

Who moves and why?

Patterns of mobility in the housing association sector in London

Key findings

Patterns of mobility

- People move for many reasons — to do particularly with their household circumstances, their housing and their work. Longer distance moves tend to be work related. Housing association tenants are generally more restricted in the types of move they can make and particularly in the locations they can choose.
- Overall Londoners are more mobile than households in the rest of the country. However housing association (HA) tenants in London move considerably less often than HA tenants in England as a whole.
- The vast majority of moves by HA tenants in London and those moving into low cost home ownership (LCHO) take place within the same district. Even so, 25% of moves into HA rented housing and 36% of moves to LCHO cross district boundaries.
- Of moves originating in London, seven per cent of tenants and 9% of those entering LCHO move outside London, but far smaller proportions of moves (3% HA tenants, 2% LCHO) are into London from elsewhere in the country.
- Within London, for existing tenants, there is some net movement slightly from the West to the North, from the East to the North, and from the South West to the South East.
- For those entering LCHO, there is some net movement slightly from the North sub-region to the East, and from the South West to the South East, but elsewhere across London there are very few net flows across sub-regional boundaries.

Who moves?

- Movers in the HA sector, both tenants and those moving to LCHO, tend to be rather better off than non-movers. The difference is

particularly marked in the case of moves into LCHO.

- Among HA tenants, the proportion of working households who move in London is similar to the rest of the country — but they move shorter distances.
- Movers within the same district are more likely to be families than those who move to accommodation across district boundaries.
- Those moving into low cost home ownership are very different from tenant movers. The typical purchasing household is working, without children and often has two earners. By no means all have been social tenants or on the waiting list.

Reasons for moving

- The main reasons given for moving, whether within the same district or further afield, are household and, particularly, housing related — the need for independent accommodation, health, homelessness, and particularly overcrowding.
- Neighbourhood and locational issues such as the desire to move near family or work are low down the list of reasons for moving.
- Work related reasons hardly feature in the main reasons given for moving. In particular longer-distance moves to and from outside London, which in other tenures would often be work related, are usually associated with health or family concerns.
- There is very little evidence yet available on the housing aspirations of HA households particularly with respect to where they would like to live.
- It is clear that current patterns of movement reflect what households are offered rather than what they would necessarily choose, given greater opportunity.

Mobility patterns in London

Mobility across tenures: London compared

Approximately 10% of households actually move house every year and this proportion has remained relatively constant across the 1990s (Boheim and Taylor, 1999).

The Survey of English Housing shows that in 2001 Londoners were more mobile than households in the rest of country — 11.4% as compared to 10.3% (Table 1). In England overall, private tenants are the most mobile, followed by HA tenants. Both HA and LA tenants move more than owner-occupiers. In London, a similar proportion of private tenants (42%) move as in England as a whole (43%), but those in the social sector are less mobile (HA tenants 11.2%, LA tenants 6.8%) than in England as a whole. The largest difference between London and the whole of England was for the category 'previously living with friends and relatives'. The much higher proportion of households moving from this 'tenure' in London is a reflection of a younger age profile and the extent of housing pressure in London. However the numbers involved are very small.

Mobility across all tenures in London typically involves very short distance moves, mainly within the same district. In London more than half, 58%, of households move less than 5 miles and another 26% move between 6 and 50 miles. Only 15% of all moves involve a distance of over 50 miles.

The vast majority of longer distance moves are by private tenants and those living with friends and family. Social sector tenants generally move short distances, with two thirds of HA tenants moving less than 5 miles. HA tenants are, however, considerably more likely than local authority

tenants to move more than 5 miles — in part because HA owned housing is spread more widely

Mobility among HA tenants

Analysis of Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) data on HA tenants in London in 2000/01, together with more general statistics about the sector, show some very clear mobility patterns (Table 2).

