



Tackling homelessness

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Foreword by Tom Dacey, Chair G15

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Foreword

Although there has been significant progress made in the last few years towards meeting London's temporary housing reduction target, homelessness remains a pressing issue for London. The figures alone do not reveal the devastating impact that this can have on people's lives. In addition to meeting lettings targets, the G15 has worked with the London Boroughs and other partners to deliver a wide range of initiatives to tackle homelessness but, as set out in this Offer document, we think that more could be done. For this reason we have worked together to assemble this *Offer to London* (the "Offer") to help to ensure that more households can reap the benefits of a settled home in the years to come. We aim to do this by addressing three key themes; these are:

- Housing homeless households,
- Preventing homelessness and keeping people in their homes, and
- Working more closely with our local authority partners and other stakeholders.

Key messages

The G15 are very active developers of new social homes. We tackle homelessness in many ways including through our extensive services to increase the employment and skills of homeless people to help them to better sustain their tenancies in the longer term. We exceed the national average with regards to nominations to local authorities. We will continue to perform to *Partners in meeting housing need* and local agreements i.e. to agreed standards but with a flexible approach to enable the temporary housing reduction targets to be met.

G15 acceptance of homeless households in priority need currently runs at 27% of local authorities' nominations, which is higher than the national average of around 18%. However, we will investigate any localities where G15 lettings to homeless households are below 35% as our research suggests that this figure is needed to enable local authorities to meet their temporary housing reduction targets by 2010. The *Offer* is about the steps the G15 will take to help to achieve this target.

homelessness – our offer summary



more detail later in the *Offer*. Significant under-recording of G15 lettings has been identified. If this is replicated elsewhere it will distort perception of G15's record in tackling homelessness in London. There are also issues of data inconsistency; G15 will work with the London Boroughs to address this through more sharing of data and the establishment of common criteria.

An exciting, new measure will be for G15 to establish local authority relationship managers to facilitate this and work on local homelessness action plans. The continued support of the Homelessness Action Team will be central to the delivery of good relationships on the ground.

We recognise that the current, overriding challenge is to tackle homelessness and to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. However, as the figures show, the G15 is becoming an even more predominant provider of new homes and lettings across London. Nevertheless, the pressures of overcrowding continue to grow within our stock and residents are pressing for greater housing mobility. One of the debates that we would like to have, with all our stakeholders, is how we balance the need for housing transfers for existing tenants and housing the homeless. In an ideal world there would be sufficient supply to meet all needs. But given the reality of the situation and our responsibility to our residents, in the longer term, we would like to work more closely with our partners to reconcile the needs of existing residents with those of homeless households.

We recognise that the current economic climate could impact on the ability of all parties to deliver the homes that London needs. Nevertheless, we hope that our *Offer on homelessness* will be accepted by our partners and that they will work with us to help deliver it. But, we also ask that, in due course, we can commence a dialogue with all stakeholders that takes longer term needs into account too and that we can begin to balance rehousing needs with pressures in our stock through jointly agreed plans that recognise these growing concerns and are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Tom Dacey, Chair G15

The conversion from temporary to settled accommodation is a critical area where we can contribute further. While this depends to some extent on the outcome of the Government review of housing benefit, G15 will continue to play an active role in delivering temporary homes. Where possible G15 will seek to provide more settled and affordable homes from the temporary accommodation portfolio.

Joint work on Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes and Common Housing Registers (CHRs) is critical to building effective partnerships with our local authority partners. G15 will actively engage in the development of CHRs and improvements to CBL schemes where partnership arrangements are robust. This includes working within sub-regions and across borough boundaries and in accordance with the London Mayor's emerging housing strategy.

The research underlying the *Offer* raises some issues about data management. We recognise that there are challenges to be met which are referred to in



About the G15

700,000 Londoners live in G15 homes. Between 2003 and 2008, G15 housing associations have invested over £6.55 billion building new homes and supporting local communities. About 50% of all lettings by housing associations in London are currently made by G15 associations.

The G15 is a group of London housing associations. It comprises a group of independent social businesses which work by ploughing surpluses back into building new homes, improving existing housing stock, and developing and delivering services to residents and neighbourhoods.

The G15 aim to build diverse and sustainable communities, places where people want to live now and in the future. To this end they combine their housing activities with a variety of innovative community and economic development programmes.

The G15 works closely with central, regional, and local government; with private and voluntary partners; and with residents to improve the quality of life for Londoners.

The G15 comprises:

- Affinity Sutton
- AmicusHorizon Group
- Catalyst Housing Group
- Circle Anglia
- A2Dominion Group
- East Thames Group
- Family Mosaic Homes
- Genesis Housing Group
- The Hyde Group
- The L&Q Group
- Metropolitan Housing Partnership
- Network Housing Group
- Notting Hill Housing Group
- Peabody Trust
- Southern Housing Group.

About this document

Whilst recognising the broader context of the Housing Reform Agenda, we commissioned research to inform the *Offer to London* document. This has examined in some detail what we are doing about tackling homelessness in London. Our aim is that the *Offer* will enable us to strengthen our contribution to tackling homelessness in partnership with the boroughs and other agencies over the coming months. It summarises our record to date but also highlights issues which need to be tackled. The document also draws on earlier research undertaken for the G15 which accounts for the differences in data years in some sections¹.

The G15 *Offer* comprises three key themes:

1. Housing homeless households through:

- Nominations and lettings to permanent homes;
- Lettings to temporary homes;
- Best use of stock to provide more homes; and
- Specific initiatives to meet the needs of vulnerable households.

2. Prevention of homelessness and tenancy sustainment through:

- Housing advice;
- Family mediation;
- Domestic violence support; and
- Supporting ex-offenders.

3. Partnership working including:

- Establishing local authority relationship managers;
- Developing an action plan to support this offer; and
- Closely monitoring progress of the *Offer* through a sub-group of G15 Directors.

Each section of the *Offer* provides a summary of activity to date and the impact of the G15's work in this area. It also highlights those challenges and issues which need to be resolved in order that the *Offer* fulfils its potential to tackle homelessness in the capital. Case examples are also provided to illustrate our current activity and our plans for future initiatives.



Context

The national context

Halving households in temporary accommodation by 2010

In 2005, 63 per cent of the 100,000 households in temporary accommodation were in London. The Government's strategy to tackle homelessness was set out in *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives*. The strategy aims to reduce homelessness by offering a wider range of preventative measures, improved housing options, increasing access to settled homes and halving the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010.

An £8 billion programme has been established to deliver 70,000 new affordable homes a year by 2010. Nevertheless, substantial challenges remain.

The London context

Homeless acceptances

In 2006/07, 15,380 households were accepted as being homeless and in priority need in London. Although the figures are reducing, 3,420 households were accepted in October to December 2007 alone. Of the households accepted in 2006/07, two-thirds were households with children who face disruption to their health, education and family life through the lack of a settled home. The G15 recognises that more can be done to house those accepted as homeless into settled homes and to prevent homelessness by supporting vulnerable people and assisting them to keep their tenancies.

Temporary Accommodation in London

In London in December 2007, 56,740 households were living in temporary accommodation. London's base line figure for temporary accommodation in 2004 was 61,630. By 2010 this should be reduced to 30,807.

The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy

In 2006, in response to the Government's target of achieving more settled homes, the Housing Corporation published its *Tackling Homelessness Strategy*².

The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Action Team (HAT) was established in 2006 to take this agenda forward with local authorities, RSLs and other stakeholders. The HAT has worked with RSLs to develop homelessness action plans and more broadly on partnership projects with councils and other agencies to meet the 2010 target.

To date, all but one member of the G15 has drafted a homelessness action plan and the final member is working on this. This includes the assignment of a homelessness champion within the organisation and measures which ensure homelessness performance is directed and monitored by the executive.

G15 investment in London

At 31st March 2007, the G15 Groups including their subsidiaries owned and managed over 360,000 homes. Some 280,000 are in London. As such the scale of G15 activity has a real impact on the lives of homeless Londoners.

