

**London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**

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

**June 2003**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1 Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Vision and Purpose.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 Local and Regional Context .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4 Extent, Nature and Causes of Homelessness .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5 Meeting Needs: Service Provision and Plans .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6 Meeting Future Needs – the Action Plan .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>7 Resources for Homelessness .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>8 Delivering the Strategy .....</b>	<b>58</b>

**Glossary of Terms** (*to be added later*)

**Appendices**

## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*To be added to final strategy*

## **2 VISION AND PURPOSE – STATEMENT BY LEADER / CLLR OSBORN**

### **Background**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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**

- 2.5 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.

2.6 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).

2.7 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.

2.8 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.

2.9 The strategy has been adopted by the Council through the following corporate processes:

- Report to the Executive on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2002, which started the process.
- Report to the Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

2.10 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.

2.11 To contribute to future reviews of the Homelessness Strategy please contact us by:

- email at xx
- phone on xx
- writing to xx
- our web-site: xx.

## **Our Vision**

- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 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**

- 2.15 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
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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**

- 2.18 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.

2.19 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**

- 2.20 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 2. 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.
- 3.3 The 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. In this section of the strategy we describe the findings of the review carried out in Barking and Dagenham. The initial assessment was made in November 2002, with an update in April 2003.
- 4.2 The review sets out recent trends in the scale and nature of homelessness in the Borough. It also compares the position in Barking and Dagenham with its peers. In analysing the findings we identify the issues and problems that we need to tackle.

### **Comparing Barking and Dagenham's Performance**

- 4.3 It is important to understand how we compare with other organisations, both in terms of the scale and nature of homelessness, and the authority's performance in tackling the problem. It is helpful to compare our performance with a selection of peer group authorities, rather than simply to rely on the average performance of all London authorities. A summary of the most important indicators for peer group authorities is provided in Figure 1.
- 4.4 The selection of peer group authorities for Barking and Dagenham is not straightforward. The Borough is unusual in that it is located on the outer London fringe, but experiences much higher deprivation levels than other outer London authorities (it is the seventh most deprived London borough). However, despite some similarities with deprived inner London authorities, our characteristics differ markedly in other respects. In terms of homelessness, the number of households accepted as homeless is lower than the average for both inner and outer London (measured as a proportion of all households in the borough), although it is comparable with Redbridge and Bexley. Similarly, a lower proportion of lettings have been allocated to homeless households than in peer group authorities, although this position is changing<sup>1</sup>. The authority also has the lowest average house prices in London.
- 4.5 No other authority has a similar profile. This influences the way we approach homelessness in the Borough. Also, the characteristics of the Borough's housing markets are set to change with the growth of London through the Thames Gateway plans.

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<sup>1</sup> See section 4.7 below, which discusses the Borough's growing homelessness problem.

Figure 1

Authority	Population (2001 Census)* (000s)	% population in BME groups	Homeless acceptances per 1000 households 2001/02**	% new lettings to homeless 2001/02***	Private homes as % all housing*** Apr 02	Index of deprivation – ave of ward ranks 2000*	Ave house price* 2001 (£)
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	164	14.8	5.6	33	64	24	94,000
Bexley	218	8.6	5.0	-	85	237	126,000
Greenwich	214	22.9	13.2	61	59	48	147,000
Havering	224	4.8	#	38	85	233	130,000
Lewisham	249	34.1	10.1	59	66	30	135,000
Newham	244	60.6	15.9	83	66	3	115,000
Redbridge	239	36.5	4.7	43	91	154	154,000
Waltham Forest	218	35.5	11.9	86	76	53	124,000

Source: \*ONS Neighbourhood Statistics (including Census 2001); \*\*ODPM Statistical Release; \*\*\*ODPM HIP 2002.

### The Scale of Homelessness in the Borough: Recent Trends

- 4.6 The scale of homelessness has increased steadily in Barking and Dagenham in recent years, reflecting the regional trend.

Figure 2

Homelessness Priority Acceptances 1999 – 2003	
Year	Number of acceptances*
<b>1999/00</b>	230
<b>2000/01</b>	234
<b>2001/02</b>	346
<b>2002/03</b>	595

Source: All data except 2001/02 and 2002/3 from HIP 2001. 2001/02 data from ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness 2002/03 data from P1E returns

- 4.7 The following table sets out the authority's quarterly returns for all homelessness applications over the last two years, and shows both the numbers approaching the authority for assistance, and the numbers of households judged to be non-priority, intentionally homeless, or not homeless. There has been a significant increase in the numbers approaching the Council for help and, in the last financial year, a larger proportion of households were accepted for help than in the previous year. Last year's changes in the

definition of priority need are likely to have contributed to the rising numbers of acceptances since July 2002, and to the reduction in the proportion of households judged to be non-priority under the revised legislation.

**Figure 3**

<b>Homelessness Decisions – 2001/02 and 2002/3, by quarter</b>									
	<b>Accepted as priority</b>		<b>Intentionally homeless</b>		<b>Non-priority</b>		<b>Not homeless</b>		<b>Total decisions</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>
Apr-Jun 2001	38	62%	7	11%	9	15%	7	11%	61
Jul-Sep 2001	72	79%	2	2%	3	3%	14	15%	91
Oct-Dec 2001	163	36%	8	2%	198	44%	79	18%	448
Jan-Mar 2002	73	16%	7	1%	175	37%	215	46%	470
<b>2001/02</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>1070</b>
Apr-Jun 2002	141	34%	5	1%	156	38%	112	27%	414
Jul-Sep 2002	129	31%	3	1%	128	34%	116	31%	376
Oct-Dec 2002	159	87%	5	3%	11	6%	7	4%	182
Jan-Mar 2002	166	35%	1	-	153	33%	149	32%	469
<b>2002/03</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>1441</b>

Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness and PIE forms

### Comparison with Peer Group Authorities

4.8 There is published data for 2000/1 and 2001/2 which allows us to make comparisons with other London Boroughs (2002/03 data had not been published at the time the strategy was drafted). While there was an overall decline in the number of acceptances in outer London between 2000/01 and 2001/02, the rising trend experienced in Barking and Dagenham was mirrored in a number of other boroughs. Lewisham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest all accepted substantially more households in 2001/02 than in 2000/01.

