthy living in homes that meet peoples' needs.
- 3.28 Teenage mothers in Barking and Dagenham access housing services via the Housing and Health Service. As part of this strategy a target is set to ensure that no under 18-year old parent is housed in unsupported accommodation.
- 3.29 The strategic vision of connected services meeting the needs of teenage parents underlines the need for some units of high support accommodation, and for a higher number of units with floating support providing the transition to 'move on' accommodation.
- 3.30 The Housing Needs Allocation Scheme has been revised within the General Needs Accommodation provision to include a referral arrangement that will cater for teenage parents.

The Children's Charter

- 3.31 Children and young people are the future of Barking and Dagenham. The Borough Partnership is absolutely committed to ensuring that children and young people grow up to achieve their maximum potential and get the support they need. The Children's Charter reflects that commitment and has been drawn up following consultation with local community groups, the voluntary sector, and community forums.
- 3.32 All partner agencies will work to ensure the welfare of all children within Barking and Dagenham. Every child should be enabled to reach their full potential and to grow up as active and valued participants within the local community. Each child, wherever possible, should grow up cared for and supported within a stable family environment, with parents who have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child, with support if necessary.
- 3.33 The Children's Charter recognises the important role of local agencies, such as the Local Education Authority, the Primary Care Trust, the Police, Housing, Health and Social Services, and the Voluntary Sector, in preparing children and young people for the future and in making arrangements to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of all children.
- 3.34 Every child has the right:
- to protection from harm
 - to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and well-being
 - to a standard of living, including housing, adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development
 - to an education directed to the development of their personality, talents and abilities, and which provides the fullest opportunity to reach the educational standards that enable them to be successful
 - to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate in cultural life and the arts
 - to grow up encouraged and supported to become a responsible citizen and to participate fully in the life of the community.
- 3.35 The Children's Charter commits the Borough Partnership to undertaking an analysis of local need and ensuring services are tailored to meet that need effectively.

Drug Strategy

- 3.36 The Home Office/Department of Health publication "Drug Services for Homeless People" states (2002:5) that between half and three quarters of

- homeless single people have in the past been problematic drug users. Many have a wide range of other problems which can exacerbate each other and heighten the risk of drug misuse and homelessness.
- 3.37 Drug Action Teams (DATs) now have the lead role in ensuring effective drug services are available for homeless people. In doing so, they should have substantial help from partners in other agencies working with this client group. The principal aims for DATs are to:
- Adapt mainstream services so that they are accessible to homeless people and provide clients with effective treatment
 - Establish specialist services where these are needed
 - Play their part in ensuring that the full range of accommodation and support provision is made available to homeless people as a basis for successful drug treatment.
- 3.38 Effective partnership work between the DAT and other agencies is crucial.
- 3.39 An essential document for the DAT will be the local authority's Homelessness Strategy. The DAT will identify how to commission services from the Housing Department to ensure effective joint working. This will be through the development of protocols which meet the needs of this vulnerable group within the local community in accordance with Supporting People initiatives.
- 3.40 The effect of substance misuse on the young people in Barking and Dagenham, either directly or through the effects of substance misusing carers, is of particular concern. Occasionally families become homeless due to their difficulties. This can result in family fragmentation and children being accommodated with other carers, sometimes with traumatic consequences. It is at these times that all agencies working together is crucial.
- 3.41 The joint mapping of services for young people leaving local authority care is also crucial in order to support them during transitional periods as they move towards independent or supported accommodation and into adulthood.

Domestic Violence Strategy

- 3.42 Barking and Dagenham has adopted the London Domestic Violence Strategy (November 2001). This strategy sets out a vision for effectively dealing with domestic violence and details the specific steps necessary to achieve this.
- 3.43 The Strategy has four main aims:
- Helping women and children that experience domestic violence

- Dealing with and deterring abusers
 - Making sure that people and organisations understand that domestic violence is unacceptable
 - Ensuring that children and young people understand that domestic violence has no place in a caring relationship.
- 3.44 Many agencies have a part to play in providing effective interventions and promoting safety. It must be acknowledged that no single agency can do this alone. There is a need for careful co-operation and inter-agency working to ensure that a comprehensive package of care is provided which prioritises adult and child safety.
- 3.45 Refuges, originally established to provide crisis intervention support, are now more often providing short- to medium-term temporary housing. Ways to either increase this provision, or reduce demand by creating alternatives, must be found so that refuges are enabled to fulfil their purpose. There needs to be an increase in safe choices for women and children experiencing domestic violence so that they can plan safer futures without compromising their quality of life.
- 3.46 This multi-agency partnership must ensure that policy and practice enable women experiencing domestic violence, including women without children, to make choices about their housing. These choices must include a range of measures that are available to support women who choose to stay in their own home without the abuser. Alternatively the quality and choice of temporary accommodation should be improved to include play provision for children, outreach services and adequate security measures.

Regional Context

The Greater London Authority

- 3.47 At an early stage in its existence, the Mayor of the Greater London Authority (GLA) set up a Housing Commission to inquire into London's needs for affordable homes. The Housing Commission's report "Homes for a World City", published in November 2000, concludes that on the basis of the evidence presented, London requires an additional 43,000 homes a year for the next ten years; more than twice the number of homes currently being built in the city.
- 3.48 15,000 of these need to be affordable housing to meet the needs of people on low and moderate incomes who are not able to pay the market costs of housing in the capital. An estimated 2,000 per year more are needed to replace homes lost through the right to buy. In addition, a further 11,000 homes a year are needed to eliminate the current backlog of unmet need over the next ten years. This is identified in the report as being particularly important to meet the needs of homeless families in