Larger, family homes

The G15 is also delivering family homes with 3 bedrooms or more: 21% of social homes let in 2005/06 and 16% of those for sale in 2005/06 had 3 or more bedrooms³. Larger homes help to reduce overcrowding and to help house families with children.

Between 2004 and 2007, the G15 delivered over 18,250 new homes for London for general needs, some 83% of the outturn for London.

¹ For example *Neighbourhood Capital G15 (2007)*.

² *Tackling Homelessness Housing Corporation (2006)*.

³ Source: *Neighbourhood Capital (G15 January 2007)*. In addition, earlier research (*Development Capital, G15 2005*) showed that of the 2,100 case study homes to rent, planned or under construction, 37% offered 3 bedrooms or more.

Why we are making this Offer

In 2008, over 56,000 households live in temporary accommodation in London including over two-thirds with children. Apart from the disruption that such a situation can cause to young lives this works against the national priority to reduce child poverty. The G15 works with partner boroughs to tackle homelessness and meet the 2010 temporary accommodation reduction target. The G15 provides permanent and temporary housing in addition to homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment services. But still, the G15 knows that more needs to be done to support delivery of the 2010 temporary accommodation homelessness target and the Government's measures to tackle worklessness and overcrowding.

G15 are a powerful force in London's housing, as mentioned in the Foreword:

- An estimated 700,000 Londoners live in a G15 home;
- The G15 offers a home to more than one in three households who live in temporary accommodation;
- Over 80% of new social rented homes in London are currently developed by the G15. Therefore what the G15 does in letting and managing tenancies is of key importance to London in reducing homelessness and meeting London's temporary housing reduction target ⁴.

G15 makes a difference but we can achieve more by re-doubling our efforts. Inevitably though, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed. Our *Offer* on tackling homelessness aims to demonstrate that G15 fully supports the drive to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. We are keen to further develop our dialogue with the Boroughs, London Councils and other stakeholders to overcome any barriers to achieving this and to support stronger partnerships.

Some of the issues identified in this *Offer* will require sustained joint working with our national and local partners over the medium to longer term in order to realise the potential benefits. We hope our partners will embrace the *Offer* as evidence of our long-term commitment.

As such we view the *Offer* as a long-term commitment to improve housing options through more focussed partnership working. We also hope that the partnership agenda will remain a core priority for the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenancy Services Authority. In this context the *Offer* aims to complement and where possible anticipate the work of these agencies.

Our proposals



On working in partnership

- G15 will establish local authority relationship managers. Their role will be to act as a local link on delivery of our *Offer*. Relationship managers will be supported by the G15 Lettings Group and through this route will be in a position to report on progress to the G15 Housing Directors and Chief Executives Group. Their work will include co-ordination of G15 contribution to local lettings targets and engagement with homelessness strategies, CBL and CHR schemes. This work will be supported by the Housing Corporation's Homelessness Action Team.
- Progress will be closely monitored by a sub-group of the G15 Directors who will report annually to the G15 CEOs on progress. An action plan will be developed to support this offer.

– our offer summary

On lettings

Housing nominees

- The G15 will work with London Councils to meet their temporary accommodation reduction targets, both locally and across borough boundaries. From information provided by the Homelessness Action Team, London local authorities estimate that 2,729 G15 homes per annum will need to be available to meet the 2010 target. G15 undertake to deliver these homes subject to sufficient flow of timely and appropriate nominations.
- To achieve G15's objectives, we will continue to perform to *Partners in meeting housing need* and local agreements i.e. to agreed standards but with a flexible local approach.
- G15 will investigate any localities where G15 lettings to homeless households are below 35% of net lettings. This will form the basis of discussions with local authorities on how performance can be improved.
- To facilitate this, G15 will work with local authorities to implement the Housing Corporation's Information Sharing protocol. This aims to ensure that accurate and timely information is provided and that vulnerable homeless referrals have sufficient support to maintain a tenancy. See below.
- To support this *Offer* the G15 will also work with local authority partners to ensure that all partners are working to the same methods of recording and monitoring.
- Although changes are suggested in the way we work, nothing in this *Offer* is intended to prevent current arrangements from working and the G15 from continuing to enhance mobility through cross-borough lettings, for example.

Choice based lettings and common housing registers

- The G15 would require an active role in the further development of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and Common Housing Registers (CHRs) to deliver the quantum of lettings required to achieve the 2010 target. The G15 would therefore welcome the opportunity to be full partners in the future development of these schemes. We believe that the protocols for both, developed in Tower Hamlets offers a set of principles that could be replicated in other Boroughs to enable this to be taken forward.
- The G15 will work within local or sub-regional structures to achieve this. To this end a joint assessment with the key stakeholders of the viability of each scheme will be required. Once again, progress in this area will be governed by the health of local and sub regional partnership working arrangements. The G15 is committed to achieving sustainable communities through these processes.

Accessible Housing Register

- *Housing Choice for Disabled Londoners* sets out the requirements to deliver the London Accessible Housing Register (AHR)⁵. As part of the commitment to Common Housing Registers and to choice based lettings the G15 will work with the boroughs to deliver the Accessible Housing Register.

Information sharing protocol

- The G15 wishes all partners to adopt the Housing Corporation's Information Sharing Protocol and ask that the boroughs, through London Councils, consider adopting a short form for information developed by the East London Housing Partnership as a minimum.

⁴ Based on new build approvals in London in 2006/07, from the Housing Corporation's 2006/07 *Outturn report*.

⁵ *Housing Choice for Disabled Londoners: Delivering the London Accessible Housing Register*. (GLA) September 2007.

G15 – our offer summary

Our proposals – continued

On Temporary Accommodation

- G15 commit to continue to play an active role in delivering temporary homes, services and products subject to the outcome of the current reviews.
- G15 will engage with local authorities to remove the barriers and minimise the bureaucracy associated with the delivery of temporary to settled schemes.
- We will work with local authorities and others to tackle worklessness in our temporary homes, through incentives and appropriate support to individuals wishing to enter employment.
- Wherever possible we will convert temporary housing to more settled accommodation.

On the best use of stock

- We commit to continuing to build on our approaches to best use of our stock which will produce more homes over the coming months and years and to working with boroughs on initiatives to reduce illegal occupation: for example, auditing stock to reduce illegal sub-letting.
- Each member commits to considering the development of an under occupation scheme that offers incentives, where one is not already in place, as well as supporting moves by households that release larger homes. We will look at ways of developing locality based jointly funded schemes to achieve this.

- We commit to participating in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). The Audit Commission runs NFI, an exercise that matches electronic data within and between audited bodies to prevent and detect fraud. This includes police authorities, local probation boards and fire and rescue authorities as well as local councils. In 2006/07 alone, this approach has led to £140 million of fraud and overpayments being detected.

On specific services and homelessness prevention

- The G15 commits to continuing to deliver specific services for homeless individuals and families and is, for example, developing new initiatives such as sanctuary projects to complement other domestic violence services.
- We will continue to offer services to help more residents sustain their tenancies and commit to continue the G15 collaboration on tackling worklessness and financial inclusion amongst our residents through projects that assist in debt management or help homeless people to develop skills, for example.

1. Housing homeless households in permanent accommodation

- The G15 is meeting its commitment to house local authority nominations in accordance with 'Partners' targets;⁶
- The scale of our programmes in London means that new lettings are double those of national comparators;
- We are significantly exceeding the national average with regards to nominations to local authorities;
- The acceptance of homeless households in priority need currently runs at 27% of local authority nominations, much higher than the national average;
- We are well ahead of the national comparator group in the use of Choice Based Lettings (CBL). In 2007/08, 48% of lettings were made through this route;
- More progress is required in relation to the use of Common Housing Registers (CHR) in that only 7% of lettings were made through CHR in 2007/08, compared with 27% for the national comparator group.