**Figure 4**

<b>Number of priority acceptances, and no. per thousand households in the Borough 2000/01-2001/02</b>				
<b>Authority</b>	<b>2000/01</b>		<b>2001/02</b>	
	<b>Number of acceptances</b>	<b>No. per 1000 households</b>	<b>Number of acceptances</b>	<b>No. per 1000 households</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>5.6</b>
Bexley	359	4.0	454	5.0
Greenwich	1227	13.6	1217	13.2
Havering	160	1.7	#	#
Lewisham	645	5.9	1102	10.1
Newham	1596	17.9	1449	15.9
Redbridge	325	3.5	437	4.7
Waltham Forest	1024	10.9	1121	11.9
<b>Outer London</b>	<b>14740</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>14630</b>	<b>7.9</b>

Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

4.9 However, while the numbers of people approaching Barking and Dagenham for assistance has increased in recent years, the authority receives a relatively low rate of applications for assistance per thousand households in

the Borough (at 17.3) compared with other authorities. Historically we have also judged a relatively low proportion of those applying for help to be in priority need compared with other authorities (5.6 households per thousand households in the Borough, and 32% of all applications), although data for 2002/03 suggests this position may be changing.

**Figure 5**

<b>Rates of homelessness priority acceptances and decisions 2000/01-2001/02</b>			
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Decisions per household</b>	<b>Priority acceptances per 1000 households</b>	<b>Priority acceptances as % of decisions</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>32.3</b>
Bexley	14.8	5.0	33.8
Greenwich	33.0	13.2	40.1
Havering	#	#	#
Lewisham	22.3	10.1	45.2
Newham	26.1	15.9	60.9
Redbridge	6.8	4.7	68.9
Waltham Forest	25.2	11.9	47.3
<b>Outer London Average</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>43.5</b>

# Data not available Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

- 4.10 Recently we have experienced a significant rise in the number of non-priority households seeking assistance. The proportion of households found to be not in priority need is also greater than the average for outer London (36% of homeless applicants were found to be non-priority in Barking and Dagenham compared with an outer London average of 23%). This may be due to the fact that there are simply more households in the non-priority category in Barking and Dagenham than is the case elsewhere (i.e. the actual incidence of non-priority homelessness is higher), or that we have been more successful than other boroughs in attracting applications from those in non-priority categories (i.e. the incidence of reporting non-priority homelessness is higher).
- 4.11 Another interpretation is that we may be less generous in our definition of non-priority homelessness than other councils (although the data at figure 6 below suggests that this is not the case, given that vulnerable young people form a relatively high percentage of those accepted as homeless in Barking and Dagenham). This is an area that we shall be exploring further in the coming year.

**Figure 6**

<b>Reasons for priority, as a percentage of homelessness acceptances 2001/02</b>					
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Dependent children</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Vulnerable young person</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total (numbers)</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>346</b>
Bexley	71%	12%	0%	17%	454
Greenwich	51%	21%	3%	25%	1217
Havering	#	#	#	#	#
Lewisham	55%	17%	5%	23%	1102
Newham	68%	10%	1%	21%	1449
Redbridge	#	#	#	#	#
Waltham Forest	#	#	#	#	#

Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

**Figure 7**

<b>Homelessness decisions by type of decision – 2001/02 (%)</b>					
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Accepted as priority</b>	<b>Intentionally homeless</b>	<b>Non-priority</b>	<b>Not homeless</b>	<b>Total decisions (numbers)</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1070</b>
Bexley	34	2	51	14	1343
Greenwich	40	2	14	44	3034
Havering	#	#	#	#	#
Lewisham	45	0	25	30	2436
Newham	61	3	13	23	2378
Redbridge	69	5	6	20	634
Waltham Forest	47	6	16	30	2368
<b>Outer London Average</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33570</b>

# Data not available Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

### **Ethnicity and homelessness**

- 4.12 Figure 8 provides information about the ethnic background of households accepted for assistance under the homelessness legislation over the last three years, and compares this with the ethnic profile of the population in the Borough as a whole. Households of African and Caribbean ethnic background are disproportionately represented among those accepted for assistance. This reflects the national picture, where black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are disproportionately affected by homelessness.
- 4.13 This finding means that our homelessness services need to be sensitive to the cultural and social needs of applicants from diverse backgrounds, and that temporary and permanent housing provision includes a suitable range of accommodation types to meet the needs of BME communities. Consultation with representatives of BME communities needs to be central to the development and review of services.

4.14 We also want to ensure that we are proactive in tackling racial harassment, which can be a cause of homelessness. Action to prevent and deal with harassment will be a vital part of the homelessness strategy.

**Figure 8**

<b>Acceptances by ethnic background 2000/01 - 2002/03 (%)</b>						
	<b>White</b>	<b>African/ Caribbean</b>	<b>Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Not available</b>	<b>Total (no.s)</b>
<b>2000/01</b>	37.2	19.7	2.1	12.8	28.2	234
<b>2001/02</b>	41.0	21.7	5.2	17.9	14.2	346
<b>2002/03</b>	48.0	27.7	5.0	13.2	5.8	595
<b>Ethnic background of Borough population – 2001</b>						
	<b>White</b>	<b>Black/Black UK</b>	<b>Asian/Asian UK</b>	<b>Mixed/ Other</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2001</b>	85.2	7.0	5.1	2.8	-	164,000

### **Lettings to Homeless Households**

4.15 Figure 9 presents data on the proportion of new lettings (i.e. excluding tenants transferring within the stock) that are made by the Council to homeless households. As the pressure of homelessness has increased, so the authority has raised the proportion of new lettings being allocated to homeless households. Consideration is being given to raising the proportion still further. We are concerned, however, that by reducing the supply of lettings available to Housing Register applicants, the scale of homelessness will increase yet more as applicants living with friends and family or in insecure accommodation will become homeless as the chances of securing a social housing letting are reduced. The total supply of new lettings has fluctuated over the past four years, but the overall trend is one of declining availability.



**Figure 9**

<b>Number and % of lettings to homeless households 2000/01-2002/03.</b>			
	Total lettings to new secure and non-secure tenants	Number of new and non-secure lettings to homeless households	% new lettings to homeless households
2000/01	1457	276	19%
2001/02	1117	369	33%
2002/3	1183	602	51%

**Source: HIP 2002**

### **Comparison with Peer Group**

**Figure 10**

<b>Number of lettings and % let to homeless households, 2000/01 &amp; 2001/02</b>				
<b>Authority</b>	<b>2000/01</b>		<b>2001/02</b>	
	Total lettings to new secure and non-secure tenants	% new lettings to homeless households	Total lettings to new secure, introductory and non-secure tenants	% new lettings to homeless households
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	1457	19%	<b>1117</b>	<b>33%</b>
Bexley	NA	-	<b>NA</b>	-
Greenwich	1871	58%	<b>1274</b>	<b>61%</b>
Havering	814	0	<b>692</b>	<b>38%</b>
Lewisham	971	53%	<b>911</b>	<b>59%</b>
Newham	1095	81%	<b>1070</b>	<b>83%</b>
Redbridge	404	51%	<b>278</b>	<b>43%</b>
Waltham Forest	827	81%	<b>744</b>	<b>86%</b>

**Source: HIP 2001; HIP 2002**

4.16 Until recently, Barking and Dagenham has allocated a relatively low proportion of available secure lettings to homeless households compared with other boroughs, reflecting the relatively low level of homelessness compared with peer group authorities. As noted above, however, the position is changing.