- temporary accommodation, homeless single people, concealed single parents and couples who lack their own accommodation. London therefore needs 28,000 affordable homes a year; a significant challenge.
- 3.49 The Commission identified 18 principal areas for action to meet the shortfall in housing, including the provision of:
- advice services: the Commission recommended that the GLA in collaboration with the Association of London Government (ALG) should undertake a survey of the availability of housing advice in London and make proposals for improved services
 - temporary housing for homeless families: the Commission recommended that the Mayor and the GLA should support the proposals made by the main London housing agencies to tackle the temporary accommodation crisis in London and advocate their adoption by the Government. The Commission also recommended that the London Housing Strategy should set a clear objective and targets to phase out the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels as temporary accommodation.
- 3.50 The Commission's report contributed to the development of the draft Spatial Development Strategy for London and will inform a Housing Strategy for London.
- 3.51 The GLA publishes regular bulletins on homelessness in London. The May and June 2002 bulletin identified that:
- during 2001/02 31,130 households were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need by London boroughs, a 5 per cent increase on the previous year
 - the main reason for the loss of previous accommodation among homeless households was the breakdown of relationships with a partner, other relative or friend
 - there were more than 54,000 households in temporary accommodation; an increase of 7 per cent over 12 months
 - the number of households living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation was 8,600.
- 3.52 Although a housing strategy for London has yet to be formally published, the GLA has developed a rough sleepers strategy. "From Street to Stability ... The Mayor's Rough Sleepers Strategy" was published in March 2001, setting out a programme of action for the GLA in four main areas:

- empowering individuals to make the choice to come off the street by improving their access to the democratic process
- improving the delivery of core services that tackle the individual's immediate problems through a Rough Sleepers Charter which commits statutory providers to best practice
- improving the provision of information to enable better access to the full range of services
- ensuring that there is a stable environment once off the streets, by increasing the supply of move-on accommodation and the effectiveness of occupation programmes.

3.53 The GLA has also developed two strategies on the prevention of, and response to, homelessness:

- The London Domestic Violence Strategy
- Alcohol and Drugs in London: the Mayor's policy and action plan to reduce the harm resulting from alcohol and drug use in the capital.

The Communities Plan

3.54 The Communities Plan, launched in February 2003, contains significant proposals for responding to the growth of London. The plan notes that in order to meet the challenge of growth and alleviating poverty and deprivation, more, better-designed and affordable homes are needed, including homes for key workers. The housing challenge is defined as:

- achieving the levels of building required by the Regional Planning Guidance
- tackling homelessness
- ensuring decent homes for all.

3.55 The action plan for London includes accelerating the development of new communities in the four growth areas of Thames Gateway; Milton Keynes-South Midlands; Ashford; and London-Stansted, Cambridge. The plan notes that London and these growth areas have the potential to accommodate an additional 200,000 homes above levels currently planned. Of particular significance to Barking and Dagenham are the Thames Gateway proposals which involve the investment of £446m in land assembly, site preparation, affordable and key worker housing, neighbourhood renewal and urban renaissance.

3.56 A London Housing Board has been established to ensure the delivery of the London part of the Communities Plan, while a new single housing pot for housing capital resources will be established. An Affordable Housing

Team is being set up in the Government Office of London to work with local authorities and the principal London agencies to help all areas provide more housing. The National government is also to work with London boroughs and others to ensure the development of effective homelessness strategies across London.

- 3.57 The implementation of the Communities Plan therefore brings into being a range of new agencies with which Barking and Dagenham will need to liaise with respect to its homelessness and wider housing strategies. We are taking the lead in producing a housing strategy for London Thames Gateway and working with our neighbours in the London Housing Partnership East Group to develop a sub-regional investment plan for new affordable homes.

Inter-borough and Inter-authority initiatives

- 3.58 The London Alliance of the West and North (LAWN) project is encouraging landlords in areas of low local demand to offer homes to families choosing to move away from high demand neighbourhoods in London and the South East. The scheme offers movers some continuing support, as well as linking them with employment opportunities in the area. This provides choice for some households in need and/or experiencing homelessness, although it is acknowledged that it is difficult to persuade people to move to areas of low employment. The Council has held discussions with LAWN to discuss working together. We are also participating with our Choices Consortium partners in a number of initiatives to encourage out of London mobility. This has included an event for residents/tenants attended by local housing authorities across Northern England and some Scottish districts.
- 3.59 The ALG has produced a protocol on Private Sector Leasing. Barking and Dagenham, based on historic patterns of demand that no longer exist, is placed in the high supply/low demand category. This grouping has created significant problems as other boroughs use our local supply for their homeless people. To tackle this problem the Council is trying to get bilateral agreements with these boroughs whereby they will not place families with the highest care needs in the Borough, they will provide regular support, and will share experience and procurement expertise. To date a successful agreement has been reached with the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

4 EXTENT, NATURE AND CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

- 4.1 All councils in England are now required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area. An initial assessment was made in November 2002, with an update in April 2003. The statistical evidence is published separately, along with the review of service providers and user views. This section summarises the main findings, analysis and pointers for future action.

Review of Homelessness in the Borough

- 4.2 Over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the numbers approaching the authority for assistance, and in the numbers of households judged to be non-priority, intentionally homeless, or not homeless. Overall, decisions were made in 1441 cases in 2002/3 compared to 1070 in 2001/2. Of these 595 households were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need compared to 346 in 2001/2. The increase last year is likely to have been caused by changes in the definition of priority need.
- 4.3 However, while the numbers of people approaching Barking and Dagenham for assistance has increased, the authority receives a relatively low rate of applications for assistance per thousand households compared with other authorities (the peer group selected for comparison consisted of local authorities with similar levels of deprivation as well as local authorities with relatively low rates of homelessness).
- 4.4 Households of African and Caribbean ethnic background are disproportionately represented among those accepted for assistance. This means that we have to ensure that our homelessness service is sensitive to the cultural and social needs of applicants, and that temporary and permanent housing provision includes a suitable range of accommodation types to meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. We will be examining the causes of homelessness in more detail.
- 4.5 In response to the increase in homeless acceptances, the authority has raised the proportion of new lettings to homeless people. However, this may have a knock-on effect on the waiting list (Housing Register) and the transfer list. As the prospect of securing social housing reduces, people may be unable to sustain insecure accommodation resulting in increased homelessness. Although the total supply of new lettings has fluctuated over the past four years, the overall trend is one of declining availability.
- 4.6 As the incidence of homelessness in the Borough has increased, the local authority's use of temporary accommodation has also increased steadily. Historically we made very limited use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The number of households placed in B&B at any one