We have also found that:

- The use of direct lettings is minimal;
- The use of the category 'other' homeless lacks transparency;
- The G15 average relet time for void properties is 35 days and is slightly lower than the national mean for relet times;
- Significant under-recording of G15 lettings has been found which could be distorting perception of our lettings record in London.

1.1 Nominations and lettings – the G15 record

1.1.1 What we have found

The analysis which follows examines the G15 lettings performance over the last three years for general needs only and the impact on London. In each case comparisons are given against the national position⁷. In the last three years the G15 have made 19,013 lettings to general needs homes (see Table 1.1). Of these, relets accounted for about two-thirds in years 2005-2007 increasing to 71% in 2007/08. The G15 new lets performance is generally around double that of the national average in each of the three years (see Table 1.1.1.). This is despite the fact that the G15 are engaged in large programmes of regeneration. Where this is the case we would welcome a dialogue with the borough to ensure that regeneration needs can be taken into account without adversely impacting on our record of housing new nominees. We also require improved information sharing and support packages to be in place in order to meet more challenging targets as noted below.

Table 1.1 – Total general needs lettings

	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
National	127,301	130,034	128,264
G15	6,090	6,630	6,293

⁶ 'Partners' targets refer to an agreement made back in 1989 by the then ALG, LBA and NHF in response to rising homelessness in a document entitled *Partners in meeting housing needs: A Good Practice Guide*.

⁷ The national comparators include RSLs with more than 1,000 homes, with data drawn from the RSR analysed by Housemark.

Table 1.1.1 – New lets and relets %

	New lets %			Relets %		
	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06	2007/08 Actual	2006/07	2005/06
National	16	16	16	84	84	84
G15	29	33	33	71	67	67

Table 1.2 shows that G15 performance also significantly exceeds the national average with regards to nominations to local authorities in all three years. The G15 performance between 64% and 67% represents an ‘on target’ performance against ‘Partners’ expectations. ‘Partners’ expects that RSLs will make available 75% of family accommodation and 50% of smaller homes to nominees of local authorities (the average of these two figures is 62.5%).

In the case of lettings to households that are accepted by the local authority as homeless and in priority need, the G15 outperforms the national comparator group. On average, lettings to the statutory homeless represent 27% rising from 23% in 2005/06 whereas the national performance ranges from 17% to 18% (see Table 1.3). To some extent this is owing to the higher incidence of homelessness in London. The G15 is prepared to work with the boroughs to raise lettings to statutory homeless households to 35% in order to enable them to meet their temporary housing reduction targets.

Table 1.2 – Lettings through LA nominations

	National	National %	G15	G15%
2007/08	67,488	53	3,876	64
2006/07	64,850	50	4,356	66
2005/06	59,080	46	4,190	67

Whilst the G15 is committed to Choice Based Lettings we would like to see the further development of Common Housing Registers according to some agreed principles. The Southern Housing Group has worked closely with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to achieve an effective Common Housing Register. This helps to achieve a good relationship between bodies through the CBL cycle, with RSLs being provided with access to the CBL system. It also maintains a strong strategic link between borough and RSLs with regular strategic meetings. The LB Southwark is establishing a Housing Needs Partnership that is also considering a Common Housing Register. Set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, are the preferred principles and protocols drafted by Southern Housing Group that are believed to make a CHR work.

Table 1.3 Lettings to statutory homeless

	Not homeless %			Statutory homeless %			Other homeless %		
	07/08	06/07	05/06	07/08	06/07	05/06	07/08	06/07	05/06
National	77	76	76	17	18	17	6	6	7
G15	70	68	71	27	27	23	3	5	6

1.2 Some issues for resolution

Our research has revealed problems with lettings data in that the findings from the various sources in some instances tend to be inconsistent and lack transparency.

'Other' homeless households

In recording lettings to homeless households there is a category known as lettings to 'other' homeless. Although lettings by the G15 are slightly lower than the national group for each of the three years and G15 lettings to 'other homeless' have halved since 2005, they still represent about 3% of lettings or about 180 households each year. We have attempted to find out who the 'other homeless' households are and the source of referral for this group. We have found no significant trends although there do appear to be a significant number referred by local authorities as 'other' homeless.

Our research also shows that these households have been referred by a network of referral agencies including health authorities and social services departments of our partner boroughs. Nevertheless we believe that greater transparency is needed and we shall examine these lettings in detail over the coming months in order to consider whether this classification could be discarded given that families are either homeless or not homeless and then either in priority need or not and therefore statutorily homeless or not. The use of 'other' homeless does not appear to meet any useful purpose. The use of the Common Housing Register through which all households would pass could clarify and add to the transparency of the lettings processes.

Direct lettings

Lettings by the G15 to direct applicants are very low in comparison with the national average at 4% and 28% respectively in 2007/08. This is partly because the G15 do not maintain waiting lists given housing demand in London. However, direct lettings have a positive role in that the majority either relieve overcrowding by assisting hidden households or offer lettings to young people from Foyers, for example. For greater transparency we would like to see all these lettings directed to a Common Housing Register and through the Housing Options services so that these lettings can be adequately accounted for.

Nominations rejections

There appears to be a real issue concerning the accuracy of data collection in relation to rejections. The figures collected for this research via the CORE recording process did not appear to be robust.

Data collection

G15 is aware that data management must be improved to support joint projects such as CBL and CHRs and to more accurately reflect the contribution of the G15 to housing the homeless. Significant under-recording of G15 lettings has been identified in three local authority areas. If this is replicated elsewhere it will be distorting perception of G15's record of tackling homelessness in London. There are issues of data inconsistency. G15 will work with the London boroughs to address this through more sharing of data and the establishment of common criteria.

- The local authority comparison clearly has ramifications for national CORE reporting beyond our *Offer*. We are prepared however, to undertake to train staff in CORE recording and work closely with the boroughs to develop up to date and validated borough by borough records, developing shared data sets as part of Area Based Action Plans to tackle homelessness.

A CORE comparison against LA records

We are concerned that CORE may not be accurately recording the performance of the G15. A comparison of local authority records in three London boroughs has been undertaken to assess the accuracy of core recording. Three years of lettings information (05/06, 06/07 and 07/08) has been analysed by the boroughs for all the RSLs operating in the boroughs who are members of the G15.

In the case of RBKC, to take just one example, there is a very significant difference between the CORE record and those of the Borough. The difference amounts to almost double the figures recorded by CORE. If this position is the case across London then the performance of the G15 is significantly distorted.

1.3 Our offer to London on lettings

Housing nominees

- The G15 will work with London Councils to meet their temporary accommodation reduction targets, both locally and across borough boundaries. From information provided by the Homelessness Action Team, London local authorities estimate that 2,729 G15 homes per annum need to be available to meet the 2010 target. G15 undertake to deliver these homes subject to sufficient flow of timely and appropriate nominations.
- To achieve this, the G15 will continue to perform to *Partners in meeting housing need* and local agreements i.e. to agreed standards but with a flexible local approach.
- G15 will investigate any localities where G15 lettings to homeless households are below 35% of net lettings. This will form the basis of discussions with local authorities on how performance can be improved.
- To facilitate this, G15 will work with local authorities to implement the Housing Corporation's Information Sharing protocol. This aims to ensure that accurate and timely information is provided and that vulnerable homeless referrals have sufficient support to maintain a tenancy.
- Although changes are suggested in the way we work, nothing in this offer is intended to prevent current arrangements from working and the G15 from continuing to enhance mobility through cross-borough lettings, for example.

Choice based lettings and Common Housing registers

- The G15 would welcome an active role in the further development of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and Common Housing Registers (CHRs) to deliver the quantum of lettings required to achieve the 2010 target. G15 would therefore welcome the opportunity to be full partners in future development of these schemes. We believe that the protocols developed in Tower Hamlets offer a set of principles that could be replicated in other Boroughs to enable this to be taken forward.
- G15 will work within local or sub-regional structures to achieve this. To this end a joint assessment with the key stakeholders of the viability of each scheme will be required. Once again, progress in this area will be governed by the health of local and sub-regional partnership working arrangements.
- We remain committed to the delivery of sensitive local lettings to ensure that communities are sustainable.