### **Reasons for Homelessness**

4.17 Figures 11 and 12 present data on the reasons why those accepted as having a priority need became homeless. Factors which have contributed to the rise in homelessness in Barking and Dagenham between 2000/01 and 2001/02 are:

- An increase in the proportion of households living with friends or relatives, who were forced to leave (from 32.9% of cases in 2000/01 to 40.4 % of cases in 2001/02)
- An increase in the proportion of households made homeless from privately rented or tied accommodation (from 14.1% of cases on 2000/01 to 25.1% of cases in 2001/02).

4.18 The strategy includes possible preventative strategies, such as Homeless at Home, and developing the awareness of private sector landlords in the role that they can play in preventative action. There is also a question for social housing landlords as to whether their practices on dealing with rent arrears might be leading to avoidable homelessness. This would appear to be a particular concern for the Council when its figures are compared to other authorities and landlords.

4.19 Figure 12a provides information collected by the Housing Advice service which shows the nature of homeless enquiry and the increase over a five-year period.

**Figure 11**

Priority acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home 2000/01, as percentage of all acceptances													
Authority	Forced to leave by		Relationship breakdown		Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears			Loss of tied/rented accommodation due to:		Leaving institution/care	Other	Total (no.s)
	Parents	Other	Violent	Other		LA	RSL	Private	AST*	Other			
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>234</b>
Bexley	16.4	19.2	7.5	1.9	9.5	1.1	0.6	1.7	27.6	1.4	2.8	10.3	359
Greenwich	22.9	22.3	12.2	4.8	2.0	0.9	0.6	0.8	19.4	5.3	3.6	5.1	1227
Havering	28.8	11.3	8.1	4.4	1.9	1.9	0.6	3.1	23.8	8.8	1.9	5.6	160
Lewisham	17.5	26.5	9.0	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	1.4	42.5	645
Newham	10.0	30.0	3.9	0.5	7.0	0.1	0.1	0.6	8.0	24.6	2.6	12.6	1596
Redbridge	16.0	19.7	12.0	1.5	0.9	0.6	0	0.9	40.0	4.3	1.8	2.2	325
Waltham Forest**	15.3	19.0	5.6	2.4	2.0	0	0	7.8	29.3	3.4	0.8	14.4	981

\* Assured shorthold tenancies \*\* Data supplied to ODPM incomplete

**Figure 12**

Priority acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home 2001/02, as percentage of all acceptances													
Authority	Forced to leave by		Relationship breakdown		Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears			Loss of tied/rented accommodation due to:		Leaving institution/care	Other	Total (no.s)
	Parents	Other	Violent	Other		LA	RSL	Private	AST*	Other			
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>346</b>
Bexley	30.6	21.1	8.1	0.7	5.3	0	1.8	0.7	20.3	2.0	2.4	7.0	454
Greenwich	26.0	27.4	9.5	5.6	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.2	15.7	9.0	3.0	1.9	1217
Havering**	26.3	13.2	15.8	10.5	1.3	0	0	1.3	19.7	5.3	2.6	3.9	76
Lewisham	20.9	32.7	8.3	1.3	0.2	1.4	0	0	0	0	2.3	33.1	1102
Newham	11.3	32.7	3.2	0.3	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.8	27.2	14.3	2.6	6.3	1449
Redbridge	14.9	20.8	5.7	0.7	0.5	0	0	0.5	48.1	5.3	2.1	1.6	437
Waltham Forest	17.0	21.1	5.3	1.7	1.2	0	0	6.3	30.6	3.6	0.5	12.7	1121

\* Assured shorthold tenancies \*\* Data supplied to ODPM incomplete

Source: ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

**DATA FROM 01.04.1998 TO \*19.03.2003**

Figure 12a

HOMELESS REASONS – DQRY DB000							1. PRIORITY REASON – DQRY DB0000/PN						
Homeless Reason	1998 1999	1999 2000	2000 2001	2001 2002	2002 2003*	%	1.1 Priority Reason	1998 1999	1999 2000	2000 2001	2001 2002	2002 2003*	%
1.2 Ejected by parents	68	71	58	53	195	268	<b>Dependent child</b>	366	494	296	316	460	46
<b>Ejected by others</b>	60	77	106	127	190	50	<b>Pregnant</b>	54	42	46	44	74	68
<b>Violent R.B.D.</b>	89	81	61	60	79	32	<b>Old age</b>	10	7	4	11	12	9
<b>Non-violent R.B.D.</b>	20	40	23	30	33		<b>Physical disability</b>	43	38	24	47	64	36
<b>Mortgage arrears</b>	33	17	10	6	12		<b>Mental handicap/illness</b>	36	35	54	44	97	120
<b>RA council</b>	47	32	32	33	41	24	<b>Vulnerable young people</b>	11	26	25	46	78	70
<b>RA Housing Association</b>	4	5	6	4	4		<b>Domestic violence</b>	7	8	12	9	7	-22
<b>RA private</b>	21	17	12	16	41	156	<b>Emergency</b>	7	3	2	1	5	400
<b>Loss AST</b>	38	57	38	65	47	-28	<b>Other</b>	7	6	21	6	10	67
<b>Other loss of rented</b>	20	24	31	61	90	48	<b>Not confirmed</b>	75	41	11	7	14	100
<b>Institutional care</b>	13	8	22	17	32	88	<b>No PN [Single]</b>	0	0	1	0	0	
<b>Refugee/Asylum seeker</b>	110	184	21	5	20	300	<b>No PN [other]</b>	1	0	0	1	0	-100
<b>Other reason</b>	70	48	41	29	18	-38	<b>No Priority Need</b>	44	15	14	6	5	
<b>Not confirmed</b>	37	17	4	5	3		<b>Former relevant Child</b>				0	5	
<b>Refugee/Asylum reapplication</b>	4	31	45	24	13	-46	<b>Accommodated or fostered</b>				0	1	
<b>Not homeless</b>	27	6	0	2	0		<b>HM Forces</b>				0	0	
<b>Violent BD Assoc person</b>				0	1		<b>Custodial sentence</b>				0	4	
<b>Racially motivated violence</b>				0	2		<b>Violence/threats of violence</b>				0	1	
<b>Other forms of violence</b>				0	2								
<b>Racial motivated harassment</b>				0	0								
<b>Other forms of harassment</b>				0	3								
<b>Leave NASS</b>				1	11								