time has risen, although the scale of use is still modest in comparison with some other local authorities. Last year, greater use was made of Council stock to provide temporary accommodation, thus reducing dependence on more expensive forms of temporary provision. We have also increased our use of Private Sector Leasing (PSL), although this is limited by the fact that other Boroughs are also using PSL accommodation in Barking and Dagenham. We shall meet the government target of no families with children in B&B by 2004, except in an emergency.

- 4.7 We have noted an upward trend in the proportion of people who have been made homeless because they have been forced to leave from the homes of friends or relatives, and because they have left privately rented or tied accommodation.
- 4.8 We have also noted that vulnerable young people form a higher proportion of acceptances than our peer group authorities.

Summary of Analysis and Pointers for Action

- 4.9 The analysis of the extent, causes and nature of homelessness in the Borough points to the following:
- The scale of homelessness continues to increase, with priority-need acceptances 58% higher at the end of March 2003 than they were a year previously. The anticipated increase in pressure from those now eligible as a result of changes to the Priority Need Order has materialised
 - Despite some fluctuations there has been an overall rise in applications from non-priority groups in the last two years. The extent and causes of homelessness amongst non-priority households needs further investigation, which may result in the need to review and revise the type of advice and assistance provided and review definitions
 - Households of African and Caribbean ethnic background are disproportionately represented among those becoming homeless in the Borough and their needs require specific consideration, both in prevention and resettlement. More generally, we need to ensure that services are sensitive to the cultural requirements of the diverse communities approaching the Borough for assistance. Consultation with representatives of BME communities needs to be central to the development and review of services
 - Racial harassment as a potential cause of homelessness needs to be tackled
 - A need to review the proportion of lettings to homeless households

- Vulnerable young people form a higher proportion of acceptances than in our peer group authorities
- Homeless at Home approaches, particularly to tackle the problem of households being forced to leave the home of family and friends, should be further considered.
- Strategies to maintain tenancies in the private sector need to be developed, including finding alternative accommodation, and examining the role of housing benefit
- Preventative action to maintain tenancies in the social housing sector should be further considered, to prevent the small number of homeless cases that are arising in this sector as a consequence of rent arrears, and which may also be arising where households are vulnerable and require additional support
- The need to learn from the strategies of other authorities in increasing the supply of temporary accommodation and preventing homelessness.

5 MEETING NEEDS: SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANS

- 5.1 In this chapter we set out current service developments and plans for the future. These are based on our assessment of current service provision, and user views, which are described in the review of homelessness.
- 5.2 Services to prevent homelessness and support people when they become homeless are undergoing substantial change within the Borough as a result of the drop in the supply of affordable accommodation and the increase in the number of presentations. Current service developments, and ways in which the Council is working with partners, are outlined below.

Current Service Developments

Preventative Services

- 5.3 New services and support to prevent homelessness are being developed through:
- Discussions with Connexions (East London) concerning the positive targeting of young single people for additional assistance
 - Discussions with Connexions and Relate about family mediation services, including referrals to Relate for family mediation
 - Engaging with East-Street, Young Peoples' Project, and Axe Street, Drug Support Project, to develop advice services to people using these agencies
 - Setting up a private sector landlords' forum
 - The production of a Services Directory as part of this strategy
 - Money advice from the CAB in six schools
 - Money advice from the Benefits Agency
 - The establishment of the Accommodation Resettlement Unit.
- 5.4 We are aware that the implementation of our policies, and those of RSLs, by evicting tenants for rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, may be a contributing factor to homelessness presentations. We also know that there is a need to extend money/debt advice services within the Borough, including setting up a lay advice desk at Romford County Court to deal with rent arrears.
- 5.5 We intend to be more effective in preventing the loss of privately rented accommodation. We have established a private sector landlords' forum. Our Housing Benefit section is maximising the use of exceptional payments to help clients obtain and maintain privately rented accommodation.

Assessment and Resettlement Services

5.6 New services, support and types of accommodation in development include:

- The development of a joint working relationship with the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for the procurement of Private Sector Leased (PSL) properties, benefiting from their experience in this field
- Procurement of PSL units, increasing from 50 to 100 places
- Building two RSL managed hostels to provide 71 units of accommodation, which we anticipate will eradicate the need to use B&B for any client group, except those in emergency need
- B&B unit funding for the ARU to employ a temporary officer to administer B&B unit funded schemes aimed at reducing reliance on B&B for families. The £68k funding is for the use of Relate's family mediation services and scheme administration
- Discussions between the Homeless Manager and Connexions as part of developing services for young people
- Development of a 116-unit Foyer for young people with our RSL partner, Network East Foyers.

