



Haringey Council

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2009-10

BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009/10

Objective 1: To halve the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, by March 2010, through effective homelessness prevention, smarter working, better partnerships and the provision of a range of housing options.

Objective 2: To maximise the development of affordable housing, by attracting investment and ensuring effective partnership working, to meet the needs of residents and help build strong and environmentally sustainable communities.

Objective 3: To ensure the efficient management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock by developing and delivering a robust client function in respect of Homes for Haringey's finance and performance management arrangements, together with a structured approach to determining and communicating the Council's requirements.

Objective 4: To tackle homelessness, overcrowding and under occupation by making best use of Haringey's social housing stock, bringing empty homes back into use, encouraging housing mobility, extending and promoting choice based lettings, and removing barriers to the private rented sector.

Objective 5: To achieve the continuous improvement of the Strategic and Community Housing Service, ensuring that it is well managed, fit for purpose, customer-centred and provides good value for money.

This plan is organised to relate recommendations to our Business Plan objectives that cover the improvement of the homelessness and lettings service, ALMO Client monitoring function and overall functionality of Strategic and Community and Housing Services.

Lead officers are identified along with the Service Improvement Groups that are tasked with carrying out the actions. These SIGS report through their Lead Officers into Housing SMT which monitors progress. Housing Improvement Board which meets fortnightly receives reports on the TA Reduction plan and the Overall Housing Improvement Plan.

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
Objective 1: To halve the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, by March 2010, through effective homelessness prevention, smarter working, better partnerships and the provision of a range of housing options.					
1.1	Achieve value for money through effective procurement of accommodation.	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate to retain and procure as many PSLs and HALs as possible as they are the most efficient to us in terms of subsidy Set up a high level meeting with Housing Associations to discuss our procurement strategy 	Ongoing September 2009	TA SIG
1.2	Work with HFH to agree new approach to re-housing management transfers and decants	Head of Housing Support and Options and Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange joint briefings for HfH TMOs and Assessments and Lettings and Advice & Options staff on new approach. Amend protocols with HfH to reflect new approach. 	September 2009 September 2009	TA Reduction SIG.
1.3	Improve approach to minimising fraud in TA and therefore reduce TA	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work is undertaken as part of a rolling programme. A number of cases have been referred to Legal for prosecution. 	Ongoing	TA Reduction SIG
1.4	Reduce TA through under occupation and occupancy checks; address incentive scheme and introduce guidance on dealing with nationality and eligibility issues	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under-occupation and overcrowding is being reviewed as part of the Council's Overcrowding Pathfinder status. This will ensure that under-occupation and overcrowding are targeted and people given greater assistance to move e.g. through direct lets or mutual exchange. 	Ongoing Ongoing	Lettings. TA.

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
1.5	Make best use of social housing stock by addressing under-occupation and overcrowding	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	Homes for Haringey undertake a 20% occupancy check on its permanent stock. The Council has a rolling programme of occupancy checks on its TA.	Ongoing Ongoing	TA SIG
1.6	Improve use of Supported Accommodation for single homeless households (ensuring that the borough has effective methods for referral and these are being prioritised for borough residents)	Head of Housing Support and Options	Complete an audit of supported housing in the borough Recruit a Vulnerable Adults Team Leader Produce a Move-On Strategy Develop a rent deposit/private rented options for single homeless clients as an additional source of move on	Aug - October 2009 September 2009 October 2009 November 2009	Housing Advice and Options SIG
1.7	Reduce the number of rough sleepers in Haringey	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce in consultation with stakeholders a multi-agency strategy and action plan for tackling rough sleeping in Haringey Subject to CLG funding set up an outreach service to help rough sleepers off the street 	September 2009 September 2009	
Objective 2: To maximise the development of affordable housing, by attracting investment and ensuring effective partnership working, to meet the needs of residents and help build strong and environmentally sustainable communities.					
2.1	Work with Housing Associations to maximise the development of affordable housing	Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships	Review the current Preferred Partnership arrangements	April 2009	
Objective 3: To ensure the efficient management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock by developing and delivering a robust client function in					