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

<b>accommodation</b>													
<b>Totals</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>837</b>			<b>661</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>837</b>	

<p>Increased homelessness year on year:</p> <p>1998/1999 to 1999/2000 = 8.17%</p> <p>1999/2000 to 2000/2001 = -28.67%</p> <p>2000/2001 to 2001/2002 = 5.49%</p> <p>2001/2002 to 2002/2003 = 55.60%</p>	<p>New – old = x</p> <p>X/ old * 100 = %</p>

## Use of Temporary Accommodation

4.20 As the incidence of homelessness in the Borough has increased, the local authority's use of temporary accommodation has also increased steadily. Whereas historically we have made very limited use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation, the number of households placed in B&B at any one time is rising, although the scale of use is still modest by comparison with some other local authorities (see below). Nevertheless the authority has been actively seeking ways of minimising reliance on B&B. Last year greater use was been made of Council stock to provide temporary accommodation. This has helped to reduce dependence on other more expensive forms of temporary provision.

**Figure 13**

Households in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter, Apr/Jun 01 – Apr-Jun 02									
	B&B		Hostels		LA/HA		Other		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Number
Jun 2001	1	-	13	4	305	90	19	6	338
Sep 2001	5	1	23	6	361	91	8	2	397
Dec 2001	13	3	26	5	444	91	7	1	490
Mar 2002	19	3	35	6	489	90	1	-	544
Jun 2002	38	6	36	6	542	88	-	-	616
Sep 2002	32	5	34	5	601	90	-	-	667
Dec 2002	72	10	38	5	626	85	-	-	736

**Note:** The authority has no recorded use of private sector leased accommodation, or Homeless at Home acceptances.

**Source:** ODPM Statistical Release – Statutory Homelessness

4.21 The Authority has already identified the need to secure other forms of temporary accommodation to supplement existing provision, and to control pressure on the supply of lettings within the social housing sector<sup>2</sup>. We have started using private sector leasing schemes and are looking at a private sector landlord accreditation scheme. As part of reducing the pressure on temporary accommodation, the Council will consider the use of the "Homeless at Home" scheme.

## Comparison with Peer Group

4.22 While the Authority is concerned at the very recent rise in use of B&B, historically, our performance compares well with other boroughs (see figures 14 and 15). The Authority has not, as yet, made use of Homeless at Home policies (see figure 16) to supplement the supply of temporary accommodation. The challenge for us will be whether we can now secure a sufficient supply of alternative forms of temporary housing, as pressure

<sup>2</sup> Barking and Dagenham Housing Strategy 2003-2006

from homeless applicants rises. The experiences of authorities such as Lewisham may be useful in this respect. Lewisham has experienced a dramatic increase in homelessness over the past two years, but has invested considerable effort in avoiding dependence on B&B. Its strategy to increase the supply of social and accredited private sector lettings is cited as a good practice example on the Housemark website, and may be a source of good practice assistance for us.

**Figure 14**

<b>Average number in B&amp;B during the year, 1998/99 – 2000/01</b>			
<b>Authority</b>	<b>1998/99*</b>	<b>1999/00</b>	<b>2000/01</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Bexley	32	45	74
Greenwich	67	0	0
Havering	61	0	0
Lewisham	279	0	0
Newham	333	302	542
Redbridge	173	169	257
Waltham Forest	45	16	66
<b>London average</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>London upper quartile</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>

Source: Audit Commission Performance Indicators

\*1998/99 PI includes those housed in hostels

**Figure 15**

<b>Average length of stay in B&amp;B 1998/99 – 2000/01 (in weeks)</b>			
<b>Authority</b>	<b>1998/99*</b>	<b>1999/00</b>	<b>2000/01</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Bexley	10	9	12
Greenwich	28	0	0
Havering	13	0	0
Lewisham	17	0	0
Newham	6	4	19
Redbridge	15	15	16
Waltham Forest	6	5	5
<b>London average</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>London upper quartile</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: Audit Commission Performance Indicators

Note:\*1998/99 PI included time spent in hostels.

**Figure 16**

<b>Households accepted as Homeless at Home, 31 March 2001 and 31 March 2002</b>		
<b>Authority</b>	<b>31 March 2001</b>	<b>31 March 2002</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	-	-
Bexley	10	39
Greenwich	592	746
Havering	1	-
Lewisham	-	-
Newham	542	648
Redbridge	-	-
Waltham Forest	113	107
<b>Outer London total</b>	<b>2,860</b>	<b>2,800</b>

**Source: ODPM Statistical release – statutory homelessness**

### **Speed of Service: Trends and Comparison with Peer Group**

4.23 There is currently one Best Value performance indicator that measures local authority performance in processing homelessness applications. As the indicator has changed, it is difficult to assess year-on-year improvement accurately but, historically, Barking and Dagenham has not performed well in comparison with the London peer group as a whole, or in comparison with individual peer group authorities (see figure 17).

4.24 However, in 2001/02 performance improved dramatically, with 87% of applications processed within 33 days, placing us well above the average even of the best performing authorities.

**Figure 17**

<b>Processing homelessness applications 1998/99 – 2000/01</b>				
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Ave. number of days to accept people</b>		<b>% decisions in 33 days</b>	
	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>1999/00</b>	<b>2000/01</b>	<b>2001/02</b>
<b>Barking &amp; Dagenham</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>87</b>
Bexley	70	48	87	74
Greenwich	28	26	74	76
Havering	18	25	76	74
Lewisham	98	59	63	64
Newham	56	45	54	53
Redbridge	67	67	45	46
Waltham Forest	103	84	57	59
<b>London average</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>London upper quartile</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>77</b>

**Source: Audit Commission Performance Indicators**

4.25 In order to develop our understanding of the Authority's performance in processing applications, we have examined the data that is available on the comparative level of staffing of homelessness services across the



capital.<sup>3</sup> These figures need to be treated with some caution, as the staff numbers used to generate the data below are estimates.

