



Harrow Homelessness Review 2008

**Tackling homelessness and high demand,
While reducing the use of temporary accommodation**

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1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness and homeless services within their area. The purpose of the review is to develop an evidence base, to inform the strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness for the next 5 years. The review is one of 4 key documents supporting the Council's homelessness strategy 2008-2013.

The first homelessness strategy was live from 2003 – 2008, and this review includes an analysis of the performance in tackling homelessness through the action plan for that period. The 2002 Act also requires local authorities to keep their homelessness strategies under review, while current guidance has stressed the importance of increased partnership with stakeholders, staff and service users. Harrow intends to produce a 5-year strategy, informed by the results of this review, which will be owned by agencies across the borough and reviewed on a yearly basis.

1.1 Strategic Context (National)

Since 2002, the government has made homelessness prevention a priority, through providing increased funding to tackle homelessness, setting challenging targets for the prevention of homelessness, and placing requirements on local councils to produce homelessness strategies. The 2002 Homelessness Act extended the definition of priority need to include new groups of vulnerable people, whilst outlining the requirements placed upon local authorities to produce homelessness strategies informed by a review of performance, current service provision and estimated future need. The Act stated that the focus of these strategies was to be on preventative measures, as well as emphasising the importance of offering advice to all people in housing need.

The government's national homelessness strategy, Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives (2005), set out plans to reduce homelessness, as well as halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. The strategy also outlined targets to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children. This strategy highlighted a new emphasis upon prevention, and this was further developed through the 'Preventing Homelessness Strategy Healthcheck'. This work was further supplemented by the introduction of BVPI 213 in 2005 (Housing Advice Service: preventing homelessness). This has since been superseded by Homelessness Prevention and Relief, which is part of the quarterly P1E returns.

The Hills report 'Ends and Means: The Future Role of Social Housing in England' (2007) looked at how we can best meet housing needs now and in the future. The report emphasised the importance of a holistic approach to housing need, integrating employment and training advice to ensure that tenants and homeseekers increase their opportunities for social and financial inclusion. The report also looked at how we can create and sustain mixed communities.

The report 'More than a roof: a report into tackling homelessness' (2003) recognised the need to focus upon a range of more personalised issues faced by homeless households, such as debt, domestic violence and drug & alcohol, while the Housing Corporation's strategy 'Tackling Homelessness' (2006) outlined the key role that RSL's have to play in

tackling homelessness. The work with RSLs has since been complemented with the introduction of the CLG Homelessness Action Team, who work to build and sustain partnerships between local authorities and RSLs, whilst promoting good practice, while RSLs themselves have recently been completing their own Homelessness Action Plans.

'Independence and Opportunity' (2007) outlines how the Supporting People programme helps to reduce homelessness by providing support to enable households to remain in their own home, and offering invaluable support services to other vulnerable groups. The strategy emphasises the need for service users to remain central to the programme, whilst highlighting future changes and plans for delivery through the LAA.

A list of relevant national strategy and policy documents is included at Appendix 2.

1.2 Strategic context (Regional)

The first Mayor's Housing Strategy was published in 2007, for adoption in 2008. All boroughs were consulted on the strategy, and the priorities identified in this homelessness strategy must be in line with those identified for regional adoption.

Under the heading of 'Changing Lives' the Mayor stated his support for government targets to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, as well as ending the use of B&B for 16 and 17 year olds by 2010. The Mayor also expects that the number of people known to be sleeping rough, and those waiting for move-on accommodation, will also be reduced.

Individual homelessness strategies should be focused upon prevention, and local authorities are encouraged to make efficient use of private sector properties, especially in sustaining improvements and offering longer-term tenancies.

Some of the key points arising from the Mayor's strategy include:

- Support 'temporary to settled' schemes, providing more settled homes, affordable rents and social assets
- Expectation that boroughs will sign up to cross-London protocols such as NOTIFY
- A clearer emphasis on tackling overcrowding, aiming to stem the growth by 2012
- Social landlords to have strategies in place to provide more family accommodation, and to reduce overcrowding amongst their tenants
- An increase in the supply of additional supported housing to 400 homes per year
- Provision of impartial housing advice and housing options services, especially for vulnerable people
- High priority to promoting choice and mobility across and beyond London
- Support an extension of the Seaside and Country Homes for older people
- Support innovative projects that aim to tackle homelessness and worklessness together
- All social landlords to deliver excellent housing management services, whilst encouraging private landlords to adopt the same approach
- Delivery of the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Support effective measures to tackle domestic violence
- Support the London resettlement strategy as a step towards reducing re-offending

1.3 Strategic context (Sub-regional)

Harrow is a member of the West London Partnership, which comprises Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea & Harrow. Each borough takes a lead in a specific area and Harrow is the lead for homelessness. As well as achieving joint projects and successful bids for sub-regional funding in recent years, the Homelessness Group has also commissioned two key surveys, the outcomes of which have been used to inform development of Harrow's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013. They are the West London Mystery Shopping Project (2007) and the 2006/07 Acclaim Benchmarking Survey of Housing Needs Services.

The West London Mystery Shopping Project (2007) was commissioned by the Homelessness Group, and has been used to gauge the quality of service delivery, and benchmark similar services offered by other boroughs within the West London Housing Partnership. The findings led to the following specific recommendations for Harrow:

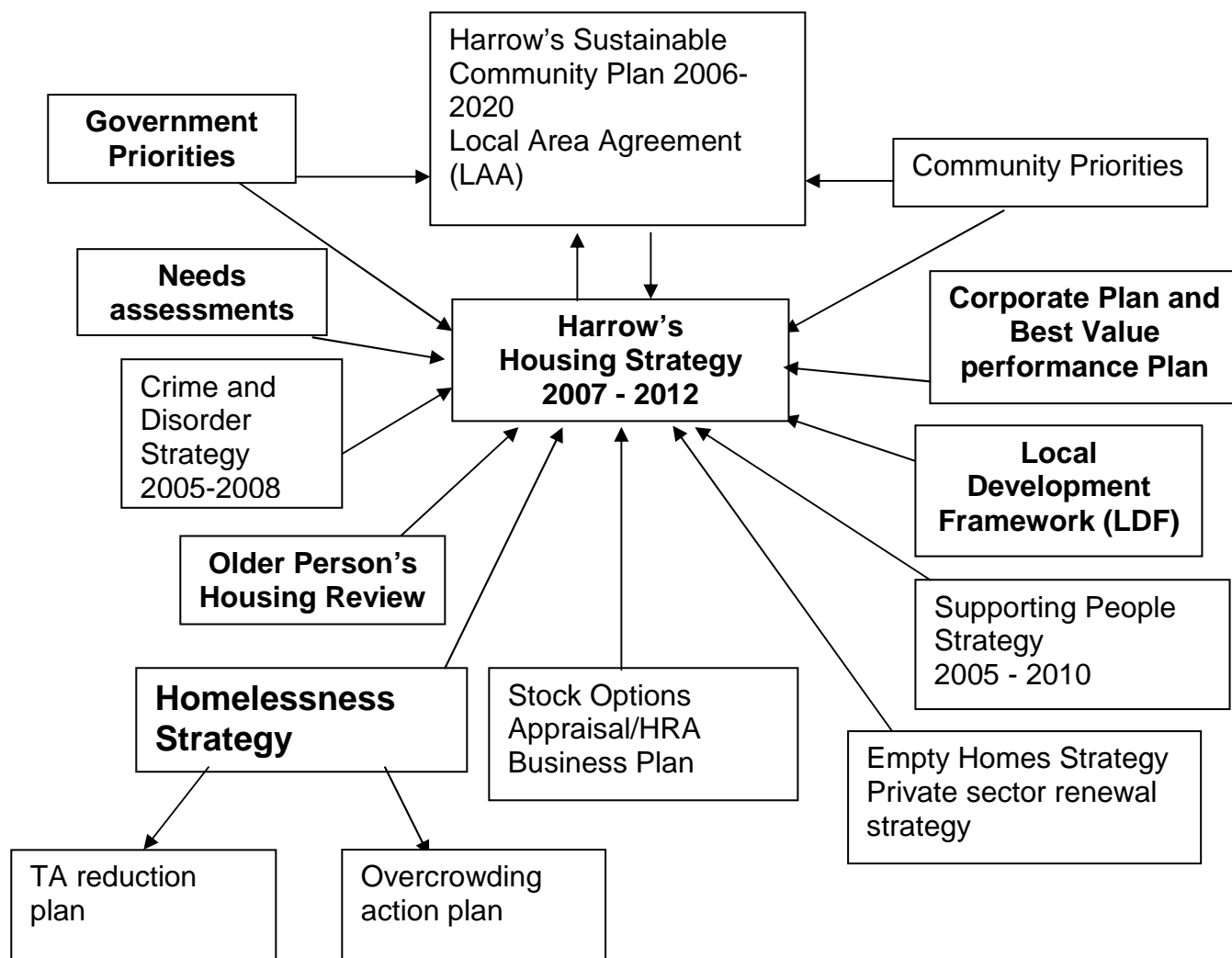
- Access to documentation / ID – Carry out a review of documentation and ID requirements and provision of advice and assistance
- Access, Customer Care and Diversity – Carry out a review of the quality of reception areas, with a particular focus on sufficient seating, accessible toilet facilities, clearer information displays, name badges for staff, better information provision over the telephone, a review of staff training, particularly interviewing and customer service.
- Signposting
Offer more signposting / leaflets relating to specific needs of service users
Review accuracy and availability of information and options available
Review recommendations of officers with regards to approaching other boroughs
- Equal Opportunities - Greater support for those for whom English is not their first language by advertising interpreting service
- Access to Housing Options – Improve the availability of 'Housing Options in West London' DVD guide to housing options and support".
- Email – Have a dedicated email address, ensure all emails received are responded to, and have a standard acknowledgement email stating when a full response can be expected, as well as a standardised response for follow up emails regarding appointments
- Telephone - Review and standardise the handling of telephone enquiries to ensure helpful and consistent advice and information is provided, and a review the offer to return phone calls as policy or on request, as an anti-poverty measure.

The 2006/07 Acclaim Benchmarking Survey of Housing Needs Services in the West London boroughs was carried out to assess the strengths and weaknesses within housing needs services across the sub region. The main findings for Harrow are listed below.

- One of the least expensive boroughs in terms of homelessness prevention, spending £1,310.22 per casework intervention.

-
- The lowest staffing and overheads costs per successful casework intervention.
 - A relatively high number of preventions for other unspecified reasons (15.80%) compared to other boroughs. Running costs for prevention measures such as the Sanctuary Scheme average £2,017, nearly twice as much as the next highest borough.
 - Second only to Ealing, Harrow spends the least on prevention, advice and assessment combined (per 1000 adjusted population).
 - It takes 43 days to issue an s184 decision, suggesting that this is an area where the council could aim to improve, and in future, adopt processes used in the boroughs that take a shorter time. Harrow is the quickest borough at s202 reviews, taking just 28 days to make a decision.
 - Harrow's total costs per unit of providing interim and temporary accommodation are relatively low at £13,424.42. However, as income is dependent on location and size of properties, this can make comparisons through the sub-region difficult. While Harrow's costs are relatively low, the long-term TA is exclusively HALS, meaning that the HB income is also lower.
 - In comparison to other boroughs in the sub region, Harrow has the lowest percentage of people leaving temporary accommodation in less than 6 months (7.41%) and the highest percentage of people leaving temporary accommodation after more than 5 years since acceptance (48.15%).

1.4 Strategic context (Local)



The new local Housing Strategy for Harrow was developed in 2007 after significant consultation and this contains a key objective around homelessness:

‘To tackle homelessness and high demand, while reducing the use of temporary accommodation,’ through:

Priority 1: Prevent homelessness through support and housing options

Priority 2: Tackle high demand

Priority 3: Reduce the use of temporary accommodation (reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010)

Another priority is eliminating the use of bed and breakfast and managing a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation. We also know that BME communities are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

Below are some of the actions under each priority:

Priority: Prevent homelessness through support and housing options
Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop supported lodging schemes for homeless 16 and 17 year olds• Maximise the use of Finders' Fee (now Harrow Letstart) scheme• Ensure repeat homelessness stays at zero in line with Supporting People strategy• Implement Homeless Employment Link Project
Priority: Tackle high demand
Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the shortage of affordable housing with all groups, and particularly BME groups, to better understand demand and alternative housing options• Distribute Housing Options DVD
Priority: Reduce use of temporary accommodation
Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out a census of temporary accommodation• Initiate and further develop private sector lettings scheme• Implementation of West London temporary to permanent housing scheme
Options not adopted and why:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private sector leasing schemes: the Council already has a satisfactory Housing Associations Leasing scheme

The 2008-2013 Homelessness Strategy will complement and expand on the priorities set in the local Housing Strategy. It will also be the parent strategy to the Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan and the Overcrowding Action Plan.

1.5 Legal Context

The legislation that covers the Council's main duties in respect of homelessness is Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). Prior to its enactment, all households that were accepted as homeless had the right to permanent housing. Following the legislative changes in 1997, Councils were placed under a duty to temporarily accommodate homeless households that they deemed to be in "priority need". Access to permanent social housing is now administered on a basis of "reasonable preference" via the choice based lettings scheme (as per Part VI of the Housing Act 1996)¹.

Amendments in the Homelessness Act 2002 have extended the "priority need" groups to include :

- 16 and 17 year olds (except relevant children i.e. those who Social Services have a responsibility under the Children (leaving care) Act 2000)
- People who are considered vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence (or threats of violence)
- People who are vulnerable as a result of spending time in the armed forces, serving time in prison or a care background.

¹ MEI LING LIN V BARNET LONDON BOROUGH MURUDE HASSAN v BARNET LONDON BOROUGH (2006) [2006] EWHC 1041

Should we find an applicant intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance with a priority need for accommodation, the Council has a duty under section 190 (2) to:

- Secure that accommodation is available for the applicants occupation for such period as it considers will give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to secure accommodation
- Provide the applicant, or secure that the applicant is provided with, advice and assistance in any attempts they may make to ensure accommodation becomes available for their accommodation

Where the applicant is deemed to be intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and does not have a priority need, the Council has a duty under section 190 (3) to provide advice and assistance in any attempts by the applicant to secure accommodation for their occupation.

1.6 Approach to review and strategy development

The process began with a review of the evidence base, sourced from a range of data:

- Housing Needs Assessment 2006
- P1E data and internal housing data (from Anite and Locata)
- Internal data from other sources: Supporting People; Teenage Pregnancy Unit; Drug and Alcohol Team; Asylum Team; Children's Services; Adults Services; Housing Advice Centre; Enabling Team
- External data from: Office for National Statistics (ONS); Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD); Probation Service; RSLs; other agencies providing homelessness services e.g. Single Homeless Forum

The detailed findings are set out in Section 3 of this document.

Consideration was then given to findings from sub-regional benchmarking by Acclaim and the mystery shopping exercise (details at section 1.2).

A multi-agency group attended an away-day on Temporary Accommodation reduction strategies in January 2008, facilitated by CLG. The outcomes from this event are reflected in the review at section 7.3.

The process also included a review of the previous Homelessness Strategy action plan (at section 5.1 and appendix 8) and current performance (at section 5.3).

The CLG Homelessness Strategy Health Check was used to identify any gaps in both the review and service provision. The recommendations from the health check are reflected in section 5.4.

The key outcomes of this process, along with consultation with staff and stakeholders, have been used to inform the new homelessness strategy 2008-13 and action plan.

1.7 Partnership and Consultation

The CLG have placed an increased emphasis on both partnership working and local authorities' strategic housing role in guidance released to assist in the completion of the

homelessness strategy. We have employed a range of methods to engage all groups upon whom the final strategy will impact. Some of the successes we have had with our consultation process include:

- 25% of front line staff engaged through Staff Sounding Boards
- Over 60 attendees at our Homelessness Strategy Conference, as well as key speakers from the Homelessness Action Team and the Harrow Homeless Forum
- Multi-agency Project Board set up to direct the work of the strategy
- All Housing Service Managers surveyed as to their thoughts on homelessness in Harrow
- Presentations to forums including the multi-agency partnerships of the Harrow Homeless Forum and the Partnership for Older People (POP) housing sub-group
- Over 500 responses from service users who were surveyed via the last edition of Homeseeker News, and invited to Focus Groups (Homeseeker News is distributed to everyone on the housing register)
- Focus Groups held with the Housing Advice Centre staff
- All agencies integral to homeless prevention surveyed and invited to join the Project Board
- Private landlords surveyed at the Private Landlords Forum, with over 180 attendees over the 2 sessions
- Forums held with young people and teenage parents facilitated by the Connexions Service
- Feedback from tenants' representatives

We strongly believe that the strategy must be owned by partners to ensure the success of the 5-year strategy. The partnership approach which we have employed to inform the review and the strategy will ensure that partners and stakeholders, as well as staff and service users, feel that they have had the opportunity to feed into the process and shape the strategy according to their experiences, aspirations and potential future needs.

2. Executive Summary

This review will be used to inform the 2008 – 2013 Homelessness Strategy, ensuring that our action plan appropriately reflects the need in the Borough, based on a robust evidence base.

This review aims to analyse performance of the previous 5-year Homelessness Strategy, as well as looking at current performance indicators and trends to predict future need and demand in the borough from different groups. The review is informed by internal monitoring data, as well as a comprehensive programme of consultation with staff, customers and partners from across the West London sub-region.

The housing needs context in Harrow is changing. Since the last homelessness strategy, we have seen an increase in the BME population, while we believe the greatest increase has been in Somali and Polish groups. Each newly arriving group brings new housing pressures and needs, which the borough must respond to. Harrow has a higher score in the 2007 update of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, highlighting the fact that there are more areas within the borough suffering from deprivation than in 2005. There is also a direct correlation between the areas in Harrow that are most deprived in terms of health and education, and concentrations of people in TA. Despite this, Harrow is still the 27th least deprived Borough in London out of 33 total (205th least deprived out of 354 regions nationally).

Harrow has a particular set of housing pressures in the context of London . Only 11% of housing in the borough is social rented stock, with 89% being in private ownership. The Housing Needs Assessment 2006 estimates that there is a shortfall of 2,303 units of affordable housing each year across the borough, meaning that the private sector has become key in meeting the housing need for households in Harrow. There is a need to increase the amount of social housing within the borough, particularly properties with 3 and 4 bedrooms.

From a peak of performing well in 2004/05, the Council has recently slipped in terms of homelessness performance. There was an increase in Bed and Breakfast placements over the last 3 years, from a baseline of 0 households in 2005, to 73 at year end 2008. In total, there are 1,058 households in temporary accommodation at the 31st March 2008, which represents an 18% decrease (from a baseline figure of 1,293) since the 50% reduction target was introduced in January 2005. 64% of all households in TA are from an ethnic minority, while the average time spent in TA is 4.5 years.

There has been a steady increase in applications and acceptances since 2005/06. The figures show that from 2002/03, to 2005/06, homeless acceptances declined. However, recent figures are now more in line with the peak of 2002/03. The loss of private rented accommodation accounts for the highest amount of homelessness presentations in Harrow, making up roughly 50% of the total applications since 2005. Repeat homelessness has remained low, with only 4 recorded cases since 2003/04.

Affordability is one of the main issues within the Borough. Only 44% of working households within the Borough could afford to buy their own home, while many see intermediate housing as unaffordable also. Private sector rents are significantly higher than those

charged by social landlords, with rents on 1 bedroom properties 58% higher in the private sector, and rents on 3 bedroom properties 61% higher. House prices on the whole have risen by 60% between 2001 and 2006.

Following the analysis of available data, a number of consultation events were held to seek the views of partners, agencies, staff and customers on the key homelessness issues in the borough, and which are more likely to be prominent over the next 5 years. These events allowed us to work in partnership with stakeholders, to identify issues, and propose solutions.

Throughout the consultation, a number of issues were repeatedly raised. The majority of people felt that there was an increased need for closer partnership working with private landlords, as they represent a large supply of stock within the borough. There needs to be more options for both tenants and landlords, with more viable options to entice landlords into letting their properties to people in receipt of housing benefit.

Improved communication was high on the agenda for all groups, directed towards different audiences. Firstly, we need to be promoting realistic expectations for applicants and people who are in housing need, around the availability of social housing in Harrow. It was also suggested that we should be more pro-active in speaking to young people in schools and colleges. This would assist in raising the general awareness in Harrow about the realities of social housing, and what the expectations of the service should be.

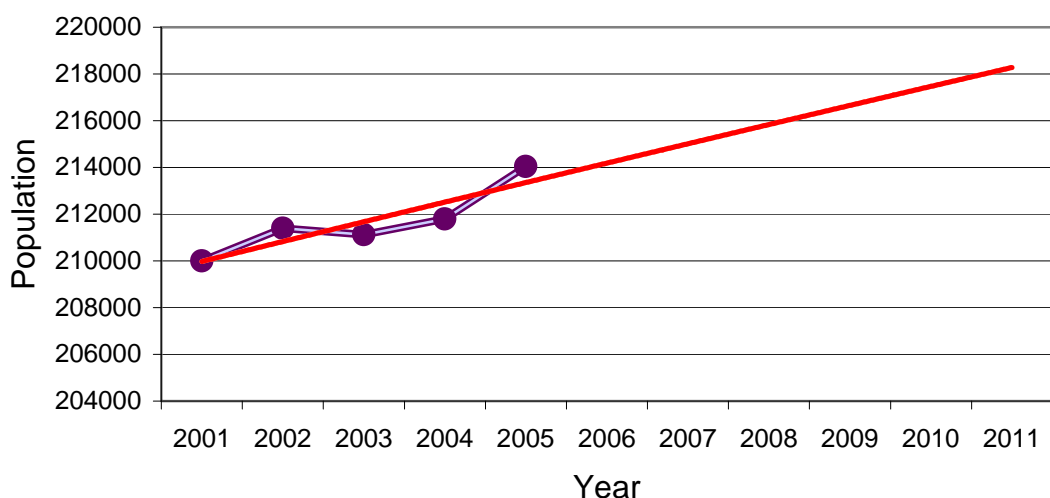
Services such as mediation and debt advice should be promoted, as family exclusions and rent/mortgage arrears are the main reasons for homelessness in Harrow. These services need to be widely advertised and available to all.

3. Homelessness in Harrow

3.1 The Borough of Harrow

The population of Harrow has marginally changed since 2001, increasing by 2%. In terms of population, Harrow is the 9th smallest borough in London. It is estimated that the population could reach 218,900 by 2011².

Population of Harrow 2001-2005



Source: Mid-2005 to mid-2006 population estimates, ONS

Harrow has a relatively young population – 63% of residents are under 45 years. The largest age group in Harrow is the 30-44 age group. The 25-44 age group will increase by at least 9% from 2001-2013. The 45-64 age group is expected to increase by 13%³.

Population of Harrow by Age

Age Group	Number	%
0-15	41,988	19.6
16-29	41,121	19.2
30-44	50,979	23.8
45-64 (Males), 45-59 (Females)	44,453	20.8
65 + (Males), 60 + (Females)	35,495	16.6
TOTAL	214,036	100

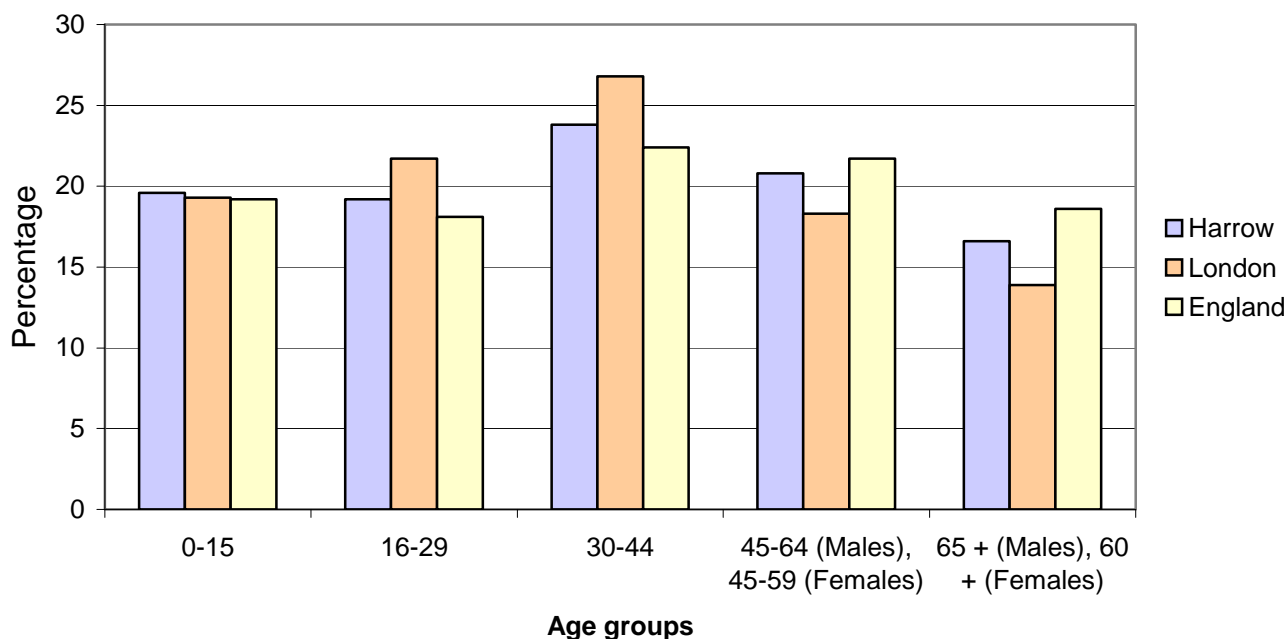
Source: ONS

² GLA 2006 Round of Demographic Projections

³ GLA 2006 Round of Demographic Projections

63% of Harrow's population consists of residents under the age of 45. This percentage is higher than the national figure of 60%. In contrast, there are a lower proportion of residents over 45 years in Harrow (37%) when compared with the national percentage of 40%. Regionally, there is a higher percentage of residents over 45 in Harrow than in London as a whole (32%).

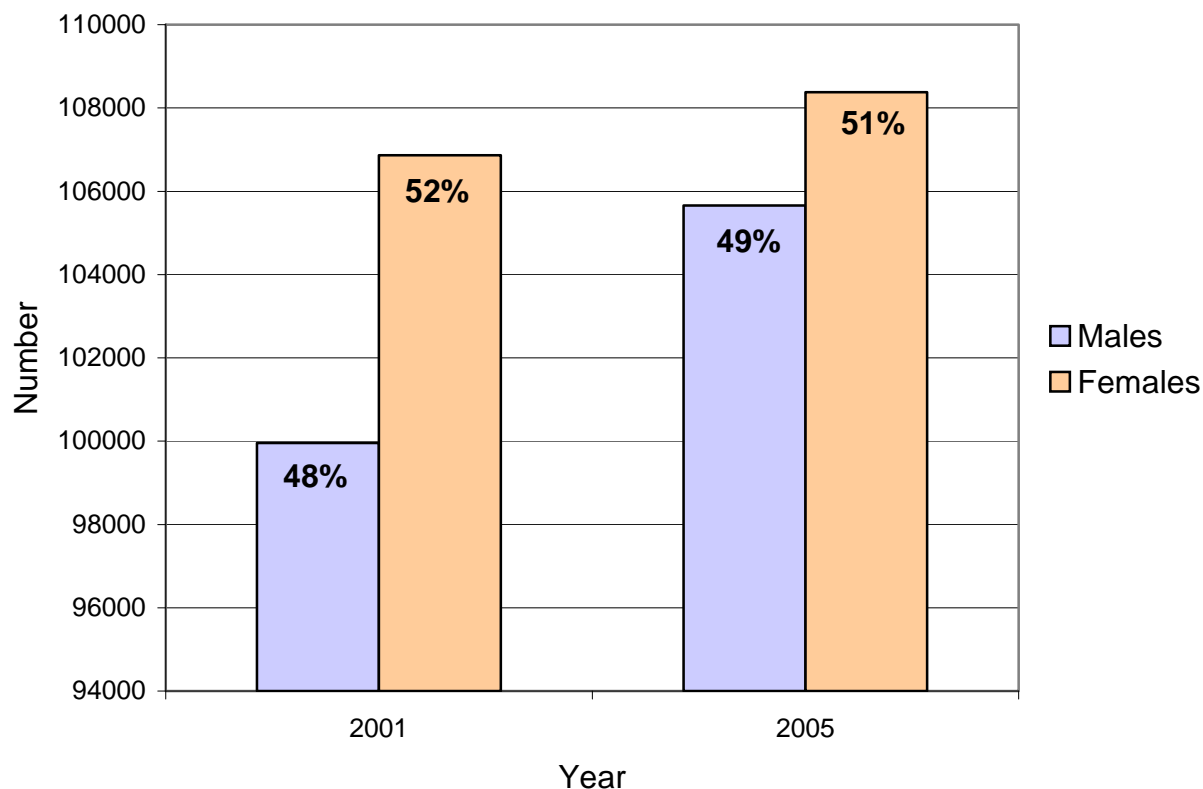
Age of Population in Harrow – Regional and National Context



Source: Resident Population Estimates by Broad Age Band (Mid 2005), ONS

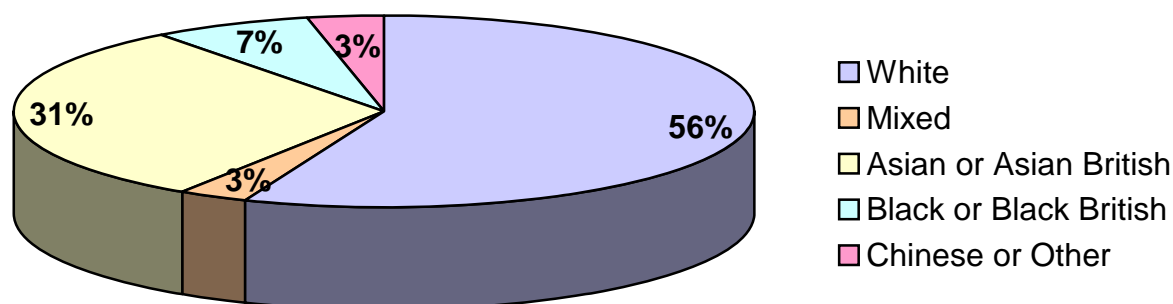
The graph below shows that the female population has decreased by 1% since census data in 2001. However just over half of the population in Harrow is female. 11.9% of males and females are aged 30-44, and 11.2% of males are aged 45-64. Just over a tenth (10.5%) of Harrow's female population are over the age of 60. A third (33%) of men and 30% of women are of working age.