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respect of Homes for Haringey's finance and performance management arrangements, together with a structured approach to determining and communicating the Council's requirements.					
3.1	Continue to perform a robust client monitoring function	Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the management agreement with Homes for Haringey Ensure the issue of repairs is dealt with as part of the review of the management agreement 	March 2010 March 2010	Voids Project Team
3.2	Improve void turnaround (in the Council's own stock, improve time taken to award Gas and Electric safety certificates)	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings and Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships	Continue to monitor HFfH performance on voids Implement recommendations from the Independent Review on Voids	Ongoing Starting May 2009 onwards	Voids Project Team
Objective 4: To tackle homelessness, overcrowding and under occupation by making best use of Haringey's social housing stock, bringing empty homes back into use, encouraging housing mobility, extending and promoting choice based lettings, and removing barriers to the private rented sector.					
4.1	Improve Choice Based Lettings: Develop a more efficient and equitable bidding process	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	Consider options for upgrading Home Connections system Continue training programme for staff and partner agencies on Home Connections	September 2009 Ongoing	Lettings SIG
4.2	Bidding: Ensure that applicants are encouraged to consider more realistic options for permanent housing	Head of Housing Support and Options	Produce a borough map showing all social housing by type, area, when last vacant etc to provide information on what is possible Ensure delivery of consistent message in all contact with service users – publications,	September 2009 Ongoing	Lettings SIG

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
			responses to complaints etc		
4.3	Maximise the supply of perm accom by closely monitoring nominations to HALs, facilitating a balance between transfer and homeless applicants, developing a comprehensive under-occupation scheme and increasing outcomes from mobility schemes.	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target HfH households who are known to be under occupying. Work with RSLs partners to develop an agreed approach to under occupation across the social sector. Link mobility work to the Prevention and Options Team/Private Sector Lettings as part of the reworking of the structure. Manage relationships with HALs and appoint Contract manager to deal with issues 	Ongoing September 2009 September 2009 September 2009	
4.4	Develop an Overcrowding Strategy	Head of Housing Support and Options	Produce an introduction to the current overcrowding action plan	October 2009	
4.5	Develop a new Lettings Policy	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<p>Conduct three month consultation with staff, clients, members and stakeholders</p> <p>Take the Lettings Policy to Cabinet for approval</p> <p>Ensure Lettings Policy reviews approach to 'homeless at home' and overcrowding and under-occupation.</p>	September 2009 December 2009 Throughout creation of policy	Lettings SIG
4.6	Increase the number of Assured Short hold Tenancies (ASTs) in the borough (includes addressing the role of other borough's, hand back leases to RSLs, Discretionary Housing	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide rent deposit and cash incentive schemes to landlords Establish Private Sector Lettings team with 	Ongoing September	PSL SIG

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
	Benefit payments ,appointment of conversion officers)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> permanent staff Continue with quarterly landlords forums to establish good relationships with landlords 	2009 Last forum was held in June 2009 next forum September 2009	
4.7	Work in partnership with the North London Sub-Region to bring empty properties back into use.	Housing Improvement Manager (Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit to Shared Housing and Empty Homes Team Leader in Housing Improvement Team. 	July 2009	
4.8	Work to decrease fuel poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Housing Improvement Manager (Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start consultation on the Affordable Warmth Strategy. Complete Affordable Warmth Strategy Investigate all properties where fuel poverty measures have been installed where there are outstanding category 1 hazards. 	July 2009 September 2009 Ongoing	
Objective 5: To achieve the continuous improvement of the Strategic and Community Housing Service, ensuring that it is well managed, fit for purpose, customer-centred and provides good value for money.					
5.1	Conduct a review of the OHMs system	Head of Housing Support and Options and Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review comparing OHMs with other available systems and in particular iWorld Ensure that any system changes or upgrades are compatible with Home Connections 	September 2009 – March 2010	Home Connections SIG TA Reduction SIG