Joint Working and Service Delivery

5.7 New services, support and types of accommodation in development include:

- Development of Connexions services for young people
- Integrating health and social care services
- Developing pre-release programmes and accommodation services for ex-offenders
- Consulting with RSLs and private sector landlords about reasons for tenancy loss
- Working with the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to develop protocols for PSL
- Building two new hostels, to be managed by RSLs
- Building a new women's refuge
- Development of a private sector landlord's accreditation scheme

Plans for the Future

5.8 In this section we summarise ideas for future developments. Subject to further consultation on the review of homelessness, we have the following aspirations for the strategy:

- Homelessness should become a high priority on the LSP agenda
- People, especially single people, should be able to stay within their local communities
- Services should be tailored to specific support needs
- There should be more emphasis on the prevention of homelessness
- There should be greater use and involvement of the private and voluntary sectors
- User views, ascertained through regular consultation, should influence future service development
- Agencies should improve joint working and share information and understanding

5.9 Our plans, for consultation, are shown below:

Plans for the Future: Advice Service

We propose to:

Increase the number of homelessness cases prevented by the Council's Housing Advice service

Make available advice to specific groups of homeless people, e.g. young people, through Connexions, East Street and Axe Street

Offer mediation services through Relate to prevent relationship breakdown between young people and their families

Work with BME community leaders to understand and tackle the causes of the disproportionate level of BME homelessness, including that caused by racial harassment

Monitor homelessness statistics to evaluate changes in numbers and causes of homelessness, including non-priority homeless cases

Establish a database to identify repeat homelessness and monitor its causes so as to reduce its incidence

Reduce levels of homelessness by main causes, especially the number of households who are forced to leave by friends or relatives

Reduce levels of homelessness caused through evictions for rent arrears

Make available in more public places and via the web the Homeless Persons' self-help pack and the recently published services directory

Develop tenancy support and money advice services to tenants and young people.

Plans for the Future: Assessment and Resettlement

We plan to:

Eliminate the need for B&B, except in an emergency

Increase PSL units from 50 to 100

Assess whether there are inappropriate uses of temporary accommodation
Assess the standards of temporary accommodation and implement service standards with landlords. Publish service and accommodation standards

Provide temporary and permanent accommodation which meets the needs of BME communities and persons with specific needs

Minimise/eliminate the sharing of accommodation by groups with conflicting needs (e.g. young persons/people with substance abuse problems)

Monitor and reduce the length of time which people remain in temporary accommodation

Review the potential for introducing Homeless at Home policies

Keep under review nominations to RSLs and permanent lettings, and adjust as appropriate the proportion of lettings to homeless households

Increase supply of affordable housing, 390 new affordable homes per year from 2003-6, to implement the ADP/ LASHG investment programmes

Increase opportunities in the private rented sector by 0.5% each year

Bring back 10% empty private homes into use per year

Consider the introduction of a rent deposit scheme.

Plans for the Future: Joint Working

Develop protocols between agencies which specify service standards and expectations, making these available to users

Develop a joint housing and social services protocol for support to people in temporary accommodation

Develop preventative and support health services for homeless people

Develop cross-borough partnerships (LAWN etc)

Commission a further Housing Needs survey in 2003/04.

Produce a BME housing strategy in 2003, to link with the needs of black and minority ethnic communities.

Establish links with the Joint Commissioning Boards (JCB) i.e. Older People JCB, Physical and Sensory Disabilities Services JCB, Learning Disabilities JCB, Supporting People Commissioning Group.

Develop a comprehensive user involvement framework and regularly survey users

Monitor service standards across all agencies

Develop joint training

Review gaps in service provision for specific groups and establish ways in which they can be bridged

6 MEETING FUTURE NEEDS – THE ACTION PLAN

Development Objectives

6.1 This section summarises our plans. The major objectives of the strategy are outlined below with the outcomes/targets associated with meeting those objectives

1.To prevent homelessness

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
Reduce levels of homelessness by main causes	To establish a clear picture of homeless numbers and needs, in order to monitor homelessness statistics and to evaluate changes in numbers and causes of homelessness.	To set up a new IT system to accurately record information on rough sleepers and numbers prevented from becoming homeless. To research reasons for repeat homelessness.	Provide accurate data on homelessness.	Homeless Persons Unit
	To increase the number of homelessness cases prevented by the Council's Housing Advice service	Develop transferable packages of information on clients (multi-agency information sharing for tenancy support).	Reduce the numbers made homeless as a result of failed tenancy.	Advice Service
	Audit regularly the extent of homelessness. Research hidden homelessness.	Housing needs survey in 2004.		Housing Strategy, Advice Service

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
Identified Priorities	To achieve a target of 6% of overall rent roll whose rent arrears are more than 13 weeks.	<p>Improve efficiency of the housing benefit administration.</p> <p>Introduce a policy for rent recovery.</p>	Reduction in the numbers made homeless as a result of eviction from council properties.	Housing Benefit
Reduction in the number of households living with friends or relatives who are forced to leave.	10% reduction in the numbers made homeless who are forced to leave by parents or relatives.	Develop housing advice skills including staff training and inter-agency working.		Advice Service
		Ongoing housing needs and advice reception service survey.		Advice Service
		Deliver parenting programme through the family service.		Social Services
		Extend Mediation Service		Advice Service
		Engage fully with "Connexions" service.		Advice Service
		Specific advice to specific groups of homeless people through East Street and Axe Street projects.		Advice Service
		Continue the delivery of community-based support service.		Advice Service
		Develop schools and youth-based prevention work.		Advice Service

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
		To deliver the Sure Start action plan in Thamesview, Marks Gate and Abbey wards and develop a programme in Gascoigne ward by 2004.		Social Services Sure Start
		Implement the teenage pregnancy strategy.		Social Services Lead person: Teenage pregnancy policy co-ordinator.
		Capacity building in the voluntary and independent sector to support young parents.		Social Services
		Develop new programmes as appropriate at the family centres in the Borough.		Social Services
Reduction in the number of people who become homeless as a result of relationship breakdown (violent & non-violent relationship breakdown).	To reduce 'third incidence' of reported domestic violence. Third incidence refers to those cases where domestic violence has already been reported on two previous occasions.	Promote work through the established domestic violence forum.		Community Safety Equalities and Diversity Unit. Lead: Domestic violence policy coordinator.
		Improve working relationships with other agencies		Domestic violence policy coordinator
		Work in the Abbey and Gascoigne area to reduce the number of domestic violence incidents in the area.		Community Safety Equalities and Diversity Unit.