Gender Profile of Harrow 2001 and 2005



Source: Neighbourhood statistics, ONS

Ethnicity Profile of Harrow

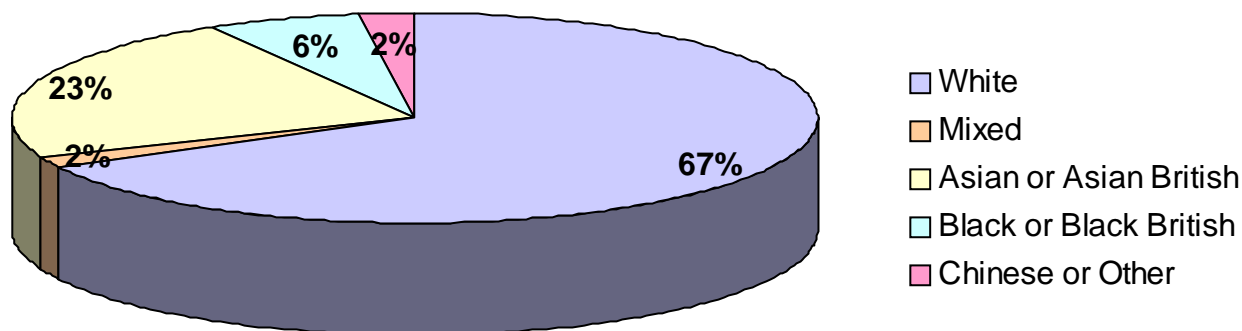


Source: Resident Population Estimates by Ethnic Group (Percentages), ONS 2005

Overall, 44% of residents are from an ethnic minority group. According to the latest population estimates, the white population has decreased by 2.2% since the 2001 census, and the mixed, Asian and Black population has increased slightly. Chinese and other ethnic

groups have had the smallest increase. In general, the BME household is more likely to consist of larger families, and to be living in private rented housing.⁴ The HNA 2006 shows the distribution of housing by ethnic group. Non-BME households occupy 67% of housing in the borough. We believe the fastest growing communities to be Polish and Somalian.

Percentage of Households by Ethnicity

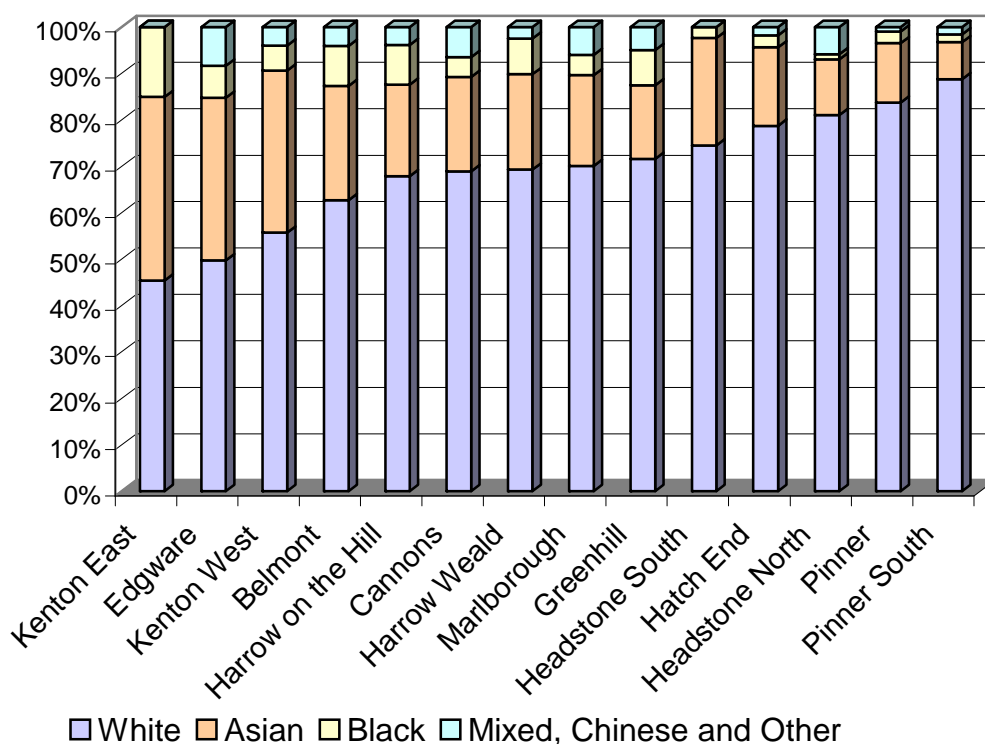


Source: Housing Needs Assessment 2006

Households of varying ethnicity are spread across the borough, but higher concentrations of ethnic groups are found in particular wards. More than half of households in Kenton East and Edgware wards (54.6% and 50.2% respectively) are of BME background. The highest concentrations of non-BME households are in the Pinner South and Pinner wards.

⁴ Harrow Needs Assessment, October 2007

Ethnicity Profile by ward



Source: Housing Needs Assessment, 2006

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. These areas are known as Super Output Areas, and were designed to improve the reporting of small areas statistics in England and Wales. The IMD is made up of the lower layer of Super Output Areas (SOA's), which consist of defined areas with a minimum population of 1000. There are 32,482 lower level SOA's in England, and contrary to popular belief, they are not defined by neighbourhoods. Instead they are a statistical geography defined by stability and uniformity of areas. There are 137 lower level SOA's in Harrow.

London has 482 of the 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) in England. These areas are concentrated in inner London Boroughs, particularly in the innermost North East Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney. 8.7% of London's LSOA's are in the 20% least deprived in England.

Within the West London Sub-region, the most deprived areas are in the north of Kensington and Chelsea, the north of Hammersmith and the south of Brent.

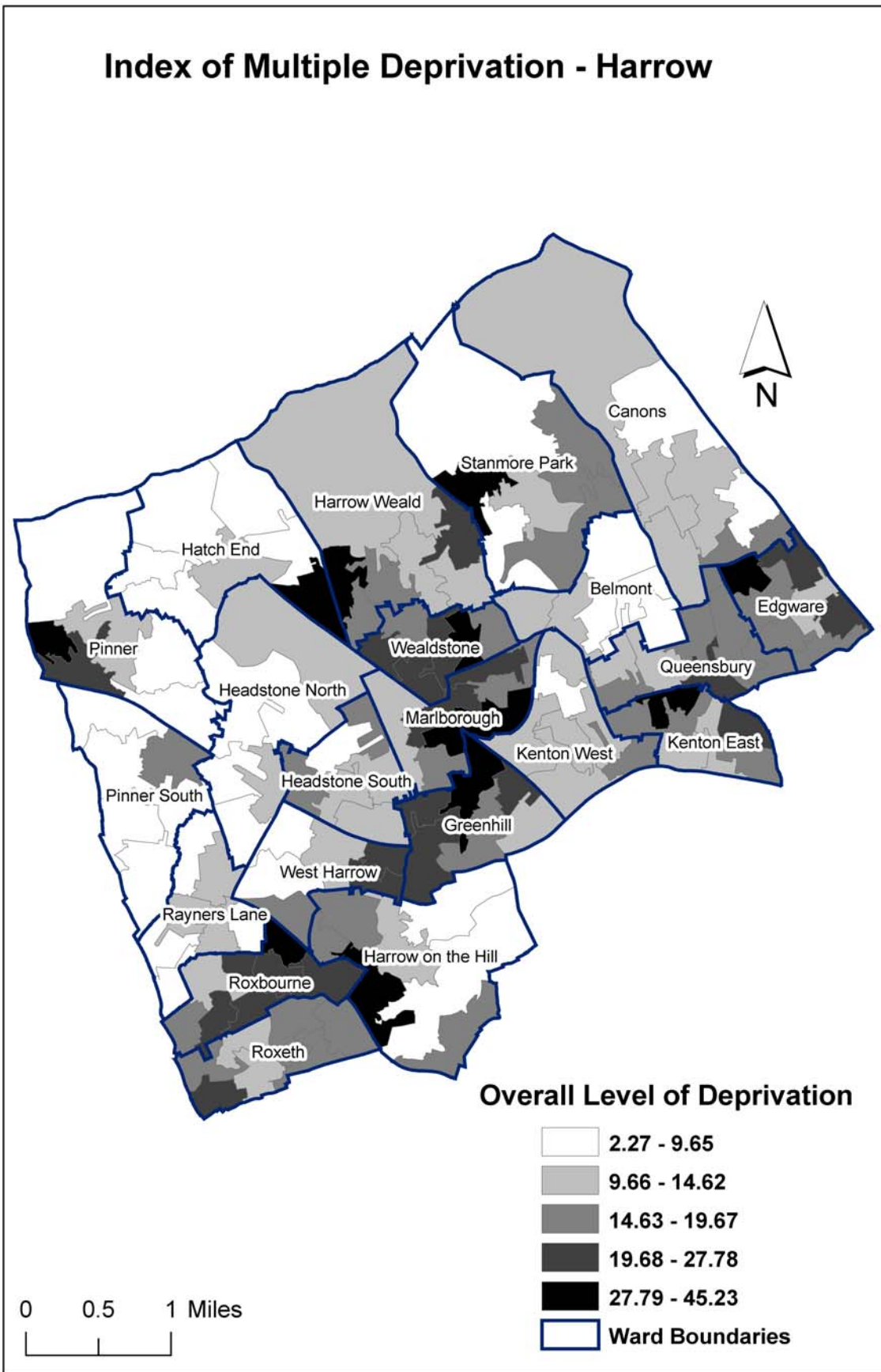
There have been some changes across London throughout the period 2004-2007. The table below highlights the main changes in the areas defined as being the most deprived in London, as well as the national ranking.

2004			2007		
LA Name	National Rank	London Rank	LA Name	National Rank	London Rank
City of London	226	28	City of London	252 (+26)	32 (+4)
Barking and Dagenham	42	11	Barking and Dagenham	22 (-20)	7 (-4)
Barnet	193	24	Barnet	128 (-65)	21 (-3)
Bexley	212	25	Bexley	194 (-18)	25 (-)
Brent	81	15	Brent	53 (-28)	12 (-3)
Bromley	238	31	Bromley	228 (-10)	29 (-2)
Camden	19	7	Camden	57 (+38)	13 (+4)
Croydon	140	21	Croydon	125 (-15)	20 (-1)
Ealing	99	16	Ealing	84 (-15)	17 (+1)
Enfield	104	18	Enfield	74 (-30)	16 (-2)
Greenwich	41	10	Greenwich	24 (-17)	8 (-2)
Hackney	5	2	Hackney	2 (-3)	1 (-1)
Hammersmith & Fulham	65	14	Hammersmith & Fulham	59 (-6)	14 (-)
Haringey	13	5	Haringey	18 (+5)	5 (-)
Harrow	232	29	Harrow	205 (-27)	27 (-2)
Havering	214	26	Havering	200 (-14)	26 (-)
Hillingdon	166	23	Hillingdon	157 (-9)	24 (+1)
Hounslow	102	17	Hounslow	105 (+3)	19 (+2)
Islington	6	3	Islington	8 (+2)	4 (+1)
Kensington and Chelsea	116	19	Kensington and Chelsea	101 (-15)	18 (-1)
Kingston upon Thames	266	32	Kingston upon Thames	245 (-21)	31 (-1)
Lambeth	23	8	Lambeth	19 (-4)	6 (-2)
Lewisham	57	13	Lewisham	39 (-18)	11 (-2)
Merton	220	27	Merton	222 (+2)	28(+1)
Newham	11	4	Newham	6 (-5)	3 (-1)
Redbridge	163	22	Redbridge	143 (-20)	22 (-)
Richmond upon Thames	301	33	Richmond upon Thames	309 (+8)	33 (-)
Southwark	17	6	Southwark	26 (+9)	9 (+3)
Sutton	236	30	Sutton	234 (-2)	30 (-)
Tower Hamlets	4	1	Tower Hamlets	3 (-1)	2 (+1)
Waltham Forest	47	12	Waltham Forest	27 (-20)	10 (-2)
Wandsworth	128	20	Wandsworth	144 (-16)	23 (+3)
Westminster	39	9	Westminster	72 (-33)	15 (+6)

* Note: The higher the figure, the better the area across the 7 indicators, therefore Hackney and Tower Hamlets have the highest levels of deprivation across London over the 3 year period, while Richmond-upon-Thames, City of London, and Kingston-upon-Thames have the lowest levels of deprivation. Figures in brackets show the change from 2004 figures, to 2007 position, with red showing a negative change, and black showing a static or positive change.

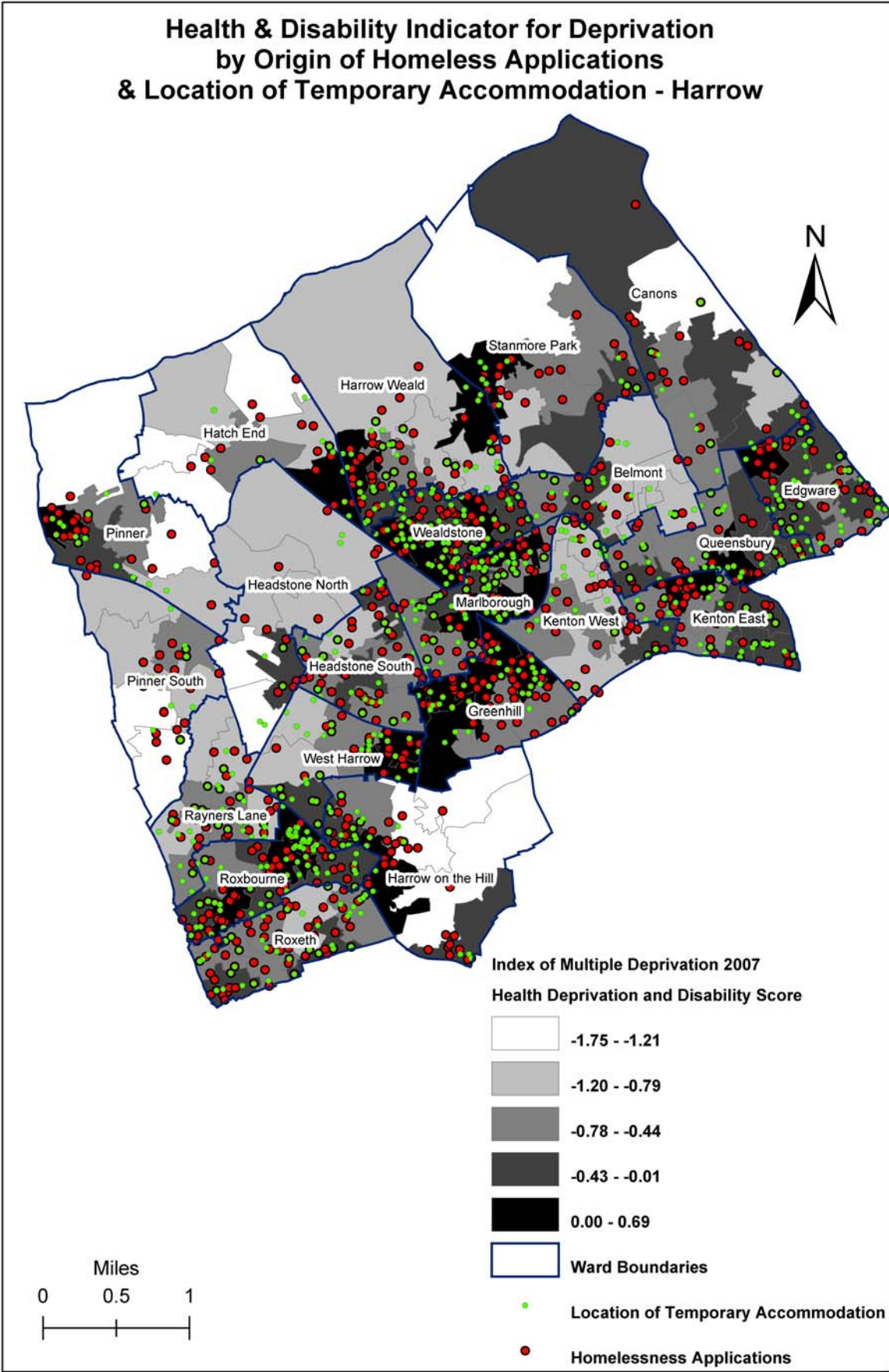
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Index of Multiple Deprivation - Harrow



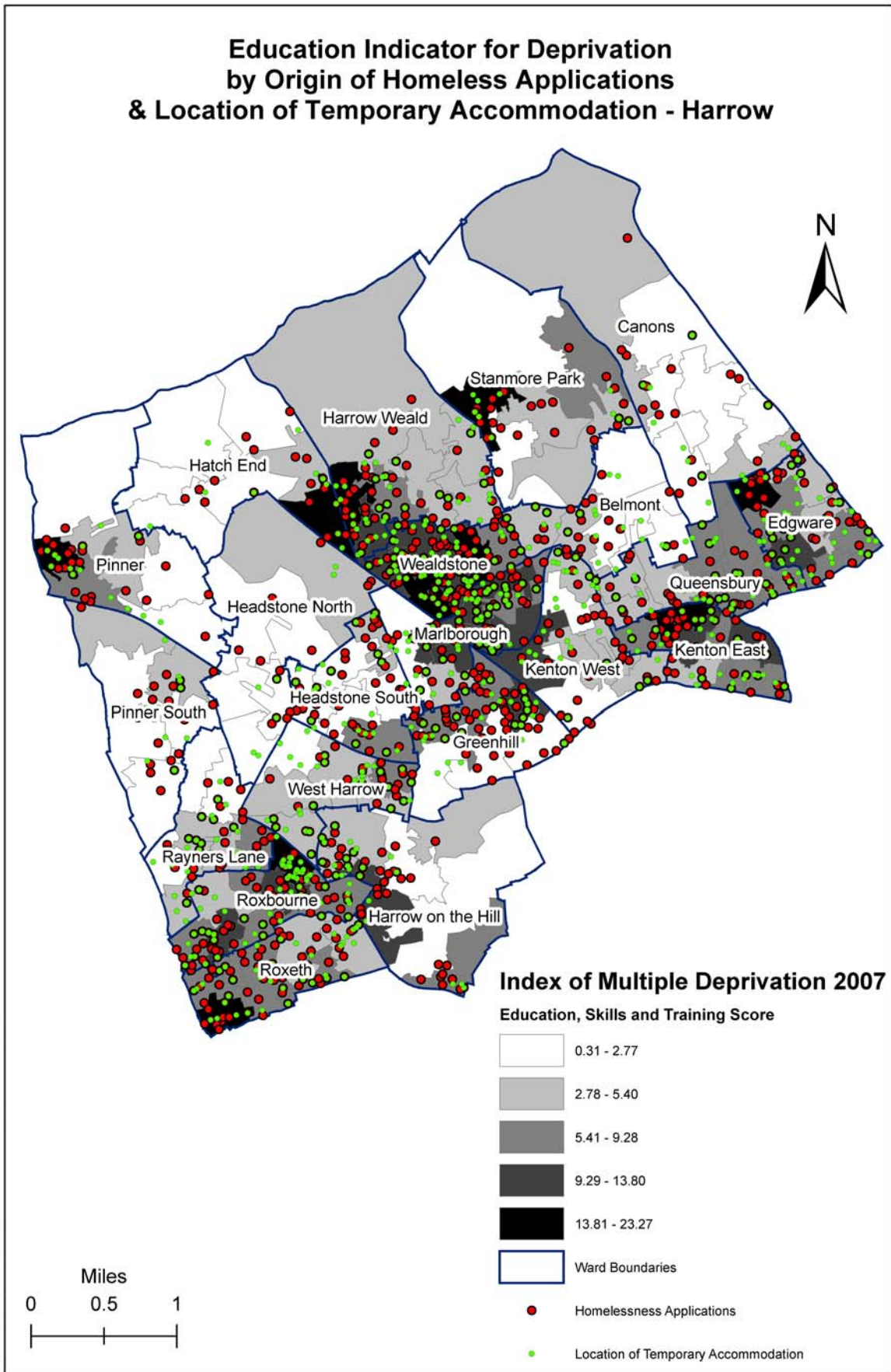
Health & Disability Indicator for Deprivation by Origin of Homeless Applications & Location of Temporary Accommodation - Harrow

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Education Indicator for Deprivation by Origin of Homeless Applications & Location of Temporary Accommodation - Harrow

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3.2 Affordability

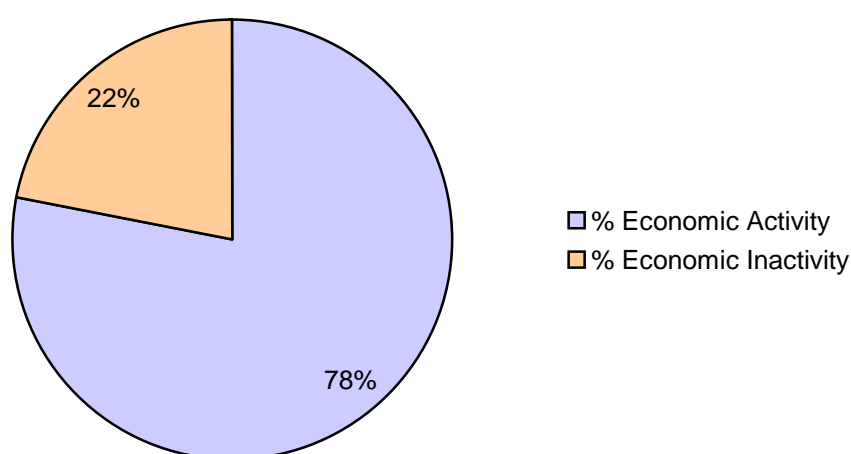
Households headed by someone aged between 30-59 record the highest average household incomes. Families consisting of 2 or more adults, with 2 or more children earn the most in Harrow, with an average annual gross income of £56,813. 22.1% of households earn £60,000 per annum, or more. Households earning the greatest income are resident in the Pinner South, Belmont and Hatch End wards. In contrast, 17.8% of households earn up to £10,000 per annum. The lowest average incomes were found in the wards of Edgware and Kenton East. Households with the lowest incomes are most likely to live in social housing.⁵

Of Harrow's population, 63.8% of residents are of working age, of which 33% are male. 12% of Harrow residents claim a benefit such as job seekers, incapacity benefit, lone parent, carer and disability benefit.⁶

Analysis of the indices of deprivation indicates that income deprivation has significantly increased since the last figures in 2004. Income deprivation in relation to children has increased considerably, particularly in the Marlborough, Roxbourne and Hatch End wards. This is despite the fact that Hatch End is home to residents earning the highest incomes. Income affecting older people has dropped slightly in terms of national rankings, but had increased slightly when compared to the London Region.⁷

There are 110,500 economically active residents, as shown in the chart below. The employment rate has increased by 1.4% since 2005/06. The unemployment rate has decreased by 5.3%.

Economic Activity and Inactivity 2006-2007



Source: Worklessness: Summary Statistics, April 2006 - March 2007, ONS

⁵ Harrow Housing Needs Assessment October 2007

⁶ Benefits Data Indicators: Working Age Client Group, 2005, ONS

⁷ Indices of Deprivation 2007, CLG

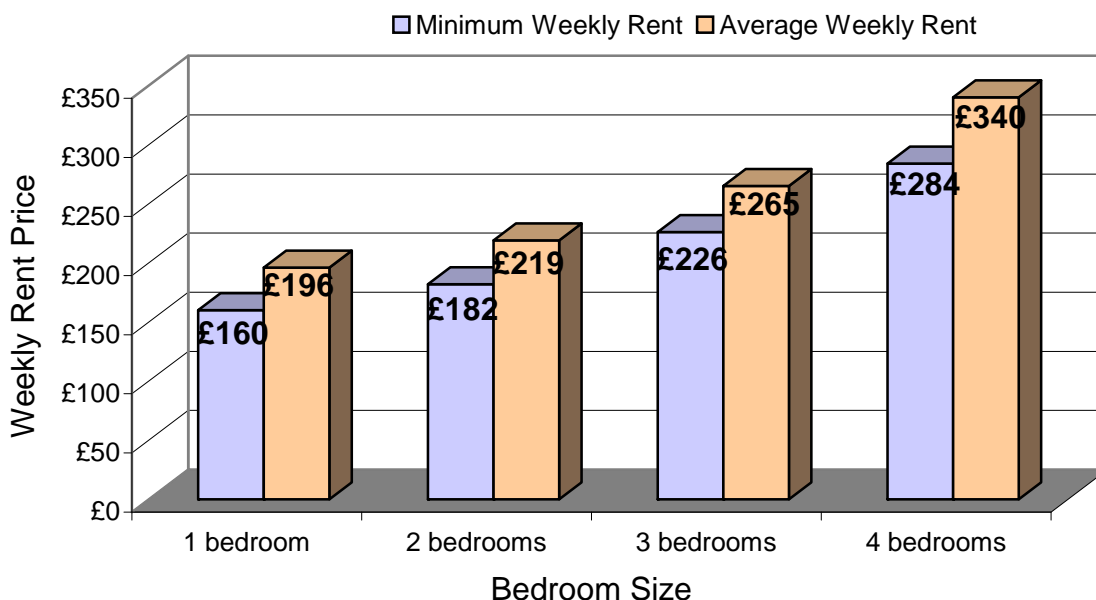
The Geography of Affordable and Unaffordable Housing (2005) stated that 56.2% of working households between the ages of 20-39 years would not be able to afford to buy a home at lower quartile house prices. Moving to another borough would increase the proportion of households nationally that could afford market housing to 47.5%.⁸

The report details trends in housing market affordability, and the challenges young working households face in buying a home at market price. The apparent gap in affordability leaves many households of all ages striving to obtain intermediate housing, as council housing stock numbers have reduced.

As with most London boroughs, Harrow faces challenges to ensure its residents are appropriately housed. Harrow's council stock is reducing at a slow rate each year, and at the present time the council is not meeting its target to complete 200 affordable homes per annum, as outlined by the Greater London Authority. There is an overall shortfall of affordable housing in Harrow, of 2,303 homes each year, identified by the Housing Needs Assessment (2006). The report also highlighted the need for additional affordable homes for large families.