Accessible Housing Register

- *Housing Choice for Disabled Londoners* sets out the requirements to deliver the London Accessible Housing Register (AHR)⁸. As part of the commitment to Common Housing Registers and to choice based lettings, G15 will work with the boroughs to deliver the Accessible Housing Register.

Information sharing protocol

- The G15 wishes all partners to adopt the Housing Corporation's Information Sharing Protocol and ask that the boroughs through London Councils consider adopting a short form for information developed by the East London Housing Partnership as a minimum. (See Appendix 3.)

1.4 Good practice examples

1.4.1 Good practice examples – current

Southern Housing Group CORE recording methods

Southern Housing Group has a detailed approach to entering CORE lettings data which it is then able to check against local authority records. It has an agreed process and training for staff to ensure improved accuracy in recording.

Completion of forms by staff and the error rate are monitored by Lettings Coordinators and the Policy Department also undertakes a validation exercise on CORE data.

Information sharing protocols

In West London, A2Dominion and Catalyst are working actively with partner RSLs and local authorities on the Housing Corporation's Information Sharing Protocol (HC ISP) to ensure that comprehensive and accurate information is used when letting new tenancies, enabling the partners to put in place adequate support to prevent potential homelessness.

Peabody Trust is currently piloting the HC ISP with Westminster City Council.

Southern Housing Group has been working with others to adopt a sub-regional information sharing protocol across the East London Sub-region. The agreed two page summary form that could be used as a template across London is attached at Appendix 3.

*Peabody Trust Choice Based Lettings*⁹

Working in Partnership with Home Connections, Peabody Housing Trust's choice based lettings service, "Selections", went live in November 2007. The system offers home seekers the opportunity to express an interest in the home of their choice by bidding on the web site using their band as currency. The Trust is offering a pan-London opportunity to their customers wanting to move anywhere within their portfolio, the first RSL in London to do so.

Home seekers can view the full range of homes available and can apply to bid for any home of their choice for which they are eligible. The full suite of housing options will be available through the site.

1.4.2 Projects in the pipeline

Housing Options Advice Service

At Circle Anglia a Housing Options Service is being developed for launch in 2008/9. It will provide Circle 33 residents with a range of options to address housing need and support to access those options. Over 1,000 households on Circle 33's internal transfer list will be assisted through this initiative. This in turn might release further homes for local authority nominated households.

⁸ *Housing choice for disabled Londoners – Delivering the London Accessible Housing Register (GLA) September 2007*

⁹ Source: Peabody Trust and Home Connections web site www.homeconnections.org.uk

2. Housing homeless households in temporary

The housing needs of homeless households accepted by local authorities cannot always be met through a permanent settled home. Over 56,700 households in London are currently housed in temporary accommodation.

- The G15 offers a temporary home to more than one in three households in temporary accommodation;
- The G15 is committed to converting temporary housing into permanent settled homes.

2.1 Temporary accommodation – the G15 record

2.1.1 What we have found

As at January 2008, the G15 provided 16,316 temporary homes in 31 London boroughs. The G15 has been working proactively to assist local authorities meet their 2010 temporary accommodation reduction targets through the NHF *London Temporary Housing Strategic Advisory Group* and the NHF *London Temporary Housing Practitioners Group*. These groups have been actively engaged with the Department for Work and Pensions, Communities and Local Government, the Homelessness Action Team, the Housing Corporation, the Greater London Authority and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

The G15 has developed a range of new products and services to assist local authorities meet the 2010 targets. These include:

- Settled Lettings Agency – a pilot scheme in south east London aimed at facilitating the move of potentially homeless families into the private rented sector.
- Direct Lettings Schemes – leasing schemes facilitating the move of potentially homeless families into the private rented sector.
- Empty Dwellings renovation and management schemes – new schemes throughout London and the south east to bring empty homes up to standard and into occupation.
- Temporary to Permanent schemes – the development of cost effective high volume long term solutions to reduce demand for temporary housing.

By improving accommodation standards and through tenancy sustainment and employment initiatives the G15 is improving the quality of life of residents and reducing turnover within temporary accommodation schemes. It is also assisting residents to sustain their tenancies.

2.2 The issues

We are willing to convert temporary accommodation to permanent homes to offer a more settled future for residents. However this requires some commitments from our partners and government as discussed below.

Temporary to Permanent schemes

Short term leasing is not the most cost effective way to deal with long term demand.

'Temporary to Permanent' schemes use an innovative and highly cost effective funding model which will create more affordable housing in the future and greater asset value to the public purse. Using rent levels similar to those paid under short term leases, the models aim to deliver permanent affordable housing within 15 years.

Partnerships between local authorities, housing associations and private funders are already in place with structured solutions ready to be delivered.

The G15 is committed to developing quality temporary accommodation and we are major contributors to this form of housing provision. However, the DWP is reviewing benefits and at this stage the outcome of that review and its impact upon the viability of temporary accommodation provision is unknown. Our *Offer* is subject to the outcome of this review.

2.3 Our offer to London on temporary accommodation

- G15 commits to continue to play an active role in delivering temporary homes, services and products;
- Wherever possible we will convert temporary housing to more settled accommodation;

- The conversion from temporary to settled accommodation is the important potential area where we can contribute further. As noted above though, this depends to some extent on the outcome of the DWP review of benefits. We commit to continue to play an active role in delivering TA subject to this proviso.

2.4 Good practice examples

2.4.1 Current examples

Purchase and Repair (Redbridge and Newham)

Since 1997, Circle 33 has undertaken an ongoing programme of street property acquisitions in The London Borough of Redbridge and The London Borough of Newham through the Purchase and Repair initiative.

Circle acquires street properties on the open market and refurbishes them to a quality standard. These properties are then let on Assured Shorthold Tenancies to nominees of the two boroughs. These families are mainly in bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation. The rent is set at an agreed level between Circle and the boroughs and is within Housing Benefit Thresholds. These rents are above Housing Corporation target rents for equivalent accommodation.

Circle works closely with Redbridge and Newham to secure grant funding within 4 years from the first letting, to "buy-out" each property. Once grant funding has been secured, the rents are reduced to Target Rents and the existing tenancies are converted to permanent accommodation (Assured Tenancies).

- In 2007/08, this approach secured approximately £10 million in funding, which enabled 42 existing families to be offered permanent homes.

2.4.2 Examples in the pipeline

Notting Hill Direct Lettings

Notting Hill leases and manages some 2,700 properties for use as self-contained temporary housing and direct letting in 14 boroughs. This number has been falling as boroughs make progress in delivering the temporary accommodation reduction target. It works closely with the boroughs where it provides temporary accommodation, to ensure that it does all it can to help them deliver their homelessness strategies.

As part of this work Notting Hill has developed a Direct Lettings (DL) product. Non-statutory homeless families are referred to it and are housed under rolling assured shorthold tenancies, which effectively provide settled housing at market rents, normally covered by housing benefit, for periods between five and ten years. This provides local authorities with a homelessness prevention option and households that are not accepted as homeless with a choice akin to the private rented sector, supplemented by Notting Hill's management and maintenance service.

10% of its leased properties are now let under DL and it is working to increase the use of DL in a number of boroughs. Later this year it will launch a lettings section on its website to enable customers to view and apply for available properties on-line.

Quality Temporary Housing

The Audit Commission noted that Pathmeads' (a subsidiary of Genesis) *'overarching approach to managing quality temporary housing places the tenant at its heart, rather than a service aligned along the minimum standards of the contract'*. This is being achieved through delivery of a service focused on the specific needs of residents where tenancy sustainment is an absolute priority. Pathmeads currently has 4,454 temporary homes in management.