- The overall level of mobility in the HA sector (13%) is disproportionately low compared to the size of the HA sector in England as a whole (19%).
- Over 75% of moves are made within the same district.
- 15% of moves are made between districts within London. Within this 15%, half of moves are made between different districts but within the same sub-region in London. The rest are between different sub-regions in London. (See Figure 1 for details of how London is divided into sub-regions).
- Of moves between districts, 30% are transfers within the same housing association and a further 3% are to another housing association.
- Of the 10% that cross the London regional boundary, 7% are out-migrants. Movers out of London go mainly to areas near London, especially to Kent, and to certain major cities: Leicester, Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham. Very small numbers of households (only 3% of moves) come from outside London.

Movement into LCHO

The CORE new sales data for Low Cost Home Ownership show that these households have a wider choice of location — with more moves between districts but fewer from outside London (Table 3).

Table 1
Residential mobility by tenure

	movers in London		movers in England	
Owner occupiers	99	6.4%	896	6.4%
Private renters	129	42.3%	685	43.4%
HA tenants	24	11.2%	168	13.7%
LA tenants	30	6.8%	274	9.9%
Others-living with relatives, friends	6	28.6%	15	13.4%
Total	288	11.4%	2,038	10.3%

Source: Survey of English Housing 2001
* Size of sample: 19,736

Table 2
Mobility among HA
tenants

Nature of move	Movers	% of moving tenants	
		in London	in England
Same district in London	14,938	75.4 %	10.0 %
Different district but same sub-region in London	1,496	7.5 %	1.0 %
Different district & different sub-region in London	1,454	7.3 %	1.0 %
• different district but same HA	870	4.3 %	
• different district and different HA	83	0.4 %	
from outside to London	558	2.8 %	0.4 %
from London to outside	1,399	7.1 %	0.9 %
Total	19,845	100 %	150,021

Source: CORE General Needs Survey, 2000/01

- 64 % of all moves into LCHO are within the same district in London.
- 25% of moves are between different districts within London. Within this figure, 17% are between different districts but within the same sub-region in London and 8% are between different sub-regions in London.
- Nearly 9% of LCHO moves are to outside London, reflecting individual opportunities. Over 85% of moves are to surrounding areas (48% to the South East region and 39% to the East) but 7% move to the Midlands, 4% to the

- South West and 2% to the North.
- Only 2% of moves are from outside London, reflecting the extreme difficulty of obtaining social housing in London if you live elsewhere.

Mutual exchanges

Evidence from a survey of mutual exchanges, i.e. where tenants arrange their own moves, shows a generally similar picture. Most of the social tenants involved moved very short distances — 83% of those in the survey moved within the same