**Figure 18**

<b>Number of acceptances and decisions per officer, 2000/01</b>		
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Acceptances per FTE</b>	<b>Decisions per FTE</b>
Barking & Dagenham	60.0	83.8
Bexley	51.2	175.6
Greenwich	58.4	146.6
Havering	#	#
Lewisham	21.5	51.5
Newham	25.1	38.1
Redbridge	13.0	18.1
Waltham Forest	51.2	102.7

- 4.26 When measured by the number of decisions overall, Barking and Dagenham has staff productivity levels which fall towards the middle of the range across peer group authorities, and might therefore be judged good value for money (although it should be noted that two peer group authorities with better decision-making turn around times have a higher overall staff productivity level than Barking and Dagenham). In terms of acceptances, Barking and Dagenham's homelessness officers processed more acceptances per officer than in any peer group authority.

### **Summary of Analysis and Pointers for Action**

- 4.27 This 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

<sup>3</sup> The source for this analysis is CIPFA's "Homelessness Statistics 2000-01 – Actuals". This provides authorities' own estimates of the number of employees working directly on homelessness (expressed as a FTE equivalent), which we have used to assess the number of decisions and acceptances per FTE.

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 PROVISION AND PLANS**

5.1 In this chapter we examine current service provision, as identified through the review of homelessness in the Borough, current service developments, and plans for the future. The views of users, gathered as part of the homelessness review, are also included.

### Housing Advice and Tenancy Support

5.2 Housing advice and tenancy services work to prevent homelessness through the provision of appropriate information, advice, and support.

5.3 Our housing advice services play a crucial role in preventing homelessness and assisting those at risk or who become homeless.

5.4 The main causes of homelessness in Barking and Dagenham are:

- Households living with friends or relatives who are forced to leave
- Relationship breakdown
- Loss of tied or rented accommodation.

5.5 A range of services is currently provided and developed to support families and prevent relationship breakdown. We recognise that more needs to be done, especially for young people and those with multiple needs. The Council will continue to put in place support mechanisms in order to ensure that we identify at the earliest possible stage the people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

5.6 The Council's Advisory Services, Homeless, Housing Advice and the Accommodation Resettlement Unit, is located at 2 Stour Road, Dagenham. The Housing Advice section is a Charter Mark Award winning service.

5.7 The Housing Advice section is primarily concerned with the interception of homeless or potentially homeless applicants to carry out initial assessment and either prevent, delay (where appropriate) or refer the case to the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) after some initial investigation. It also deals with referrals from the Estates Section requesting emergency decant accommodation and attends Social Service accommodation meetings, meetings with the Community Mental Health Team, and meetings relating to Children and Families.

5.8 The latest statistics show that Housing Advice provided 2018 clients with advice in 2002/3 and referred 837 cases to the HPU when homelessness

was unavoidable (Housing Advice provide local monthly housing advice sessions at Thames View Aid and Gascoigne Aid and Advice).

- 5.9 Named officers specialise in areas of interest and where service links are essential. These include a named officer for Probation Service referrals and Community Mental Health (Accommodation Panel) and a named person that is a link person for the Children and Families Division, Social Services.
- 5.10 The Council provides potentially homeless people with a Homeless Person self-help pack, which is available at advice and housing offices.
- 5.11 The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides advice to people which may assist in preventing homelessness, particularly money advice.
- 5.12 The homelessness review indicates a growing need for family mediation, conflict resolution and parenting initiatives, together with more support for people with chaotic lifestyles. There is a plan to extend the mediation scheme, which is currently funded by the ODPM Homelessness Directorate. This strategy will aim to draw together the existing services in a more coordinated and strategic manner, to develop and coordinate housing advice and support services, and to involve innovative services such as Connexions.
- 5.13 The CAB, in its Borough Evidence Report (2003), and as a member of the Strategy Working Group, has emphasised the benefits of enhanced information, advocacy and advice services, joint working protocols for advice agencies, and monitoring. This encompasses forums such as the Housing Benefit Advisory Group. The Borough Evidence Report pinpoints debt and unrealistic settlements as a significant cause of homelessness, and improved arrears management as a means of tenancy retention. Increasing debt is set within the context of pressures on the supply of affordable housing. The strategy Action Plan includes activities to deal with the problems identified.

#### Homelessness Assessment and Support

- 5.14 Homelessness Assessment and Support services work with people who are threatened with, or who become, homeless. Their work contributes to the objective of alleviating homelessness and preventing social exclusion. Their work to develop new forms of temporary accommodation to replace Bed and Breakfast use will deliver the target of having no families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation by 2004.
- 5.15 The Council's HPU receives referrals mainly from Housing Advice, but it also has a direct referral arrangement with Women's Aid when domestic

- violence is evident. The HPU processed over 800 homeless applications 2002/3 and actively seeks to prevent homelessness where appropriate.
- 5.16 Recent statistics reveal that the average officer caseload is about 77 cases each. This causes problems with enquiry continuity, sustainability and administration.
- 5.17 The Accommodation Resettlement Unit (ARU) was established with Supporting People funding to meet the ever-increasing demands for temporary accommodation (a 56% increase in homelessness during 2002/3).
- 5.18 The Council has successfully avoided out-of-borough placements for homeless people, except for a few B&B placements, and intends to maintain this approach to temporary accommodation and support for homeless households.
- 5.19 The Council has one homeless hostel in Barking which houses 34 households. In addition we house a small number of households in B&B and a number in temporary Council accommodation. We encourage the use of the Homeless at Home initiative, but our experience is that these arrangements do not last for long. Unlike in other boroughs, applicants do not have the threat of out-of-borough and, in many instances, out-of-London placements.
- 5.20 Housing people permanently where they have support networks, including access to schools, families, faith and other community support groups is essential for social inclusion and the maintenance of a home. We do know that more needs to be done to avoid the disruptive effects on households, and particularly young people, of “the revolving door” pattern of homelessness. A new system of recording to be introduced in June 2003 will capture all homeless approaches that result from rent arrears.
- 5.21 Support is provided to people in temporary accommodation. Supporting People funds 47 floating support places.

#### Joint Working and Service Delivery

- 5.22 The Council is fully aware that tackling homelessness requires a corporate approach and collaborative working with the many organisations, including voluntary organisations, which have contact with homeless/potentially homeless people.
- 5.23 The Council has good working relationships with the main agencies which, compared to some London Boroughs, are few in number. The strategy development process has been an opportunity to strengthen existing relationship. However, we recognise the importance of having protocols

so that all parties, including service users, know the type and level of service and support which can be provided.

5.24 In addition to housing, services to homeless people are provided through the following Council teams:

- Leaving Care Team
- Children and Families
- Mental Health
- Education Services.