The estate and letting agents survey suggested that private rents in Harrow start from £640 a month for a 1-bedroom property to £1136 a month for a 4-bedroom property. In terms of affordability, 69.6% of households in private rented accommodation would be unable to rent privately without HB assistance. 20.7% of households are living in unsuitable private rented accommodation, assessed using the 9 criteria identified by CLG. 35.6% of private tenants are in receipt of housing benefit.⁹

Minimum and Average Private Property Rents



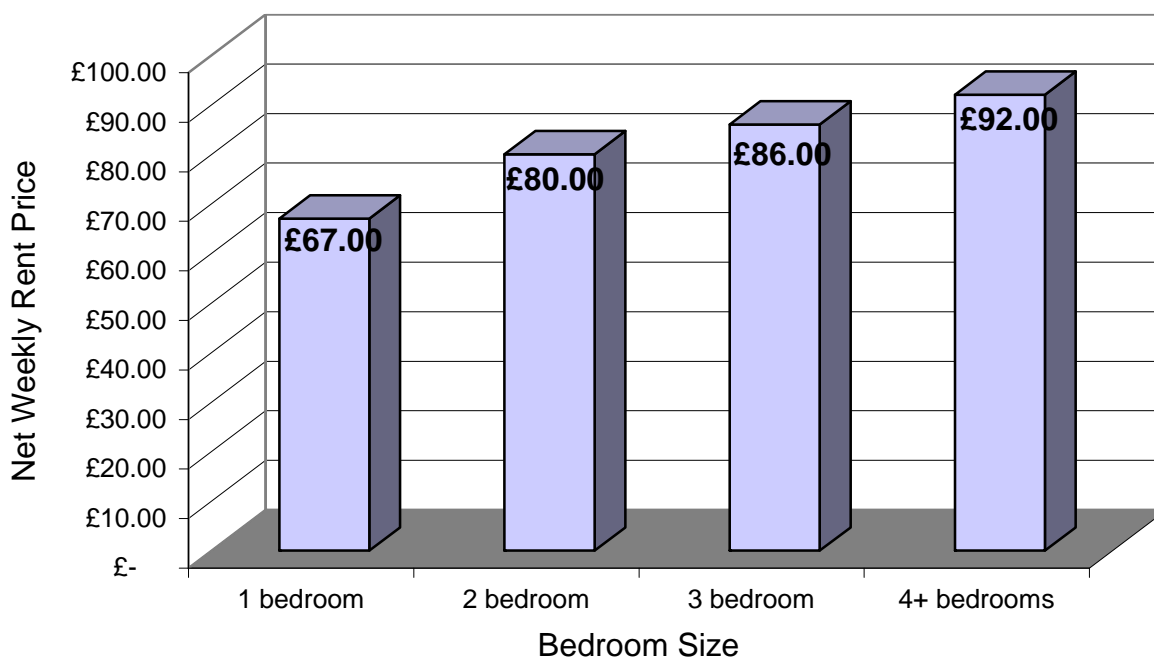
Source: Housing Needs Assessment, 2006

⁸ The Geography of Affordable and Unaffordable Housing, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005

⁹ Housing Needs Assessment, 2006

The graph below shows the considerable difference between private and social housing weekly rents, where social rents are much more affordable. For instance, the minimum weekly rent for a 1-bedroom property in the private sector is 58% higher than the social housing net weekly rent for the same sized property. For a larger, family-sized property, the percentage is even greater – 61% higher for a 3-bedroom property.

Social Housing Net Weekly Rents



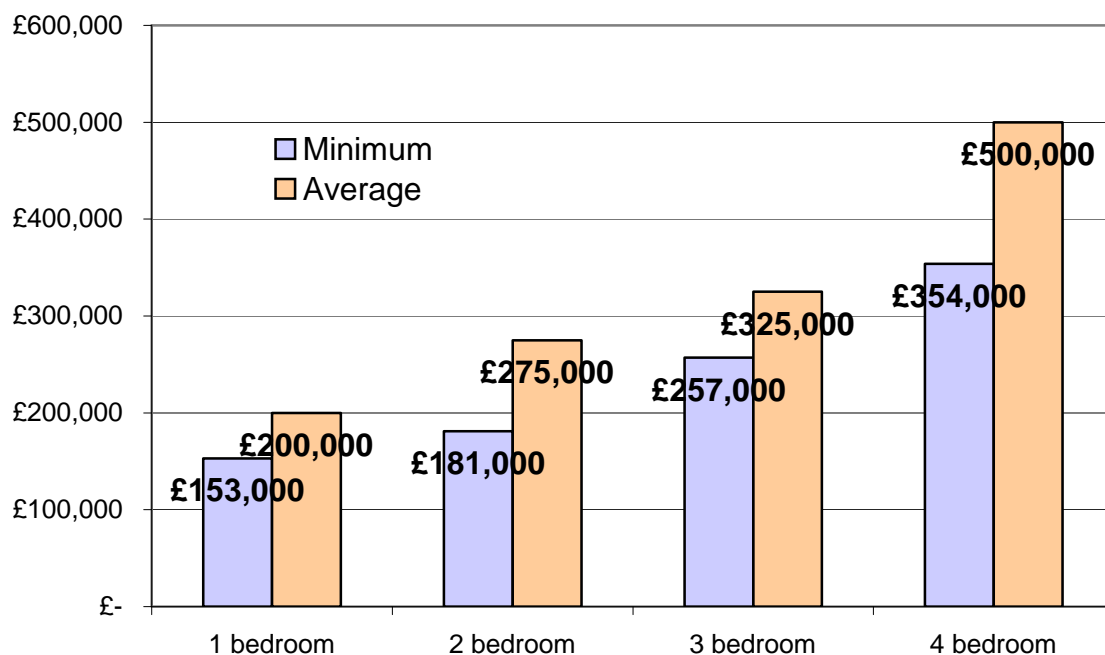
Source: Harrow Needs Assessment 2006

According to the survey of estate and lettings agents, property prices in Harrow start from £153,000 for a one-bedroom property, up to £354,000 for a four-bedroom property. Average property prices were found to be between 25-50% higher than the minimum property prices.

House prices have risen 60.2% between 2001-2006, above the rate of increase for London. Sales of flats made up 32.3% of total sales, and the average price was £204,862.

Pinner, Stanmore and Harrow on the Hill were the most expensive places to live within the borough.

Minimum and Average Property Prices in Harrow



Source: Survey of Estate and Lettings Agents (2006), Harrow Needs Assessment 2006

There are 84,614 dwellings in Harrow. 89% of those are in the private sector, 12% of which is privately rented. Only 6% are council properties and 5% are housing association properties. These high levels of home ownership place great pressures upon making rented accommodation more widely available and accessible to those on lower incomes.

3.3 Temporary accommodation

The number of people housed in temporary accommodation by the council was 1,058 at 31st March 2008. This was a 3.2% reduction since the same date in 2007, and an 18% reduction since the inception of the CLG target (in January 2005) to reduce the number of households in TA by 50%. Over a 5-year period, B&B figures reduced gradually to 0 in 2003/04 and 2004/05. However, numbers have begun to increase recently, from 14 households in B&B at 31st March 2006, to 73 households at 31st March 2008. BME households make up 64% of total households in temporary accommodation. Further analysis shows that the highest proportion of an ethnic group in temporary accommodation have described themselves as Black African, a total of 18%. This group is over-represented in the figures, as population estimates state that there are approximately 3.5% of Black Africans in the borough, and 7% of residents of a Black background.¹⁰

¹⁰ Resident Population Estimates by Ethnic Group (Percentages), ONS 2005

Homeless Applications and Acceptances 2002/03-2007/08

Period	Total Applications	Total Acceptance	Total Acceptance %	Total Acceptances Housed *	Total Housed % *
2002/03	2450	399	16%		
2003/04	1827	263	14%		
2004/05	1993	96	5%		
2005/06	1662	120	7%		
2006/07	1724	159	9%	151	95%
2007/08	1811	221	12.2%	212	96%

*New monitoring mechanism introduced in 2006/07

Source: LBH data

Homeless applications have been slowly increasing since 2005/06. The applicants for 2007/08 account for 1.1% of the total Harrow population aged over 16 years. With regards to homeless applications, 1.2% of the total population were female homeless applicants, and 0.9% of the total population were male.

Homeless acceptances have increased, from 5% in 2004/2005 to 11.75% in 2007/2008. The increase is despite a 45% decrease of people accepted as homeless since 2002/2003. Of these acceptances, 66.9% were female and most applicants were aged between 20-39 years. This accounted for 67% of all acceptances up to 31st March 2008.

Homeless Applications and Acceptances – Breakdown by ethnicity 2007/08

Ethnicity	Applications	Acceptances	% Applications
Total White Population	593	69	11.6
White: British	416	49	11.8
White: Irish	45	4	8.9
White: Other White	132	16	12.1
Total Mixed Population	82	10	12.2
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	24	2	8.3
Mixed: White and Black African	22	2	9.1
Mixed: White and Asian	15	3	20
Mixed: Other Mixed	21	3	14.3
Total Asian Population	361	40	11.1
Asian or Asian British: Indian	110	2	1.8
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	55	5	9.1
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	16	2	12.5
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	180	31	17.2
Total Black Population	447	54	12.1
Black or Black British	10	0	0
Black or Black British: Caribbean	139	14	10.1
Black or Black British: African	236	33	14
Black or Black British: Other Black	62	7	11.3
Total Chinese or Other Ethnic Group Population	94	18	19.1
Chinese	4	0	0
Other Ethnic Group	90	18	20
Not disclosed	234	30	12.8
TOTAL	1811	221	12.2

Source: LBH data

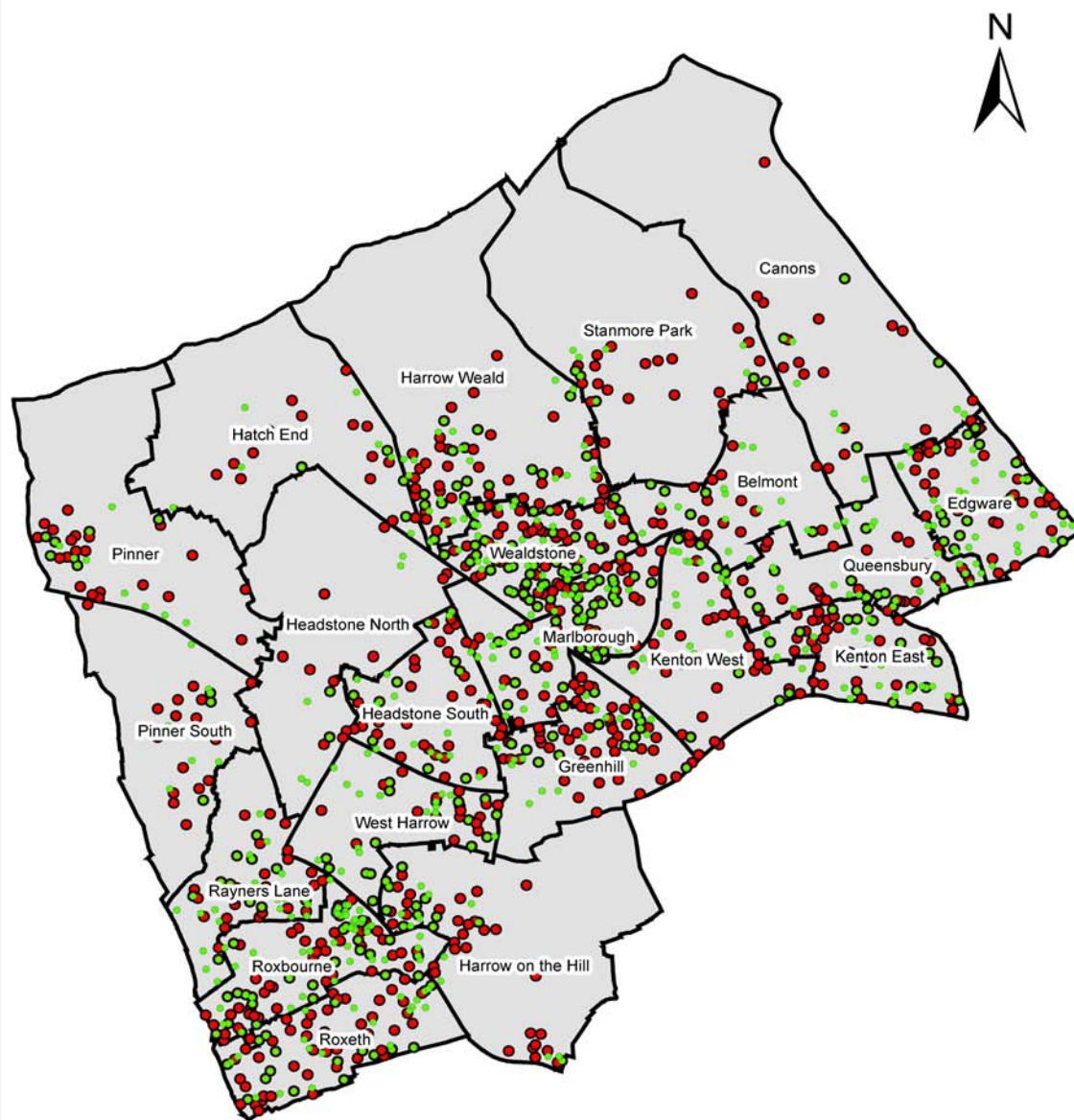
The table above suggests that applicants of an unclassified ethnic group made up 20% of applications accepted, the highest for any ethnic group. The greatest proportion of any single ethnic group making a homeless application, were White British, accounting for 22% of total applicants in the year. In terms of numbers, White British accounted for the most accepted cases.

Applications were concentrated in the south of the Harrow Weald ward, travelling south across the Wealdstone, Marlborough, Greenhill, West Harrow, Rayners Lane, Roxbourne, Roxeth and West of Harrow on the Hill wards. Concentrations were also found in Pinner and to the east of the borough, namely Kenton West, Kenton East, Queensbury and Edgware.

In terms of the location of ethnic groups within the borough, the graph below indicates that more than half of BME households are concentrated in Kenton East and Edgware (adjoining the boroughs of Brent and Barnet). Pinner and Pinner South have the highest concentrations of non-BME households.

Concentrations of BME groups can be compared to the areas of deprivation on the Index of Multiple Deprivation map on page 16, where a similar outcome is depicted. Harrow's ranking in barriers to housing and services as a deprivation indicator has worsened by a significant proportion, from 156th place in 2004 to 69th place in 2007. Eleven of Harrow's super output areas fall within England's 20% most deprived areas, and while this is not on the same level of deprivation seen in some areas nationwide, it still highlights significant pockets of deprivation in Harrow, namely in Hatch End, Harrow Weald and Stanmore Park. The wards with the least amount of homelessness are Headstone North and Canons.

Origin of Homelessness Application & Location of Temporary Accommodation - Harrow



Key

- Homelessness Applications
- Location of Temporary Accommodation

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*140 applications are from other local authorities such as Watford, Three Rivers, Hertsmere, Barnet, Brent, Ealing and Hillingdon. 8 temporary accommodation addresses are in Brent, Ealing and Hertsmere

The table below shows that households of Black background are the largest group in temporary accommodation, accounting for 292 households (27% of total households) in all types of temporary accommodation.

Type of Temporary Accommodation by Type and Ethnicity – 31st March 2008

Ethnicity	Type of Temporary Accommodation					TOTAL
	B&B	Hostels	ASTs	Short Stay	Women's Refuge	
White British	19	13	124	1	1	158
White Irish	2	0	23	0	0	25
White Other	5	4	58	0	0	67
Black British	0	0	6	0	0	6
Black Caribbean	2	4	46	0	0	52
Black African	10	13	171	0	0	194
Black Other	1	3	36	0	0	40
Asian Indian	0	2	32	0	0	34
Asian Pakistani	2	2	32	0	0	36
Asian Bangladeshi	1	0	15	0	0	16
Asian Other	10	3	139	0	0	152
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	1	2	10	0	0	13
Mixed White/Black African	2	2	6	0	0	10
Mixed White/Asian	0	2	2	0	0	4
Mixed Other	0	0	9	0	0	9
Chinese	0	0	2	0	0	2
Other	7	5	100	0	0	112
Not Disclosed	11	11	106	0	0	128
TOTAL	73	66	917	1	1	1058

Source: LBH P1e data

The loss of private rented accommodation has been the main reason for homelessness. Other reasons include the unwillingness of parents, or relatives and friends to accommodate extra households, and the violent breakdown of a relationship with a partner.

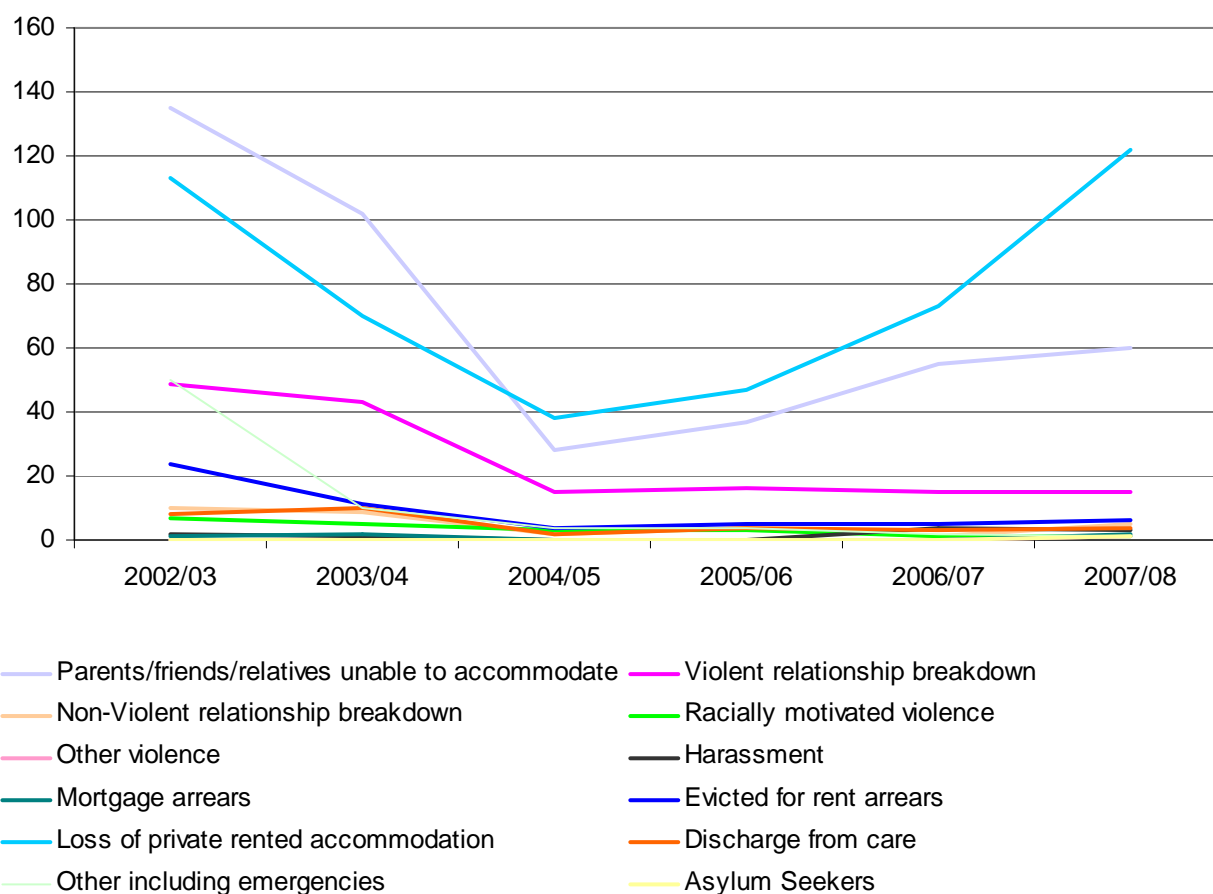
Reasons for Homeless Acceptances 2002/03-2007/08

Reason	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Parents/friends/relatives not willing/able to accommodate	135	102	28	37	55	60
Breakdown of relationship with partner:						
• Violent	49	43	15	16	15	15
• Non-violent	10	9	2	4	1	5
Racially motivated violence	7	5	3	3	1	1
Other violence	0	0	0	0	0	1
Harassment	2	1	0	0	4	3
Mortgage arrears	1	2	0	0	0	2
Evicted for rent arrears	24	11	4	5	5	6
Loss of private rented accommodation	113	70	38	47	73	122
Discharge from care	8	10	2	4	3	4
Other including emergencies	50	10	4	4	2	1
Asylum Seekers leaving NASS	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	399	263	96	120	159	221

Source: LBH data

The table has been reproduced in chart form below. From this it is evident that the loss of private accommodation is now the primary reason for homelessness. The next highest reason is parents, and friends no longer willing to accommodate, whereas this used to be the most common reason for homeless acceptances. Elsewhere in West London, parents/friends no longer willing to accommodate is still the single largest cause of homeless acceptances.

Trends in Reasons for Homeless Acceptances 2002/03-2007/08



Source: LBH data

Since 2006/2007, there were no instances of homeless applicants making more than one successful application, within two years of their first application. In previous years, the level of repeat homelessness has been below 2%, and is on a similar level to other London boroughs within the West London sub-region.

Percentage of repeat homelessness 2003/04-2007/08

Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
%	1	2	1	0	0

Source: LBH data

Average Household Size in Temporary Accommodation

Bed Size	Number of People	Households	Average Household Size
Studio	61	61	1.00
1	18	9	2.00
2	990	358	2.77
3	1455	357	4.08
4	977	172	5.68
5+	797	101	8.91
TOTAL	4194	1058	3.96

Source: LBH data

The average household size in TA is four people to a house. The table below displays information about current tenants in temporary accommodation. The average length of time spent in temporary accommodation is 4.5 years. However, the average time is reduced for those living in smaller properties (such as studio accommodation), as there are fewer tenants in such properties waiting to move on. Time spent in temporary accommodation for such properties averages 2.4 years. This contrasts with tenants in larger accommodation consisting of 3 bedrooms or more, spending an average of 5.5 years or more.

Length of Time in Temporary Accommodation by Bed Size

Bed size	Number of tenants	Average Days in TA	Average Years in TA
Studio	61	875	2.4
1	9	1312	3.6
2	375	1041	2.9
3	359	2004	5.5
4	178	2171	5.9
5+	103	2189	5.9
TOTAL	1058	1663	4.5

Source: LBH data

Of the total council lettings during 2007/2008, 37% (100 lettings) were allocated to homeless tenants, most of which were 2 bedroom properties, although there were a significant proportion of 1 and 3 bedroom properties. No larger properties were let to homeless tenants, indicating the length of time waiting for a property with 4 bedrooms or more will not be reduced. Housing Association lettings accounted for 29% of all lettings to social rented properties through the council. 43% of Housing Association lettings were allocated to homeless tenants, most of which were 2 bedroom properties. However if you

exclude 1 bedroom lettings, 65% of all family sized lettings were made to homeless applicants.

3.4 Analysis of the waiting list

Locata is a choice-based lettings scheme, which gives the housing applicant the choice of property and area when bidding for social rented properties. Scheme participants include applicants from 6 local authorities, and 9 RSL's within the West London sub-region. Of the 4,098 homeseekers registered with Locata in Harrow, 58% are within priority bands A-C. The majority are registered within band C, with 2,218 homeseekers. 66% are waiting for a 1 or 2 bedroom property. The largest proportions of homeseekers are white, in particular, of white UK background. However, the majority of Locata homeseekers are of BME background – 67.4% of registrants of various BME backgrounds, compared to 32.6% of non-BME households. 11.6% of homeseekers are under 25 years of age, of which 1.8% are under 20 years. 14% of registrants are aged 40-44 years of age.

Number of Locata Homeseeker Registrations 31st March 2008

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5+ Bed	TOTAL
Band A	8	26	5	4	0	43
Band B	45	57	15	8	4	129
Band C	473	715	593	304	133	2,218
Band D	753	599	310	41	5	1,708
TOTAL	1,279	1,397	923	357	142	4,098

Source: LBH data

Source of Locata Bids 2007/08

Edition	Issues 1-155 Harrow only	Issues% 1-155 Harrow only	Issues 1-155 Total	Harrow bids as % of total
Coupon	48,776	16.52%	485,276	10.05%
Phone	50,729	17.18%	603,563	8.40%
SMS	16,800	5.69%	183,096	9.18%
Staff	12,460	4.22%	138,511	9.00%
Web	166,452	56.38%	2,520,220	6.60%
Grand total	295,234	100.00%	3,930,754	7.50%

Source: LBH data

There were 3,930,754 bids in total, during 2007/08. Harrow's bids made up 7.5% of total bids. 56% of Harrow's bids were online, and these account for 6.6% of all online bids. The data suggests that seeking staff assistance is the least common way of placing a bid, at 4%. 10% of total Locata coupon bids were made by Harrow.

3.5 Lettings

There were 1,533 lets between 2002/03 and 2007/08 (Harrow Council dwellings). A further 84 households were housed through Housing Association nominations, and 55 households were re-housed through out of borough nominations. This compares with a figure of 42 households housed within Harrow through nominations into the borough.

Between 2006 and 2008, there were 124 transfers between Council tenants, with the trends showing most households downsizing through the transfer system

3.6 Housing supply

Levels of affordable housing provided through planning policies have increased from 78 in 2004/2005, to 139 in 2006/2007, an increase of 78%. Current levels need to increase, to accommodate the growing population.

To avoid family division or overcrowding, there is a need for more affordable houses of 4 bedrooms or larger.

The Right to Buy has reduced the number of council homes since its introduction in 1980, and will continue to do so, albeit at a slow rate. The reduction in Right to Buy is an effect of the broader housing market situation i.e. the relatively high cost of houses in Harrow, and a reduction in the RTB discount over previous rates.

Below is a breakdown of Council stock:

Council Stock by bedsize 2001- 2007

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Group Homes*						2	2
Bedsits*						179	179
One Bedroom	2221	2210	2069	2049	2039	1855	1855
Two Bedroom	1885	1842	1590	1559	1539	1522	1518
Three Bedroom	1696	1660	1504	1470	1447	1434	1421
Four + Bedroom	104	104	99	97	97	97	98
Total	5906	5816	5262	5175	5122	5089	5073

*New categories for 2006

Source: LBH data

Currently, there are 28 RSL's recognised by the Housing Corporation as holding stock in Harrow. The table below summarises the breakdown of stock by RSL.

RSL Name	Total stock in Harrow	General Needs	Supported Housing	Social Leasehold
Paddington Churches Housing Association	472	343	129	0
The Guinness Trust	35	35	0	0
Shepherds Bush Housing Association	7	7	0	0
Acton Housing Association	516	495	21	0
English Churches Housing Group	52	52	0	0
Jewish Community Housing Association	32	0	32	0
Dimensions (UK)	6	0	6	0
Peabody Trust	10	10	0	0
Circle Thirty Three Housing Trust	15	15	0	0
Housing 21	7	0	7	0
Sanctuary Housing Association	30	0	30	0
Stadium Housing Association	300	190	110	0
Catalyst Communities Housing Association	50	0	50	0
Metropolitan Housing Trust	370	334	36	0
Harrow Churches Housing Association	231	0	231	0
Haig Homes	24	24	0	0
Pinner House Society	32	0	32	0
Womens Pioneer Housing	20	20	0	0
John Grooms Housing Association	1	1	0	0
Home Group	868	670	198	0
ASRA Greater London	56	22	34	0
Anchor Trust	124	0	124	0
West London YMCA	42	0	42	0
Chiltern Hundreds Charitable	126	126	0	0
Abbeyfield UK	18	0	18	0
Family Mosaic	9	9	0	0
Inquilab	49	49	0	0
Stanmore Christian	47	0	47	0
TOTAL	3,549	2,402	1,147	0

Source: Regulatory and Statistical Returns Survey, Housing Corporation, March 2007

The number of RSL supported housing units in Harrow has more than doubled in the past year, mainly due to the development of a 42 unit foyer for young people on Roxeth Hill. General needs dwellings have also increased by 2.7% since 2006. 41% of general needs housing has two bedrooms. The Greater London Authority (GLA) has set a target for Harrow to complete 400 new homes per annum, of which 50% should be affordable (200 units). In 2006/07 the council fell short of the GLA's target of 200 affordable units completed, although it is worth noting that of the units completed, 81% were social rented. If all units planned for 2008/2009 are completed, the council will exceed the annual affordable housing supply target by 37%. However, 67% will be intermediate housing and only 32% social rented. Compared with 2006/07 figures, the provision of affordable homes will increase by 91% in 2007/08 and 132% in 2008/09 if all units planned are completed.