Figure 1
Map of sub-regions
in London

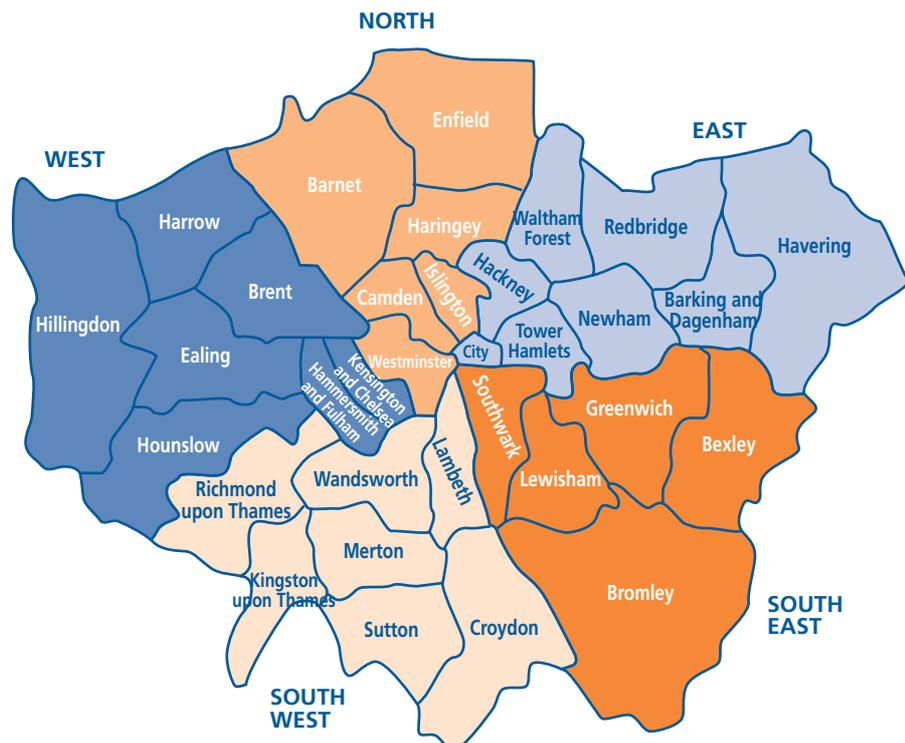


Table 3
Movement among
those entering
LCHO

Nature of move	Number	% of LCHO movers	
		in London	in England
Same district in London	1,017	63.8 %	10.9 %
Different district but same sub-region in London	266	16.7 %	2.7 %
Different district & different sub-region in London	134	8.4 %	1.4 %
from outside to London	37	2.3 %	0.4 %
from London to outside	139	8.7 %	1.5 %
Total	1,593	100 %	9,303

Source: CORE New Sales Survey, 2000/01

district. But a larger proportion, 11%, moved across the London border.

Overview

Overall the mobility patterns of HA tenants and those entering LCHO in London suggest a relatively immobile sector — and one where, when households do move, it is generally for very short distances and within the same district. The picture reflects a sector where allocations are based on professional assessment of housing need in the face of overwhelming pressure on available resources.

Even so, there is evidence of some preparedness to move across boundaries where the opportunity arises — particularly with respect to LCHO, but also in the context of mutual exchanges and where the housing association has accommodation available across district boundaries.

Mobility patterns between London sub-regions

Tenant mobility

Figure 2 summarises the mobility patterns of HA tenants between London sub-regions based on CORE analysis.

Over 90% of the nearly 18,000 tenants who move within London, move within the same sub-region. Thus only 8% (about 1,454 tenants) move across sub-regional boundaries.

The net movement is slightly from the West to the North, from the East to the North and between the South West and South East. This is a very different pattern than would be expected if market pressures affected decisions. Much of the flows that

are observed owe more to the location of HA property than to tenant choice.

Mobility by household type shows that movement in the West is mainly among families and non-workers, while in the South moves are disproportionately among the elderly. Other attributes do not differ greatly. Again these patterns reflect the nature and extent of housing need.

Low cost home ownership

Figure 3 summarises the mobility patterns between London sub-regions of those entering LCHO.

Shared ownership mobility patterns are similar to those for HA tenants, in that people tend to move to nearby areas. However, considerably higher proportions of households cross sub-regional boundaries as compared to HA tenants. Even so the proportion is still less than 10% and the numbers moving across boundaries are very small.

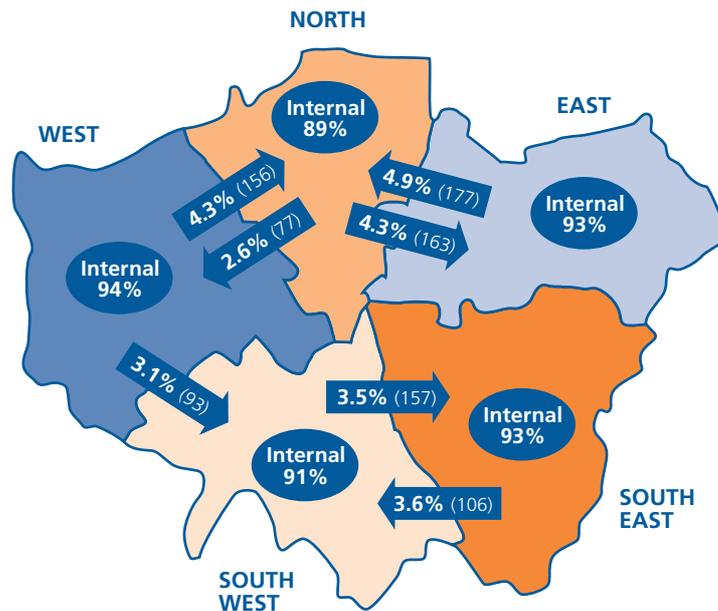
Movements are, if anything, from the North to the East and between the South West and the South East, and from the East to the North. In particular the North appears to be connected with the South West. There is some slight evidence of movement towards lower cost areas.