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
		Development of second stage women's refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence.		Housing Strategy
		Implement the crime and disorder strategy.		Community Safety Equalities and Diversity Unit
Reduction in the number of people who become homeless as a result of the loss of rented accommodation.	6% of overall rent roll whose rent arrears are more than 13 weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve efficiency of housing benefit administration. Develop tenancy support services. Floating support services: Six units for ex-offenders. Six units for teenage parents. Accommodation resettlement support for 70 people. Housing support for 150 people.	Early resolution/prevention of homelessness.	Housing Benefit Social Services (Supporting People team).
	Develop housing advice skills including staff training and inter-agency working.	Staff training		Advice Service
	To ensure that information and advice are accessible both to professionals and service users.	Continue the provision of advice and assistance on landlord issues through advertising.		Advice Service
		Establish landlord forum.		Housing Strategy- Private sector team
		Re-evaluation of resettlement officers.		Accommodation Resettlement Unit

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
		Employ two additional housing advisers to deal with associated problems.		Advice Service
		Future plan to develop counselling services, to adopt East London debt strategy.		Advice Service
Increase public awareness of information to prevent homelessness	To improve education work in schools and colleges and to ensure that young people are aware of the risk of homelessness. To increase the presence of housing advisers in schools. Advice service to make close links with day centres and community centres.	Better promotion of the homeless persons' self-help pack and service directory	More choice for potentially homeless persons and greater chance of early prevention of homelessness.	Advice Service
To tackle the causes of the disproportionate level of BME homelessness including that caused by racial harassment.	To develop a BME housing strategy by Feb. 2004.	Equalities impact assessments on all housing policies, functions and services. Community consultation. To review the effectiveness of the racist incident reporting system across the Council. Housing needs survey including BME needs.		Housing Strategy. Equalities and Diversity Unit.

2.To alleviate homelessness and prevent social exclusion.

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (and to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
To provide a high quality assessment service and appropriate accommodation and support for homeless households.	100% processing of all assessment within 33 days.	To train staff within the homeless unit on quality assessment.		Advice Service
		Employ temporary staff in the Homeless Persons Unit to assist with assessment.		Homeless Persons Unit
	To maintain a period of 4-6 weeks length of stay in temporary accommodation.	Increase the use of RSLs' properties.	Increased choice for homeless persons. Eliminating inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.	Accommodation Resettlement Unit
	To maintain published standards for temporary accommodation.	Landlord accreditation scheme		Advice Service Housing Strategy
	Increase supply of private sector leasing from 70 to 100 by Dec2003.	Publish service and accommodation standards.		Accommodation Resettlement Unit
		Improve liaison with Housing Standards on maintaining standards in the private sector.		Accommodation Resettlement Unit
		Benchmarking with other East London local authorities on rent level in the private sector.		Housing Strategy- Private Sector team

Objectives	Targets	Planned activity in 2003/4 (and to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
		To provide floating support to homeless households with specific support needs in temporary accommodation.		Supporting People team
	Maintain supply of Council's new lettings to homeless people at 40%.	Secure capital and revenue funding to develop 116 foyer units in Barking & Dagenham, linking long-term accommodation with training and support.		Housing Strategy. Allocations Section
		To develop 37 additional units of supported housing for people with special needs.		Housing Strategy
		Commission new services for those with complex needs.		Supporting People team

3.To maintain the current situation that there are no rough sleepers in the Borough and eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children, except in emergencies, and even then for no longer than six weeks.

Objective	Target	Planned activity in 2003/4(and to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation
To eliminate the use of bed and breakfast for families by 2004.	Increase supply of affordable housing. 390 new affordable homes per year from 2003-6.	Implement the Housing Corporation Approved development programme/ Local authority social housing grant investment programme.	Reduced pressure on temporary accommodation.	Housing Strategy
	Increase opportunities in the private rented sector by 0.5% each year.			Housing Strategy- Private Sector team
	Bring back 10% of empty private homes into use per year	Empty Property Strategy Officer's liaison with advice service.		Housing Strategy-Private Sector team
	Develop rent deposit scheme.	Research rent deposit scheme in Newham Council.		Homeless Persons Unit Accommodation Resettlement Unit.
	Increase private sector leasing from 70 to 100 by 2003.			Accommodation Resettlement Unit
	Increase the use of "Homeless at Home" scheme			Advice Service

4.To secure joint working and service delivery by relevant agencies.

Objective	Target	Planned activity in 2003/4(and to 2005/6)	Outcome	Lead organisation.
To secure joint working and to provide user or needs led service and support.	Develop the LAWN scheme.	Develop cross-borough partnerships.	Opportunities to share information on good practice.	Accommodation Resettlement Unit.
To improve the integration of services delivered at local level by Housing, Social Services, Primary Care Trust, RSLs, and private landlords.	Preferred partnering model in place by Dec 2003.	Establish links with the Joint Commissioning Board i.e. Learning Disabilities JCB, Physical and Sensory Disabilities JCB, Supporting People Commissioning Group, Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board.		Housing Strategy
	Commission Housing needs survey in 2003/04. Develop comprehensive user involvement framework and regularly survey users.	Commission the housing needs survey.	Provision of appropriate housing to meet needs. Matching needs with supply.	Housing Strategy Advice Service
To continuously improve service standards.	Review tendering agreement for the provision of temporary accommodation.	Monitor service standards across all agencies		Accommodation Resettlement Unit

7 RESOURCES FOR HOMELESSNESS

Bed and Breakfast

2001/ 02	£117,255
2002/03	£664,076 (£428,012 net of housing benefit)

Proposed Action to Reduce the Use of Bed and Breakfast:

Housing provision	Funding sources
Two new hostels (71 units)	Supporting people grant for revenue costs Capital funding (local authority social housing grant)
Private sector leasing of temporary accommodation	
Empty private homes (target: to bring into use 10% homes a year)	
116 foyer units for single homeless of 16-24 age group	Delivery of scheme dependent on a successful bid for local authority social housing grant and supporting people grant.