5.25 The Council uses its planning powers to apply s106 agreements for the provision of affordable housing.

5.26 A joint strategic response between primary care trusts and local authorities is required to tackle health inequalities experienced by people who are homeless. The British Medical Association publication "Housing and Health: Building the Future" examines the problems. Other research<sup>4</sup> into the single homeless rough sleeper population shows that:

- 30-50% of homeless people experience mental health problems
- About 70% of homeless people misuse drugs
- About 50% of homeless people are dependent on alcohol
- Rough sleepers are 35 times more likely to kill themselves than the general population and have an average life expectancy of 42 years
- Physical health is poor, e.g. high rates of TB, respiratory problems and skin diseases.

5.27 In spite of this level of poor health, single homeless people are 40 times less likely than the general population to be registered with a GP. Families living in temporary accommodation also experience physical and mental health problems:

- Overcrowded, cold, damp and unsanitary living conditions are highly conducive to physical and mental ill health
- Homeless children are twice as likely to be admitted to hospital, with particularly high admission rates for accidents and infectious diseases
- Behavioural problems such as aggression, bed wetting and over activity have been found to be higher among homeless children
- Mental health problems are significantly higher among homeless mothers and children.

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<sup>4</sup> Health in Homelessness Strategies - Sarah Gorton, Senior Policy Officer, Health Action at Crisis, Feb. 2003.

- 5.28 The Barking and Dagenham Homelessness Strategy recognises the need for joint working between health, social services, housing and voluntary sector organisations to tackle the link between homelessness and ill health. A health sub-group within the homelessness forum aims to ensure that services are available to homeless people, particularly services dealing with:
- Addictions
  - Physical health
  - Mental health
  - Podiatry and physiotherapy
  - Occupational therapy
  - Dental treatment
  - Learning disability
  - Diet
- 5.29 Voluntary organisations have an important and growing role in the provision of a range of services to homeless people in the Borough. Compared to many London boroughs the scale of provision is small, less than 20 agencies, as was borne out by the service provider audit carried out as part of the homelessness review.
- 5.30 The majority of services are not specifically provided for homeless people though agencies include homeless people within their client groups. Voluntary organisations run two hostels for homeless people. These are the Vineries project, which has 36 beds for single people aged between 16 and 30, and the YMCA which has a 150 bed hostel. Priority is given to accommodating 18 – 25 year-olds.
- 5.31 The level of current provision means that there is a manageable number of partners. However, as is shown below, certain client groups have neither accommodation nor floating support services to meet their needs.
- 5.32 A postal audit of all service providers undertaken during the latter part of 2002 identifies the contribution of voluntary organisations to local services for the homeless. Full details are contained in the Services Directory in Appendix 4.
- 5.33 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are significant as the main providers of affordable social housing. They are also the landlords of supported housing projects and, in future, hostel accommodation. The Council secured its highest ever level of Local Authority Social Housing Grant and Approved Development Programme Investment (including Challenge Fund) in 2002/03. This will secure 572 new affordable homes in the Borough; 367 for social renting and 205 shared/low cost home ownership. The Housing Strategy sets a target of at least 390 new affordable homes

per year from 2003-2006. The Council and its partner, Network East Foyer, have developed plans for a 116-unit Foyer for young people in housing need.

- 5.34 RSLs will be contributing significantly to support services provided under the Supporting People Plan. They also have a major role in preventing homelessness through effective tenancy support to prevent evictions. Also, Blackwater Housing Association has a 32-bed hostel for the single homeless, with a further four beds for care leavers.

#### Pan London and Regional Working

- 5.35 We are aware that we are a host authority for many homeless people placed in our area by other London Boroughs, some for considerable periods of time. At present we have limited knowledge of the numbers and type of people placed in-Borough, and whether they receive support from the placing authority, or make demands on our services. This lack of knowledge should change through the implementation of the NOTIFY project being developed by the GLA. We recognise the need to co-ordinate homelessness responses with those of other London Boroughs.

- 5.36 We know that homelessness does not recognise borough boundaries and intend to work with other East London authorities in the prevention of homelessness and the provision of suitable services and accommodation.

#### **Services for Specific Groups**

- 5.37 In this section we review the services available for specific groups, drawing upon the review of homelessness and the Supporting People Strategy.

#### Rough Sleepers

- 5.38 There are no recorded instances of rough sleeping in the Borough. We will continue to monitor the position

#### Substance Misusers

- 5.39 There is no specialised accommodation, or floating support service, for drug or alcohol users.

#### HIV/Aids

- 5.40 There is no specialised accommodation, or floating support service, for people with HIV/Aids.

#### People with Mental Health and Learning Disability Needs



- 5.41 There are 23 units of supported accommodation currently provided by Warden Housing Association and London & Quadrant for people with learning disabilities. London & Quadrant are developing eight additional units for people with learning disabilities in Barking and Dagenham.

An extra-care sheltered scheme for older people with mental health problems will be developed in 2003/04, providing 32 units of accommodation with support. There are three units in Crisis House, a cross-borough scheme for people with mental health problems; this is currently shared with London Borough of Havering.

#### Asylum Seekers

- 5.42 Unaccompanied minors who are asylum seekers are supported through Children's Services.

#### Young People

- 5.43 Services are more developed for young people and are being carried forward within the context of the Children and Young People's preventative strategy.

#### The Preventative Strategy

- 5.44 The Barking and Dagenham Preventative Strategy has been formulated to promote the well-being of children and young people who are at risk or vulnerable. It is intended to be the document under which all the agencies who work with children and young people will work together in a co-ordinated way, building on the work of the Children's Charter, to ensure that the needs of children and young people are recognised and promptly met.
- 5.45 In the Preventative Strategy the promotion of good outcomes for every vulnerable child or young person is at the core of service delivery and inter-agency planning. It will ensure that services can be better accessed by children, families and young people 'under one roof'. All agencies will implement the Children's Charter, monitor the effectiveness of their own work in promoting long term well-being, and develop specific mechanisms for doing this through identification, referral and tracking.
- 5.46 We want to ensure that no child is excluded from the opportunities in society and the continuous improvements in our services. We will build on the existing range of specialist services to ensure that vulnerable and at risk children are identified and receive appropriate support services. All services will monitor their activities to ensure that children and young people who are vulnerable and at risk are benefiting in terms of their

immediate and long-term welfare, and that they are included in the opportunities enjoyed by the wider community.

- 5.47 At a strategic level the Preventative Strategy will be developed by the Children's Service Strategy Group, which brings together Senior Managers from lead agencies. This group will work on Identification and Tracking (IRT), Inter-agency links, Shared Vision, Co-ordinated Service Delivery, Child Focus, Effective Prevention, and Learning from Experience in order to deliver continuous improvement.
- 5.48 These initiatives include services for care leavers, who are mainly housed by the Leaving Care Team thereby avoiding the homelessness route. Young vulnerable people are receiving support services from Connexions and Relate. The Connexions service is developing the government's IRT system for 0- to 19-year olds which will enable a greater understanding of, and focus on, the needs of young people.