Attributes of movers and their reasons for moving

Movers and their reasons for moving: London compared

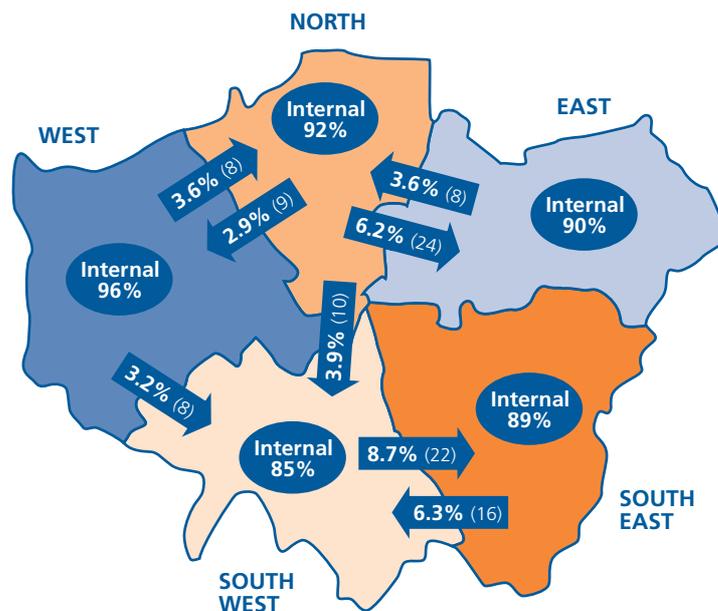
Over the country as a whole the majority of those who move are younger households. Those moving to private renting cite change of job and other personal reasons. The

Figure 2
Main movements of
HA tenants
between London
sub-regions



Source: CORE General Needs Survey, 2000/01

Figure 3
Main movements of
LCHO movers
between London
sub-regions



Source: CORE New Sales Survey, 2000/01

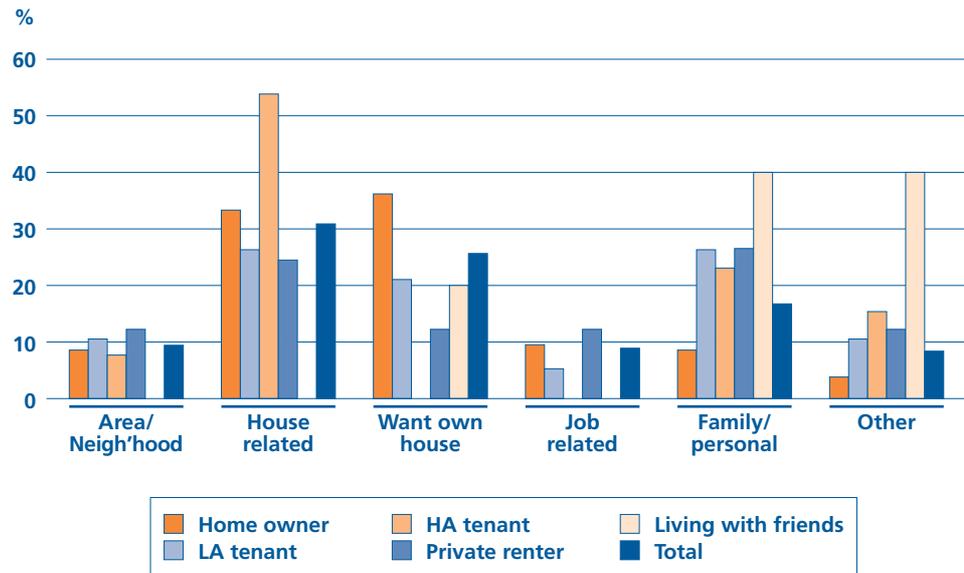
reasons for moving for those moving into and within the social sector are wanting a larger house or flat, other personal reasons and to move to a better neighbourhood. Those moving out of social renting to owner-occupation want to buy, are looking for a better neighbourhood and a larger house or flat. Forty percent of newly forming households include a member working full time. Job-related reasons relate mainly to longer distance moves, whereas in short distance moves, house-, area- and family-related reason are more important.