Preventative Services

Services	Funding sources
Accommodation Resettlement unit	ODPM homelessness directorate
Tenancy support services	Supporting people grant
Mediation services	ODPM homelessness directorate

8 DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Delivery Structures and Processes

- 8.1 The Housing Sub-group of the LSP will be the vehicle through which this strategy is co-ordinated and delivered. Alongside this partnership overview, the actions contained in this strategy will be incorporated in the Council's balanced scorecard process. This means that where actions are relevant to services, reference will be made to them in service scorecards.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 8.2 The Action Plan (section 6) describes how needs will be met. Performance in achieving the outputs and outcomes within the stated timescales will be monitored regularly via the Housing Sub-group and service scorecard monitoring. Individual service developments that are commissioned will be monitored in greater detail. Detailed service activity and performance data will also be recorded and reported.

Evaluating Strategy Processes

- 8.3 Reports on strategy progress will also cover the effectiveness of joint working arrangements such as the operation of protocols and joint training.

User Involvement

- 8.4 A user network will be developed to ensure that the user perspective informs both the development of the service and its evaluation.

Reporting/Accountability Structure and Timescales

- 8.5 The Housing Sub-group of the LSP will be responsible for producing six-monthly reports on action plan progress. These will cover:

- Progress in achieving outputs and outcomes outlined in the Action Plan
- Recent trends in homelessness based on statutory and locally developed performance indicators
- Progress in implementing joint working arrangements
- A summary of any relevant findings of locally or nationally commissioned research in the field, and outcomes of any recent user evaluation of service performance.

- 8.6 From this, the Housing Sub-group will produce an annual review of the Strategy by March each year in order to tie in with budgetary and other planning cycles.

- 8.7 In order to link with other relevant strategies and plans, the above six-monthly reports, annual reviews, and any relevant more detailed reports will be submitted to the relevant planning structures for information/comment.

Appendix 1 Strategy Working Group Members

Ken Jones	Interim Head of Housing Strategy	LBBB
Amanda Johnson	Supporting People Project Manager (left 31 March 2003)	LBBB
Annette Rauf	Domestic Violence Policy Co-ordinator	LBBB (left 31 March 2003)
Ayo Jones	Director	Ethnic Minorities Partnership Agency (EMPA)
Bernard Hannah	Commissioning Manager for Mental Health Service	SSD/PCT
Bob Barr	Social Inclusion Co-ordinator	Social Services and Primary Care Trust
Chris Evans	Manager	Dagenham CAB
Christianah George	Strategy Officer	LBBB
Dave Chapman	Manager	Axe Street Project
David Ward	Service Manager	LBBB Social Services
Doug Bannister	Principal Advice Manager	LBBB Housing
Hilary Coolican	Resettlement Officer	London Probation Service (Romford)
Isabel Williams	Family Support Manager	LBBB Social Services
Karen Wiltshire	Supporting People Project Officer (now Acting Supporting People Manager)	LBBB
Lourdes Keever	London Probation Area Partnership Manager	
Naomi Goldberg	Head of Policy & Performance	LBBB
Natasha Brown	East Street	
Sharon Dodd	Manager	Connexions
Terrie Handley	Acting Manager Homeless Persons Unit	LBBB
Tony Draper	Head of Housing	LBBB
Wendy Ahmun	Project Manager Housing Strategy	LBBB

Appendix 2 Consultation

The following organisations/individuals were invited to participate in the initial consultation:

Axe Street Project
Anchor Trust
Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust
Blackwater Housing Association Ethnic Minorities Partnership Agency (EMPA)
Community Housing Manager, Housing and Health, LBBD
Connexions
Councillor Bryan Osborn
Councillor Sidney Kallar
Councillor Matthew Huggins
Councillor Mrs. Val Rush
Dagenham CAB
Domestic Violence Policy Co-ordinator, LBBD
East Street
East Thames Housing Group
Estuary Housing Association
Hanover Housing Association
Leaving Care Team, LBBD
London Probation Service
London & Quadrant Housing Trust
Peabody Trust
Principal Advice Manager – Housing, LBBD
Romford YMCA
Social Services Department, LBBD
Springboard Housing Association
Stort Valley Housing Association Look Ahead Housing & Care
Southern Housing Group
Supporting People Project Officer, LBBD
Swan Housing Association
The Vineries Women's Project

Appendix 3

National policy context, good practice guidance and other related policy initiatives

National Context

At a national level, preventing and tackling homelessness is part of a broader government agenda of dealing with social exclusion. More specifically, the government is promoting a change in the approach to homelessness – away from reacting to homelessness as it occurs to preventing homelessness wherever possible. “More than a Roof”, published in March 2002, sets out the government’s approach, building on policies set out in the Green Paper “Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All”, “Supporting People, Policy into Practice”, and the Rough Sleepers Unit Strategy, “Coming in from the Cold”. Its main themes are:

- strengthening help to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- developing more strategic approaches to tackling homelessness
- encouraging new responses to tackling homelessness
- reducing the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels for homeless families with children
- sustaining the two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping
- ensuring the opportunity of a decent home for all.

“Coming in from the Cold”, the Government’s Strategy on Rough Sleeping, includes eight main proposals:

- increasing the number of bedspaces available for rough sleepers in London
- developing a more focused, targeted approach to street work
- providing services when rough sleepers need them most
- helping those in most need, such as those with mental health problems and those who misuse drugs and/or alcohol
- ensuring a continuum of care from the streets to a settled lifestyle
- providing opportunities for meaningful occupation
- improving the incentives for people to move away from a street lifestyle
- putting in place measures to prevent rough sleeping.