Proposed completions 2007-2008

Scheme	Number of Dwellings		TOTAL
	General Needs (Social rented)	Intermediate Housing	
Troy House - Elmgrove Road	24	25	49
Mepham Gardens	5		5
BAE Site- The Grove	3	44	47
HCHA Supported Housing Scheme	4		4
Railway Public House- Hatch End		4	4
Roxborough Road	3	6	9
TOTAL	39	79	118

Proposed completions 2008-2009

Scheme	Number of Dwellings		TOTAL
	General Needs (Social rented)	Intermediate Housing	
Pinner Road	27	85	112
Biro Site	51		51
Marsh Road	6	6	12
Raebarn	6	35	41
Kenton Road		10	10
14-20 High Street, Wealdstone		19	19
Texaco Service Station- 50-54 Northolt Road		8	8
29-33 Pinner Road		12	12
Stonegrove Filing Station		9	9
TOTAL	90	184	274

The Honeypot Lane site is an additional site that has not been included in the above table, as the timescale for completion of the scheme is currently 2008-2012. However, there may be phased completion of some units during 2008/09.

In terms of projecting future supply, the table below shows sites, which have been developed between 2006 and 2008. The figures given for the 2008/09 programme, through to the 2011/12 programme, are projections only.

Affordable housing completions and projections

Year	Social	Shared Ownership	Total Affordable Housing
2006/07	116	27	143
2007/08	48	79	127
2008/09	89	143	232
2009/10	164	100	264
2010/11	317	225	542
2011/12	279	142	421

4. The needs of identified groups

Households including a vulnerable resident (with mental health needs or a physical disability) are more likely, on average, to be living in unsuitable housing. Harrow Council and its partners currently provide housing related support to 1859 vulnerable people at any one time, to enable them to retain their independence. Housing related support is currently provided through either accommodation based services (74%) or floating support (19%) to the following:

- single homeless people and families (68 units);
- older people (1320 units);
- people with drug and alcohol dependency (35 units);
- women fleeing domestic violence (22 units);
- young people at risk and leaving care (93 units);
- ex-offenders (101 units of support);
- teenage parents (6 units);
- refugees and asylum seekers (20 units);
- people with learning disabilities (57 units);
- people with mental health needs (137 units);
- people with physical and sensory disabilities (36 units);
- people with HIV and AIDS (12 units).

The needs of individual groups are analysed below.

4.1 Rough sleepers

The last rough sleeper count was carried out in collaboration with the West London YMCA on the 29th October 2004, when one person was found to be sleeping rough. There are no further rough sleeper counts scheduled, as figures are consistently less than 10 rough sleepers. According to P1e data and Supporting People figures, four people had reported that they had been sleeping rough the night before upon presentation to the Council during 2007/08.

The discussion paper *'Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the streets to independent living and opportunity'*¹¹ outlines the need to update the previous strategy on rough sleepers, in order to further reduce rough sleeping and keep figures to a minimum. This will be made easier with the introduction of the Supporting People programme. The government is seeking to improve the outcomes for former rough sleepers by providing employment, skills and health opportunities, as a more holistic, multi-agency approach to the issue.

4.2 Young people

The council accepted a homelessness duty to 16 young people less than 20 years of age in 2007/08. As at the 31st March 2008, 4 young people aged 16-17 years are in B&B temporary accommodation. The main reason for homelessness was parents or friends and relatives no longer willing to accommodate them. The young people in temporary accommodation are mostly female, of BME background, and are in full-time education. There are 66 home seekers under 20 years of age on the waiting list. 39% are non-BME and 60% are waiting for a 1-bedroom property.

There are currently 21 units at the YMCA foyer available for Harrow 16-17 year olds, with a further 8 bedrooms at the Bonnersfield. Supporting People also offers support to 93 units of accommodation for young people at risk, and those leaving care, with 78 accommodation based units available, and 15 floating support.

4.3 Vulnerable adults

The definition of a vulnerable adult is a person "aged 18 or over, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is, or maybe unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".¹² This definition is extended to individuals and families who have been suffering abuse, harm or exploitation, and as a result have become socially excluded.

In 2007/08, there were 178 enquiries made to the Council in relation to violence or harassment. Of these, 125 were relating to a violent relationship breakdown, 7 were from households experiencing violence from related persons, 1 enquiry was around racially motivated violence, 29 were other forms of violence, 2 were racial harassment cases, and 13 were 'other'.

¹¹ Communities and Local Government, April 2008

¹² Law Commission Report, 1997

From these enquiries, Harrow accepted a duty to house 20 households on the basis of violence or harassment, and there were a further 14 homeless preventions through the Sanctuary Scheme.

During 2005/06, the West London sub-region spent £2,587,448 on local housing-related support services for women experiencing domestic violence. This accounts for 3.9% of the total Supporting People grant spent in the sub-region. There are 22 units of support offered by Supporting People for women fleeing domestic violence in Harrow, 6 units of accommodation, 6 units of floating support and 10 units of resettlement support.

4.4 Gypsies and Travellers

The 2006 pan-London Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment identified that there were 3 current occupied residential site pitches in Harrow, with a maximum need for 16 residential pitches to 2017, and a minimum need of 0. This is based on providing a minimum of 30 houses between 2007 and 2017, or a maximum of 0, taking into account psychological aversion to bricks and mortar.

4.5 Single people

During 2007/08, 63 single people were accepted as homeless. This accounts for 3% of total acceptances during this time. Of these acceptances, 79% were offered supported housing, and floating support. The majority of single homeless are of BME background (52%) but the highest proportion of any one ethnic group are White British, with 38%. 46% of those accepted were listed as job seekers. 17% were listed as economically inactive. Nearly a tenth (9.5%) are long-term sick or disabled. 96% are on drug intervention programmes. Looking at LOCATA data, 32% of those on the home seeker register are waiting for a 1-bedroom property. 579 single home seekers are within priority bands A-C.

Of the single homeless currently in temporary accommodation, 23% are in B&B accommodation, and 22% are living with family. 11% have been placed in general needs dwellings.

Single people who become homeless often have multiple needs; for example, rough sleeping history, mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependencies, ill health and/or disability, or a history of offending. These needs are addressed individually below.

4.6 Families

31% of homeless households accepted by Harrow were families with dependent children. 11% were households that included a pregnant woman, with no other dependent children. 20% of those households were lone parents. There were a total of 937 families in temporary accommodation.

The government target to end the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for families is challenging. Despite the various prevention methods the council have adopted, 39 families have been placed in B&B accommodation, due to the rise in acceptances between 2006 and 2007.

Supporting People has provided housing related support for 47 families between April and December 2007. 34.4% of those families were of white UK background, and 23.4% of Asian families were in receipt of family support. For the last 2 years, there has been no repeated homelessness.

The Council currently uses 2 homeless hostels offering the following provision: 69 bedspaces at Anmer Lodge, with a further 84 at Vernon Lodge designated for families.

4.7 Older people

3 households were accepted as homeless as a result of old age in 2007/08. The main reasons for homelessness were the unwillingness of relatives/friends to accommodate, and the end of private rented accommodation. This is partly due to the fact that we are able to offer suitable social rented housing to older people before they become homeless.

103 older people between the ages of 60-64 years are on the LOCATA home seekers register, 77 registrants are aged 65-69, 60 registrants are aged 70-74 years, and 36 are aged 75-79 years. 32 older people home seekers are over 80 years of age. 103 older people have been approved for sheltered accommodation, 97 are in priority bands B and C.

The Harrow Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) 2006 analysed older men aged 65 and over, and older women aged 60 and over. It estimates that there are 33.5% of total households in the borough consisting of older people. The report suggests that vulnerable households are more likely to contain older people. 31.7% of older people accommodation is social rented. In contrast, 78.7% of older people owner-occupiers, and this proportion is likely to increase.

Many people with physical disabilities and mental health needs are living longer; as they grow older, their housing and support needs should be adapted accordingly. In addition, the needs of older BME households should also be addressed. In the 2001 census 1,059 people over 75 years of age identified themselves as Indian, compared with 39 over 75 who identified themselves as Pakistani, 6 Bangladeshi and 62 as Black Caribbean. White households are more likely to have an older person residing there – 43.4% of households have a non-BME household head (HNA 2006).

The HNA 2006 concludes that 7.3% of older person only households live in unsuitable housing. The Older People's Housing Review 2005 estimated that around 2,300 older people in Harrow would experience difficulty in cleaning themselves. More than 3,200 older people experience mobility problems, particularly with using the stairs. This indicates the need for adaptations in the home, and/or extra assistance.

Supporting People data shows us that there is support provided to 1,320 units in the Borough for older people, with the majority of these units (1,094) classified as sheltered accommodation and 44 units designated for frail elderly (Extra Care). 125 units are privately owned and supported by the Home Improvement Agency; the remaining 57 units are floating support.

4.8 Overcrowded and under occupying households

The Housing Needs Assessment 2006 identifies a total of 3,554 households in the borough as overcrowded and 27,349 under-occupying their home across all tenures. Social rented households and households in private rented accommodation are more likely to be overcrowded and higher levels of owner-occupiers are under-occupying.

Current Bedrooms	Bedrooms Needed							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
1	1143	392	50	11	2	0	0	0
2	135	887	352	56	8	0	0	0
3	128	202	661	257	50	9	0	0
4	21	14	23	58	40	6	1	0
5	8	5	1	3	18	14	2	0
6	3	0	0	1	4	2	2	0
7	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
8+	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: LBH data – all households on the housing register (90% with bedroom known)

The bedroom standard used by the West London Locata partners is similar to, but not exactly the same as the Bedroom Standard used by the National Housing Survey, so we expect these figures to change somewhat when we adopt the Bedroom Standard as part of the CLG Overcrowding Pathfinder project. Nevertheless it gives a fairly clear picture of the extent of over-crowding among housing register and transfer applicants, showing 23.1% of housing applicants lacking one bedroom and nearly 5% lacking 2 or more bedrooms ("severely overcrowded"). This data also shows 555 (12.1%) households (all tenures) on the register under-occupying their home, of which 71 are currently in social rented housing and are recorded as under-occupying and wishing to move.

4.9 Teenage parents

There were 3 teenage parents living in temporary accommodation in 2007/08. 2 used to live with their family, but they are no longer willing to accommodate. One teenage parent is residing in B&B accommodation. All the teenage parents are of non-BME background. Teenage parents received less visible housing related services, including 6 units of accommodation support, funded by Supporting People.

Harrow Under 18 conception rate (per 1,000)										
	1997	1998 Baseline Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Harrow										
Rate of under 18 Conceptions, includes live births and terminations	30.8	27.1	27.8	21.6	24.5	28.0	26.7	33.6	30.2	25.8
Actual number of conceptions		105	107	84	99	115	111	141	127	107
% change in rate from baseline		0	2.7	-20.4	-9.6	3.5	-1.4	24.0	11.2	-4.7%
London	50.6	51.1	50.5	50	50.3	52.8	51.8	49.2	46	45.4
England	45.5	46.6	44.8	44	42.5	42.7	42.2	41.6	41.3	40.4
% change in rate from baseline		0	-4.1	-6.4	-8.9	-8.6	-9.8	-	11.1	-11.8

Key findings:

- Harrow now has the second lowest rate of Teenage Pregnancy in the London region
- Harrow's Teenage Conception rate has steadily declined since the launch of Harrow's Innovative outreach work 'Clinic in a Box', a service offering advice and support to young people to raise awareness of parenthood
- This success is also notable due to Harrow's changing population, and the evidence of the multiple deprivation data on page 14.
 - Harrow is now ranked 205th out of 354 districts in England for multiple deprivation, compared to 232nd in 2004.
 - Harrow is ranked 89th for income deprivation, compared to 142nd in 2004 in England.
 - Particularly notable, Harrow is now ranked 65th for income deprivation affecting children, a considerably higher ranking than in 2004 when Harrow was ranked 137th.
 - Young people aged 0-19 form over 25% of the whole of Harrow's population, with higher risk of poor sexual health and risky behaviour

Recent successes in Harrow include:

- New pharmacy scheme providing free emergency contraception to 19s and under throughout the borough
- Workforce Training on 'Sex and Young People' for 90 local professionals
- Operational network established
- Sexual health and midwifery resource packs
- New contraception service flyer
- Learning skills grant award – education and skill development for young parents
- New Chair of Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board
- Young Parent Group – new Service Level Agreement, greater publicity, and parents' success at gaining new funding. Regular attendance has improved by over 500%

-
- Higher profile – Recent Conference with Mayoral, Local Authority and Primary Care Trust input, plus over 15 specialist services. Teenage Pregnancy as a specialist item on the Primary Care Trust Professional Executive Committee

4.10 People with disabilities

During 2007, Harrow accepted 7 households as homeless, because either the applicant or a member of their household was vulnerable as a result of physical disability. Most applicants were female, and of BME background. The main reasons for their homeless acceptance was the unwillingness of parents, relatives and friends to accommodate them any longer, and violence.

The HNA 2006 states that there are 64.9% households with vulnerable residents who have physical disabilities. It concludes that such households are more likely to be in unsuitable housing. 27.2% of households are estimated to be living in unsuitable housing, due to insufficient support, or their homes require adaptation. Levels of unsuitable housing can be compared to a borough average of 12.1%, and an average of 9.5% for households with no vulnerable residents. Households requiring adaptations listed a shower unit (21.1%), a lift/stair lift (17.8%), and a downstairs WC (16.9%) as the most needed.

Apna Ghar Housing Association also offer a floating support service for BME older people, who have a physical disability.

There are a total of 57 units of support offered by Supporting People for people with learning disabilities, 48 of these units are accommodation based support, and 9 units are floating support. There are a further 36 units offered for people with physical and sensory disabilities.

4.11 People with mental health issues

9 households were accepted as homeless in 2007/08 as a result of mental illness, accounting for 5% of total acceptances. The main reasons for their homeless acceptance were leaving a care institution, and the unwillingness of parents, relatives and friends to accommodate them any longer. Supporting People client record data shows that 55% of households were female. 70% were long-term sick or disabled. 58% of households require high-level care.

46% of households in social housing consist of people with mental health needs; this is the single largest proportion of the vulnerable groups living in social housing. The HNA 2006 estimates that households with vulnerable residents with mental health needs total 1,733 in the borough, accounting for 2.1% of all households. 27% of such households are likely to be living in unsuitable housing, and like people with disabilities, this is significantly higher than the borough average.

A total of 137 units of support are provided by Supporting People for individuals with mental health needs.

4.12 Drug and alcohol misuse

The Drug and Alcohol Team (DAT) saw 87 clients during 2007/08. Of these, 33 clients were assessed as having an urgent housing need, and are of no fixed address. 86% of

clients are male, and more than half (55%) were aged 25-34 years. The majority of DAT clients (64%) were of White British background. A third of the referral sources were self-referrals. Over 40% of the existing clients are unemployed, on incapacity and sickness allowance. 30% have co-morbidity problems, which is a combination of drug misuse and mental problems. 20% have complex needs, and require multi-agency approaches to deal with issues such as suicide attempts, violence, crime, severe health problems, anti-social behaviour and child care issues. There is an additional problem for drug-using couples, often resistance coming from one partner if one partner is engaged with treatment and rehabilitation. Harrow also offers a floating support service through MST Step Forward for Drug and Alcohol clients.

Through Supporting People, there are 35 units of floating support offered to people with substance misuse.

4.13 Ex-offenders

The Probation Service figures for ex-offenders show that only 30% are regarded to have a housing issue, with 130 out of 433 ex-offenders scoring 2 or above on the accommodation question. These figures were taken between January 2007 and December 2007. The table below shows where the offenders are placed, and what their accommodation needs are:

Accommodation status	Total Offender Population		Accommodation Needs	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Permanent/independent housing	336	78%	57	44%
Bail/probation hostel	5	1%	1	1%
Supported housing	18	4%	10	8%
Transient/short-term	54	12%	44	34%
No fixed abode	17	4%	17	13%
No information	3	1%	1	1%
TOTAL	433	100%	130	100%

Of the 433 people registered with the Probation Service, 57% had either drug or alcohol problems, while 54% were classified as having some mental health issues. 55% of this group were also assessed as being at medium risk of harm.

In terms of monitoring data, White British was the largest ethnic group registered, at 37% of the total. Black or Black British – Caribbean was the only other ethnic group in double figures, with 12% of the total. 87% of people registered were male, with 12% registered as female. The age profile of those registered is evenly spread across 18-24, 25-30 and 31-40, with 26%, 23% and 25% respectively.

We are also liaising with the Housing Advice Worker (HAWk), with a target to ensure people have access to services that are provided by Supporting People. We are also encouraging moves into the private rented sector for this group. We currently have 6 bedrooms available for ex-offenders through Penrose Housing Association. Supporting People offer 101 units of support to ex-offenders, 80 units through the HAWk referral support, 15 units through floating support, and 6 units of accommodation.

4.14 Ex-service personnel

There is currently no information on the number of ex-service personnel who are likely to be at risk of homelessness. This is an area, which we will address through the new homelessness strategy action plan, to adequately assess housing need and provision for this group in the future.

Communities for Local Government reports that provision is being made to improve the process for ex-service personnel to obtain an affordable home. Service personnel will be entitled to apply for a shared ownership property, paying a minimum of 25% of the price and a reduced rent on the remaining cost of the home.

Housing legislation is currently being reviewed to ensure service personnel are treated fairly when approaching councils for homelessness assistance. The Housing and Regeneration Bill 2007-2008 states that service personnel can have a local connection within the area they are stationed or living in, which will give them the same priority as other people.

4.15 BME Households

Of the 1,811 applications during 2007/08, 984 (54%) were from BME households. Of the 1,058 in temporary accommodation, 680 (64%) were of BME background. The main reasons for homelessness are listed below. The most common reason for homelessness, irrespective of ethnic group, was loss of private rented accommodation. Further information around the representation of BME households is available at section 3.3.

Reason for Homelessness by Ethnicity

Reason	White		Black		Asian		Mixed		Other		Not disclosed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parents not willing/able to accommodate	16	7.2	9	4.1	0	0	2	0.9	0	0	4	1.9
Other friends/relatives not willing/able to accommodate	11	5	11	5	2	0.9	2	0.9	2	0.9	1	0.5
Breakdown of relationship with partner:												
• Violent	4	1.9	5	2.3	2	0.9	0	0	2	0.9	2	0.9
• Non-violent	0	0	3	1.4	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
Other violence	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Harassment	3	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mortgage arrears	0	0	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
Rent arrears:												
• HA/RSL	0	0	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
• Private sector	0	0	2	0.9	2	0.9	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
Loss of private rented accommodation	24	10.9	17	7.7	29	13.1	6	2.7	12	5.4	15	6.8
Other including emergencies	10	4.5	5	2.3	4	1.9	0	0	2	0.9	5	2.3

Source: LBH data

Applications and Acceptances by Ethnicity 2007/08

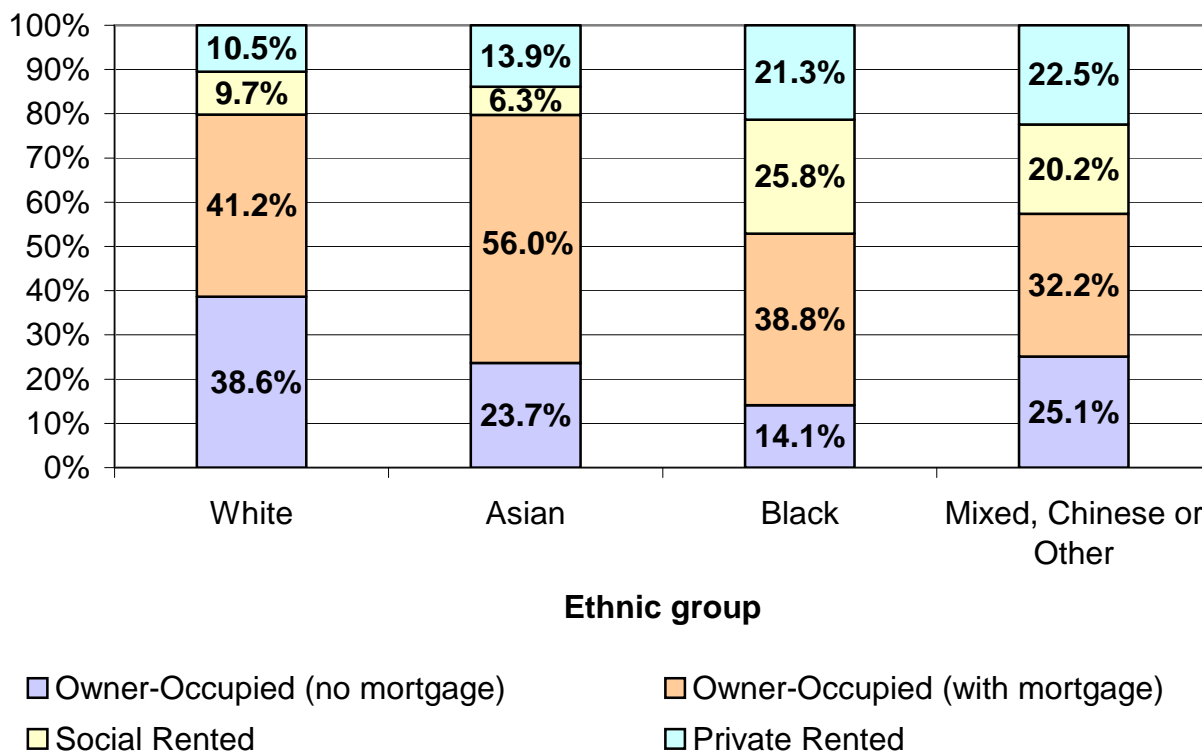
Ethnicity	Applications	Acceptances	Percentage of Applications
White	593	69	12%
Black	447	54	12%
Asian	361	40	11%
Mixed	82	10	12%
Other	94	18	19%
Not disclosed	234	30	13%
Total	1811	221	12%

Source: LBH data

The following data was taken from the HNA 2006. Ethnic groups were re-grouped into four main clusters: White, Asian, Black and Mixed, Chinese and other. The graph below shows that White and Asian households are more likely to owner-occupy, and least likely to be in social rented accommodation. The Black community account for 4,922 households within the borough, and have the lowest owner-occupied rate. There are also more Black

households in the social rented sector than any other ethnic group. Mixed, Chinese and other have the highest percentage of private rented households.

BME Households and tenure



Source: HNA 2006

White and Asian households have higher incomes than the borough's average. White households tend to have a higher level of household savings (£24,881) than BME households, which average £8,194. Black households record the lowest amount of savings, with £2,826. 25.8% of mixed, Chinese or other households are living in unsuitable accommodation, slightly more than Black households, with 22%.¹³

The wards with the highest proportion of BME communities are Kenton East, Edgware, Kenton West and Belmont. The wards with the highest proportion of non-BME communities are Pinner South, Pinner, Headstone North and Hatch End. On the housing register, 60% of home seekers are of BME background.

4.16 Asylum seekers

During 2007/08, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodated 41 families in Harrow. 15 families were Sri Lankan, 6 were Somali, and 4 were Afghani. These families are awaiting a decision on their applications for indefinite leave to remain. If these families were granted stay they would become eligible for assistance with housing, particularly if they were living in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation. As at 31st March 2008, there were 2 families with no recourse to public funds, supported by Children's Services, residing in B&B accommodation. These families were placed in accordance with section 17 of the

¹³ Harrow Housing Needs Assessment, 2006

Children's Act 1989, at a total cost of £900 per week. Such families are not entitled to housing, but may possibly in future represent a figure of hidden homelessness, and may contribute to rough sleeping statistics. 31 unaccompanied asylum seeking children were supported by Harrow's Children's Services in 2007/08. There are 10 young people, classed as asylum seeking children leaving care, that are eligible to bid for housing.

There is also a pilot scheme being introduced as a result of the Somali Needs Survey which was carried out in Harrow. This scheme aims to offer short-term floating support to 15 service users, on a range of issues such as sustaining existing tenancies, rent payments and exploring housing options. The pilot is set to run for one year, and has a move-on aspect to the service, with 2 service users already having moved on from the service.

4.17 Faith groups

There is currently no information on faith groups who are likely to be at risk of homelessness. This is an area, which we will address through the new homelessness strategy action plan, to adequately assess housing need and provision for this group in the future.

4.18 Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender community

There is currently no information the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender community, who are likely to be at risk of homelessness. This is an area, which we will address through the new homelessness strategy action plan, to adequately assess housing need and provision for this group in the future.

5. Harrow's approach to tackling homelessness

5.1 Progress against the action plan 2003 – 2008

The action plan for the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 contained nearly 118 targets across a wide range of action areas. Harrow achieved 48% of these targets. Where targets were not achieved, these in the main were due to either a lack of resources and therefore not prioritised as key projects, or were not deliverable in practice. Below is a summary of the key achievements over the life of the 2003 strategy, together with some summary statistics on homelessness prevention, while the complete review of the 2003-08 Action Plan can be found at Appendix 8.

Action - What we will do to prevent homelessness

- Prevented homelessness for over 300 applicants for each year of the strategy.
- Further developed the Sanctuary initiative to prevent homelessness for all 'hate crime' cases.
- Established the temporary post of Private Sector Assertive Outreach Worker (Housing Provision Team) as a permanent post.

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Fresh Start Scheme	19	14	11	0
Sanctuary Project	88	28	24	14
Single Homeless Project	145	170	238	218
Finders Fee Scheme	340	295	191	106
Outreach preventions *	-	-	17	39
Family Mediation	236 referrals	196 referrals (96% homelessness prevented)	184 referrals (84% homelessness prevented)	90

* Separate data not available for 2004-2006

Fresh Start Scheme

In 2003, we were able to 'hand-hold' the moves of many families out of London to social housing in boroughs in the north of England and the midlands. This began to drop off, as is clearly shown in the table above, as these boroughs adopted choice based lettings schemes, resulting in lettings of their void properties going to local people in relatively low or no housing need in preference to homeless families from London.

Sanctuary Scheme

In 2003 to 2005, we carried out a very large number of sanctuaries for people who would otherwise have been homeless due to domestic violence, and would therefore have had to relocate. The demand has reduced considerably in the last 3 years. While there is no research which would explain this, we think it is probably because many of the original installations were done for women who had moved many times already (there was a backlog of families needing these security measures in order to live settled lives). The current position is that we are not turning cases away, and there is no evidence to suggest that people are not being offered sanctuary.

Single Homeless Project

There continues to be a steady demand by non-priority homeless single people and couples for the rooms that our partners in the West London YMCA and Paradigm Housing Association have been able to secure under their respective rent deposit schemes.

Finders Fee Scheme

There has been a downturn in the amount of private rented lets achieved since 2005. This could be due to a number of things including, operational changes within Harrow. A new scheme named Letstart was launched in late 2007 and a team of dedicated officers has been put in place. The number of lets has now started to increase and we are hopeful that this rise will continue as use of the private rented sector is a key source of housing supply in Harrow for people who would otherwise be homeless.

Outreach preventions

We have been increasingly successful in persuading landlords to keep tenants in their accommodation when they have been threatened with homelessness, especially with the help of our fast-track housing benefit service and our links to various other support agencies. We will shortly be introducing a prevention fund in order to make this work more effective. Early intervention to prevent homelessness will be a key strand of our strategy to manage homelessness.

Family mediation

The Relate mediation service has for the last year been providing a more holistic service called “therapeutic mediation”, aimed at ensuring that the customers (typically young people) we refer are assisted to resolve all problems relating to their potential homelessness, such as an inability to get on with their parents or lack of confidence to take up training and employment opportunities.

Action - What we will do to Improve Housing Advice and Information

- Developed a clear protocol for referral of cases between the Council’s Housing Assessment Team and the independent Housing Advice service.
- Revised performance monitoring information procedures to produce ‘smarter’ indicators and targets with more emphasis on case outcomes, in line with audit commission guidance (BVPI 213).

A number of targets originally set in the Homelessness Strategy 2003 have not been achieved due to a lack of resources. However, the West London Housing Advice Group was established and has been working on a number of initiatives and promoting good practice.

The Housing Advice Centre assisted 142 households in 2007/08 to resolve their homeless situation and 236 households in 2006/07.

Action – What we will do to further develop Choices and Options for homeless people

- Through our housing options scheme we helped an average of 200 homeless households a year to find a solution to their homelessness
- We ensured that all statutory and non-statutory homeless households were offered an options interview as part of their housing application.
- We increased internet, telephone and text bidding under Locata by 20% (against a target of 10%) in total a year over the 2 years of the initial strategy.