As part of the model it has developed, in consultation with its tenants, a modern procurement partnership dedicated to temporary housing repairs. It is a service which provides choice, flexibility, reliability and satisfaction for customers. It also combines quality management services with improved acquisition and relet standards to deliver accommodation that is comparable to that of permanent homes. By delivering quality temporary housing services, Pathmeads is playing a key role in helping to minimise the pressure on local authority partners for permanent social housing.

Empty Property Schemes

Pathmeads HA also operates various schemes across Greater London to bring empty properties back onto the lettings market to assist in meeting the 2010 target to halve temporary accommodation.

3. Housing homeless households through best use of stock

More homeless households can be assisted through the best use of stock.

- 53 specific initiatives are underway that enable the G15 to make better use of their stock;
- Some 600 homes have been or will be added to the stock in the next twelve months which can help to house more homeless families;
- New Generation schemes help to keep families and communities together;
- Tackling under-occupation is a priority for all members;
- Prevention of illegal occupation and of fraud is a priority.

3.1 Best use of stock – the G15 record

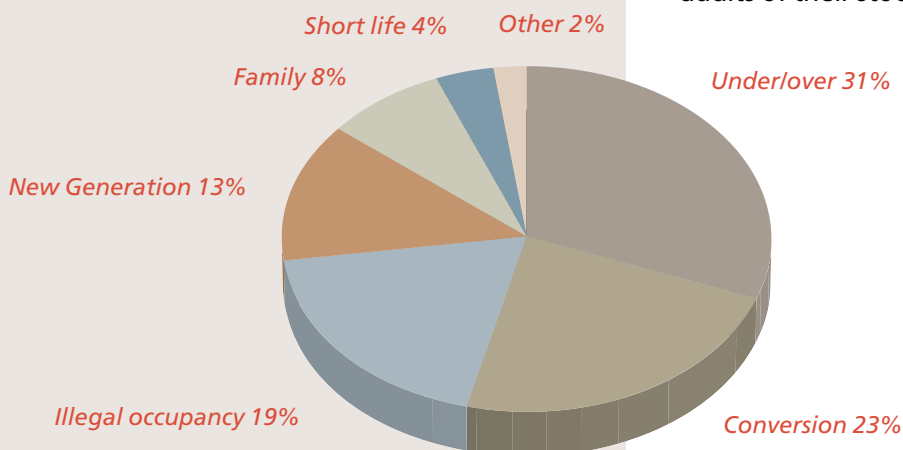
The G15 are actively reviewing their homes in order to make the best use of stock. Initiatives include those that target the reduction of overcrowding. New Generation schemes address the needs of hidden households and the younger generation whilst also helping to keep families and communities together. Most of the G15 are actively tackling under-occupation through the use of incentive schemes which encourage small households that are under-occupying larger homes to move to more appropriate accommodation. The Peabody Trust, for example, made an additional 116 homes available in 2007/08 through its under-occupation incentive scheme. There are also schemes to convert lofts, to build extensions and the use of reserves to create larger, family homes.

Many of the G15 are undertaking property and tenancy audits to prevent illegal occupation and sub-letting.

53 specific initiatives have been reported that enable the G15 to make better use of their stock. Some 600 homes have been or will be added to the stock in the next twelve months. Furthermore, several hundred more homes will be identified in the coming months. For example, the Genesis Housing Group alone estimates that some 300 homes will become available over the coming years as a result of its policies to make best use of stock. Further vacancies will occur as a result of tenancy audits.

Chart 3.1 illustrates the nature of this activity. Many members of the G15 are also undertaking reviews and audits of their stock to reduce illegal occupancy.

Chart 3.1 – G15:
Best use of stock



3.3 Our offer on the best use of stock

- We commit to continuing to build on our approaches to make best use of our stock which will produce more homes over the coming months and years and to working with boroughs on initiatives to reduce illegal occupation.
- Each member commits to considering the development of an under occupation scheme that offers incentives, where one is not already in place, as well as supporting moves by households that release larger homes.
- We commit to participating in the National Fraud Initiative. Since 1996 the Audit Commission has run the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), an exercise that matches electronic data within and between audited bodies to prevent and detect fraud. This includes police authorities, local probation boards and fire and rescue authorities as well as local councils. To date, an estimated £450 million of fraud and overpayments have been identified from this work and the initiative has attracted international recognition. In 2006/07 this approach has led to £140 million of fraud and overpayments being detected.

3.4 Good practice examples

3.4.1 Current examples

Illegal Occupation pilot with Southwark Council

This pilot project run by Family Mosaic is a scheme to identify, evaluate, and tackle unauthorised occupation in RSL stock in Southwark. Southwark provides the investigation expertise and resources and in return receives 100% nomination rights to the vacancies created.

The pilot has identified better practice and contributed to the development of an informed and consistent approach to tackling unauthorised occupation across the social housing sector within Southwark and the South East sub-region.

100% of properties released through the pilot will be offered to the London Borough of Southwark to meet housing needs, including homelessness and overcrowding.

The scheme is being evaluated by a panel consisting of representatives from Family Mosaic, Hexagon, London and Quadrant and the London Borough of Southwark, and it is now proposed to extend it to these associations and ultimately to all associations in the Borough.

Funding for the pilot came from the CLG and a proposal is now being put together for longer term funding.

The following outcomes/outputs were achieved from the 3 month pilot:

- 300 properties visited on at least one occasion;
- 253 properties where the tenant was verified as being in occupation;
- 14 cases of unauthorised occupation identified, vacant possession achieved in 9 of these cases (unauthorised occupant or tenant voluntarily relinquished property and vacated), and 5 cases referred to legal services;
- 11 Notice to Quits served;
- 26 x '7 day' letters delivered (letter giving tenant 7 days in which to respond following non-response to visits and letters as precursor to issuing a Notice to Quit);
- 37 further letters issued to which there was no response.

On the basis of the 300 properties visited as part of the pilot, and the 14 cases of unauthorised occupation, this indicates a potential level of unauthorised occupation in Family Mosaic's stock in Peckham of 4.66%, comparable to levels in the neighbouring local authority housing. The picture in Peckham does not necessarily indicate the picture across Southwark, but may be indicative of levels in deprived inner-city areas generally.

Family homes scheme

L&Q is buying street properties on the open market which it funds itself. The properties are used to rehouse larger families on the transfer list. 80 homes have been purchased. This scheme has been successful in moving residents who have been on the transfer list for sometime and were unlikely to get a move in the near future because of the lack of larger properties.

3.4.2 Projects in the pipeline

Regional overcrowding project

A2Dominion is working with the West London sub-regional overcrowding project which will analyse overcrowding and the demand for accommodation in a far greater detail than before. This will then be used to develop new initiatives and strategies to address homelessness provision.

Overcrowding and under-occupation Initiatives – Perfect Fit programmes

The Southern Housing Group is partnering with South East London and East London sub-regions on the *Perfect Fit* programmes aimed at freeing under-occupied properties and offering them to overcrowded residents in these areas. In addition, the Group is also starting a series of workshops on its Hackney estates with The London Borough of Hackney. The workshops provide information to residents on a range of initiatives that are aimed at making existing homes more suitable to peoples needs and making available larger family sized properties for those who need them.

Remodelling of existing stock

All Network's general rented housing stock has been inspected and recorded. This information will be used to identify properties that lend themselves to loft conversions, extensions and additional use of available land to increase living space within the properties and Network owned land.

4. Housing vulnerable homeless households

This section considers vulnerable residents and specific services established to meet the needs of these homeless individuals and households.

In London in 2005/06 the G15:

- Housed over 3,700 households with support needs;
- 31% were to lettings of new homes;
- 49% of those housed had homelessness status (statutory and non-statutory);
- 55% were from minority ethnic groups;¹⁰
- 35 specific services are reported for vulnerable groups.

4.1 Specific services – the G15 record

Chart 4.1 below illustrates the main need types served by the G15.