Homelessness Legislation and Policy Initiatives

The current legislative framework for homelessness is set out in the 1996 Housing Act and the Homelessness Act 2002. The homelessness provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 came into force in July 2002 and include:

- the requirement for local authorities to carry out reviews of homelessness and to prepare homelessness strategies based on the reviews, and revise the strategies at least once every five years
- the requirement for local authorities to provide a greater level of advice and assistance for applicants not owed housing duty
- the repeal of the two-year duty to be replaced by an indefinite duty to applicants owed the full housing duty
- a power to secure accommodation for non-priority applicants
- a new duty of co-operation between housing and social services
- changes in the detail of reviews and appeals procedures.

New secondary legislation was also introduced during 2002. The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation (England) Order) 2002 came into force on 31 July 2002. It extends the priority need groups to include 16- and 17- year olds, care leavers aged 18-21, people vulnerable due to violence or threats of violence, and people vulnerable from having an institutionalised background (former prisoners and armed services personnel).

A revised Code of Guidance on Homelessness was issued for consultation in July 2002. It builds on existing guidance, but includes significant changes in:

- Chapter 1, which deals with the new duty to have a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness in the district
- Chapter 8, which deals with the priority need groups, including those introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002 (Commencement No. 1) (England) Order 2002
- Chapter 9, which includes guidance on the strengthened duties of advice and assistance owed to certain applicants
- Chapter 10, which deals with the new duty of co-operation when dealing with families with children which are intentionally homeless or ineligible for assistance
- Chapter 14, which deals with powers to accommodate
- Annexe 7, which deals with joint working.

The Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation, in force from 31 January 2003, refers to how applicants are to be offered a choice of

accommodation while still giving reasonable preference to those in most urgent housing need.

Alongside these significant legislative changes, there are a number of national initiatives on homelessness that local authorities are expected to implement. These include:

- ensuring that, by 2004, no families with children are living in bed and breakfast accommodation, except in an emergency. In December 2002, the government announced that new secondary legislation will be brought forward to ensure that this target is attained
- ensuring the health care of young babies and children in temporary accommodation by notifying Primary Care Trusts of placements of families with babies/young children in temporary accommodation. Housing authorities need to agree procedures with the Primary Care Trusts and implement robust systems to make sure such notifications are made in consistent and reliable ways.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and other government departments have produced a range of guidance to support the implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002 and associated initiatives, as well as to assist more generally with the prevention of homelessness. These publications include:

- a) “Homelessness Strategies: a Good Practice Handbook”. This was produced following research into how local authorities can adopt a strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. It sets out guidance on:
 - developing a homelessness strategy – creating the strategy, successful joint working, and mapping needs and resources
 - homelessness services – preventing homelessness, specialist services for particular groups, (including homeless families, young people, older people, asylum seekers and refugees, rough sleepers, people leaving prison and other institutions), and homelessness services provided by other agencies
 - accommodation provision – temporary accommodation, permanent social housing, supported housing, and private sector housing
- b) “Preventing Tomorrow’s Rough Sleepers: A Good Practice Guide” was produced by the Rough Sleepers Unit as a practical way of assisting local authorities and other key agencies in preventing homelessness. The handbook includes advice on:

- identifying people at risk of homelessness – risk assessment, preventing tenancy breakdown, effective tenancy sustainment
 - clear pathways for people entering and leaving institutions – hospitals, care, prisons, the armed forces
 - preventing rough sleeping – quick turnaround of services when coming across rough sleepers, focusing homelessness services on prevention
 - effective homelessness prevention strategies – strategies for young people and opportunities presented by future policy developments
- c) “Drugs Services for Homeless People: Good Practice Handbook” aims to help Drug Action Teams and partner agencies plan and develop more effective services for homeless drug misusers. It includes specific guidance on planning a joint drug and homelessness strategy and partnership working to meet the accommodation needs of homeless drug misusers.

“Care Leaving Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook” covers the principal elements to be considered by local authorities when developing integrated strategies to meet the housing and support needs of young people leaving care, including providing an appropriate range of accommodation.

“Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness”, ODPM, offers new target outcomes for Councils in 2003 and sets out the outcomes and actions achieved by “beacon councils” under their excellence assessment framework.

The Homelessness Directorate of the ODPM has also allocated resources to help local authorities develop new schemes to tackle homelessness. £125 million is being spent during 2002/03 on projects such as mediation services for family and couples in relationship difficulties, additional support for women fleeing domestic violence, rent deposit guarantee schemes to help homeless people find housing in the private sector, court and landlord advice services to reduce evictions, and debt and welfare counselling to help people sustain their tenancies. The Directorate has a budget of £260m to allocate over the next three years.

- f) “Homelessness: Responding to the New Agenda”, published by the Audit Commission in January 2003, draws on Best Value inspections, audit activity and research. It contains a range of recommendations on:
- maximising the prevention of homelessness
 - effective and holistic advice services
 - improving homelessness assessment and decision-making

- improving standards and reducing the cost of temporary accommodation
- longer-term measures to minimise homelessness
- improving inter-agency working

Other Good Practice Guidance

“Homelessness Strategies and Good Practice”, produced by the Association of London Government, highlights some of the good practice developed by London boroughs to meet the needs of homeless households. The briefing considers the following themes:

- preventing homelessness
- access to other housing options
- increasing the supply of affordable accommodation/making best use of the existing stock
- increasing the provision of temporary accommodation
- supporting people in temporary accommodation
- supporting vulnerable people
- cross-borough co-operation, liaison and consultation
- new initiatives

“Tackling Homelessness: A Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities”, (2003) published by the London Borough of Harrow, a beacon authority for homelessness, describes a number of practical initiatives that ‘may help local authorities manage increasing demand from the homeless’. The guide focuses on four main areas: the assessment and administration of homelessness; providing a range of solutions for applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness; effective measures to prevent homelessness; and increasing the supply of permanent housing and suitable temporary accommodation.