Action – What we will do to improve Temporary Accommodation

- Reviewed existing RSL HALs performance on housing management and repairs against the original service specification and set targets with RSLs for continuous improvement.
- Provided an information ‘help’ pack to all new applicants placed into temporary accommodation to cover:
 - (i) Access to primary health care and education
 - (ii) Access to support services whilst in temporary accommodation

(iii) Common questions and answers

- Developed 20 units of supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds to respond to the new demand for the extension of the 'priority need' categories.

In the future the Supporting People commissioning body have agreed to fund the delivery of the following new supported housing services:

- 3 additional units of supported accommodation for Harrow young people at Roxeth Gate foyer
- 6 additional units for 18-25 year olds at Hindes Rd
- A support contract for homeless families at Vernon Lodge
- A support service specifically working with homeless families in TA to enable them to move on into other housing options e.g. private sector tenancies (for 10 service users at any one time).

In the longer term SP will review the TA support contracts.

Action - What we will do to improve access to affordable social housing

- Developed a support plan to ensure Harrow Locata members, including vulnerable clients and BME communities, understand and are able to fully access the scheme.
- Reduced void turnaround times in Council properties to 35 days through pre-allocating properties, reducing void repair times and ensuring all lettings are through accompanied viewings. This target was exceeded and the void turnaround for 2007/08 was 23 days.

Action - What we will do to promote new supply of affordable housing

- Worked with the local authority West London affordable housing group to maximise the number of affordable housing units available, in West London and pan regionally, to house homeless people.

Action - What we will do working with the private sector to tackle homelessness

- Increased the supply of affordable private rented homes by targeting grants and loans linked to the rent levels and nomination rights.

Action - What we will do to build on Partnership working

We were unable to deliver on our target of achieving 75% of all our operational homelessness initiatives being operated on a joint West London basis as in practice this was not feasible. However, we continue to make links with our West London partners on specific projects where economies of scale can be achieved by delivery on a sub-regional basis, for example a Temp to Perm scheme.

A Beacon Council benchmarking club for tackling homelessness was not established, as we used our West London neighbours to benchmark our services.

Action - What we will do tackle homelessness on a West London basis

The majority of targets set under this action were not practical to deliver. However, Harrow continues to work with its sub-regional local authority partners on specific projects to tackle homelessness sub-regionally. Some key projects delivered sub-regionally are as follows:

- Mystery shopping
- TA satisfaction surveys
- Finders Fee survey
- West London Letstart website and activity monitoring system
- Housing options DVD in 16 languages
- Common TA standards agreed across West London
- HELP Scheme
- Sunrise pilot scheme (refugees)
- Benchmarking exercise on homelessness services and costs

Action - What we will do to promote education, training and employment opportunities for homeless people

- Implemented the NOTIFY IT notification project for education and agreed a protocol with education for ensuring that school aged children can access a school placement within an agreed time scale.
- Developed educational play facilities in the Council's homeless families' hostel, Vernon Lodge.
- Developed a working protocol with the Housing Employment Link Project (HELP) on ways homeless people can access employment and training opportunities.

Action - What we will do to improve access to health for homeless people

- Ensured that all homeless children under 5 in bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation are linked to a health visitor.
- Implemented the 'NOTIFY' IT system to improve the information flow to PCTs on homeless people.

Action - What we will do to improve services for single homeless

- Commissioned a second Rough Sleepers count in Spring 2004 to follow on from the count conducted in October 2001.
- Prevented homelessness for over 50 16-30 year olds per annum through the mediation project.
- Set up the Harrow Single Homeless Forum in its own premises at Victoria Halls, central Harrow.
- Developed the Roxeth Gate Foyer for single homeless people in Harrow by 2006.

Action - What we will do to tackle youth homelessness

- By autumn 2004 we developed a 6 unit supported hostel for teenage parents with Metropolitan Housing Trust, in partnership with Brent Council
- Commissioned West London YMCA to develop a Supported Lodgings scheme. The Co-ordinator is in post and is actively setting up procedures and recruiting host families.

Action - What we will do to continue to tackle homelessness amongst victims of domestic violence

- Prevented homelessness by assisting over 40 households in 2004/05 to voluntarily remain in their home through the Sanctuary Project.
- Developed move on accommodation through Women's Pioneer Housing Association for 6 households who were victims of domestic violence.
- Took action to evict against perpetrators of domestic violence from Council tenancies and included an explicit statement to that effect in the Tenancy Agreement.
- Agreed reciprocal allocations arrangements with West London Council partners to speed up safe management transfers and prevented victims having to apply as homeless.

Action - What we will do to meet the needs of homeless asylum seekers and refugees

- Referral protocols and signposting have been established, to ensure that all refugee groups are aware of the options for single homeless people

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness amongst ex-offenders

- Although there is no written protocol on preventing homelessness, we have strengthened our working relationships and information sharing with probation. A HAT Senior Officer attends the PPO operational group and the MAPPAs, where there is a multi agency approach to tackling housing issues faced by ex-offenders. The Housing Needs Manager also attends the PPO strategic group that also acts as the London Resettlement Strategy group.
- Single homeless ex-offenders have full access to the single persons rent deposit scheme at the Victoria Halls Single Homeless Surgery. PPO, London Resettlement and MAPPAs clients also have full access and can be prioritised for risk management purposes for the scheme.
- A second hostel has not been developed. However, floating support for up to 15 ex-offenders is now being provided via Supporting People funding in addition to the 6-bed hostel.

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness amongst older people

- We have been able to work with potentially homeless elderly people to ensure that they are re-housed before they become roofless. This is possible because the supply of sheltered and designated elderly, studio and one bedroom accommodation, is relatively high in comparison to the demand.
- Supporting People has commissioned two floating support schemes in 2007/08 supporting elderly people in all tenures to sustain their tenancies, one specialising in the elderly mentally ill and the other a more generic scheme.

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness from ex services personnel

To date priority has not been given to tackling homelessness for ex-services personnel. We do not have many approaches from this category of applicant but we have recently set in place monitoring mechanisms to ensure that they are not being disadvantaged because of local connection considerations.

5.2 Current service provision

Below is a table of services that are currently available to the homeless.

Service Provision	Key Partners	Service Description
Homeless Advice	YMCA, Housing Associations, Drug and Alcohol service	Offering a range of housing advice services, including referral to mediation, housing outreach and the sanctuary scheme
Housing Advice	Citizen's Advice Bureau	Providing free information on legal, money and other problems on an appointment, drop in, or telephone basis
Mediation	Relate	Advice, support, counselling and mediation, including housing mediation to prevent homelessness, especially for young people
Floating Support and related services	StepForward (Metropolitan Housing Trust)	Offer housing related support to many people, including teenage parents, helping them to cope with early parenthood and fulfil their own ambitions. The service also offers support to people with mental health and dual diagnosis issues.
	Apna Ghar	Offer housing related support service for disabled people, especially Asian people and their families to live independently in their homes, which meet both their physical and cultural needs
	Central & North West London Mental Health Team	Providing a range of health and social care services for people with mental health and substance misuse problems and learning disabilities living in central and north west London
	Hestia	Provides accommodation, advice, resettlement, outreach services and floating support services for women experiencing domestic violence
	Look Ahead	Support for vulnerable people, often with complex support issues connected with mental ill-health, learning disability and drug and alcohol misuse, and homeless families in homeless hostels
	Penrose Housing Association	Accommodation and floating support for ex-offenders
	Willow Housing and Care	Sheltered housing and support services for older people

	Housing Employment Link Project (H.E.L.P.)	A programme for homeless people to access employment and training opportunities
	Children's Services	Advice and support for children and families
Debt Counselling	Capitalise	Providing debt advice to financially excluded people on a drop in basis at the housing reception area
Single Homelessness	Frays	Supported and short-term accommodation for single people
	YMCA	Supported lodgings scheme for young people
	Harrow Churches HA	Medium to low support accommodation for single young homeless people
	Probation Service	Working with offenders, intervention programmes, and referrals for housing
Interpreters	Quest	Translation service
	Languageline	Translations in Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Gujurati, Punjabi, Spanish, Urdu & Vietnamese and others
Youth Services	Connexions	Information, advice and guidance to support young people aged 13-19 (or up to 25 if disabled) on education and employment
Letstart	Letstart Team	Harrow Council scheme for landlords to let their properties directly to tenants in receipt of benefits or on low incomes (this is affiliated to the West London Letstart initiative)
	Housing Benefit	Harrow Council run service offering assistance with paying rent for households on low income
	Homelessness Prevention Team	Harrow Council service aiming to prevent homelessness by offering suitable housing options

5.3 Current Performance

There are 4 homeless related BVPI's that were part of the CPA indicators until 31st March 2008. These are:

- BV183a – Average time in B&B (weeks)
- BV 183b – Average length of stay in hostel accommodation (weeks)
- BV 214 – Repeat homelessness acceptances
- BV203 - % change in average number of families placed in TA

Harrow has consistently remained in the upper threshold for repeat homelessness acceptances, with current figures showing 0% in 2006/07 and 2007/08. Performance in both BV183b and BV203 are in the middle threshold with the average stay in hostel accommodation decreasing slightly from 12.04 weeks in 06/07 to 11.6 weeks in 07/08, while the percentage change in average number of families in TA has worsened from -5.84% in 06/07 to -2.48 in 2007/08. The only indicator where Harrow is in the lower threshold is average time in B&B; this has gone from 1 week in 2005/06 (upper threshold), to 7 weeks in 2007/08.

Other indicators used to measure performance which are not in the CPA are BV202 (Rough Sleepers count), where we have recorded 0 rough sleepers at the last count, compared to 1 in both 05/06 and 06/07. BV213, the number of households who consider themselves homeless who approached the LA advice service, and where advice casework resolved their situation, shows a falling figure of 8 households in 07/08, compared to 12 in 05/06, however, this is still in the upper threshold of the PI.

There are 2 other indicators, which are taken from P1E returns used to monitor performance, number of households requiring B&B per quarter, and number of households in B&B for more than 6 weeks. Both of these indicators have risen over the period 2005 – 08, with the number of households requiring B&B per quarter rising from 14 households in 05/06 to 73 in 07/08. The number of households in B&B for more than 6 weeks has also risen, from 0 in 2005/06 to 18 in 2007/08.

5.4 Resources

The resources available for implementation of the Homelessness Strategy include: Harrow Council homelessness revenue budget, specific CLG revenue grants, Harrow affordable housing fund capital and Housing Corporation capital, plus privately raised finance for new housing schemes delivered by RSLs.

The total net revenue budget for homelessness in 2008-9 is £2.7m, and includes £204,000 specific CLG revenue grants and £320,000 HB income. In 2009-10 cost savings of £160,000 will be made to support the HARP IT project.

The homelessness service is subject to changing external forces and a number of budgetary pressures associated with the costs of temporary accommodation and prevention initiatives (see section 1.3 of this review). Where new initiatives have revenue cost implications these will be managed within the overall homelessness budget or address within the corporate medium term financial strategy updated on an annual basis.

5.5 Value for Money

A recent West London benchmarking exercise suggested Harrow had some of the lowest costs for homelessness prevention and costs of temporary accommodation (see section 1.3 of the review). However, Harrow's Audit Commission near neighbour analysis suggests that the homelessness service is expensive. This is an area requiring further detailed analysis.

5.6 CLG Strategic Health Check

The CLG Strategic Health Check (Sept 2006) provided an opportunity to examine homelessness in Harrow, focusing on four areas. This covers a strategic assessment, together with an assessment of homelessness prevention, a fuller examination of the wider causes of homelessness and the overall effectiveness of administering homelessness in Harrow. Additionally, the Strategic Health Check indicated where there is scope for improvements in the service, most notably in:

- More effective partnering arrangements and prevention
- Improving communications and referrals for vulnerable single persons
- More effective management and identification of the needs of homeless applicants

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- Providing further support for sustaining tenancies
 - Identifying the best way of serving the needs of diverse local communities
 - Considering new "value for money" initiatives including access to welfare benefits
 - Continuing learning and development for front line practitioners

Actions arising from these areas for improvement are reflected in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 Action Plan.

5.7 Equalities Impact

An equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been developed and is included at Appendix 9. The EIA assesses the impact the Strategy will have on defined groups based on an analysis of current evidence included elsewhere in this Review document. It reflects actions required to address differential impact, which have then been included in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

The assessment has shown that although higher proportions of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households are presenting as homeless and on waiting lists for suitable accommodation, particularly larger accommodation, there is no evidence from the data to suggest that this group is directly discriminated against in the homelessness process (12.3% of applications from BME households are accepted, compared with an overall average of 12.2%). However, it is important to note that there will continue to be an imbalance in the proportion of larger BME households waiting for accommodation with so few larger social rented properties becoming available for letting each year.

Other key findings from the assessment include the need for larger accommodation, the need for access to adapted properties for physically disabled people, improved collection of data on disability for more accurate monitoring on disability and research into the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups, faith groups and gypsies and travellers.

In addition to the EIA, the Council needs to demonstrate that it has had due regard to promoting the equality of opportunity of disabled people and other persons in accordance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Section 49 also requires the Council to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons. Equality of opportunity in this case would be represented by the specific needs of disabled people for suitable temporary and permanent accommodation being recognised and prioritised.

Data is not currently routinely collected on the numbers of disabled people, or households containing a disabled person, presenting as homeless to assess whether or not this is disproportionate to the number of disabled people in the community. In addition, the council's ability to find suitable temporary accommodation for people with mobility impairments is restricted by the limited availability of such accommodation that has been designed or adapted for use by people with mobility impairments. There are similar difficulties concerning the provision of permanent accommodation, although there is scope for adaptations, subject to resource availability.

5.8 Risk assessment

The homelessness strategy operates in an environment that is fluctuating and highly susceptible to change due to external factors. In response to this there has been a risk appraisal of key elements of the Strategy and Action Plan and controls are in place to mitigate and manage the highest risks.

Specific factors currently impacting on the delivery of the strategy include the 2008 “credit crunch”. This could significantly increase the number of households presenting as homeless and reduce the supply of new affordable homes. A detailed risk management matrix has been developed and is included at Appendix 10.

6. What do our staff think of our services?

6.1 Methods of engagement

There were a variety of methods employed to ensure that we consulted with as wide a range of staff as possible. Presentations to staff groups ensured that all staff were kept informed of the work around the homelessness strategy, and all were encouraged to make their thoughts known to the Project Team to feed into the strategy. Front-line staff were invited to join a ‘Staff Sounding Board’, which was used to engage front-line staff in discussing current service provision, as well as future needs. Service Managers were consulted by mailing out a questionnaire, while staff from other services were engaged at the Homelessness Strategy Conference and various multi-agency meetings. Key staff from other Council departments were identified and surveyed to ensure that the Strategy links into other work areas effectively.

The Project Team, who are responsible for the day to day management of the project is made up of Council staff, the membership of which is shown below:

Name	Position	Role
Jane Fernley	Interim Housing Needs Manager	Project Sponsor
Paul O’Callaghan	Project Manager – Strategic Housing	Project Manager
Rebecca Caprara	Housing Strategy and Performance Manager	Project Team member
Jacky Souter	Housing Provision Manager	Project Team member
Rosy Leigh	Housing Assessment Manager	Project Team member

6.2 Staff Sounding Boards

Front line staff were invited to join a sounding board, with the aim of surveying staff opinion on current service provision, whilst also using their experiences to shape future services in Harrow. Over 25% of staff came forward to participate in the groups, of which we held two 2 hour sessions. The first group was an un-structured discussion, allowing staff the opportunity to direct the session according to their main concerns and opinions, while the second session had a more strategic focus around research findings from the initial stages of the review. A full version of the report can be found at Appendix 3.

Some of the key findings from the sessions were:

-
- Improvements needed to the reception area
 - Evaluation of resources in both the HAT and HPT
 - Need for a reality check in the Borough around supply and demand
 - Early intervention schemes need to be implemented
 - Need to promote debt advice service
 - Programme of education for customers, staff and members
 - Need for closer working partnerships with agencies and internal departments
 - Longer-term private sector tenancies, and improved relations with Landlords
 - Promotion of the Letstart Team and a more pro-active approach to delivery
 - Improved working relationships with Managers and front-line staff
 - Ongoing staff training
 - Complete holistic approach to homelessness prevention, involving other agencies throughout the process.
 - Need to re-launch the Fresh Start Scheme
 - Penalising repeat homelessness

7. What do our partners think of our services?

7.1 Methods of engagement

A central theme of the Harrow Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013, is the need for ever increasing emphasis on partnership working. The consultation process has shown that there is willingness between agencies to work together and this needs to be carried forward into the dissemination and implementation of the 5-year strategy.

We used a number of methods to engage partners; the central method was a homelessness conference, which brought together partner agencies across the Borough and beyond to discuss homelessness in Harrow. All delegates took part in a workshop of their choice, and the majority of these workshops were hosted by individuals from outside the Council, ensuring that the event had a more partnership orientation to it.

We also identified key agencies throughout the Borough, and surveyed them with a questionnaire seeking their individual thoughts on homelessness. Statistics were also collected from a range of sources, allowing us to analyse the needs of particular groups and predict future need.

7.2 Partner agencies within the Borough

Harrow can only tackle homelessness through genuine partnership working. This is evident in through the membership of the Harrow Homeless Forum. The full membership of the Forum can be seen at appendix 7.

7.3 Temporary Accommodation Reduction Awayday

Harrow Council hosted a TA awayday in January 2008, which was facilitated by Jenkins Duval consultants for the CLG. The aim of the day was to bring partners together, using the CLG TA reduction model, to identify ways of reducing the use of temporary accommodation throughout the Borough. The day itself was a success, with attendance from key stakeholders and service providers. The results of the session were used to inform the

recently produced TA Reduction Plan, which sets out our proposals for meeting the government target by 2010.

The key headlines drawn out through discussions on the day were: improving relationships with private sector landlords, and balancing allocations and homelessness.

Improving relationships with private sector landlords

The Awayday identified that partnership working was essential in developing relationships with private landlords, and ensuring that any schemes are both viable and appealing.

Some of the actions suggested were:

- Quarterly forums with private landlords
- Reduce the end of AST's as a reason for homelessness
- Setting up of a tenant liaison service, and an effective landlords forum
- Need for more robust enforcements around environmental health
- Closer working with HB e.g. identification of vulnerable tenants around LHA and use of discretionary housing payments to prevent homelessness

Balancing allocations and homelessness

- Review 65-70% of allocations of family units to homeless households, as this may be a perverse incentive to homelessness
- Hand holding for under-occupiers
- Promote extensions and de-conversions to alleviate overcrowding
- Cash incentives for Council tenants to move into the private sector

This work was used to formulate an action plan, which fed into the development of the TA reduction plan, which has recently been approved by CLG, and has strategic links with the homelessness strategy.

7.4 Homelessness Strategy Conference

Harrow Council held its Homelessness Strategy Conference on the 9th April 2008, the aim of which was to bring together partners from across the Borough and beyond to feed into the development of the homelessness strategy. There were over 60 attendees, with keynote speeches from Mark Meehan of the CLG/Housing Corporation Homelessness Action Team, and Dennis Price, Chair of the Harrow Single Homeless Forum. There were a range of opportunities for delegates to contribute to the strategy, with forms placed in the delegate packs, a display with key aims to comment on, and workshops which focused on key areas of homelessness, including:

- Housing Advice
- Allocations
- Housing Supply
- Overcrowding and Under-occupation
- Prevention and Options
- Young Homelessness
- Single Homelessness

Delegates at the Harrow Homelessness Strategy Conference, April 2008



These workshops were facilitated by a range of people from all sectors and providers, and aimed to engage experts around the key themes, pulling out difficulties, successes and potential issues that the strategy needs to address over the next 5 years. Feedback from the event has been captured in Appendix 5, and some of the key headlines are summarised below:

- Managing expectations
- Early intervention
- Mediation and debt management
- Benefits advice
- Appointment of Tenancy Relations Officer
- Lack of larger properties
- Transparency in allocations policies, and a review of existing policies
- Extra incentives to downsize
- Common housing register
- New supply to look at larger properties
- Supporting People single point of contact
- Access to information
- Greater engagement with the voluntary sector
- Youth offending and mental health
- Education and partnership working
- More research into single homelessness to define age/need
- Maximising existing supply

7.5 Project Board

The Project Board was made up of officers from the Project Team, as well as representatives from RSL's, the Voluntary Sector, Supporting People, West London YMCA and other specialist agencies. The full membership of the Project Board is shown below:

Name	Organisation	Role
Jane Fernley	Harrow Council	Project Sponsor
Paul O'Callaghan	Harrow Council	Project Manager
Rebecca Caprara	Harrow Council	Project Team/Board Member
Rosy Leigh	Harrow Council	Project Team/Board Member
Jacky Souter	Harrow Council	Project Team/Board Member
Nick Davies	Harrow Council (SP)	Project Board Member
Philip Ishola	Harrow Council (Asylum Seekers)	Project Board Member
Martin Williams	West London YMCA	Project Board Member
Kris Fryer	Harrow Housing Advice Centre	Project Board Member
Karen Connell	Stadium Housing Association	Project Board Member
Michele Crombie	ASRA Housing Association	Project Board Member
Eilidh Brown	Home Group Housing Association	Project Board Member
Phiroza Gan	Harrow Inter-Faith Council	Project Board Member
Tim Gray	West London Homelessness Co-ordinator	Project Board Member
Ahmed Abdi	Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS)	Project Board Member

Tony Burles	Family Mediation London North West	Project Board Member
Alistair Anderson	Harrow Association for the Disabled	Project Board Member

8. What do our customers think of our service?

8.1 Methods of engagement

Harrow Council has a number of publications, which are mailed out to tenants and home seekers throughout the year, giving advice and updates on a range of options which are available to them. All people who are registered with the Council as a home seeker receive Homeseeker News.

To catch the widest audience, a survey was mailed out to everyone who is registered as a home seeker or with Locata. This sample was around 4,500 people, and the response to the survey was excellent, with 488 responses.

The survey itself asked some general questions about people's experiences when dealing with the Council around homelessness issues, but also invited respondents to volunteer for participation in focus groups, which would explore some of the wider issues in more detail. Volunteers were offered a small incentive to take part in these groups.

Visitors to reception were also surveyed through a customer satisfaction survey, and some of the results from this survey are shown in the section below.

8.2 Focus groups

Customers who responded to the survey mailed out in Homeseeker News expressing a desire to join a focus group were invited to attend groups looking to draw out their experiences of dealing with Harrow Council Housing Services. The groups explored their thoughts around service provision, particularly around what services they felt that we should provide to assist customers when approaching the Council.

The groups were facilitated by peer facilitators, drawn from a resource pool administered by the West London Supporting People Team. This was felt to be a more integrated approach to consulting with the customers, as the facilitators themselves had also experienced homelessness.

The groups highlighted a number of points. Some of the key findings are summarised below, while a full report can be found in Appendix 6.

- Disrepair of properties in the private sector
- Regular moves unsettling families, especially children
- Willingness to explore options, particularly out of Borough moves
- Lack of understanding of the Locata system
- Not enough larger properties in the Borough
- Landlords only concerned with rent, rather than providing a good service
- Need for increased communication between the Council and tenants
- Constant moves are leading to an increase in ASB

- Need for closer working with landlords for them to accept housing benefit
- Lack of adapted properties available

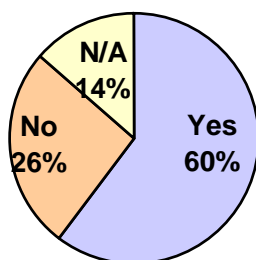
8.3 Homeseeker News survey

The aim of the survey was to obtain feedback from service users who had approached Housing Services or the Housing Advice Centre. BME respondents accounted for 75% of all responses, and the largest proportion of respondents in any one ethnic group was Asian, accounting for 41% of the total. 50% of respondents were female, and 34% of replies were from individuals aged between 35 years old and 44 years of age. 24% of respondents had a disability, while this figure increased when looking specifically at the BME community, as 70% of BME respondents classed themselves as disabled.

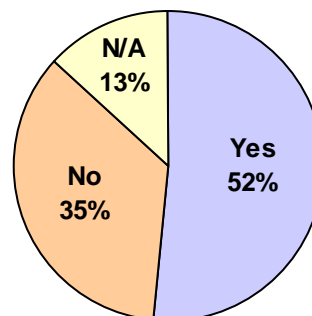
The main reasons for visiting were for information on temporary accommodation (20.3%), general housing advice (16%) and the threat of homelessness/housing options advice (both at 11.5%). In addition, 18.9% of services users required information and advice for multiple services, and 13.9% of service users approached for other reasons, such as information on private renting, housing benefit queries, and information on Locata.

BME service users mainly sought advice on temporary accommodation (19%), general housing advice (13%) and the threat of homelessness (12%). The customers with a disability used a variety of services from the housing department and Housing Advice service, mainly for information regarding temporary accommodation (25%), advice on housing options (15%) and general housing (14%).

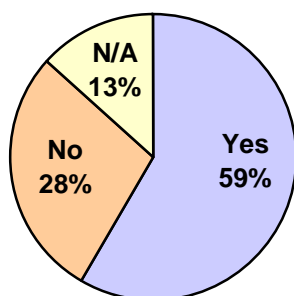
Question 2a - We provided useful information and advice?



Question 2c - Did we provide the service that you came for?



Question 2b - Was the information/advice clear to you?



Overall, service users were positive about their experiences of Housing Services and the Housing Advice Centre. 294 (60%) respondents felt that the information they received was useful. 284 (59%) respondents stated that the information and advice they received was clear enough for them to understand. Over half (52%) of service users were satisfied that they received the service they came in for.

Further feedback was received, where respondents had an opportunity to suggest any services that should be provided for the future. The most common response was the amount of time it takes for households to obtain a permanent home. Another common response was the lack of knowledge on Locata and banding. Other answers included an available list of estate agents and letting agents in Harrow, willing to accept those on benefits, and keeping households informed of their housing application, as a follow-up service.

More than half (52%) of BME respondents did not give an answer to this question. 8% had concerns regarding the amount of time it takes for households to obtain a permanent home, while the need for larger homes and greater support with Locata accounted for 5% of responses. Some respondents who considered themselves to have a disability thought that the council should keep homeseekers more informed. Improving mobility and providing adaptations in the home was the main trend, while respondents also felt that the service delivery could be improved.

8.4 Consultation with young people and teenage parents

In partnership with Connexions, Housing Services ran focus groups with a set of young people, and a group of teenage parents to draw out their thoughts on the services which they received from Harrow Council and its partner agencies. The groups were also asked for their opinions on what improvements to the service they felt were necessary and feasible. A full report from these sessions can be found in appendix 4.

The 2 groups showed different results. While the young people were mainly happy with the services which were provided to them, the teenage parents were extremely unhappy. Some of the key points from both groups were:

- Unsuitable accommodation (hygiene, drug and alcohol issues, shared facilities) for their age and circumstances
- Lack of respect from Council staff due to their age/situation

-
- Encouragement for education programmes around housing for young people
 - Support for moving out of Borough
 - More information available for these groups
 - Most would advise people to stay at home for as long as possible
 - Assistance with budgeting would be helpful
 - Mediation service was not as effective as it could be
 - Council needs a more pro-active approach to assisting these groups
 - Need for a focus on the family home

8.5 Customer Satisfaction survey

This survey aimed to look at customer responses to the Housing Needs service. There were 47 responses in all, and 76% of these were from BME respondents. 11% of respondents classed themselves as having a disability.

The main reasons for visiting Housing Services were B&B or Hostel accommodation (26%), and Temporary Accommodation (26%). 19% of respondents visited due to a threat of homelessness, while 23% gave no reason for their visit. Resident services, housing options advice and general housing advice had 2% of visitors each.

78% of customers found the reception area clean, with 77% stating it was also comfortable and 81% thought it was easy to find. 62% of visitors did not have an appointment with the main service that they saw.

Waiting times showed that the vast majority of respondents were seen within 0-15 minutes (55%). 19% were seen within 16-30 minutes, and 21% were seen within 31-60+ minutes.

The customers felt on the whole that our staff were polite (91%), and helpful (91%). 87% thought that the staff listened to what they had to say, although only 38% remarked that staff told them how long they would have to wait before being seen. 85% of respondents thought that we provided useful information and advice, and the same percentage also thought that this information was made clear and that we provided the service that they came for.