The Survey of English Housing shows that, among Londoners, job-related reasons are far more likely among those moving in the private sectors (home owners and private tenants) whereas for social tenants, house- and family-related reasons dominate (Figure 4).

Attributes of HA movers in London

The main attributes of HA movers in London as compared to the rest of the country can be identified from the CORE analysis.

Figure 4
Reasons for moving
by tenure (London)



Source: Survey of English Housing, 2001

Movers within the same district

HA tenants who move within the same district in London as compared to the country as a whole and movers in London overall, include:

- more lone parents;
- more two parent families;
- more non-workers;
- fewer retired households;
- more households from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

The proportion of working households among London tenants appears to be the same as in the country as a whole, although their take-home pay is slightly above the average. The average age of moving working households, at 40, is similar to movers in the social sector overall — but above that found in the total population of movers.

A far higher proportion of those moving within the same district in London are homeless as compared to the country as a whole. This is reflected in the higher proportion coming from temporary accommodation and reflects the mechanisms by which local authorities meet their legal responsibilities.

Within-district movers are likely to obtain a larger dwelling, consistent with the fact that the most usual reason for moving (at 18.5%) is overcrowding. The other major reasons for moving within a district are permanent decant, health and disability,

and the need for independent accommodation.

Movers between districts

London movers who cross district boundaries when they move (almost thirty per cent of whom are moving within the same housing association) are disproportionately:

- single adults;
- one worker or job seeker households;
- working full-time;
- Caribbean or African;
- homeless (reflecting London's generally high proportion of such households);
- from the HA sector or temporary accommodation;
- obtaining a one bedroom unit.

They are thus smaller households with slightly more than average capacity to pay. Their main reason for obtaining accommodation is the need for independent living (although this is not reflected in a significantly younger average age). Again work or employment reasons do not feature among the main reasons given for moving.

The pattern of between-district moves in part reflects the relative availability and turnover of smaller units and the extent to which small units are concentrated in the HA sector, as much as the pressure of demand. It should however be reiterated that the numbers involved, at under 3,000 per annum, are small.

Movers into and out of London

The small numbers of households that are moving into London are more likely to be:

- single people;
- elderly/retired/non-working;
- without children;
- British/European;
- from temporary accommodation.

Even though non-working and elderly households are over-represented, the average income of this group is similar to other movers in London, and above that elsewhere in England.

Their main reasons for moving include desire to move nearer family and the need for sheltered accommodation, as well as health and disability to some extent. Here therefore the reasons given for moving are about household specific need as recognised by professionals — as compared to movement within districts which is predominantly about inadequate housing. Employment related needs do not enter into either equation.

Those who move out of London have a somewhat similar pattern to those moving in (although again it is necessary to stress the very small numbers involved). Their reasons for moving are predominantly the desire to be near family, the need for sheltered accommodation and problems of health and disability. Where they differ from in-movers is with regard to income: their take-home pay is far lower, at around 60% of the average for those moving within London.

Differences between households who obtain new-lets and re-lets

The differences between households obtaining new-let and re-let accommodation reflect both the particular pressures faced by local authorities and HAs in accommodating family households and the relative turnover of different types and sizes of properties.