#### Older People

- 5.49 The Council has developed a single waiting list for all forms of elderly persons' accommodation, Council or RSL, with a common assessment tool and priority scheme.

#### People with Disabilities

- 5.50 The Anchor Staying Put, Home Improvement Agency, based in the Council office at Stour Road, Dagenham, provides advice and support services for people with disabilities.

Voluntary sector organisations provide 12 units of floating support services.

#### People Subject to Domestic Abuse

- 5.51 Women subject to domestic abuse have access to a women's refuge providing eight units. There are plans for a further four-bedded refuge.

#### Offenders

- 5.52 The Crime and Disorder Strategy sets out our approach to people in contact with the Criminal Justice system. Cross-borough arrangements exist and the Probation Service purchases six places a year from the YMCA. The support for ex-offenders, many of whom have mental health and/or substance misuse problems, is recognised as being inadequate in the Supporting People Strategy.

#### **User Views**

- 5.53 User views of current services and how users would like to see these services develop have been sought as part of the review of homelessness. A summary of their responses is attached at Appendix 5. In general service users were positive about the services received, especially the quality of housing advice. Dissatisfaction was expressed about the nature of temporary accommodation and the length of stay. In particular, users with a disability considered that the temporary accommodation offered did not always match their specific needs.
- 5.54 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. We also include details of services for specific client groups.

### **Current Service Developments**

#### Preventative Services

- 5.55 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.
- 5.56 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.
- 5.57 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

5.58 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

5.59 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**

5.60 In this section we summarise ideas for future developments. These will be refined following consultation on the draft strategy. Initial consultation on the review of homelessness drew out 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

5.61 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 through Connexions, East Street and Axe Street

Offer mediation services through Relate to prevent young persons' family breakdown

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 new 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
	To achieve a target of 6% of overall rent roll whose rent arrears are more than 13 weeks.	Improve efficiency of the housing benefit administration.  Introduce a policy for rent recovery.	Reduction in the numbers made homeless as a result of eviction from council properties.	Housing Benefit



London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

Identified Priorities				
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
		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-

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

				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.
		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"> <li>• Improve efficiency of housing benefit administration.</li> <li>• Develop tenancy</li> </ul>	Early resolution/prevention of homelessness.	Housing Benefit

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

		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.		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
		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	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

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

	schools. Advice service to make close links with day centres and community centres.			
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.**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>2. Targets</b>	<b>Planned activity in 2003/4 (and to 2005/6)</b>	<b>3. Outcome</b>	<b>4. Lead organisation</b>
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

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

		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.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Planned activity in 2003/4(and to 2005/6)</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Lead organisation.</b>
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.

(Glossary of terms to be added)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Strategy Working Group Members**

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

## **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 – Services Directory

Organisation	Client Group/languages	Address/phone/access	Open Times	Services Provided
African Legal Advisory Services	Refugees, asylum seekers, and people affected by immigration law  Access to interpreters	Trocoll House Suite 305 Wakering Road Barking 020 8507 0450 Full wheelchair access and adapted toilets Home visits can be arranged.	Mon-Fri 10-5 Sat 11-7 Drop-in, phone, or make appointment.	Advice, advocacy and representation for people affected by immigration law
Asian Women Advice and Training	Asian Community  Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu. Access to interpreters	2 Malpas Road Beacontree 020 8593 3804 Limited wheelchair access – no adapted toilets	Mon-Fri 10-4	Information and advice on welfare benefits, education/training and domestic violence
Asylum Seekers Unit	Refugees/Asylum Seekers	Social Services Department Civic Centre Rainham Road North Dagenham RM10 7BW. 0208 592 4500		Resettlement issues: family, welfare, debt, housing, consumer, immigration, equality, disability, mental health, education, community care
Axe Street	Drug dependent persons  Translation by arrangement	39-41 Axe Street Barking IG11 7LX 020 8507 8668 Full wheelchair access	Mon- Fri 9.30-5.00, on Thurs till 7.00	Community detox; acupuncture, counselling and advice; referral to rehab
Barking & Dagenham Centre for Independent Inclusive Living	Disabled people, carers, family members and professionals Access to interpreters, Language Line, BSL	St George's Centre St George's Road Dagenham 020 8227 5412 Full wheelchair access & adapted toilets. Home visits available.	Mon-Fri 9-5	Range of services for disabled people, their families and carers and professionals.
Barking CAB	General Public Some information available in	55 Ripple Road Barking	Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 10-12 drop-in and phone	Advice and information on a range of issues including housing, benefits, debt and

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

Organisation	Client Group/languages	Address/phone/access	Open Times	Services Provided
	Braille and on tape.	020 8594 6715 Full wheelchair access and adapted toilets.	Wednesday 5-7 appointments/phone	Employment rights.
Catholic Children's Society Homelessness Team	Homeless families living in B&B accommodation  Access to BSL signers and to interpreters	73 St Charles Square London W10 6EJ 020 8969 5305 Limited wheelchair access: home visits can be arranged for those unable to access offices	Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00  Drop-in or phone	Information on welfare rights and options, general advice on education and practical services. Outreach services
Connexions Futures Barking	Mainly young people 16-19; careers advice available to 16+	Unit 6A Monteagle Court 32-38 Wakering Road Barking IG11 8TE 020 8591 9999	Mon- Tues 9-12.30 and 1.30-5.00; Wed-Fri 9-12.30 and 1.30-4.00	Careers advice, information, contact with training providers, job placement
Dagenham CAB	General Public  Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu	339 Heathway Dagenham 020 8592 1084 Full wheelchair access and adapted toilets. Home visits available.	Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 10-1 drop-in Office hours 9-5.30	Advice and information on housing, benefits, debt and employment rights
DIAL – Barking and Dagenham	People with disabilities, carers and workers in the field of disability Access to interpreters, BSL	St George's Day Centre St George's Road Dagenham 020 8592 1084 Full wheelchair access and adapted toilets. Home visits available	Mon-Fri 10.30-3.30	Advice and information for people with disabilities, on benefits, grants, equipment, self help groups, travel and mobility, employment, health and housing.
East London Somali Association	Refugees and asylum seekers, particularly from the Somalian community.  Somali and Arabic	Room 9 728 Romford Road London E12 6BT 020 8514 6124 Full wheelchair access	Mon-Fri 10-4.30 Drop-in, phone, write, or make an appointment	Advice and information.
East Street	Young people 14-25	20 East Street	Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs 2-6;	Health, drugs, careers, immigration and