Chart 4.1 – Supported housing by need type 2005/06

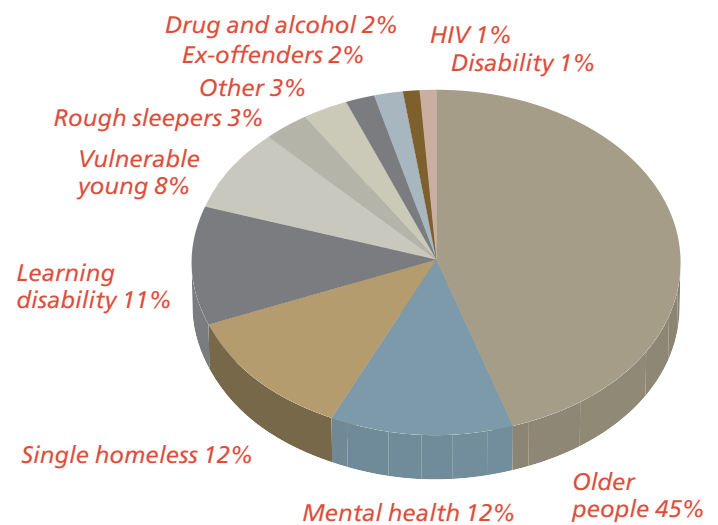


Chart 4.2 illustrates the many reasons why these vulnerable people left their last settled accommodation. This shows that 18% of those housed were facing relationship breakdown either violent or non-violent.

¹⁰ Source: Neighbourhood Capital G15 (2007).

through the provision of specific services

Chart 4.2 – G15 Supported housing 2005/06, main reason for leaving last settled home

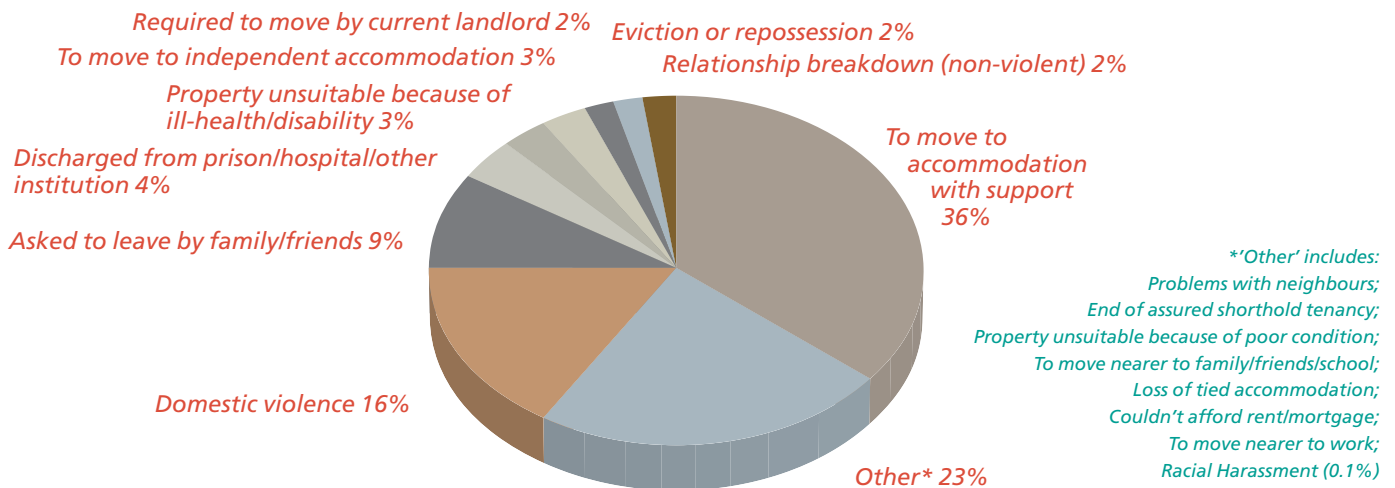
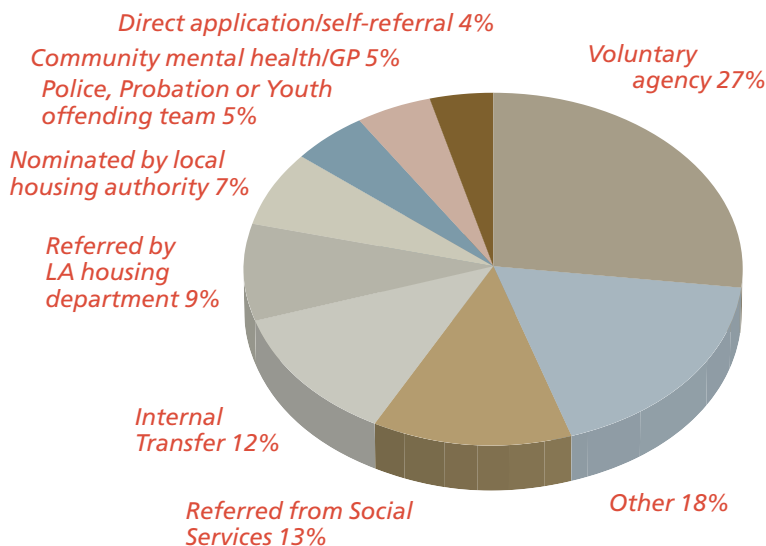


Chart 4.3 sets out the agencies that work in partnership with the G15, referring vulnerable clients to them for permanent rehousing.

Chart 4.3 – G15 Supported housing 2005/06 Source of Referral



Specific services

35 specific services for homeless people are provided by the G15 (over and above core supported housing and temporary accommodation provision). The schemes meet a range of diverse needs although Mental Health support projects, foyers and services for young people and Sanctuary projects to complement other domestic violence services, feature significantly within their services.

4.2 Our offer to London on specific services

- The G15 commits to continuing to deliver specific services for homeless individuals and families and is, for example, developing new initiatives such as further sanctuary schemes.
- We will continue to work in partnership to meet London's needs for these services as set out by the GLA and the boroughs.

4.3. Good practice examples

4.3.1 Current examples

Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI)

The Hyde Group is working with Thames Reach and Broadway to provide properties for RSI tenancies. Approximately 150 units are offered across London. Hyde has two dedicated Resettlement Workers in Lewisham and Greenwich to support RSI tenants. Hyde's tenancy support is provided flexibly according to tenants' needs and according to agreed protocols and procedures, such as support planning and goal setting. Both practical and emotional support is provided. Specialist support to deal with substance abuse, mental health problems and gaining employment are also offered through *intouch* and Hyde Plus.

Assisting ex-offenders

Metropolitan Housing Partnership's Safer Communities project is a floating support and accommodation based service for individuals who experience forensic/mental health/complex needs. The scheme is based in Kensington and Chelsea. The Safer Communities project enables high-risk offenders to live in the community in a way that is safe for them and the community. The staff work closely with the Multi Agency Protection Agency (MAPP), led by the police community team and probation. These agencies share information and MST Threshold can alert the panel when there is a potential risk to the public so that appropriate action can be taken. Assistance is offered with skills training/college courses. Staff facilitate practical support in relation to community care grants and life skills. Cognitive work is explored that allows individuals to understand connections between past behaviour and exclusion. In line with the London Resettlement Strategy and working in partnership with the Drug Intervention Programme (DiP), this service has recently expanded to include support for individuals recently leaving prison.

4.3.2 Projects in the pipeline

Sanctuary in East London

The Peabody Trust is working with East London Housing Partnership on a sanctuary project to provide safe accommodation for households fleeing domestic violence. It is also developing a reciprocal protocol with RSLs and local authorities within West London for families experiencing domestic violence.

Collaboration to deliver housing advice for young people

Catalyst Housing Group intends to work collaboratively with local authority partners and other RSLs to explore outreach opportunities with organisations such as Shelter and Centrepoin to set up housing advice workshops for young people and parents to highlight the challenges of finding suitable accommodation and the realistic alternatives available.

5. Homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment

To have a home and then to lose it is not only devastating for the individuals concerned but adds to the flow of homeless households seeking rehousing in London. Services are needed, especially for the most vulnerable, to enable them to keep their home and remain secure in the long term. In addition to tackling the needs of homeless people as outlined in the previous sections, the G15 are committed to homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment services. They also offer complementary services such as those that tackle worklessness and financial exclusion.

- 58 different services aimed at preventing homelessness are provided by the G15;
- 73 services are offered by the G15 in relation to tenancy support alone;¹¹
- Eviction levels are improving with the G15 median level falling over the three years 2005-2008;
- 97 worklessness projects are being delivered by the G15 and over £28.5 million is being invested.

5.1 Homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment – the G15 record

The G15 offer a diverse range of homelessness prevention services as illustrated in the good practice examples including:

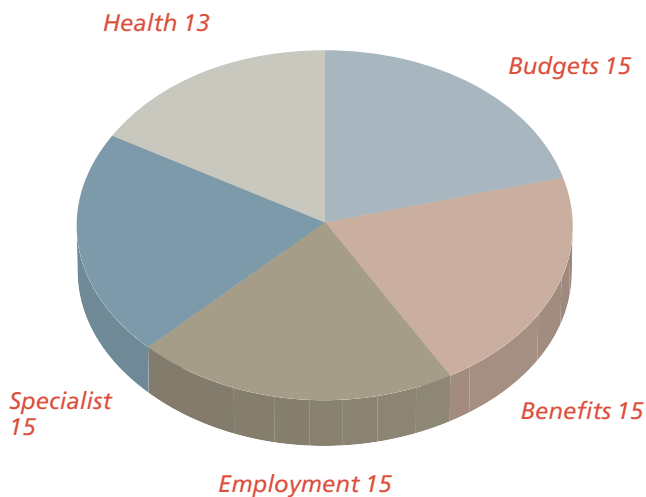
- Housing advice;
- Family mediation;
- Domestic violence support;
- Supporting ex-offenders; and
- Tenancy sustainment.

G15 tenancy support services are illustrated in Chart 5.1 and include:

- Financial management and assistance with budgets and reduction in financial exclusion including accessible credit through Credit Unions;
- Help with benefits claims to maximise income;
- Assistance in accessing appropriate health services, including mental health services;
- Assistance with access to specialist services that an individual might need, for example, substance misuse advice;
- Offering employment, education, skills and personal development initiatives to assist a person into work or to increase their potential and ability to manage the tenancy in the longer term.

¹¹ *Neighbourhood Capital G15 (2007).*

Chart 5.1 – G15 Tenancy sustainment services



5.1.1 Prevention of eviction

G15 is committed to reducing levels of eviction and to only using eviction as a last resort. Eviction levels are improving with the G15 median level falling over the three years and only slightly higher than the median for the national comparator group. The G15's average of 0.5% matches that of our local authority counterparts. Prevention and sustainment services have helped to reduce the rate of evictions. Tackling anti-social behaviour also features in the G15 Homelessness Strategies and can help to prevent perpetrators from losing their homes. Most of our members are also using Pre-Action Protocols.

5.1.2 Tackling worklessness

The G15 record on tackling worklessness illustrates complementary efforts to assist people to retain tenancies. The G15 is delivering 97 projects and investing over £28.5 million mainly in London which includes match funding by the G15 of just under 50%¹². Of the 97 projects, two-thirds concentrate on increasing education and skills levels enabling more people to find jobs. A third relates to employment schemes and encourages self-employment through enterprise. One in seven projects help to meet the needs of people from minority ethnic communities.

The G15 are tackling barriers to work by assisting with the costs of transport and child care. The G15 offer assistance with transport costs in the case of one in two schemes and offer child care assistance in 44% of projects.

5.1.3 Our offer to London on homelessness prevention

- We will continue to offer services to help more residents sustain their tenancies and commit to continue the G15 collaboration on tackling worklessness and financial inclusion amongst our residents.

¹² From data assembled for *Housing associations tackling worklessness* (Housing Corporation 2007)

5.2 Good practice examples

5.2.1 Current examples

Money ways

Money ways is one of the extensive support services provided by AmicusHorizon to residents. It is a financial support service established to improve financial awareness and prevent evictions or abandonment due to inability to pay. *Money ways* provides face-to face or phone interviews, advice about accessing furniture, reasonable loans through credit unions and financial advice.

Fast acting short term intervention service

This is a service funded by East Thames Group and provides a fast acting tenancy support service to residents at risk of homelessness whatever their tenure. People who are referred to the service will be seen within two weeks and a short term action plan agreed with all the parties that can assist. It is usually expected that the desired outcomes will be achieved within 3-6 months.

5.2.2 Projects in the pipeline

Financial Inclusion Strategy

Hyde's new Financial Inclusion Strategy is at the draft stage. So far it has worked with 20 independent agencies, including the DWP funded – 'Change' partnership encouraging/ assisting tenants without access to bank accounts to open one. Over 350 residents have taken up this opportunity so far. In Croydon, Hyde is piloting a new scheme with two other housing associations to encourage tenants to save with a credit union – Hyde is paying the £5 joining fee, with the other housing associations contributing to savings.

Telephone debt advice service

Hyde Plus has funded and piloted a specialist organisation to provide a telephone debt advice service for the Group's tenants across London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. In its first year the scheme has helped 70 residents with an aggregate debt of about £300,000 by working on their behalf to reschedule debts and to produce repayment plans. Although the individual rent arrears are high, they account for less than 10 per cent of their total debts. The scheme has assisted people with rent arrears and possibly helped to prevent eviction in extreme cases.

6. Tackling homelessness through working in

A strategic approach.

This document demonstrates that the G15 are tackling homelessness through the provision of permanent and temporary homes and the delivery of specific services and are preventing homelessness through tenancy support and advice. However, none of this can be effectively achieved without a commitment to working in partnership. The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy primarily identifies the need to improve partnership working between housing associations and local authorities¹³.

Critical for London boroughs at the moment is the revision of their 2003-2008 Homelessness Strategies and many are now also beginning to work on Area Planning with housing associations. Each plan will incorporate a section on how the RSLs are working with them, to tackle homelessness.

6.1 Working in partnership – the G15 record

6.1.1 Corporate commitment and a strategic approach

The G15 are properly engaged with the homelessness agenda and we understand the importance of working in partnership. All our Homelessness Action Plans incorporate ways of even better working with our partner local authorities. We are also committed to sub-regional working through our partnerships such as South East London Housing Partnership and the West London Housing Partnership. Some members are also contributing to the partnerships' homelessness sub-groups. We have adopted champions and drafted strategies. Nothing in this *Offer* is intended to conflict with existing arrangements.

But we think that we can improve this further by developing a process of managing relationships at a borough level. We have tremendous market intelligence through the many forums we attend and relationships our members are involved in across the capital. We think that everyone would benefit if one G15 member takes the lead in a particular borough to work through the various aspects of our *Offer* to London set out in this document and to feedback information to the G15 and our partners. Dialogue is essential but with so many partner boroughs and with some members operating in several of them a lead G15 member could only help. The lead officer could be the homelessness champion of that G15 member or report to the champion on progress. The lead officer would report back to the G15 housing directors on progress on matters such as the development of shared data or a Common Housing Register and other aspects of our *Offer*. Progress would also be reported back to the G15 Chief Executives' Group. What we could achieve is a sort of 'one stop shop' to talk to the G15 at a borough and sub-regional level and vice versa.

¹³ HAT topic briefing on developing partnerships (Housing Corporation April 2008)

Chart 6.1 shows how this could work in terms of a dialogue and to offer accountability at a strategic, operational and tactical level to ensure that our *Offer* can be properly monitored and implemented.