Those obtaining new-let accommodation are more likely to have children and to have working members of the household than those obtaining re-lets. They are also likely to come from local authority accommodation and are disproportionately Asian and African. Incomes are slightly

higher, reflecting age, household structure and the numbers of workers in the household. They are more likely to move to a bigger house i.e. 38% of them move to three+ bedroom dwellings.

Those obtaining re-let accommodation tend to be disproportionately moving within the HA sector, to come from the private rented sector or to have been previously living with friends and family. They are also more likely to be elderly and European and tend to move to a smaller home (58% move to a 'one bedroom dwelling' and only 14% move to a 'more than three-bedroom' property).

Low Cost Home Ownership movers

Low cost home ownership movers have a rather different profile than tenants, reflecting their greater range of opportunity. They are disproportionately:

- single or two adult households with no children — except for movers out of London who tend to be traditional two parent families;
- younger — on average five years younger than tenants;
- in work and working full time with two incomes where there are two adults;
- with higher monthly take home pay — which is four to five times above that of the average tenant mover;
- ethnic minority households, especially among those moving within London;
- moving from private renting and family and friends rather than the social sector; and
- achieving dwellings with at least two bedrooms.

As such, households benefiting from low cost home ownership are very different from those obtaining social rented housing. Equally, although it is general policy that allocations of shared ownership accommodation should be to social tenants or those on the waiting list, 23 % of those purchasing in 2001/2 were neither social sector tenants nor on a waiting list. Moreover, to succeed in buying, households have to have quite high take home pay and to be in full time work. Indeed, a large proportion requires two incomes.

Mutual exchange tenants

The survey of Mutual Exchange Tenants also

supports that social tenants are more likely to move for house- and area-related reasons. Nearly half of moving tenants stated that they moved house to obtain more suitably sized homes and to move to a better area. Only 10% of tenants suggested that they moved for job-related moves.

Tenant aspirations

There is little survey evidence available on what tenants want and where they would be prepared to live. This is in part because there has been little capacity to satisfy tenant aspirations when the emphasis has to be so strongly on achieving minimum housing standards. These gaps in information are beginning to be filled by local housing needs surveys and by studies related to particular mobility initiatives. A number of potential information sources on aspirations at local authority and HA level have been identified, which will be analysed in future research.

Overview of reasons for moving

The attributes of movers and the reasons they give for moving suggest that the most important pressures for mobility are:

- inadequate current accommodation — either because of homelessness/temporary accommodation/new household formation etc. or because of overcrowding and specific household requirements;
- household attributes, notably ill health and to a lesser extent, the need to be nearer family; and, especially for those entering LCHO,
- the expectation of achieving a better home.

Except for the LCHO group, most of the reasons given are 'push' rather than 'pull' factors — reflecting the extreme pressures on the sector and the incapacity of the sector to address other than the highest priority needs.

What is also clear is that the group entering LCHO are in no way a subset of tenant households. Rather they are younger and better off, with greater capacity to afford their housing costs and to take on the risks associated with owner occupation.

Conclusions

Households in the HA sector in London are clearly far less mobile than those living in the rest of the country. Their reasons for being offered a move are generally to do with their current housing conditions and relatively few involve significant choices in relation to location. Thus the vast majority of moves are professionally determined and based on housing need.

Even so, there is evidence that people, especially those without children, are prepared to move away from their immediate locality if different opportunities are available. The fact that housing associations own property across district and sub-regional boundaries clearly increase opportunities to move longer distances.

Those moving into low cost home ownership, although still more likely to move within the district, have a slightly greater choice of locality and tend if anything to move to lower cost areas.

The geography of social sector housing opportunity remains far more constrained than for those in the private sector. In particular the social sector inherently concentrates on housing need rather than helping those looking for job-related moves. Mobility across district and London boundaries can only be achieved by increasing the choices available to tenants.

Additional information

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