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

Organisation	Client Group/languages	Address/phone/access	Open Times	Services Provided
Youth Advice Centre	Translations available	Barking IG11 8EU 020 8270 4646 Full wheelchair access	Fri 11-3; Sat 12-3	Free legal advice on specific days of the week
Homeless Persons Unit	People who are homeless as defined by the Housing Act  Language Line and Council translation unit	2 Stour Road Dagenham RM10 7JF 020 8227 2464 Out of hours emergency: 020 8594 8356 Full wheelchair access	Mon-Fri 8.45-4.45  Drop-in or phone	Assessment of priority need under the Homeless Act. Provision of temporary accommodation for those assessed as in priority need.
Housing Advice	Residents of the Borough  Access to interpreters	2 Stour Road Dagenham RM10 7JF 020 8227 2177/2452 Full wheelchair access Out of hours emergency: 020 8594 8356	Mon-Fri 8.45-4.45  By appointment , but people who are homeless can visit without an appointment	Housing advice for all residents in the Borough including private/council tenants, home owners and homeless people
Gascoigne Aid & Advice Shop	General public	128 St Mary's Parade Barking IG11 7TF 020 8591 9855 Full wheelchair access	Mon-Fri 10.00-3.00 Drop-in for enquiries. Advice workers by appointment	Debt/money advice, housing and welfare benefits etc
International Christian Care Foundation	General public Translation available	Unit 120 Estuary House 196 Ballards Road Dagenham RM10 9AB 020 8592 9323 Full wheelchair access	Drop-in centre 10.00-5.00 Mon-Fri Saturday children's folk club 11.00-4.00	Advice on UK immigration law, housing, welfare and benefits for homeless, young people, refugees etc. Some referrals to Age Concern, CVS, EMPA, and YMCA.
Newham Action Against Domestic Violence	St Mark's Community Centre Tollgate Road London E6 4YA	020 7473 3047	Mon-Fri 10.00-5.00	Comprehensive service for anyone experiencing domestic violence
North East London Family Mediation Service	Couples separating or divorcing, and their children Access to interpreters, BSL. Facilities for the deaf by prior arrangement.	11 Althorne Way Dagenham 020 8593 6827 Limited wheelchair access. No adapted toilets, except in adjacent unit	Mon- Thurs 9.30-5.30 Fri: Appointment only	Information for couples involved in divorce or separation, to enable them to reach agreements about children, finance and property via mediation. Specially trained counsellors to help children having problems due to the



London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

Organisation	Client Group/languages	Address/phone/access	Open Times	Services Provided
				separation/divorce of their parents
Redbridge Money Advice and Debt Counselling Centre	General public Access to interpreters	Ilford County Court Buckingham Road Ilford IG1 1TP 020 8478 1132 Full wheelchair access	Mon-Fri 10-5 Drop-in, phone, write or contact to make an appointment	Money advice and debt counselling, mortgage arrears and possession. Housing advice including homelessness, rent arrears and housing allocations. Employment advice. Legal help and casework on debt, consumer issues, employment and housing.
Redbridge Refugee Forum	Refugees and Asylum Seekers  Range of community languages	First floor Broadway Chambers 1 Cranbrook Road Ilford IG1 4DU 020 8478 4513 Casework: 8514 4728 Full wheelchair access	Mon, Wed-Fri 10-12.30 Tues 2-3.30	Advice, information and casework on a range of issues, including immigration, benefits, housing and education. Health advocacy by appointment. ESOL classes. Creche. Food parcels for people with no access to benefits, the NASS system or support from social services. Support for refugee community groups.
Social Services Dept	General Public  Access to interpreters and BSL signers	Civic Centre Rainham Road North Dagenham RM10 7BW 020 8592 4500 Emergency out of hours: 020 8594 8356 Limited wheelchair access	Mon-Fri 9-4.30 Call in or phone	Range of social services for children and families, older people, people with learning difficulties and mental health problems.
Vineries Young Women's Project	Young Women aged 16-30 years.	321-329 Heathway Dagenham 020 8593 3931 Limited wheelchair access. Adapted toilets. Home visits available.	Mon and Thurs 12-2.30 Tues 12.15-2.15 Wed 9.45-11.45 Fri 12.15-2.15: teenage mums	Advice, information, classes and counselling. Creche
The Vineries Hostel	Young single homeless people aged 16-30	1-11 Vineries Close Dagenham RM9 5DA 020 8598 8672	Mon-Fri 9-5 Self or agency referrals.	36 bedspaces for young single homeless people (except convicted sex offenders, those with a history of arson, alcohol problems, or not entitled to benefits)
YMCA	Priority for 18-25 year-olds Some rooms adapted Full wheelchair access	29 Rush Green Road Romford RM7 0PH 01708 766211	Direct and self-referral Mon-Fri 9.00 -5.00 No emergency	Hostel (150 bedspaces) Foyer project and benefits advice. Resettlement work and move-on accommodation.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Draft Homelessness Strategy

Organisation	Client Group/languages	Address/phone/access	Open Times	Services Provided
Women's Aid National Helpline	Women fleeing domestic violence See also Newham Action Against Domestic Violence	0845 702 3468	accommodation 24/7	

## Appendix 5

The Borough's Housing Advice Service designed a questionnaire to be completed by service users. 18 returns were received during the review and strategy development process. Users were asked questions concerning the following:

- Users' reasons for homelessness
- Whether homeless within or outside the Borough
- The circumstances that might have prevented homelessness occurring
- Experiences of the service
- Improvements that could be made to services
- The nature of temporary accommodation and how many moves were involved before permanent accommodation was offered
- Other views
- Monitoring data

The prime reason for homelessness was relationship breakdown, although loss of private rented accommodation and loss of tenancy due to rent arrears were also mentioned.

All respondents had become homeless within the Borough except one asylum seeker who had been placed from Southend.

Most respondents did not think that their homelessness could have been avoided. The remainder commented that the cost of private rented accommodation was too high and they would need to be in work or have more money to afford it, thus securing their own housing.

The majority of people found the Housing Advice Service very helpful and the advice provided fair and precise. A few respondents did not agree, with comments being made about not getting anyone to explain information clearly or at the time they felt they needed it.

Improvements to the service include the need for more information leaflets and improvements to the quality of temporary accommodation. Comments about temporary accommodation were primarily about the condition of the properties and its cleanliness. There were some concerns about location, either the neighbourhood or the flat itself.

The majority of respondents had had one temporary accommodation placement only. None had yet moved into permanent accommodation.