6.2 Our offer to London on working in partnership

- G15 will establish local authority relationship managers. Their role will include co-ordination of G15 contribution to local lettings targets and engagement with homelessness strategies, CBL and CHR schemes. This work will be supported by the Housing Corporation's Homelessness Action Team.
- Progress will be closely monitored by a sub-group of the G15 Directors who will report annually to the G15 CEOs on progress. An action plan will be developed to support this *Offer*.

Chart 6: Monitoring and accounting for our offer



6.3 Good practice examples

Working in partnership

In addition to its detailed homelessness action plan and pledge to work towards tackling homelessness further, Affinity Sutton has pledged that its main subsidiary, Broomleigh, will work collaboratively with all statutory and voluntary organisations to reduce the number of Broomleigh tenants becoming homeless through harassment, crime, and domestic violence. To this end it is attending all local meetings to improve information sharing and co-ordination to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on its estates. This work is monitored at Board level as Broomleigh is committed to working to make Bromley safer.

Two examples of future commitments to working in partnership and contributing to homelessness strategies

The Hyde Group offer includes:

- Audit of local authority consultation mechanisms on homelessness;
- Auditing key local authority homelessness strategies;
- Nominating lead staff to attend local authority consultation meetings;
- Developing multi-agency assessment processes to develop a joint protocol so that there are clear guidelines for joint working activity.

The Network Group offer includes:

- Audit of local authority consultation mechanisms on homelessness;
- Analysis of local data relating to homelessness;
- Committing to specific goals to increase housing stock;
- Engaging in joint working with LAs/RSLs and key stakeholders to agree realistic rehousing options.

Appendix 1: Preferred Principles and Protocols for a common housing register

Southern Housing Group is open to working in partnership with a local authority and other registered social landlords (RSLs) in a local authority area or sub-region through a common housing register in which:

- there is a single application process for applicants for social housing in the area;
- a single assessment system is applied to all applications for social housing in the area;
- all matching to properties is from a single housing list for social landlords in the area,

where:

- the single assessment system reflects the priorities of all the landlords involved; or
- those priorities are addressed by a realistic proportion of properties being matched outside the common housing register.

In summary, a successful scheme would preferably be:

- a) managed by an equal partnership of landlords through a development group, with power to make decisions, which meets at least quarterly to review the scheme;
- b) based on agreed protocols, preferably replacing existing nominations agreements;
- c) able to give each partner access to the information and communication technology (ICT) system so that, when allied to a choice-based lettings scheme, all advertisements and shortlists are completed by the advertising partner;
- d) operated through a single assessment system reflecting the priorities of, and with the same assessment for extenuating moves for the tenants of, all the landlords involved to ensure a consistent, fair and transparent process;
- e) assessing all requests on medical grounds through a single medical assessment agency, or process;
- f) maximising the opportunities for moves between landlords and across tenures;
- g) standardising forms and processes;
- h) maximising the use of landlords' existing ICT;
- i) maximising the sharing of better practice and increasing accountability through joint monitoring;
- j) maximising administration through faster void turnaround and reduction in duplicated processes;
- k) allowing all partners a more strategic perspective and role in the area.

Furthermore, in LB Southwark the RSL representatives in that group ask that if a single assessment system is used (Southwark's uses a banding system) it should reflect the RSL partners' transfer priorities as clearly as the host LA's. For example, an RSL tenant in a decant scheme of 15 flats must have the same prospect of an early offer as an LA tenant on a regeneration estate of 500 homes. An RSL 'management transfer' must be a matter of priority to the CHR partnership even where the LA doesn't have such a policy.

Appendix 2: Preferred Principles and Protocols for Choice Based Lettings

Southern Housing Group is open to working in partnership with a local authority and other registered social landlords (RSLs) in a local authority area or sub-region through a choice-based lettings scheme, in which there is:

- a single advertising process for the properties of social housing landlords in the area;
- a fixed period for all eligible applicants to request suitable properties through widely-advertised and widely-available means;
- matching to properties by a common process after the request period;
- the smallest possible number of exceptions to these processes;
- reporting of all outcomes to allow eligible customers to assess their prospects; and
- a recent Equalities Impact Assessment or immediate plans to carry one out,

whether:

- the scheme is operated through or in lieu of a nominations agreement; and
- the proportion of each landlord's properties in the scheme is 100% or a smaller agreed proportion.

In summary, a successful choice-based lettings scheme would preferably be:

- a) managed by an equal partnership of landlords through a development group, with power to make decisions, which meets at least quarterly to review the scheme;
- b) based on agreed protocols, preferably replacing existing nominations agreements;
- c) operated by a single Operations Team responsible for advertising, preparing shortlists, and monitoring, reporting, reviewing and developing the service, with matching by the landlord, and maintaining the relationship with the ICT provider;
- d) clearly advertising who are its eligible customers and what are its appropriate properties and any exceptions;
- e) operated on a weekly cycle, unless there are pressing reasons agreed by all partners to extend this to fortnightly;
- f) using a clear agreed advertising template, preferably with a photograph of the property or similar, and accessible electronically by each partner;
- g) using a proportional lettings system reflected in the advertisement where there is a banding system, unless there are pressing reasons agreed by all partners to match always from the top band;
- h) able to support multiple requests, and multiple viewings under agreed circumstances;
- i) equipped with a 'priority card' or equivalent system where 100% of partners' properties are included, to allow for emergency or sensitive lettings or a management transfer policy;
- j) able to manage direct offers where there is a one-offer or limited offer policy;
- k) able to support local lettings plans;
- l) permit advocates (friend, relative, support worker or member of the landlord's staff), to act on behalf of the customer; and
- m) working towards, or have achieved, an effective Accessible Housing Register.

Appendix 3: East London Information Sharing Protocol and Sub-region nomination form

RSL:		Attention of:	
Property (type & size):			
1st /2nd/3rd/4th/5th Nominee:	(Delete as appropriate)	Application Number	
Flag? Flag Contact Details (see Support Contacts)			
Nominee Current Address:			
	Postcode:		Tel No/email:

Household Details:

Surname	First Name	D.O.B	Gender	Relationship to Applicant	Joint Application?	Economic Status CORE Q3	Nat Ins No.
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Ethnic Origin of Applicant (CORE Q4)

White British		White Irish		White Other		Chinese or Other ethnic group – Chinese	
Mixed White & Black Caribbean		Mixed White & Black African		Mixed White & Asian		Chinese or Other ethnic group – Other	
Asian or Asian British – Indian		Asian or Asian British – Pakistani		Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi		Asian or Asian British – Other	
Black or Black British – Caribbean		Black or Black British – African		Black or Black British – Other		Mixed Other	
Refused							

Housing Access Route (CORE 14)

Transfer due to Overcrowding:		Housing Register:	
Transfer due to Medical:		Other Homeless: Please specify	
Transfer due to Social/Management reason:		Statutorily Homeless: Please specify	
Mobility scheme			

Risk Assessment

(Levels 1-4 with 1 being very high) see below for definitions

	1	2	3	4
Risk to other individuals				
Risk to Applicant				
Risk to Organisations				

Risk to other individuals – Risk to staff, contractors, neighbours, other household member and the community from violent or dangerous applicant/member of applicant household if incomplete or inadequate information provided to ensure appropriate support provided.

Risk to applicant – Risk to applicant/ household member of unfair treatment because of inadequate information, or self harm or abuse because of inadequate or inappropriate support provided.

Risk to organisations – Risk to organisation of cost of tenancy failure, arrears, damage to property, higher void rates, dealing with anti social behaviour; risk to reputation through poor publicity, if incomplete or inadequate information provided to ensure appropriate support provided.

Support Needs

Communication needs			
Medical assessment/Needs of applicant			
		Date carried out:	
Vulnerability of any household member			
Tenancy sustainment (floating support needs)			
Statutory Care (Mental health, Social Services – Care package)			
Contact details of support provider			
Nominating Agency:			
Nominating Officer:			
Contact details:			
		Date:	
If accepted – tenancy start date:			
If refused – reason why:			

Once completed, please return to:



Contact

For further information please contact:

Victor da Cunha
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