9. Focus on.....

9.1 Housing Advice Centre

The Housing Advice Centre (HAC) is a service which is commissioned by and on behalf of Harrow Council to provide advice and support to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. The Centre offers free, independent, confidential and impartial advice, both through drop-in sessions, telephone help, and appointments.

The service is delivered in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), and between both services, a wide range of advice, including financial exclusion, assistance with housing benefits, and advice on housing options within the Borough, is offered

There has been a comprehensive programme of consultation with the Housing Advice Centre, as they see people with housing issues on a daily basis, and therefore can offer an insight into the main homelessness issues for people in Harrow. The consultation included a focus group, where staff from the HAC discussed their thoughts and opinions on homelessness services in Harrow, and an analysis of end of year data for those people that have been referred to the service. The HAC also facilitated a workshop at the homelessness conference around housing advice provision, and their expertise in this area led to a more productive discussion with other agencies in Harrow.

In the year from March 2007 to April 2008, the HAC saw 2,853 cases, 2,464 were regarded as purely housing related, accounting for 86.4% of total enquiries. Housing Benefit made up the next largest category, with 10.3% of approaches (294 cases).

Of the 2,464 approaches for housing, the main reasons were for access to provision of accommodation 27.8% (684 cases), private sector rented property 26.7% (657 cases) and threatened homelessness 22.1% (545 cases). Other approaches were concerned with local authority homelessness service (5%), local authority housing (4.8%), housing association properties (4.1%) and actual homelessness (3.8%). Owner-occupiers, discrimination, environmental and neighbour issues and other housing issues were all under 3% of total approaches.

The HAC assisted people with debt totalling £818,497 in the year to April 2008. The largest single amount was around mortgages and secured loan arrears with £389,218 worth of debt in this area. Rent arrears worth £203,168, and credit cards/personal loans worth £184,400 were also part of the money advice given out by the HAC. The specialist money advice referral project also saw a large number of people, with 115 referrals in the year to April 2008. This project managed around £633,442 worth of debt, across rent arrears, other priority debts and non-priority debts. The money advice section of the HAC provides invaluable assistance to people in financial difficulty, and this is a service that needs to be emphasised throughout the life of the strategy to continue the good work which is already ongoing in Harrow.

The monitoring data for approaches shows a number of trends, however, this reporting is only for the 6 months to April 2008, and therefore is not representative of the total approaches from March last year.

In terms of ethnicity, the largest group of customers was classified as 'White – British' (21.2%). Asian or Asian British – Other made up 14.9%, and Black or Black British – African accounted for 14.7%, White – Other was 12.8%.

In terms of age, the largest groups were 25-34 (29.6%), and 35-49 (38%). The housing tenure category showed that 57.7% of total approaches were from private tenants, 16.2% were social housing tenants.

Household type highlighted that the majority of people receiving advice from the HAC were single people (32.2%), 22% were couples with dependent children, and 18.7% were single persons with dependent children.

Following on from the data analysis, the staff from the HAC attended a focus group. The focus group looked to draw out staff experiences in the area of housing advice, while trying to encourage staff to think about any gaps in service provision, what we do well and what they would like to see in the strategy. The focus group was carried out over an hour, and all staff were informed that all responses would be anonymous. Some of the findings are summarised below:

- Staff felt that we need to establish better links with private landlords, and whilst doing so, look to improve the attractiveness of schemes such as Finders Fee/Letstart to private landlords
- The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) needs to be monitored, and some of the Rent Officer decisions are felt to be unfair, not taking into account the affordability issues

around the private sector. This needs to be monitored through partnership, with linkages between the new LHA, and the old system of HB payments.

- There is a lack of suitable housing for the disabled, more in terms of adaptations to existing properties.
- We are not promoting downsizing enough, and staff felt that extensions to properties, such as loft conversions would be a solution to overcrowding. There also need to be more incentives to downsize.
- There needs to be some more work done around prevention of arrears. Some people are approaching the HAC with extremely high levels of rent arrears, and there should be early intervention mechanisms in place to prevent this.
- More support needs to be offered to private landlords, should there be an issue with their tenants; this would help greatly in promoting partnership working with the private sector, and encourage more landlords to approach the Council with housing.
- There needs to be a reality check – people need to be told the full reality of the housing situation in Harrow, and this needs to be rolled out into schools/colleges to promote early intervention
- We need to be more pro-active in ensuring that families are kept within support networks; moving people to different areas has an unsettling effect on children moving schools, and can promote under achievement.

Some of the solutions proposed at the focus group were:

- Longer-term private sector tenancies
- Advice packs for landlords
- The need for a dedicated elderly persons officer/team within the Council housing department
- Link the incentive for downsizing to reduction of rent arrears, this could act as a double benefit in terms of freeing up larger properties, whilst preventing high rent arrears. This incentive should also be promoted as a longer-term proposal, with smaller properties linked to lower energy bills.
- Need for a wider money advice service – more and more people approaching the service are suffering from financial mismanagement, with the problem only set to increase due to escalation of affordability problems. This however would require more staff resources to provide an effective service.

The HAC staff felt that the Homelessness Strategy should focus on the following areas:

- Young people – looking at parental relationships, family mediation and a more intense focus on the home. Staff felt that it is sometimes easy to forecast future demand if mediation is employed effectively.
- Affordability solutions – due to the current high cost of housing, children are growing up and cannot afford to leave the family home, which is leading to tension.
- People who are working and yet still living in the family home should be expected to make a financial contribution. This all leads to good practice, as when young people do leave home they will have gained the necessary financial and behavioural skills to sustain their own tenancy
- We need to be tougher on people with rent arrears – people are running up arrears, then paying at the last minute therefore securing their tenancy. This is a drain on Council Officer time, when there are homeless people in need of these properties.
- An increased focus on prevention rather than crisis management

- We need to work more closely in partnership to help people pay their rent on time..
- Early intervention is key to the future success of the Borough in tackling homelessness, and there is a need for more focus on early intervention in schools and colleges.

Overall, the staff said that they felt that partnership working in the Borough was effective, but felt that there were certainly areas for improvement. There is a need for a culture change, where we don't look at each other as separate entities, rather as one group working together throughout Harrow.

9.2 Single Homeless Forum

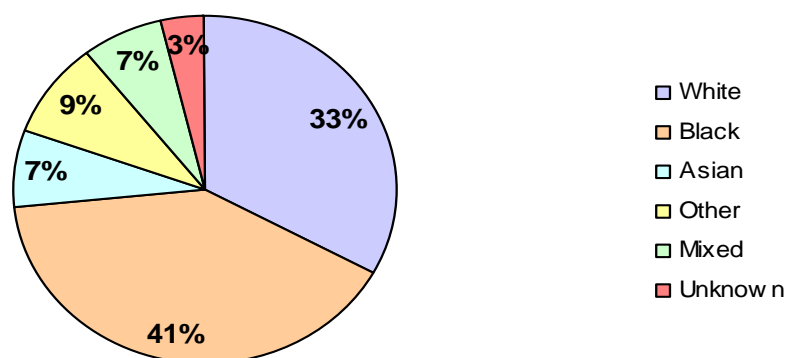
Through a multi-agency approach, Harrow Council has set up a Single Homeless Forum, a drop in centre offering advice and support to people on a range of issues. The service has been running for 5 years, and has proved extremely successful in assisting and understanding the needs of people in the Borough.

The forum runs every Wednesday, from 2pm – 4pm, and has representatives from Harrow Council, Housing Advice, Housing Associations and agencies such as the Drug and Alcohol service.

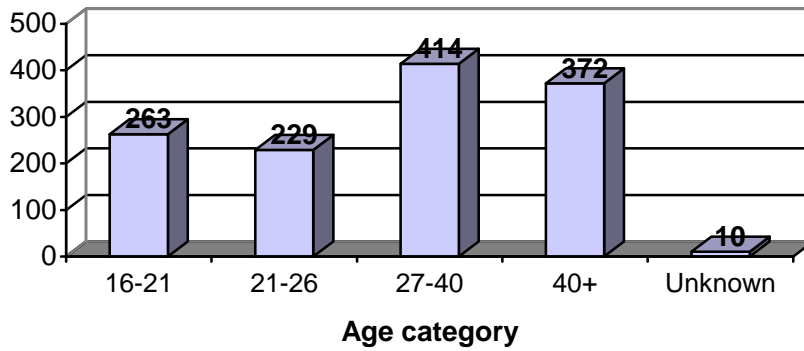
There is also a quarterly meeting, which brings together all agencies working around homelessness. This meeting is used to find solutions, through partnership, to homeless issues in the Borough,

Between April 2007 and March 2008, there were 1,288 first attendances at the drop-in session. There was a much higher number of these presentations who were male, with 934 male approaches, compared to 347 female (7 unknown). Some of the other key statistics for the Single Homeless Forum are highlighted below:

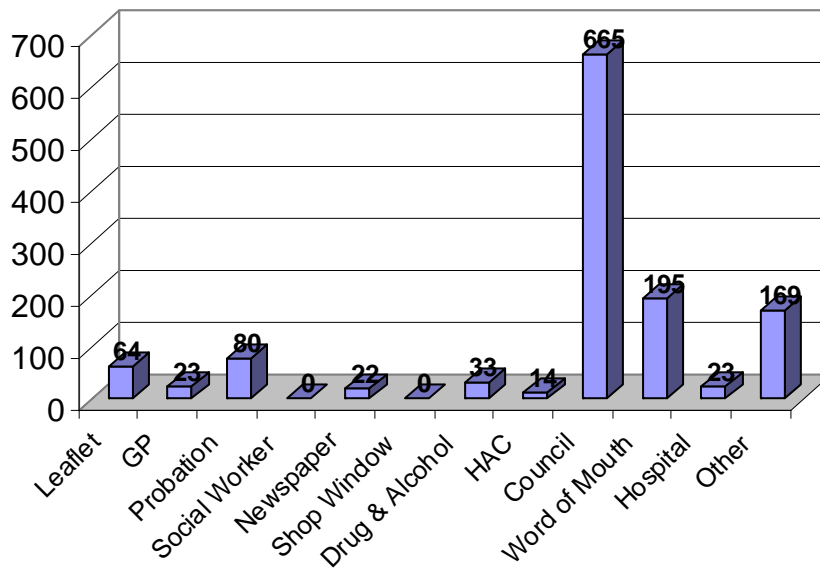
Approaches by Ethnicity



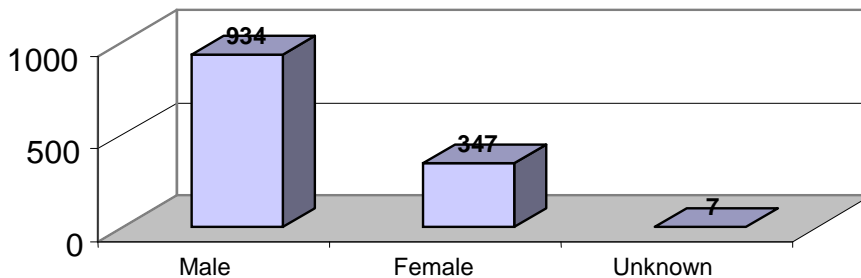
Approaches by age



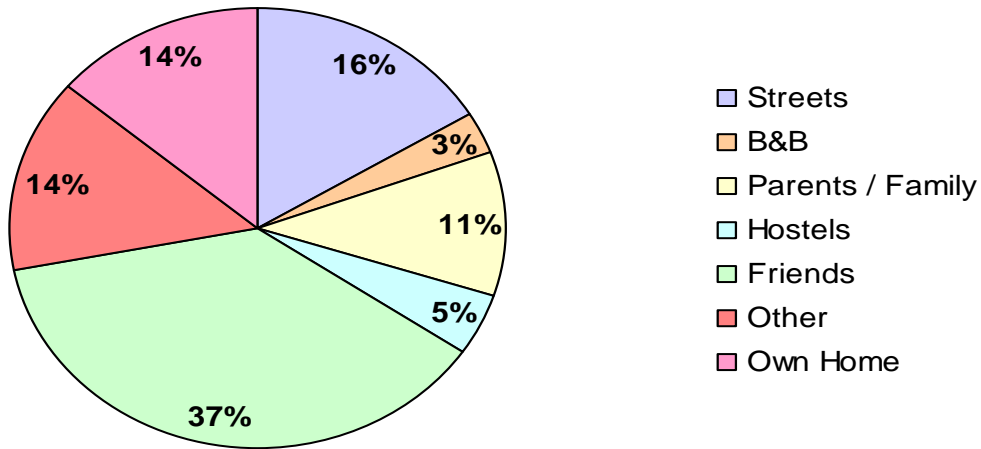
Approaches by Type of Referral



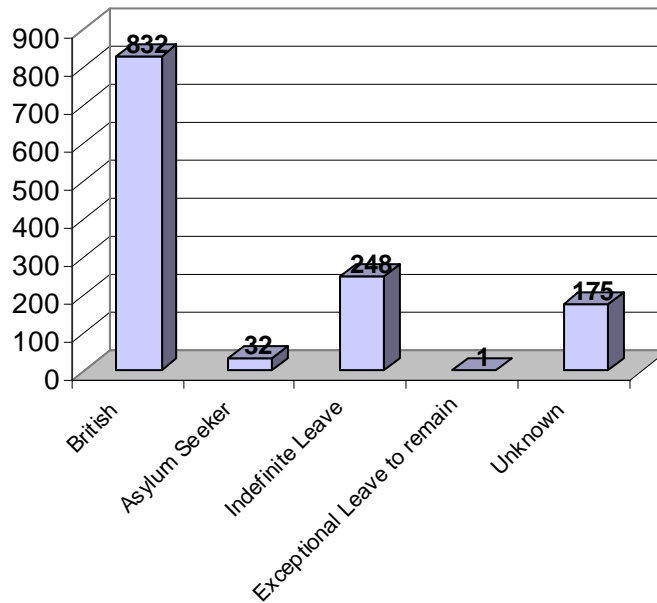
Approaches by Gender



Where attendees spent previous night



Immigration Status



10. Future trends

10.1 Future Trends in Homelessness

Deprivation studies show that TA provision is concentrated in the most deprived housing areas. Almost a third of families are in temporary accommodation. Children and their families do not benefit from the disruption of living in temporary accommodation, and this may have an adverse effect on children's health and well being. In the previous section we have highlighted the close links between poor housing and income deprivation, and that this has a particular effect on children. Homeless households often have multiple needs, and

therefore require a multi-agency approach. BME households feature highly as they are over-represented in temporary accommodation figures.

As the needs of older people change, the possibility of unsuitable housing for this vulnerable group increases. The HNA 2006 outlines an affordable housing requirement model. The method implies that there is an annual need to provide 49 older people units per annum. The model shows that there is a shortfall of affordable housing of 89 dwellings per annum. In addition, the Older Peoples Housing Review 2005 identified a need for:

- A greater diversity of sheltered housing options (including shared ownership and extra care, and enhanced sheltered rented schemes)
- More support for older owner occupiers, the majority tenure in Harrow, and likely to increase
- Ensuring that older people receive good quality housing advice and are offered housing options to enable them to maintain an independent and fulfilling lifestyle

Disabled households living in unsuitable housing due to the need for adaptation is an issue, as the proportion is significantly higher than the average.

There is a need to increase the provision of larger, affordable family homes to meet demand. The Council's RSL partners cannot build enough of these larger properties to satisfy the level of demand, and therefore the opportunities offered by the private sector are extremely important in satisfying demand. This is also true in maximising existing stock, and bringing properties back into use. With the forthcoming overcrowding and under-occupation initiative, it is essential that we look to all sources of affordable housing to reduce the number of households living in unsatisfactory conditions.

10.2 Housing Demand

There are a number of factors that will cause the levels of homelessness to fluctuate over the coming years. The numbers in temporary accommodation will successfully reduce, due to a range of approaches devised to prevent homelessness, including:

- Harrow Options model – providing alternative housing options to the housing register
- The Sanctuary Project – support for domestic violence victims allowing them to remain in their homes
- Mediation – support for homeless applicants excluded from their family or friend's home, with the aim of achieving reconciliation, where possible
- Letstart – facilitating a private sector tenancy either in Harrow, or elsewhere, according to the customers preferences.

The borough's population is estimated to increase; therefore new households will be created. Increasing house prices, and the increasing gap in affordability, will see greater housing demand.

11. Next steps

There are a number of key issues and challenges which the Review has highlighted. These have been listed under each of the agreed priorities for the Strategy to show how we have decided upon the 4 key areas in the strategy.

Objective 1: To prevent homelessness, and to tackle high demand and the wider causes of homelessness

What the review told us:

Findings	Section
The loss of private rented accommodation is the largest single cause of homelessness presentations in Harrow, making up roughly 50% of applications since 2005	3.3
Social rented stock in the Borough is low, with only around 11% of the total stock in Harrow	3.2
Performance on tackling homelessness has slipped recently, with a steady rise in homeless applications and acceptances since 2005.	3.3
As of July 2003, Harrow had 0 households in B&B, whereas at year end 2007/08, there were 73 households in B&B	3.3
Overall, the number of households in TA has reduced by 18% since the CLG target of a 50% reduction by 2010	3.3
Private sector rents are substantially higher than those offered by social landlords. Weekly rents on a 1 bedroom property are 58% higher in the private sector, while rents on a 3 bedroom property are 61% higher.	3.2
Repeat homelessness has remained low, with only 4 cases recorded since 2003/04	3.3

What our stakeholders told us:

Findings	Section
Need for early intervention techniques, including making presentations about homelessness issues to schools and colleges	6.2
	7.4
	8.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
Need to do more work around prevention of rent arrears as a cause of homelessness	6.2
	7.3
	7.4
	9.1
	App 4
	App 6
Need to increase the supply of larger properties	7.3
	7.4

	8.2
	9.1
	App 5
	App 6
Increase partnership working with the Housing Advice service and Connexions	6.2
	7.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
Improve mediation and money advice services	6.2
	7.4
	8.2
	8.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Increased focus on the home. Training for parents and children will assist them in the future when they become independent	7.4
	8.2
	8.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Make best use of the Housing Benefit Discretionary Housing Payment fund to prevent homelessness	7.3

Objective 2: To secure accommodation for homeless people across a range of tenures, and to manage and reduce the use of temporary accommodation

What the review told us:

Findings	Section
There is a significant shortfall in affordable housing in Harrow. The projected shortfall is 2,303 units per annum	3.2
There has been an increase in the BME population of Harrow since the 2003 strategy, and we believe that this is most apparent in the Polish and Somalian communities.	2
	3.1
64% of households in TA are from a BME background	3.3
The average length of time spent in TA is 4.5 years, although this can vary greatly depending on the bedroom size required	3.3
BME households are disproportionately represented in larger sized TA, and wait longest for permanent re-housing	3.3
56% of working households in Harrow could not afford to buy their own home. House prices rose by 60% between 2001 and 2006	3.2

The housing register shows significant levels of overcrowding, with almost 25% of applicants lacking 1 bedroom, and nearly 5% lacking 2 bedrooms, and therefore classified as 'severely' overcrowded	4.8
71 social rented households are recorded as under-occupying and wishing to move	4.8

What our stakeholders told us:

Findings	Section
Need to manage expectations	6.2
	7.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Open up opportunities to move out of Harrow, should there be an interest to do so	6.2
	8.2
	8.4
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Need to address affordability issues with private sector properties, and offer a range of viable, attractive housing options	6.2
	7.3
	7.4
	8.2
	8.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Work with landlords to address concerns, and promote initiatives such as the LHA	6.2
	7.3
	7.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 5
Maximise the use of social rented stock	App 5
Work with RSL's, and develop a robust strategy to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation	App 5

Objective 3: To support vulnerable homeless people, including young and single homeless, in accessing settled homes and sustaining their tenure

What the review told us:

Findings	Section
Harrow has an increased score in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, however, it is still ranked as the 27 th least deprived Borough in London out of 33	3.1
There is a direct correlation between the areas in Harrow that are most deprived in terms of health and education, and location of people in TA	3.1
Households including a vulnerable resident (with mental health needs or a physical disability) are more likely to be living in unsuitable housing	4
Harrow Council and it's partners currently provide housing related support to 1,859 vulnerable people to enable them to retain their independence	4
Housing related support is provided through either accommodation based services (74%) or floating support (19%)	4

What our stakeholders told us:

Findings	Section
Some service users felt that the constant moving between TA properties was leading to an increase in anti-social behaviour, due to there being no cohesion within communities	App 6
There is a lack of suitable, adapted accommodation in Harrow for disabled people	8.3
	9.1
We need to improve partnership working with private landlords to ensure a good standard of properties	6.2
	7.3
	8.2
We also need to work in partnership with landlords and estate agents to open up options to people in receipt of HB	8.2
	9.1
There is a need for more emergency accommodation, as the homeless process can take too long	8.3
	App 4
A hand-holding service would assist both tenants and landlords in sustaining their tenancies	9.1
	App 6
Need to focus services towards the most vulnerable and at risk groups	7.3
Holistic approach towards vulnerable groups, such as offering education, advice and support.	6.2

Objective 4: To regularly review the homelessness strategy, to ensure it is effective, adapts readily to the changing external environment, and that the Housing Needs service provides good value for money

What the review told us:

Findings	Section
Harrow performs relatively well in terms of value for money when compared with the rest of the West London Sub-region	5.5
60% of customers surveyed felt that the information which they received was useful, while 59% felt that the information and advice they received was clear enough for them to understand. 52% were satisfied that they received the service which they came in for	8.3
<p>The Strategic Health Check highlighted areas for improvement in the service, most notably around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective partnering arrangements and prevention • Improving communications and referrals for vulnerable single persons • More effective management and identification of the needs of homeless applicants • Providing further support for sustaining tenancies • Identifying the best way of serving the needs of diverse local communities • Considering new 'value for money' initiatives including access to welfare benefits • Continuing learning and development for front line practitioners 	5.6
There is a need to capture information about disability for monitoring purposes and appropriate staff training	5.7
There is a need to increase our knowledge around groups including ex-service personnel, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, and Faith Groups	4.14
	4.17
	4.18

What our stakeholders told us:

Findings	Section
Creation of a homelessness 'network' throughout the Borough	App 5
Roll out a programme of education/training for staff, customers and members	6.2
	7.4
	8.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 4
	App 5
	App 6
Improved communication between agencies	6.2
	7.3
	7.4
	8.2
	8.4
	9.1
	App 4
	App 5
Training for landlords, specifically around the LHA	6.2
	7.3
	7.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 5
Evaluation of staffing resources in both of the Housing Needs staff teams	App 3
Policy briefings for all staff	App 3
Establish information sharing protocols	6.2
	7.4
	9.1
	App 3
	App 5
Improve the customer reception area	App 3
	App 6
Improve communication/updates for those on the waiting list	App 6

Appendices

Appendices	Title	Page
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Appendix 1: Glossary

ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
AST	Assured Shorthold Tenancy
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
DAT	Drug and Alcohol Team
GLA	Greater London Authority
HA	Housing Association
HAC	Housing Advice Centre
HALS	Housing Association Leasing Scheme
HAT	Housing Assessment Team
HAWk	Housing Advice Worker
HB	Housing Benefit
HELP	Homeless Employment Link Project (West London project offering employment and training advice)
HNA	Housing Needs Assessment
HPT	Housing Provision Team
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreements (agreed priorities between central government the local strategic partnership)
LBH	London Borough of Harrow
LDF	Local Development Framework
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LSOA	Lower Super Output Areas
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MST	Metropolitan Support Trust
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NOTIFY	IT system monitoring the movement of homeless households
ONS	Office for National Statistics
P1E	Quarterly homeless performance returns to government
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPO	Prolific and Priority Offenders
RSL	Registered Social Landlord (also known as Housing Association)
Sanctuary Scheme	Installation of security measures to enable victims of DV to remain in their own home where they would usually become homeless
SMS	Short Message Service
SOA	Super Output Areas
SP	Supporting People
TA	Temporary Accommodation
THATCH	The Homeless and the Churches in Harrow
UK	United Kingdom
WC	Water Closet
YMCA	Young Mens Christian Association (West London YMCA is an RSL partner)

Appendix 2: Relevant Strategy and Policy Documents

Document	Owner	Date
NATIONAL		
Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives	CLG	2005
Tackling Homelessness	Housing Corporation	2006
The Homelessness Act	CLG	2002
Ends and Means: The future role of social housing in England	John Hills/CLG	2007
More than a Roof: A report into tackling homelessness	CLG	2003
Independence and Opportunity	CLG	2007
REGIONAL		
Mayors Housing Strategy	Mayor of London	2007
The London Plan	Mayor of London	2004
West London Housing Strategy	West London Housing Partnership	
LOCAL		
Harrow Housing Strategy	Harrow Council	2007
Sustainable Communities Plan	Harrow Council	2006
Supporting People Strategy	Harrow Council	2005
Crime and Disorder Strategy	Harrow Council	2005
Local Development Framework	Harrow Council	
Local Area Agreement	Harrow Council	2008
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Harrow Council	2007

Appendix 3: Staff Sounding Board reports

Front line staff were invited to join a 'Staff Sounding board', the format of which a focus group approach. We had around 25% of the total staff in the Housing Assessment and Housing Provision Teams attend the 2 groups, with the membership of the Board shown below:

Name	Position	Role
Paul O'Callaghan	Project Manager – Strategic Housing	Project Manager
Charlene Samms	Housing Information and Research Officer	Facilitator
Hayley Young	Housing Options Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Michelle Dickins	Housing and Initiatives Support Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Juliet Martins	Homelessness Assessment Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Salima Alotia	Accommodation Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Anne Senior	Homelessness Prevention Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Felicia Thornhill	Accommodation Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Jennifer Dack	Housing and Initiatives Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Candis Skinner	Housing Options Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Toyin Awe	Homelessness Assessment Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Linda Hodge	Allocations Support Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member
Paul Allen	Homelessness Assessment Officer	Staff Sounding Board Member

The groups drew out some of the officers thoughts around the current service provided by Harrow, and their thoughts around what we do well, and where we can improve. The second meeting moved more towards strategic thinking, looking at what we should be planning for through the strategy, and future needs and demand. This gave the staff the opportunity to shape the strategy according to their own experiences.

Group 1 – 8th April 2008

Some of the key messages emerging from the first group were similar to those seen through consultation with other groups. Staff felt that there was a definite need to ensure customers were given a realistic picture around the housing available in the borough, with more transparency in our allocations procedure. We also need to publicise this, and be more proactive in getting the message across to children at school to intervene and prevent homelessness as early as possible.

Staff felt that there was a lack of incentives for private landlords in the Borough, as well as a lack of support. The staff felt that the appointment of a liaison officer to work specifically with private landlords would address the issue, as well as a more tailored service for private landlords, such as a dedicated phone number to call. This also brought about the question of resources, as there is currently only one member of staff fielding calls from private sector landlords. We need to make our service more appealing and easy to use for the landlords, as the process is currently drawn out, and can be off putting; an example of this is the wide range of documents that landlords are expected to provide.

The Housing Benefit issue was again mentioned in these groups, with staff believing that this is also a deterrent to some private landlords when thinking about making their property available for a Council letting. Staff felt that landlords were not comfortable with HB payments in arrears, while existing mechanisms between the HB Team and front-line staff to process payments are flawed. Staff promise landlords that the HB will be fast-tracked through the system in emergency cases, but once the paperwork goes over to HB, this is not the case, there appears to be a breakdown in communication between the two teams.

Looking at solutions to improve the service, staff instantly thought that there is a need for more resources, including a need to recruit more permanent staff. The Letstart initiative is an excellent programme, but also needs a bigger team for it to function effectively. The Letstart programme also needs to be project managed more effectively, and sold to the landlords as an incentive. Letstart also needs to work more effectively around homelessness prevention, and we need to emphasise the position of the Council to customers that private sector properties are the only real option.

In terms of staff knowledge and expertise, staff felt that there is a need for people working on reception to be fully trained and offered more support from managers. There is a general feeling amongst the staff that they are not listened to by managers, and this can lead to a misunderstanding about the pressures and difficulties of the job on a day-to-day basis. Staff who are on secondment to another role feel that there should be a more in-depth induction process, while the introduction of a structured, written procedure manual would assist officers covering other posts being able to do so to the best of their ability.

Communication between different sections needs to be improved, particularly between the housing assessment/housing provision teams, and housing management. Staff thought that the Beacon Status was achieved through effective gate keeping, and that this has not been achieved more recently due to teams not working together as effectively.