Specific measures/initiatives advocated in the guide include:

- looking at baseline figures for an authority and setting a target for homeless acceptances per thousand households
- examining the recruitment, retention and training of homelessness staff
- reviewing the approach to assessing homelessness presentations triggered by parental, relative and friend exclusions to include home visits, a focus on mediation, and alternative housing options
- providing a housing options package for people approaching the authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness (the Harrow Options Model is set out in detail – this includes LAWN, assistance with private renting, and shared ownership options)
- increased focus on the prevention of homelessness to include:
 - family mediation
 - assertive outreach work to prevent eviction from private and public sector tenancies

- establishing early warning protocols where applicants are referred for prevention work at an agreed stage in the arrears recovery process
- improved security measures for cases involving domestic violence
- tackling housing benefit problems.

The NACAB report, “Possession Action – The Last Resort?”, published in February 2003, notes that ‘one of the most important changes is the shift in emphasis enshrined in the Homelessness Act 2002, which places prevention at the heart of homelessness strategies and therefore has direct implications for how landlords should recover arrears’.

The report sets out recommendations which focus on the need for a change in approach by some social landlords towards the recovery of rent arrears, including the drawing up at a national level of a joint statement of practice on preventing and recovering rent arrears to which all social landlords should subscribe.

The Shelter report “Housekeeping: Preventing Homelessness through Tackling Rent Arrears in Social Housing”, (2003) notes that current approaches to managing rent arrears in social housing cause homelessness and argues in favour of new ways of tackling arrears to avoid court proceedings. The report concludes that the structure and administration of the housing benefit system is the main cause of rent arrears. Recommendations include:

- that the Government should fund independent arrears resolution services
- that local authorities should identify homelessness due to rent arrears that result from their own policies and those of housing associations and identify ways of reducing the resultant homelessness
- that social landlords should seek possession through the courts as a last resort.

Other Legislation and Policy Initiatives

Supporting People Programme

The intent of this initiative is to:

- make public services more responsive to consumers
- improve co-ordination among organisations and functions involved in planning and delivering services
- increase service effectiveness and efficiency
- focus provision on local need

The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme (THBS) was introduced in April 2000 to identify Housing Support services funded through Housing Benefit and aims to quantify their costs. The THBS also provides an opportunity for the development and introduction of new housing support services for vulnerable people.

Since April 2003 THBS has been replaced by funding through the Supporting People Grant.

Children Act 1989

Local authorities in England have certain duties under the Children Act 1989 to assist homeless children including:

- a duty on social services authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need and, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families
- a duty to provide accommodation for any child in need in their area who appears to them to require accommodation

a duty to provide accommodation for any child within their area who has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare the authority considers is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide accommodation. Housing authorities are under a duty to assist social services authorities to provide accommodation in these circumstances, provided that compliance with the request is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions.

Children Leaving Care Act 2000

This Act makes provision for children and young people who are being, or have been, looked after by a local authority. It sets out duties in relation to:

- 16- and 17-year olds who have been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period which ended after they became 16 (eligible children)
- 16- and 17-year olds who are not currently being looked after, but were eligible children before ceasing to be looked after (relevant children)
- young people up to the age of 21, (or older if the pathway plan goes beyond 21), who have been relevant children, were being looked after when they became 18, and who were eligible children before ceasing to be looked after (former relevant children)

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

This Act removes homelessness help and entitlement from all people subject to immigration control (people who require leave to enter or remain in the UK) unless help and entitlement is specified in an order made by the Secretary of State.

Data Protection Act 1998

The Data Protection Act 1998 came into force on the 1st March 2000. It repealed the Data Protection Act 1984 and the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. Along with the Housing Act 1996, it gives homeless applicants certain statutory rights to see and check information which the local authority holds about their housing application.

Reducing Re-offending

The Social Exclusion Unit's report "Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners" makes specific recommendations on meeting the housing needs of newly released prisoners and in particular advocates:

- increasing the discharge grant
- giving resettlement departments within prisons the ability to secure emergency housing for prisoners who would otherwise be homeless on release
- the case for enabling more prisoners to retain their housing by settling unavoidable arrears on their behalf.

Appendix 4 Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
ADP	Approved Development Programme
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
Best Value	The duty of continuous improvement for local authorities as set by the Local Government Act 1999 and monitored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
LASHG	Local Authority Social Housing Grant
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCT	Primary Care Trust

Term	Definition
Priority Need	<p>Extensions to the homelessness priority need categories came into force on 31st July 2002 through the Homelessness Act 2002.</p> <p>Prior to the new regulations priority need for accommodation was broadly restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ someone who is pregnant; ➤ people with dependent children; ➤ people who are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reason; ➤ people who are homeless as a result of a disaster, such as flood or fire. <p>Priority need also includes any persons with whom people described above live or might reasonably be expected to live.</p> <p>1.1.1 New priority need categories</p> <p>The priority need categories have been extended to include the following groups of people who become homeless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 16- and 17-year olds - excluding 'relevant children' under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and 'children in need' who are owed a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989; ➤ care-leavers aged 18, 19 or 20 years who were looked after, accommodated or fostered when aged 16 or 17, and who are not 'relevant students'; ➤ people aged 21 or over who are vulnerable as a result of being looked after, accommodated or fostered by the local authority, and who are not 'relevant students'; ➤ people who are vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence (or threats of violence); ➤ people who are vulnerable as a result of spending time in the armed forces or having been in prison or remanded in custody. <p>Priority need is automatic for the first two of these groups. For the others, priority need will be determined for each individual case employing the test of 'vulnerability' according to the definition established by case law and the code of guidance.</p>
PSL	Private sector leasing of properties owned by private landlords or RSLs
RSL	Registered Social Landlord

Term	Definition
Service scorecard	An approach to balancing priorities and resources