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
5.2	Improve Pointing: Centralise pointing restricting access; reduce timescales to point an applicant; improve quality and consistency of information to applicants; provide written procedure for pointing applicants or management transfers	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling programme of centralising pointing to only the Assessment Team Produce booklets giving transparent view of points – linked to Lettings Policy 	Ongoing January 2010	Lettings SIG
5.3	Review Housing Register - programme of annual reviews	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that every household in TA is contacted annually by the Assessments Team to review their circumstances 	Ongoing	Lettings SIG
5.4	Keeping applicants informed of their progress	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual re-registration will give opportunity for this. Further development of Home Connections to provide more feedback from bids. For households in TA, this will be covered as part of regular TA visits. 	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Lettings SIG
5.5	Review relationship with customer services including reception duties at Apex House and telephone calls	Head of Housing Finance and Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate having calls from customer services returned to S&CHS Investigate the reception service that is provided by customer services and the possibility of having a trained housing member of staff on reception 	September 2009 September 2009	Advice and Options SIG
5.6	Conduct a feasibility study on self-registration	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at what LB Camden and LB Bromley did regarding implementing self-registration If the project is possible produce a project plan and set up project team 	July 2009 July 2009	Lettings SIG

Area	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
5.7	Carry out a review of current customer satisfaction surveys and develop process for ensuring issues are identified and addressed	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager/ Corporate Customer Focus Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with HfH and Viewing Officers to review questions contained in the Viewing survey. Build element of customer feedback into annual re-registration process. 	September 2009 September 2009	
5.8	Ensure engagement with service users through programme of communications	Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop communications strategy Deliver communications strategy 	September 2009 Ongoing	
5.9	Improve performance of Customer Service Centres and telephone access	Business Support Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish partnership meetings and work towards a Directorate Service Level Agreement Continue to monitor performance 	September 2009 Ongoing	
5.10	Communicate and widely advertise service standards	Business Support Manager/ Corporate Customer Focus Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service standards currently under development. 	July 2009	
5.11	Complete EIAs to understand the impact of policies and strategies on potentially vulnerable groups	Business Support Manager/ SMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include next year's EIAs in the business plan. 	Ongoing	
5.13	Data integrity: Ensure all data contained on OHMs is accurate and that information is consistent across different databases	Director of Special Projects	<p>Continue with data cleansing projects looking at the Housing Register and the accuracy of details on OHMs</p> <p>Ensure accurate classifications are being used</p>	Ongoing Ongoing	

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			for homelessness		
5.14	Build an analysis of risk into the budgeting process in regard to subsidy changes and maximising re-chargeable income	Head of Housing Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget analysis carried out assessing the financial impact of various alternatives that may be proposed by the DWP 	Under review at monthly budget monitoring meetings	
5.15	Review approach to file management	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings and Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and integrate files Ensure files are being stored inline with corporate policy 	<p>Ongoing starting in September 2009</p> <p>Ongoing starting in September 2009</p>	

Appendix One – Completed Activity

Inspection Reference	Summary of recommendation	Lead Officer	Actions to make it happen	Timescale	Relevant SIG
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.1; 7.16	The production of a TA Reduction Strategy action plan and TA Financial Strategy - the financial strategy is particularly significant given the subsidy changes	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TA Reduction Plan to be finalised by the end of April 08. Plan to concentrate on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how we will reduce TA placements what we will do to move people out of TA detail of the types of schemes that we will use as alternatives to TA. 	End of April 2008 - Complete	TA Reduction Group
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.1	Establish a High Level Monitoring Group to direct TA strategy in the future	AD, S&CHS	The previous TA Reduction Group referred to in the report has been replaced by SIGs reporting to a High Level Housing Improvement Board.	Complete	Housing SMT
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.2	Develop a model to assess the effectiveness of TA prevention over time by monitoring new first stage placements	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Advice and Options SIG have agreed new categories for monitoring outcomes of prevention activity. OHMS system being amended to include new categories. Move towards all new placements being agreed by Validations Team prior to placement New TA placements to be agreed by SMT member Set up backlog team Clear backlog 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Housing Advice and Options SIG</p> <p>Housing Assessment SIG</p>
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.3	Ensure the efficient use of TA available and address emergency accommodation in light of TA reduction targets	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more placements into TA will be made without a homeless application being taken. These will now only be approved by an SMT member. <p>A backlog team will be set up to clear cases without decisions.</p> <p>Management transfers will no longer to taken as homeless and placed in TA.</p> <p>Decision times will be reduced through closer management scrutiny.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete, ongoing monitoring</p>	All

Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.6	Manage relationships with RSL partners and ensure that the Council receives 100% nominations	Head of Housing Support and Options	Initial work being carried out to review nominations against new build completions.	Complete	Lettings SIG
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have subscribed to CORE but need to agree approach to implementation. 	Complete	
			Set up clear monitoring processes and regular meetings with RSLs to measure compliance with Nominations Agreement.	Complete	
AC rec'd 1d - Para 58	Review rationale for TA placements outside the borough	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	To target those families living in Birmingham: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All families originally placed in Birmingham and Luton in TA have been reviewed and housing solutions identified for permanent residency in Birmingham or Luton or return to Haringey. The next area of focus will be Enfield. 	Complete	TA SIG
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.26	Review storage policy for homeless	Head of Housing Finance	On going project in place.	Complete	
Garner Review September (2007) Para 7.7	Produce a Homelessness Strategy in partnership with all agencies	AD, S&CHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates to be agreed for issues paper to CEMB and CAB 	Complete	
			Strategy agreed	Complete	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy launched – 12 September 2008 	Complete	
AC Rec'd 2b Para 79- 81	Improve Choice based Lettings: Making the verification process simple, flexible and user friendly ensuring that reasonable efforts are made to contact priority bidders to view properties - this includes improving pointing	Head of Housing Support and Options	Create a pre verified pool of applicants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the actual detail of the verification –to make better use of information we already have – shorter verification process for certain categories of cases. 	Complete	Lettings SIG
			Ongoing		
BPR 6.6a	Viewings– allocate responsibility for viewings to HFH	Head of Housing Support and Options	Viewing Officers did initially move across to work in HfH Building Services but it has now been agreed by the Voids SIG that 2 Viewing officers will be appointed, which will be paid for		

			by HfH but located with the Lettings Team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions are being developed. • Permanent recruitment to take place. • Protocol to be agreed on joint working between Rehousing Service and HfH. 	Complete Complete Complete	
AC rec'd 4a and b Para 135 - 139	Improve approach to staffing: Reduce reliance on temp and agency staff and addressing high levels of sickness absence	Business Support Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed through people plan. • Deliver people plan actions. 	Ongoing	
	Improve approach to staffing: Training plan for staff, linked to the aims of the service	Business Support Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed through people plan. • Deliver people plan actions. 	Ongoing	
BPR 6.4c	Develop initiatives to target applicants who are likely to be unsuccessful advising them of other re-housing options	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment letters have been redrafted – different letters depending on outcome of assessment – directing to alternative options. • Review to ensure full suite of letters. • Load into OHMS to be triggered automatically at certain points levels and for certain bedsizes. • Introduction of visits for applicants where Assessment Team identify a housing need but are unlikely to be able to assist e.g. larger households. 	Complete Complete December 2008 October 2008	Lettings SIG
BPR 6.4d	Recruit Home Connections Support workers to assist people currently not bidding to make bids	Head of Housing Support and Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Home Connections Support Officers have been in post since September 2007. 	Complete	
AC Para 41	Complaints process – learn from complaints and promote the Council's compensation scheme	Business Support Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi- annual learning from complaints report with clear actions Input to directorate learning from complaints group and delivery of actions. Look at Council's compensation scheme to develop remedies where complaints have been upheld.	Ongoing	

AC Para 56- 57	Homelessness: Assess the range of housing managers' duties ,	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	<p>The AC report is confusing two roles; that of TA Housing Managers who are responsible for tenancy management issues and that of P&O Officers who carry a caseload of clients.</p> <p>Better liaison arrangements have been put in place to ensure repairs reporting and carrying them out are improved.</p> <p>Housing Managers, along with all Council officers, take the opportunity to discuss options with clients. This is done in visits, surgeries, letters, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New structure and job descriptions to be implemented to clarify roles 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p>	P&O, use of ASTs.
	Communicate the reduction of TA as a key priority for CEMB.	AD, S&CHS	Produce a TA Narrative and EA Narrative for the year 09/10 explaining the journey and considering portfolio profile.	Complete	TA SIG
	Update Housing Strategy for period 2009/2019	Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships	Take strategy to Cabinet for formal approval	Complete	
	Develop a new Lettings Policy	Head of Housing Needs and Lettings	Establish a Lettings Policy project team and assign responsibilities	Complete	Lettings SIG
	Work to decrease fuel poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the Affordable Warmth strategy to Integrated Housing Board 	Complete	

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