Staff felt that individual workloads were preventing officers from working pro-actively. Again, staff referred to the low capacity of the Letstart Team as an area which needs to be addressed, as well as the designation of procurement officers, who would be active in identifying and securing properties across the Borough. There also needs to be an increased emphasis on homeless assessment and prevention officers liaising with private landlords to place clients in accommodation.

Staff thought that repeat homelessness should be penalised if clients are approaching for the same reason as before. Mediation was not felt to be working, and was only effective as a delaying tactic encouraging people to become homeless, not the other way round, it was also felt that officers from Connexions were working against the mediation process. To improve services, there was a need for a complete holistic approach to homelessness, with improved partnership working, particularly with HB and Connexions.

Group 2 – 23rd April 2008

The second staff sounding board focused on strategic solutions to the current homelessness situation. When asked about what should feature within the strategy, staff felt that there should be a focus on working partnerships with private landlords. Clients are worried about accepting private rented accommodation, as they think they will lose their banding and priority. A re-launch of the Fresh Start scheme, offering different areas to move to, would see the take-up numbers increase, as the current areas offered are now saturated.

In terms of homelessness prevention, staff stated that early intervention was pivotal in preventing homelessness. Informing young people whilst they are still in secondary school, and changing the mindset that council housing is easy to obtain, will help to get the message across. A scheme should be implemented, whereby young people under 18 years can receive mediation in a host family setting for a defined time period, before returning back to living their parents. Clients living in Assured Shorthold Tenancy accommodation should have their tenancies extended beyond a year.

Advice and information given to clients should be uniform throughout the service; staff feel that some clients receive more attention than others if they have made their situation known to high-level managers. The Council's policy and procedures should be followed through, regardless of position in council. In addition to this, there is a need identified by front-line staff, for more support by the managers. The staff stated that they would welcome a policy brief, where managers could take the opportunity to train them on both internal and external policies.

Again the group focused upon the need to give people in the Borough a reality check around the availability of social housing. It was also mentioned that this needs to be developed into some form of training for other staff, customers and elected members to ensure that we are all giving the same message. This was also the case when asked about existing partnerships with agencies and internal departments.

The staff then completed an exercise mapping out current services provided and who the key partners were, as well as their thoughts on what services should be provided and the key delivery agents for these also. The results of this have been fed into both the review and the strategy action plan.

Appendix 4: Consultation with young people (in partnership with Connexions)

There were 2 separate focus groups held by Connexions, with teenage parents and young people who had used the housing service due to them becoming homeless. These groups were facilitated by a Project Officer from Connexions, with some direction and support provided by the Housing Service. The groups aimed to draw out experiences of dealing with the Council when in housing need, and how we could improve services for these groups in the future.

These groups were also complemented by surveys which were mailed out to people who were known to have accessed these services, but could not attend the focus groups.

Group 1 – Teenage Parents 16th May 2008

The teenage parents group was held on the 16th May 2008, and there were 10 attendees taken from an existing network known to Connexions. The group were informed that their comments would be entirely anonymous, and were encouraged to talk openly about their experiences and ideas around the housing service offered by Harrow Council.

The group felt that the service on offer was poor, and that staff appeared to have pre-conceptions about their position as they were single parents. Group members felt that the family members' opinions were taken more seriously than their own, due to their age and their situation. All participants felt that this perception continued even after they were placed in accommodation.

Those who were offered mediation services felt that this was a delaying tactic from the Housing Service. However, once mediation had taken place, the feedback given from the group was positive, saying that they felt this was a useful tool in resolving their issues.

The constant transition between properties was a source of concern for the group, and they felt that this had a negative effect on their children. They also felt that there was not enough information available for people in their situation, and that the options available to them were either not feasible, or explained in detail. The group also believed that it was not an accurate assumption that some young people become pregnant to be given a Council property.

In terms of solutions, the group were fairly unified in saying that they would advise others in their situation to remain at home as long as possible. They also stated that if there is no other option, then it is essential to approach the Council as soon as possible, and not to wait until the baby is born. There were also more comments around the approach taken by Council staff, and how they could be more helpful and understanding.

A programme of education, rolled out in schools and colleges would help to raise awareness of the situation, whilst also informing people of what they are entitled to or what they can expect. Assistance with budgeting and debt advice was a key service which was suggested, as many found this the greatest source of stress once placed in their own accommodation. The group referred to the unsuitability of some of the placements for young families, and that this needs to be thought through before placing them in certain schemes.

Group 2: Young People, 4th June 2008

An evening session was held with 5 young people who had accessed the housing service through becoming homeless. The format of this group followed the initial consultation with the teenage parents. Again, the group were informed that all comments made would be entirely anonymous, and the purpose of the consultation was explained.

Overall, the group were positive about their experiences in dealing with the Council housing services. It was emphasised that the level of expectation was low, mainly due to the fact that the level of understanding and knowledge was minimal. This again prompted the issue around education for young people in schools around housing issues.

The first point of contact for the group was both Colleges and Connexions. Again, it was felt that the staff in the housing service did not really appreciate the situation due to the age of the individual, and it was mentioned that staff were more receptive once a professional was in attendance on behalf or with the applicant. There were questions raised around the processes in place, as many of the group felt that they were passed from department to department without much explanation or guidance.

The group felt that the mediation service wasn't as effective as it could have been, and again felt like this was delaying their application. On the whole, the group thought that they were treated fairly by the housing service, although they again remarked that this improved further when they were with a professional.

It was said that Harrow offers a good service to young people, although it was felt that this was only once the individuals concerned were in the situation. It was said that the Council should be more pro-active in educating young people about the realities of housing, and prepare them more adequately. There was a positive response to the option of moving out of Borough.

Many felt that it was with regard to parenting that many young people find themselves in housing need, and the upbringing that they receive can shape their decisions and perceptions of living on their own.

Through their own experiences, the group stated that they would like to see more emergency accommodation, which was safe. They thought that if more information was provided to young people, it would help to prevent homelessness in this group, while an increased focus on resolving family break-ups would also help to enable young people to remain at home. A service offering advice within schools and colleges would also help, the citizenship programme was also mentioned as a vehicle for educating this group.

Most of the group were unhappy with their initial placement, from the point of view that they were placed in an unsafe environment whilst being vulnerable themselves. Most felt that there was a lack of security and general hygiene issues, whilst other residents had drug and alcohol issues, increasing the feeling of insecurity. Shared properties were also an issue, as many of the group were at College studying for qualifications, which other residents did not appreciate.

Other vehicles for the education of young people on housing issues were the Youth Council, as well as surveys and questionnaires mailed out for completion. The group welcomed all

opportunities to become involved in the housing process, on the premise that the outcomes were actioned.

Appendix 5: Homelessness Conference

Following on from presentations in the morning session, delegates were asked to break into their selected workshops to discuss agreed key subjects. These were:

- Housing Advice
- Allocations
- Housing Supply
- Overcrowding and Under-occupation
- Prevention and Options
- Young Homelessness
- Single Homelessness

Housing Advice:

The group thought that the main issues were around managing expectations, and early intervention in respect of mediation and debt management. Other areas which were felt to be important were the provision of comprehensive benefits advice, an in-depth understanding of legal rights and status around particular groups and priority need categories. Education programmes need to be adopted in schools to extend family mediation to a younger age. We also need to introduce a scheme around 'parenting skills', which would help us to look at homelessness in a more holistic context as part of the family dynamic.

When looking at partnership working arrangements, the workshop thought that we need to be more aware of the different agencies who may be involved in preventing homelessness in the Borough. We also need to be having regular liaison meetings with nominated representatives from these agencies, and need to introduce structured feedback mechanisms.

Gaps in current advice provision were felt to be access to services where no right to reside or recourse to public funds existed, an awareness of debt advice and management in Housing Management, and the absence of a Tenancy Relations Officer in Harrow.

The group would like to see the strategy address a solidly funded housing advice centre, able to provide advice on all aspects of landlord and tenant law as it relates to the prevention of homelessness. They also felt there should be increased emphasis on early intervention, again remarking on the importance of a Tenancy Relations Officer.

Allocations:

The main issues in Harrow were perceived to be the lack of larger properties for families, and the perception of unfairness. To resolve this, the group suggested a more transparent approach, and ensuring that the public are correctly informed about the change in situation.

The group also suggested that we should review the allocations policy, particularly around 'homeless at home' and whether we are capturing the people in most need.

We need to look at other options; so that we can offer a broader choice of housing which is both workable and feasible, and we need to ensure that there are more tenancy support officers made available.

The group felt that the strategy should look at the appointment of a resettlement officer, extra incentives for people to downsize, ensuring that vulnerable groups are catered/provided for and try to ensure that we are not moving families in emergency accommodation outside Harrow.

Housing Supply:

There is a need for us to endorse the current policies on affordable housing negotiation, and to ensure that everyone comments on the LDF core strategy. We need a continued focus on the empty property strategy to maximise the use of our existing stock, and to promote area improvements.

The need for partnership working was emphasised by focusing on a common housing register for council and RSL's, ensuring that everyone knows who is getting properties and we can monitor nominations more effectively. The group made the point that RSL's should be more transparent in promoting supply by making use of their existing stock through extensions/de-conversions etc.

Overcrowding and under-occupation:

The group thought that the reasons behind the situation were the loss of 3+ bedroom properties through Right to Buy, and that new supply consisted mainly of 1 and 2 bedroom builds. There is also a lack of awareness, and issues around managing expectations.

To move forward, we need to engage more fully with RSL's, focus upon developing and sharing best practice and target new build properties to meet need in these areas. The group felt that the strategy should emphasise the link between parental exclusions from the family home, look at early identification around the potential for overcrowding and under-occupation, and empower the overcrowding/under-occupation officers that Boroughs will be appointing in the next few months. The Camden model was mentioned as a source of existing best practice.

Prevention and options:

This group focused around a range of early intervention mechanisms including:

- Referrals from Schools and Doctors surgeries
- Community education and media management
- Homelessness surgeries in the community
- Access to information
- Shared information
- Explaining legal processes
- Expanding the Wednesday Drop in sessions to specialised sessions
- Move away from depending on people coming to us
- DVD's and other communication methods
- Educating/training for other agencies

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- Floating support
 - Council/RSL to identify overcrowded situations
 - Training for voluntary groups
 - Change stereotype applications
 - Look at space saving solutions such as adaptations, grown up children living for longer periods at home
 - Change incentives from the private sector, whilst looking ahead through Letstart

The group also thought that Supporting People had a greater role to play through the single point of contact and the provider panel for move-on.

The Prevention and Options group thought that the strategy should capture access to information, getting the message out and making contact with communities, expansion of the drop-in service, greater engagement with the voluntary service council and early prevention. The idea of a homelessness 'network' throughout the borough was also discussed, offering contact points for all agencies to share good practice and work together to resolve issues.

Young homelessness:

Young homelessness was seen as a growing problem in Harrow, with family exclusions and a lack of respect for others causing the rise. Youth offending and mental health issues were also believed to be prominent in Harrow, and the fact that there are no affordable alternatives apart from social rented properties. Unaccompanied youths, such as asylum seekers were also growing in need, and again, the cultural belief that the council has a duty to offer a secure property was seen as key in the levels of need amongst young people.

A number of solutions were proposed, such as education around housing options, more joined-up partnership working, with joint protocols established between agencies. An increased dialogue between housing providers, colleges, schools and agencies such as Connexions was also suggested.

The group felt that the strategy should look at case studies nationally to establish good practice, develop a single homeless pathway, encompassing a single point of referral, increased partnership working, mediation services for all young people and focusing the Single Homeless Forum more towards youth. There needs to be more provision for young people with mental health problems or challenging behaviour, and we should also improve consultation with younger people around the issue of homelessness to raise awareness.

Single homelessness:

We need to identify age groups in single homeless, there is evidence of older groups approaching due to family break-ups, and there is a need to research this. With these different groups, there is a different sort of need being presented, which we need to understand and cater for. The emphasis on partnership working was stressed, especially around those groups who have specialist knowledge around different cultures.

It was felt that we need to maintain and expand on family advice and mediation in the Borough, whilst re-introducing the drop-in for young people. There is a need to promote

links with the Watford YMCA and to also re-introduce a specific move-on budget, including rent deposit.

There was a lot of discussion around housing supply. The group felt that there should be incentives for developers and RSL's to build or convert 1 bedroom accommodation. The pressure around empty homes was also discussed, as well as the conversion of empty shop units and commercial properties for innovative self-contained accommodation.

Appendix 6: Customer focus groups

There were 3 focus groups run throughout the day on Tuesday 6th May. These groups were facilitated by peer group facilitators, with support from the housing service. All respondents were ensured that their comments would remain anonymous, and were informed of the purpose of the study.

This report has laid out the findings from all 3 sessions, due to the disparity between numbers of attendees for the different sessions. In all, we had 32 attendees, with the morning session proving the most popular.

People on the waiting list felt that the Locata CBL system was too difficult to understand, and were confused as to the point of being in band D. Many remarked that by being placed in band D, they were likely to never be offered permanent Council accommodation. It was felt that we could improve as a service by providing regular updates to people registered with us, as to the availability of properties, their likelihood of getting these, and also an estimated waiting time.

All of the attendees thought that the amount of time which they had to wait for a property was too long, and that the amount of moves which they have to make after moving into a property had an unsettling effect on their children. Most were critical of the standard of properties in the private sector, both for the lack of monitoring of landlords, as well as the general disrepair of properties. There were many comments regarding financial assistance for repairs to properties, as well as remarks around landlords' focus purely on rent rather than their home.

Many felt that it would be appropriate to offer training courses or open sessions for those who are registered with the Council, to assist them in understanding the Locata system better. Most attendees were raising points about people jumping ahead of them in terms of priorities, and they find this frustrating without knowing the mechanics of the lettings function in the Borough.

Attendees were willing to accept private sector options on the whole, as well as expressing an interest to out of Borough moves. These schemes, however, need to be viable and offer a feasible opportunity for both tenant and landlord.

The groups felt that the constant moving between properties was leading to an increase in ASB, due to their being no cohesion within communities. They also felt that families were living in over-crowded conditions, which was not suitable for those with younger children. In terms of existing supply, the point was raised around the lack of supply of 3, 4 and 5 bedroom properties in Harrow. It was also mentioned that there are not enough adapted properties available for those who require them.

A more customer focused service would benefit customers, for example, visits to tenants at defined intervals in their tenancy would help to rectify any tenancy issues which may have arisen, while a form-filling service and improved communication were other areas where the groups felt that we could improve.

Most people thought that we could work more closely with Housing Benefit, as well as private landlords, to prevent issues arising around rent arrears and repairs. A form of

mediation service was proposed, where the Council would act as a go between for tenants and landlords to resolve any issues. Housing Benefit was seen as a major problem for tenants looking to secure their property, as many landlords were seen to favour people in work rather than those on benefits.

Appendix 7: Membership of the Harrow Homelessness Forum

Below is a list of all partners in the Borough, registered as members of the Harrow Homeless Forum.

- HAVS (Harrow Association of Voluntary Services)
- Harrow Refugee Forum
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Housing Advice Centre
- Paradigm Housing
- Harrow PCT
- Harrow Islamic Society
- Harrow Somali Women's Action Group
- Hestia Women's Aid
- Harrow Jobcentre Plus
- Forge Housing Association
- Harrow Drug and Alcohol Service (PCT)
- The Pension Service for Harrow and Hillingdon
- Harrow Council for Racial Equality
- West London YMCA
- Harrow Churches Housing Association
- Stonham Housing Association
- Home Group
- Connexions
- Stepping Stones Trust
- Shelter
- THATCH (The Homeless and the Churches in Harrow)
- Mental Health and Learning
- Metropolitan Housing Trust
- Homeless Link
- MIND in Harrow
- Caryl Thomas Clinic
- Somali Students Organisation
- Harrow Women's Centre
- Harrow Centre of Volunteering
- Resource Information Service
- Leaving Care Team
- Race Hate Crime Team
- Paddington Churches Housing Association
- Children's Services
- Teenage Pregnancy Team
- Department of Works and Pensions (Benefits Agency)
- Safer Homes
- Indian Volunteers for Community Services
- Brent and Harrow Health Project
- Acton Housing Association
- Harrow Central & North London Mental Health Trust

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- London Probation Service
 - Youth Offending Team
 - Watford New Hope Trust
 - Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations
 - Harrow Women's Association
 - Harrow Detached Team
 - Asylum Seekers Service
 - Harrow Iranian Community Association
 - Metropolitan Police
 - Brent Private Housing Information Unit
 - Harrow Inter-faith Council
 - Afghan Association of Harrow
 - Inqilab Housing Association
 - Refugees into Jobs
 - Network Housing Association
 - Family Mediation RELATE
 - Brent and Harrow African Community Project
 - Education Services
 - Harrow International Christian Centre

Appendix 8: Review of the Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008 Action Plan

Key:	Completed
	In progress
	Not completed
	Not prioritised
	No resources to complete
	Deferred

Action - What we will do to prevent homelessness					
We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Prevent homelessness for 300 applicants for each year of the strategy.	HNM	Each year of strategy	Annually	Over achieved each year. See BVPI 213. Established the West London Floating Support Service for Single Homeless through Lookahead offering 46 hours per week of support to prevent homelessness.
2.	Review and improve our mediation initiative thereby increasing our performance on prevention through mediation by 10% over 3 years.	HNM	July 2006	July 2006	Not achieved - figure for 05/06 was 166, in 06/07 it was 90 and in 07/08 it was 90
3.	We will reduce the number of households reapplying as homeless from 6% of acceptances to 3% over 5 years.	HNM	July 2008	ongoing	Achieved in 06/07 and 07/08. In 07/08 no cases of repeat homelessness
4.	We will develop clear protocols/SLAs with the Housing Benefits service that set out each service's responsibilities and actions to prevent homelessness.	HNM, HB Service	June 2004	-	Not prioritised – HB worker in Housing obviates need for protocol.
5.	We will further develop the Sanctuary initiative to prevent homelessness for all 'hate crime' cases.	HNM Harrow Police	October 2003	-	Led to overspend on sanctuary budget, which had to be reined in.

6.	We will agree performance targets with the Harrow Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), and all Registered Social Landlords in the Borough, to identify tenants at risk of homelessness and bring about joint intervention to prevent homelessness for cases of rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.	HNM Harrow ALMO	January 2004	-	ALMO was not pursued. Performance targets not prioritised for RSLs. Action plan for 2008 will feature work with Council and RSL partners on preventing homelessness in social housing tenants
7.	We will establish the temporary post of Private Sector Assertive Outreach Worker as a permanent post.	HNM	November 2003	November 2003	Increased to 3 posts for prevention work, and now considering 4.

Action - What we will do to Improve Housing Advice and Information

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Produce a marketing strategy for the Housing Advice Service including how to reach minority and hard to reach groups.	HAC Manager	August 2004	-	Not prioritised
2.	Develop a protocol to tackle illegal eviction and harassment in conjunction with the Council.	HNM/HAC Manager	October 2003	-	
3.	Recruit volunteers for the HAC service and review opening hours and the introduction of outreach surgeries using volunteers.	HAC Manager	May 2004	-	Not done – not part of HAC contract
4.	Undertake an audit of Housing Advisory Services in the Borough and develop the quarterly HAC sub group meetings into a Housing Advice Forum.	HNM/HAC Manager	June 2004	-	West London Housing Advice Group superceded this initiative
5.	Develop a clear protocol for referral of cases between Housing Assessment and Housing Advice.	HNM/HAC Manager	December 2003	December 2003	In HAC contract
6.	Revise performance monitoring information procedures to produce 'smarter' indicators and targets with more emphasis on case outcomes.	HAC Manager	November 2003	April 2007	HAC information produced in line with BVPI 213.
7.	Pilot a benefits take up interview with Council tenancy sign ups to prevent early homelessness.	HNM/ALMO Manager/HA	February 2004	-	Sign ups do include HB, but not other benefits

		C Manager			
8.	Develop a housing advice information guide for council staff.	HNM/HAC Manager	September 2004	-	Not prioritised
9.	Look to develop the capacity of advice and voluntary sector agencies in the Borough to offer housing advice including joint training initiatives.	HNM/HAC Manager	December 2004	-	Not prioritised

Action – what we will do to further develop choices and options for homeless people

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Through our options scheme help 250 homeless households a year to find a solution to their homelessness	HAT Manager, HPT Manager	By end March end year	Annually	Overachieved (see Finders Fee figures)
2.	Expand access to the LAWN Fresh Start Scheme to local RSLs by 2004.	HAT Manager	April 2004	-	LAWN is no longer an effective scheme because of choice based lettings in northern towns.
3.	Fully expand the Homefinder Scheme to private sector landlords in areas outside of London wherever homeless people wish to relocate.	HAT Manager	September 2003	-	First initiative largely failed. New one just getting off the ground
4.	Ensure that all statutory and non statutory homeless households are offered an options interview as part of their housing application.	HAT Manager	November 2003	November 2003	
5.	Expand the criteria for the options interviews to include issues in relation to health, education or other identified needs.	HAT Manager	August 2004	-	Will expand to include employment and debt shortly
6.	Extend the principle of Choice Based lettings to temporary accommodation over the lifetime of the strategy.	HPT Manager	September 2005	-	Has not been practical to date. New Frays scheme will be semi choice based Plans overtaken by 2010 target.
7.	Develop a support plan to ensure that all Harrow Locata members understand and are able to access the Scheme.	HPT Manager	June 2004	June 2004	A support plan has been written up, options officers operate assisted bidding lists, advocates are invited to presentations on 6 monthly cycle and consultation exercise carried out.

8.	Increase internet, telephone and text bidding under Locata by 10% in total a year over the 2 years of the initial strategy.	HPT Manager	By end March 2004 and 2005	December 2005 Achieved 2005 and all areas continue to increase	
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Action – What we will do Improve Temporary Accommodation

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Review existing RSL HALs performance on housing management and repairs against the original service specification and set targets with RSLs for continuous improvement.	HPT Manager	July 2003	Completed and continually monitored. Performance currently good with all RSL's.	
2.	Develop a model private sector leasing scheme as part of a contingency plan to deal with any negative effects of any fluctuations in RSL performance on temporary housing procurement.	HPT Manager	May 2004	-	Not prioritised and the risk of HB reductions superceded this
3.	Review the future use of the Anmer Lodge hostel with the estates and valuation service and seek to extend the lease for a further 3 years.	HPT Manager	November 2003	Lease extended.	Planning permission extended to Feb 2010. Project currently assessing potential alternative sites for reprovision of this facility elsewhere, and overall need for hostel accommodation.
4.	Provide an information 'help' pack to all new applicants placed into temporary accommodation to cover: (iv) Access to primary health care and education (v) Access to support services whilst in temporary accommodation (iii) Common questions and answers	HPT Manager HPT Manager HPT Manager	January 2004 October 2003 April 2004	West London TA charter booklet produced 2005	
5.	Develop 30 units of supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds to respond to the new demand for the	HPT Manager	April 2005	2006	HCHA Bonnersfield

	extension of the 'priority need' categories (acquired at a rate of 10 units per year).				The YMCA scheme at Roxeth Gate was been developed – Harrow have taken up increased numbers of supported units so that SP now contracts for 21 units Supported Lodgings developed
6.	As a result of the Government's target for eliminating the use of bed and breakfast for families, review the future of Harrow's bed and breakfast homeless hotels in conjunction with the Harrow Hoteliers Forum and Planning. Review should consider: (i) Alternative use of hostels for single non priority homeless (ii) Conversion of some hotels into self-contained units for homeless families (iii) Conversion of some hotels to provide hostel accommodation for young key workers on low incomes	HNM HNM HNM	May 2004 May 2004 May 2004		Not prioritised. Overtaken by need for hotel accommodation to meet emergency housing need
7.	Building on current practices, set up an information sharing protocol/SLA between the Housing Benefit services, RSL HALs partners and Housing Provision, for the assessment of housing benefits for HALS tenants.	HNM	January 2004		Dialogue in place and information is being shared. There is no written protocol in place as it was not deemed necessary
8.	Set up a temporary housing tenants association and look at feasibility of incorporating the association into existing council tenant consultation systems.	HPT Manager	February 2004		Not prioritised
9.	Ensure all RSL HALs associations introduce regular customer consultation and satisfaction monitoring processes.	HPT Manager	November 2003		No information on RSL consultations. Council has done one survey since 2003. WL have done one. Supporting People annually contract monitor RSLs with support contracts. As part of this process we have evidence from services about

					customer engagement and satisfaction. C/F to 2008-13
10.	Establish a mental health temporary accommodation hostel for clients during the vulnerability assessment process.	HNM/ Enabling Manager	May 2005		Not prioritised. No facility established.
11.	Review the feasibility of establishing a 10 year leasing scheme for temporary housing.	HNM/HPT Manager	April 2005		Superseded by temp-to-perm scheme reflected in 2008 action plan

Action - What we will do to improve access to affordable social housing					
We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Complete our allocations policy review to ensure that homeless households have maximum access to social housing.	HPT Manager	December 2003	November 2003	Policy is being reviewed including target of 70% to homeless, options include revising down the % of allocations to the homeless
2.	Develop a support plan to ensure Harrow Locata members including vulnerable clients and BME communities, understand and are able to fully access the scheme.	HPT Manager	May 2003	December 2004	A provider led move on panel has been established with a process for allocating band B (move on from supported accommodation) on the basis of need and an overall allocation.
3.	Expand access to the LAWN Fresh Start scheme to local RSLs and agree targets for the number of moves per year. This will free up additional social housing units for the homeless.	HNM	April 2004	-	LAWN is no longer an effective scheme because of choice based lettings in northern towns.
4.	Extending the tenants incentive scheme to under occupying RSL tenants. Specifically target elderly under occupiers who may be interested in moving out of London under the LAWN scheme.	HNM	April 2004	-	Not prioritised as budget spent to capacity on council under occupiers C/F to 2008-13
5.	Reduce void turnaround times to 35 days through pre-allocating properties, reducing void repair times and ensuring all lettings are through accompanied viewings.	ALMO Manager/ HNM	April 2004	April 2006	Target exceeded
6.	Increase the proportion of RSL nominations by 5% over the life of the strategy by improved monitoring of nominations and RSL voluntary agreements to increase the proportion of lettings available to Harrow.	HNM	July 2005	-	Not prioritised C/F to 2008-13
7.	Improve take up of shared ownership nominations	HNM	March 2005	Register developed	Low Cost Home Ownership register

	amongst homeless people through the development of a shared ownership register and improved marketing. Over 30% of all nominations should be from homeless people by March 2005.			March 2005	set and regular marketing of schemes undertaken as they complete. Nomination target of 30% not met due to the household income requirements for shared ownership. C/F 2008-13
Action - What we will do to promote new supply of affordable housing					
We will:		<i>By</i>	<i>When</i>	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Increase the staff resources for the enabling team by 2 officers.	Enabling Manager	December 2003	December 2003	Additional officer transferred into team 2006.
2.	Work with the local authority West London affordable housing group to maximise the number of affordable housing units available, in West London and pan regionally, to house homeless people.	Enabling Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing	West London nominations distribution mechanism agreed.
3.	Ensure that the number of affordable housing units delivered meets Harrow's affordable housing Section 106 policy.	Enabling Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing	Harrow policy superceded by London Plan policy. Not currently meeting London Plan target of completing 200 units per annum. However there are new development proposals in place to achieve this from 2008/9. C/F 2008-13
4.	Review and agree funding options for new affordable housing following the abolition of LASHG.	Enabling Manager	December 2003		Funding for new affordable housing secured from the Housing Corporation through the NAHP bidding process
5.	Undertake an asset management appraisal for remodelling outdated council and RSL sheltered accommodation, utilising under used garage sites and pursuing with planning and estates opportunities for site assembly.	Enabling Manager	July 2004		Some small sites brought forward eg Mephram Gardens. Sheltered Housing review completed 2006/7 – options being investigated

Action - What we will do working with the private sector to tackle homelessness					
We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Provide a landlords guide which combines information on legal rights and responsibilities with information on our private rented sector access schemes.	Empty Homes Manager	March 2004	Not done	Landlord Forum took place Nov 06 led by Environmental Health – provided updated to landlords on legislative changes. Harrow currently not a member of London Landlord Accreditation scheme. If we could potentially buy-in to a pan-London guide.
2.	Develop with the CAB Housing Advice Centre regular landlord surgeries aimed at preventing homelessness through resolving disputes.	HNM/HAC Manager	October 2003		
3.	Expand our Relate Mediation Service to landlords and tenants.	HNM	April 2004	-	Not prioritised
4.	Develop a protocol for tackling harassment and illegal eviction with clear allocated responsibilities for all agencies involved in the process.	HNM	October 2003		C/F 2008-13
5.	Target the use of housing benefit top up payments where private sector tenants are having difficulties paying the rent.	HNM/HB Manager	November 2003		HB top up is administered by HB, not Housing
6.	Increase the supply of affordable homes by targeting grants and loans linked to the rent levels and nomination rights.	NM/Empty Homes Manager	October 2003	Ongoing	In 2007/08 grant pipeline 37 units including ones completed and still undergoing works (for empty homes). £188k claimed for 06-08 from West London with a further £212k to claim. Better Homes Grant – 11 units in pipeline linked to direct lettings scheme. Not had take-up of full £180k

					so some grant has been offered back to West London.
7.	Develop an enforcement strategy for non-registered HMOs including targeting the worst unfit properties on a risk assessed basis.	Environmental Health Manager	July 2004		Although a specific enforcement strategy has not been developed, the Environmental Health Team use good practice as the basis for targeting non-registered HMOs.
8.	Set targets for keeping people in their homes following the expansion of the remit of the Staying Put agency to include disabled people and social priority households under 60 whose homes require repair or adaptation.	Improvement Grants Manager	August 2004		Supporting People funds the Staying Put (HIA) service and Willow Floating Support service for 35 older people living in owner occupation.
9.	Develop a positive marketing campaign to reduce prejudice against letting accommodation to people on benefits.	HNM	December 2004		Not prioritised.
Action - What we will do to build on Partnership working					

As partnership working is key to our homelessness strategy many of the action points in other sections of the strategy refer to partnership working. However, specifically:

We will:		<i>By</i>	<i>When</i>	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Ensure that tackling homelessness is identified in all key strategy strategic partnership plans and strategies	Housing Strategy Manager	Ongoing	ongoing	Ongoing
2.	By 2005, 75% of all our operational homelessness initiatives should be being operated on a joint West London basis thereby providing economies of scale and consistency of approach across the sub region.	HNM	July 2005	-	Highly ambitious, not practical in reality
3.	Set up a Beacon Council benchmarking club for tackling homelessness with the other 6 successful	HNM	November 2003	-	Not done. Used West London to benchmark

	councils nationally. Use the initiative to promote and learn from best Practice and implement new ideas in Harrow.				
4.	Commit to the continued funding of all the operational homelessness initiatives at their current level of funding over the 5 years of the strategy.	HNM	Ongoing	Ongoing	

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness on a West London basis

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Jointly commission homelessness prevention schemes to include mediation and the Sanctuary Project (at least 5 out of 7 partners to be involved by July 2005).	HNM & other Needs Managers in West London	July 2005	2007	The West London Single Homeless floating support service has been established and provided by Lookahead offers 46hrs pw of support for single homeless in Harrow
2.	Rationalise the purchase of temporary accommodation with West London to reduce costs competition and improve efficiency.	HNM & other Needs Managers in West London	July 2005	-	Not practicable, but lots of joint working on TA and benchmarking costs
3.	Seek to standardise homelessness assessment procedures across the sub-region.	HNM & other Needs Managers in West London	July 2005	October 2007	West London (Acclaim) Benchmarking results will help
4.	Explore the feasibility of establishing a West London Homelessness Service to tackle homelessness consistently across the sub-region.	HNM & other Needs Managers in West London	July 2005	-	Not practicable

Action - What we will do to promote education, training and employment opportunities for homeless people					
We will:		<i>By</i>	<i>When</i>	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Implement the schools based homelessness education project in 25% secondary schools 2003/04, 50% 2004/05, 75% 2005/06.	HAT Manager	Ongoing	-	Not prioritised but will be in the new homelessness strategy C/F to 2008-13
2.	Implement the NOTIFY IT notification project for education and agree a protocol with education for ensuring that school aged children can access a school placement within an agreed time scale.	HAT Manager	November 2003	Notify working fully December 2005 No protocol agreed	
3.	Develop educational play facilities in the Council's two main homeless families' hostels, Vernon Lodge and Amner Lodge.	HPT Manager	June 2004	Completed in V/L 2004	No progress in Anmer – Lease end issues now
4.	Ensure that 90% of families with school aged children are not required to move within the first stage emergency accommodation to ensure family links with existing schools are maintained.	HPT Manager	Ongoing	Unmet	Lack of supply in Harrow, applicants need to move back to Harrow and then into hostels.
5.	Ensure that 75% of families with school aged children in leased 2 nd stage temporary accommodation are not required to move before they are permanently rehoused.	HPT Manager	Ongoing		Clients opting for other options because of lack of supply of perm accomm. Cannot always renew lease.
6.	Develop a working protocol with Job Centre Plus on ways homeless people can access employment and training opportunities.	HNM	September 2004		West London HELP Employment project has started
7.	Provide all homeless households in long term leased temporary accommodation with an opportunity for a specific benefits and employment interview, so they are aware of what they can earn and its effect on	HNM	September 2004	2007	Clients written to as part of West London TA Audit and asked to express an interest. All those who responded were passed to HELP. All

housing benefit entitlement.					SP service users have a support plan with agreed outcomes around employment education and training. Outcomes reporting from the providers demonstrates that outcomes from these service users are being achieved.
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Action - What we will do to improve access to health for homeless people

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Identify a lead officer on homelessness within Harrow PCT.	PCT	April 2004		Not done
2.	Look to develop a GP registration service for homeless people attending Accident and Emergency.	HNM/PCT	September 2004		Not done
3.	Ensure that 95% of homeless families placed into emergency accommodation receive information on how and where to register with a local GP within 3 weeks of moving in.	HPT Manager/ PCT	March 2004	2006	Emergency accommodation leaflet produced.
4.	To ensure that all homeless children under 5 in bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation are linked to a health visitor.	HPT Manager/ PCT	September 2003	December 2005 Notify working Met. HV informed of all families with children in emergency accom	
5.	Develop a hospital discharge protocol with the PCT for vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	HAT Manager/ PCT	October 2003	Only October 2003 Mental Health protocol in operation	
6.	Produce a health information pack for both homeless families and single homeless people.	PCT	April 2004	-	

7.	Aim to set up a PMS (Personal Medical Service) specialising in homelessness by September 2004.	PCT	September 2004		
8.	Discuss with the PCT how homeless people can access a 'walk in' health service.	PCT/HNM	December 2004	-	
9.	Develop a health and homelessness awareness training package which can be used by both sectors.	PCT/HNM	February 2005		
10.	Implement the 'NOTIFY' IT system to improve the information flow to PCTs on homeless people.	HPT Manager	November 2003	December 2005 Implemented by HAT	
11.	Ensure that homeless people have fair access to health services through providing information and interpretation in community languages.	PCT/HNM	October 2004	October 2004	Housing Needs provide GP information to clients placed in emergency accommodation and offer interpretation whenever needed. SP targets expect that Providers will ensure that Service users are registered with GPs

Action - What we will do to improve services for single homeless

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Commission a second Rough Sleepers count in Spring 2004 to follow on from the count conducted October 2001.	HNM	April 2004	October 2004	
2.	By Spring of 2004 establish an 'early warning' initiative with the police and local businesses to combat rough sleeping.	HNM	Spring 2004	October 2004	
3.	Relaunch the single homeless common monitoring form from Autumn 2003.	HAT Manager	November 2003	-	Not prioritised

4.	House 100 new single homeless people a year for the life of the strategy through the various accommodation projects.	HNM	Ongoing	Ongoing	Roughly 200 rent deposits every year
5.	Prevent homelessness for 50, 16-30 year olds per annum through the mediation project.	HAT Manager	Ongoing	Ongoing	
6.	Set up the Harrow single homelessness team in their own accommodation at Victoria Halls.	HNM/West London YMCA	September 2003	September 2003	
7.	Develop a 3-year winter shelter and consider developing a full time emergency shelter.	HNM/ Homelessness Forum	September 2003	Ongoing until winter 2006/07	Winter shelter now discontinued. No resources to complete a full-time emergency shelter
8.	Negotiate with local hoteliers access for single homeless people into local B&Bs where there has been a fall in the homeless families trade.	HPT Manager	November 2003	Met – should be HAT target	No longer relevant because of pressure on TA due to 2010 target
9.	Develop a Foyer for single homeless people in Harrow by the Spring of 2005.	Enabling Manager	April 2003	2006	YMCA Roxeth Gate
10.	Develop an accommodation project for single vulnerable women and victims of domestic violence.	HNM	October 2004	-	Hestia Womens Aid Project

Action - What we will do to tackle youth homelessness

Action - What we will do to tackle youth homelessness					
We will:		<i>By</i>	<i>When</i>	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	By autumn 2004 develop a 6 unit supported hostel for teenage parents with Metropolitan Housing Trust.	Supported Housing Manager	November 2004	November 2004	MST
2.	Ensure that no 16/17 year old needs to spend longer	HNM	March 2004	2004	New provision – YMCA and Supported Lodgings

	than 6 weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation.				
3.	Purchase up to 12 units a year of accommodation and support for young people with multiple needs with a specialist young person's provider.	HAT Manager	Ongoing		22 places achieved to date
4.	Develop up to 15 units a year of supported lodgings for young people through the Frays Housing Association lodgings scheme.	HAT Manager	March 2004	Coordinator appointed Dec 2007	9 hosts available at June 2008 – WL YMCA
5.	Develop a multi-agency housing support panel to jointly assess the vulnerability and support needs of all 16/17 year olds who approach as homeless.	HAT Manager	March 2004		Panel being developed for Supported Lodgings scheme April 2008

Action - What we will do to continue to tackle homelessness amongst victims of domestic violence

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Prevent homelessness by assisting 100 households a year to voluntarily remain in their home through the Sanctuary Project.	HNM/Police/ Women's Aid/Women's Centre	Ongoing	Ongoing	100 per year not needed. Budget cuts → 25/50
2.	Develop move on accommodation through Women's Pioneer Housing Association for 8 households who are victims of domestic violence.	Empty Homes Manager	January 2004	6 units completed March 2004 (won empty homes award)	A new DV resettlement service for 15 Service Users has been commissioned.
3.	Take action to evict against perpetrators of domestic violence from Council tenancies and include an explicit statement to that effect.	ALMO Manager/ HNM	July 2004	2005	New tenancy agreement
4.	Agree reciprocal allocations arrangements with West London Council Partners to speed up safe management transfers and prevent victims having to	HNM/HPT Manager	October 2004	October 2006 Met	West London Domestic Violence Reciprocals agreement rolled out to RSLs and others

	apply as homeless.				
5.	Look to provide over the life of the Homelessness Strategy, a second refuge in Harrow.	HNM/ Enabling Manager	July 2006	-	Not done
6.	Ensure that RSLs operating in the Borough develop their own domestic violence policies and procedures to prevent homelessness.	HNM/ Enabling Manager	July 2004		Not prioritised

Action - What we will do to meet the needs of homeless asylum seekers and refugees

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	Work with a cross-departmental and multi-agency project (The Refugee Practitioners group) to draft a joint refugee and asylum seekers strategy for the Council with clear objectives for tackling housing and homelessness.	Refugee Strategy Group	November 2004		Not done
2.	Ensure that all refugee groups are aware of the options for single homeless people and monitor access and take up of these schemes by refugees.	HNM	December 2003		Referral protocol/sign posting to NASS in place. Single homeless unaccompanied Asylum seeking children referral to children's service procedure in place
3.	Identify any poor quality temporary housing occupied by NASS subsistence only cases and take action to improve conditions.	Environmental Health Private Sector Team	December 2003		In response to e Home office 2007/8 case resolution project Housing and the Asylum Service will be reviewing/possibly visiting said properties to ensure the appropriate housing needs for these individuals are met
4.	Set targets for the acquisition by RSLs of larger temporary accommodation units to ensure that 4 bedroom plus asylum seekers and refugees families	HPT Manager	December 2003	Targets set	

	do not have to spend long periods in bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation.				
5.	Fully participate in the Harrow Refugee Forum and the Refugee Practitioners group to ensure that the needs of homeless refugees and asylum seekers can be discussed and addressed.	HNM	Ongoing		
6.	Ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have equal access to our homelessness prevention and housing options through targeting and appropriate information in community languages.	HNM	July 2004	✓	Translation always offered where required

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness amongst ex-offenders

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	We will strengthen working relationships with probation and develop a joint protocol on preventing homelessness, information sharing and how ex-offenders can access housing advice and other services	HNM/ Probation	July 2004		Although there is no written protocol on preventing homelessness, we have strengthened our working relationships and information sharing with probation. A HAT Senior Officer attends the PPO operational group and the MAPPAs, where there is a multi agency approach to tackling housing issues faced by ex-offenders. The Housing Needs Manager also attends the PPO Strategic group that also acts as the London Resettlement Strategy group. SP have also agreed to fund the HAWK worker post (who liaise between housing and probation and holds a caseload of offenders who

					require housing advice and support)
2.	Provide full access to probation to the Harrow rent guarantee scheme for single homeless ex-offenders.	HNM/ Probation	February 2004		Single homeless ex-offenders have full access to the single rent deposit scheme at the Victoria Halls Single Homeless Surgery. PPO's, London Resettlement and MAPPA clients also have full access to the scheme.
3.	Look to develop a second hostel for ex-offenders with Northwest London Housing Association with specific support via supporting people funding.	Enabling Manager	December 2004		A second hostel has not been developed. However, floating support for up to 15 ex-offenders is now being provided via supporting people funding in addition to the 6-bed hostel.
4.	Develop a homelessness prevention protocol with Harrow's ALMO to ensure that joint decisions are made with the homelessness service where short term sentenced prisoners stop receiving housing benefits after 13 weeks in custody.	HNM/ ALMO Manager	June 2004		All Harrow Housing tenant cases are referred through to the Homelessness Prevention Team in HAT before any possessions proceedings take place
5.	Include probation as part of the weekly single homeless multi-agency advice surgery, so that ex-offenders are able to access health, drug and alcohol and other support services.	HAT/ Probation	March 2004		There was little demand for probation services to attend the surgery every week. However ex offenders who attend the surgery would have access to health, drug and alcohol and other support services.

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness amongst older people

We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	The housing advice marketing strategy should seek to address access to advice for elderly people.	HAC Manager	August 2004	-	Not done. CF to Older Peoples Housing Review
2.	A protocol needs to be agreed with Housing Benefits and social landlords in Harrow to identify those	HNM Manager	August 2004	-	Not done

	elderly people at risk of homelessness through tenancy failure.				
3.	The Council will review the provision of supported housing options for older people and in particular the needs of black and minority ethnic older people.	People First/ Strategy Manager	September 2004		Older Persons Housing Review completed in 2005. Action Plan agreed and implementation underway 2006. New Extra Care housing scheme being developed 2008-10. Floating support for older people has been developed

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness from ex services personnel

Action - What we will do to tackle homelessness from ex services personnel					
We will:		By	When	Completed On (insert date task was completed)	OR Current Status (include reason for delay or deletion of task if applicable)
1.	The Council will improve liaison with armed forces discharge service to ensure ex Harrow residents are aware of the advice and assistance available to them.	HAT Manager	June 2004	-	Not prioritised

Abbreviations:

HNM - Housing Needs Manager

HAT - Housing Assessment Manager

HB - Housing Benefit

HPT - Housing Provision Manager

HAC - Housing Advice Centre Manager

PCT - Primary Care Trust

Appendix 9: Equality Impact Assessment 2008

Directorate	Adults and Housing Services	Section	Housing
1. Name of the function/policy to be assessed	Harrow Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013		
2. Date of assessment	July 2008		
3. Is this a new or existing function/policy	New strategy (replaces 2003-08 Homelessness Strategy)		
4. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the function/policy	<p>The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to carry out a review of homelessness and homelessness services within their areas. The purpose of the review is to develop an evidence base, which can inform the strategic direction in tackling and preventing homelessness in Harrow over the next 5 years. The Act also requires the Council to produce a homelessness strategy every 5 years, based upon the findings of the review. The priorities identified within the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent homelessness, and to tackle high demand and the wider causes of homelessness • To secure accommodation for homeless people across a range of tenures and to manage and reduce the use of temporary accommodation • To support vulnerable homeless people, including young and single homeless, to access settled homes • To further develop the homelessness strategy and service 		
5. Are there any associated objectives of the function/policy? Please explain.	<p>Yes. The objectives of the strategy are contained in the action plan. Equalities issues have been mainstreamed throughout the review, strategy and action plan.</p> <p>There are also linkages with other Council strategies, such as the Housing Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Adults and Housing Services</p>		

	Transformation Programme Plan
6. Who is intended to benefit from the function/policy and in what way?	All homeless households, staff, residents of the Borough. The Homelessness Strategy aims to reduce homelessness in Harrow, ensuring that all households in housing need are offered attractive, viable housing options. Through linkages with other strategies, the Homelessness Strategy also aims to enhance the life chances of the most vulnerable people, linking education, employment and support into housing issues.
7. What outcomes are wanted from this function/policy?	Improved services for homeless households, services tailored to specific needs, improved partnership working to deliver objectives, reduction in households in temporary accommodation, increased partnership with private landlords to increase options/supply, measures to increase social and financial inclusion e.g. access to employment and training advice
8. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	<p>Detract - increased need/demand for social housing, increased rent levels in Harrow and house prices, misdirection of resources/services, failure to meet % targets for affordable housing on new developments, failure to engage private landlords,</p> <p>Contribute – increased resources in HAT/HPT teams and more effective working, sub-regional liaison, establishment of homelessness network in the Borough, continued promotion of Harrow Homeless Forum/Private Landlords Forum, maximising use of existing social housing</p>
9. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function/policy?	<p>Adults and Housing Services Officers and Members, Housing Advice Centre, RSL's, Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, Private Landlords, Homeless Households, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BME households • Families • Young homeless • Teenage Parents

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Homeless • Victims of Domestic Violence • People with Drug and Alcohol problems • People with learning disabilities, mental health issues and physical disabilities • Ex-offenders • LGBT Community • Ex Service Personnel <p>Indirectly affects all borough residents</p>				
<p>10. Who implements the function/policy and who is responsible for the function/policy?</p>	<p>The strategy will be implemented by the Housing Needs Team, in partnership with key stakeholders. Gwyneth Allen, Divisional Director for Adults and Housing Services is responsible for the Homelessness Strategy.</p>				
<p>11. What data or other existing evidence have you used to assess whether the function/policy might have a differential impact?</p>	<p>Housing Register, P1E returns to government, Housing Needs Assessment 2006, Locata lettings data, internal data on temporary accommodation, B&B and vulnerable groups (from different departments).</p>				
<p>12. Has the data or other evidence raised concerns that the function/policy might have a differential impact? If so in what area(s)?</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">RACE</td> <td style="width: 25%;">GENDER</td> <td style="width: 25%;">DISABILITY</td> <td style="width: 25%;">OTHER</td> </tr> </table>	RACE	GENDER	DISABILITY	OTHER
RACE	GENDER	DISABILITY	OTHER		
<p>13. What are the concerns?</p>	<p>Evidence collected throughout the review showed that BME communities are slightly disproportionately affected by homelessness, the strategy aims to address this by taking into account different needs from BME groups, as well as increased partnership working with community and voluntary groups representing BME communities.</p> <p>An analysis of data also revealed that people with physical disabilities are disproportionately affected by homelessness with a lack of suitable adapted temporary accommodation to meet their needs. The assessment has also highlighted a lack of comparative data to analyse whether disabled people are discriminated against</p>				

	<p>in the homelessness process, as information is not collected systematically.</p> <p>There were areas where we felt we did not understand the needs of certain groups, namely Faith Groups, Ex-service personnel and the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender group. This has been referred to in the Strategy Action Plan as an area which we intend to do more work on to ensure our provision reflects the needs of these groups.</p>
<p>14. Does the differential impact amount to adverse impact (i.e could it be discriminatory, directly or indirectly?)</p>	<p>No in relation to race and other. Evidence shows that the assessment process and opportunities for housing are fair and equal, while the lack of knowledge around certain groups is addressed as an action under priority 4 of the strategy.</p> <p>With regard to disability, the lack of monitoring data on disability through the homelessness application process means it is impossible at this stage to ascertain whether the process is discriminatory. The lack of suitably adapted properties could be construed as having an adverse impact on physically disabled people and is therefore indirectly discriminatory towards this group.</p>
<p>15. Have you considered ways in which the adverse impact might be reduced or eliminated?</p>	<p>Actions have been included in the Homelessness Strategy Action plan at Objective 3 action 23 to assist in reducing the adverse impact on physically disabled homeless people and at Objective 4 action 12 to ensure accurate monitoring reports to assess any differential impact.</p>
<p>16. Have you made sure you have consulted with the relevant groups and service users from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Minorities? • Disabled People? • Men and Women generally? 	<p>The consultation was wide and varied, and all groups were consulted upon the work, either through surveys or focus groups. Agencies specialising in provision for these groups were represented on the Project Board, which was set up to monitor the direction and priorities of the strategy. All members of the Harrow Homeless Forum, which includes representatives from key voluntary and statutory agencies in Harrow (members listed at</p>

	Appendix 7 of the Homelessness Review), were invited to comment on the Review and strategy during its development.
17. Please give details of the relevant service users, groups and experts you are approaching for their views on the issues	<p>All customers registered as Homeseekers with the Council were surveyed through Homeseeker News, a newsletter sent out to all registered applicants. We received over 500 responses, and 10% of these attended follow up focus groups to discuss the issues in more detail. We also held focus groups for teenage parents, young people, and the Housing Advice Centre.</p> <p>All known groups offering homelessness services in Harrow were invited to a Homelessness Conference, and we sought members to the Project Board. We ran workshops at the homelessness conference on key issues to draw out the thoughts of expert providers in particular fields.</p> <p>Front-line staff were invited to join a staff sounding board, where 2 focus groups were held to determine their thoughts on current and future service provision.</p> <p>All internal departments and external partners with services relating to homelessness were asked to feed into the strategy development, as well as providing information to develop the review.</p> <p>We adhered to all government guidance in the development of the strategy.</p>
18. How will the views of these groups be obtained?	Focus groups, telephone conversations, postal surveys, meetings, workshops, multi agency strategic meetings
19. Please give the date when each group/expert was contacted	Consultation ran from March 2008 through to the end of June 2008.
20. Please explain in detail the views of the relevant groups/experts on the issues involved.	<p>The feedback we received is detailed in the strategy and review. However some of the more pertinent points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for young people on housing issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased supply of larger homes and supported homes • More attractive, viable private sector options • Targeting support towards the most vulnerable groups • Promotion of the advice and mediation service • More partnership working • Need to manage expectations around social housing supply
<p>21. Taking into account the views of the groups/experts, please clearly state what changes (if any) you will make, including the ways in which you will make the function/policy accessible to all service users, or if not able to do so, the areas and level of risk.</p>	<p>The views that were put forward through the consultation have been used to formulate all of the targets in the Action Plan for the strategy.</p> <p>The documents will be accessible to all. It will be made available from our main office, as well as on the Council website. This will also be offered in a range of formats, including different languages and Braille.</p>
<p>22. Please describe how you intend to monitor the effect this function/policy has on different minority groups</p>	<p>The Homelessness Strategy will be subject to a yearly review, carried out by Harrow Council Housing Services, in partnership with the Strategy Project Board, Staff Sounding Board and existing Forums. These groups all contributed to the development of the strategy and are also willing to participate in ensuring that the yearly review takes place, and set new targets where appropriate. A programme of customer surveys is included in the Strategy action plan at Objective 4, action 7, the findings from which will be analysed by age, gender, race, faith, disability and sexual preference to identify any disparity in satisfaction between different groups.</p>
<p>23. If any elements of your function/policy are provided by third parties, please state what arrangements you have in place to ensure that the Council's equal opportunities criteria are met</p>	<p>An action arising from the Strategy is to develop a number of protocols with internal and external partners (Objective 4 action 3). An equalities aspect will exist for each protocol to enable effective monitoring. In addition, through the Harrow Homelessness Network, more opportunities will arise to share good practice, resolve situations, whilst ensuring that guidelines are met. Strategic links with RSL Homelessness Action Plans</p>

24. Please list any performance targets relating to equality that your function/policy includes, and any plans for new targets	All targets can be seen in the Action Plan (at Section 4 of the Homelessness Strategy). Targets around equality are explicit in some sections, but also run as a thread throughout broader targets.
25. How will you publish the results of this impact assessment?	The EIA will be included in the appendices of the Homelessness Review, which will be made available as a public document both from the main office as well as the Harrow Council website.
26. Date of next assessment	31 st July 2009

Appendix 10: Risk Table

Contact Name: Jane Fernley

Date of Register: July 2008

Risk no.	Process	Risk Description	Controls/Mitigants	Risk Rating after controls	Further possible actions	Target Risk Rating	Action Owner	Risk Owner	Current Risk status	Date Reviewed	Increase/Decrease/Same	Reason	New Risk /Rating Status
1		Recruitment, retention and development of quality staff in a highly competitive environment.	Acting up arrangements Temporary and interim staff Learning and Development plan reviewed. Restructure plan approved. Senior manager recruitment completed.	C2	Further reduce use of temporary/ interim staff Reduce bureaucracy on filling vacancies. Measures to develop/ recruit staff e.g. apprenticeship schemes	D2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Red				

2a		Failure to meet statutory obligations & targets regarding homelessness linked to volatility of external environment e.g. housing market & credit crunch	Dedicated teams/resources Homelessness strategy action plan Monthly targets and strong performance monitoring implemented. Regular seniors meetings and staff briefings Letstart team re-established & fully resourced. Use of overcrowding & underoccupation incentive grant.	D2	Ensure better liaison with private sector landlords and agents. Regular review & monitoring of implementation of Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	E2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Amber				
2b		Changes in legislation (HB) - direct impact on services provided.	Liaison HB, landlords & tenants to promote & explain Local Housing Allowance	D2	Continue to monitor impact of LHA and address any issues arising	E2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Amber				
3a		HB - impact of proposed subsidy reductions will be significant financially	HB team have discretionary payment funding to bridge the benefit shortfall and rent	C2	Closer working between Housing Benefit and the Housing Service in discretionary payments provision	E4	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Amber				

3b		Economic downturn causing likely increase in mortgage/secured loan arrears (CAB report (Dec 07) highlights increased arrears)	Publicise money advice schemes/services. Liaise with lenders on individual cases. CLG protocol for lenders	C2	This will be closely monitored locally through joint working between HAC and Housing Services	C2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Amber				
4		Temp to perm 100 units planned – viability depends on early decisions re HB subsidy/Housing Corp capital, CLG waiver re HRA assets, funders' response. If T2P units are not counted as permanent from Day 1 then they will not impact the target anyway.	A detailed risk appraisal has been developed for the scheme	B1	Consideration could be given to developing a contingency plan to deliver the 100 units by some other means	C2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea/ Alison Pegg	Gwyneth Allen	Red				

5		Failure to meet UDP targets for affordable homes and local targets in relation to large family homes. New RSL supply - house building activity uncertain in current financial climate so projected permanent supply may not materialise	Policy and guidance in place Active negotiation with landowners and RSLs. Revised Housing needs survey.	C2	Improve internal processes and communication. Develop SPD for affordable housing. Pre-disposal consultation on land and property needed. Ensure Council maximises values on land sales. Close monitoring of development programme	C2	Planning director/ Alison Pegg	Andrew Trehern	Red				
6		Severe financial constraints impacting on General Fund service activity (homelessness). HRA consequences.	Delivery within constraints CLG homelessness grant used effectively. Monthly budget monitoring/ forecasting taken place.	C2	Income maximisation e.g. charges to B&B residents for services. Intervention to prevent homelessness	C2	Jane Fernley / Ray O'Shea	Gwyneth Allen	Red				

7		Failure to deliver housing strategy's long term objectives in relation to all housing tenures, particularly private sector, where this would impact on homelessness service provision.	Review of Housing strategy and HRA business plan Review of private sector housing strategy Completed private sector housing survey. Housing needs survey report.	D2	Participate in corporate activity in relation to private sector housing Complete Report to Strategic Board. Report to Housing Strategy Review Group on Homelessness Strategy implementation	D2	Gwyneth Allen/ Eddie Collier	Paul Najsarek	Amber				
8		Failure to reprovide Anmer Lodge causing increase in B&B usage	Options appraisal to identify alternative sites and review of requirements underway	C2	Strategy in place by January 2009 for provision after January 2010	D3	Alison Pegg Enabling Manager	Gwyneth Allen	B1				