

Islington's Enhanced Housing Options Proposal

Strategic Vision

The following aims frame the Council's and Housing's strategic vision, set out in our Sustainable Community Strategy, and the new draft Housing Strategy.

To make bold steps towards reducing poverty in the borough through:

- improving and maximising employment opportunities and maximising income
- raising educational standards
- improving housing options in particular to address the issues of demand and overcrowding
- improving the environment and tackling climate change
- promoting better mental and physical health
- promoting safer communities

Our corporate and housing objectives give us a clear direction for our priorities for action and a clear link to the Enhanced Housing Options proposals. This provides us with an opportunity and potential for increased resources to address our objectives - particularly:

- improving and maximising employment opportunities
- improving housing options - in particular to address the issues of demand and overcrowding

Track Record - Evidence of the success of our current Housing Options Service:

Islington has a track record in achievement in housing option:

- One of first local authorities to introduce CBL
- All council vacancies and RSL nominations let through CBL
- Range of LCHO opportunities allowing people to access home ownership
- Reduced homelessness applications and acceptances
- Reduction in number of families in temporary accommodation – on track to achieve the CLG target.
- No families in B&B
- No 16/17 yr olds or any other client group in B&B
- Maintain the lowest level of rough sleeping in central London
- Award winning sanctuary scheme for people experiencing domestic violence
- Regional Champions for Homelessness 2007/8
- Innovative *Smart Move* mutual exchange scheme for overcrowded and under occupying tenants

- Successful under occupation scheme securing significant numbers of homes for overcrowded households
- New Generation scheme assisting sons and daughters of social housing tenants to move to a home of their own
- An established and successful Private Landlords Forum
- Fifth highest number of accredited landlords in London through the LLAS
- Well established Islington Accredited Landlord Association
- Successful Private Sector rent deposit scheme enabling people to access private rented sector

This gives us a sound base on which to enhance our housing options service.

Islington envisages this bid as an enabling bid. To link the already very successful services offered by the Housing Aid Centre, the Regeneration and Community Partnership and our Choice Based Lettings scheme to enhance the life chances of our most vulnerable residents through better housing and employment.

There are three key enhancements which widen the housing options service we currently provide making for a more integrated, holistic and outward facing service.

1. Housing and Employment

Enhancing Housing Option interviews to include advice on employment and training opportunities.

The Regeneration and Community partnership team at Islington has a number of projects to help Islington residents get and sustain work. The programme as a whole has helped 672 into work so far from April 07 and supported 2275 people. Islington is currently working with our Choice Based Letting partners to develop the Homeconnections website to inform customers accessing the site for housing advice of employment and training opportunities that Islington provides. Our front line housing advice officers come into contact with the most vulnerable of housing applicants with over 3,000 households seeking housing advice each year. We propose to use £20k to provide training to our housing advice staff on how to sign post customers into the employment and training opportunities.

Outcome: 250 additional referrals for training and employment advice.

Partnership working with Peabody to provide an employment and housing officer to work on Kings Cross estate.

We are currently negotiating the arrangements for working in partnership with Peabody Housing Association to provide outreach employment liaison on one of our most deprived housing estates - the Kings Cross estate. This estate is within a designated super output area of high levels of worklessness, poverty and deprivation. Trailblazer funding will enable us to part fund an

outreach/guidance officer who will conduct outreach, engagement and referral services for hard to reach tenants and work with them on a 1-1 basis to access employment and training opportunities.

Outcome: 60 referrals for employment and training advice.

2. Housing and overcrowding

The 2008 Housing Needs survey carried out in the borough indicated some 2600 social housing households under occupy their homes in Islington. Persuading these to move to smaller accommodation could have a significant impact on relieving the high levels of overcrowding.

This builds on our excellent track record on reducing overcrowding and our very successful under occupation schemes.

Number of under occupation moves achieved 2006 - 2008

Year	No. Moves
2006/07	101
2007/08	113

Our schemes to date have been based on incentivising tenants to move with grants. In the last 3 years we have provided approximately £300k in funding to achieve some 258 moves. The average grant amounting to £1,163. We believe this to be very good value when compared to the grant levels provided by our neighbours and number of moves they achieve.

On evaluation of this success, however, we have found that under occupation moves are not particularly dependant on the level of cash incentive given to the tenant, but rather on the availability of a personalised service to assist with the practicalities of moving. We currently have one full time Under Occupation Officer who provides this service.

Using CLG Trailblazer funding we would employ another officer to work in this area. Their duties would be to assist the current Under Occupation Officer but in addition actually seek out under occupiers who are not currently registered for a housing transfer in order that we can target them. In employing this additional staff member, on past performance we would expect to increase rehousing to under occupiers by a further 30 moves.

Outcome: Addition 30 under occupation moves and additional

3. Extending Choice across tenures.

It is clear from our housing needs research that we will be unable to meet housing need from the council and RSL social housing stock. We see the private rented sector therefore playing an increasingly significant and important role in assisting us meet housing need. It accounts for approximately 24% of the stock some 22,000 homes.

Our proposal to extend choice across tenure is to:

Extend the Homeconnections Choice Based Lettings scheme to include private rented sector homes

This would allow private rented homes to be advertised on line to Islington clients through our Choice Based Lettings system and express an interest.

The bidding process would not be based on points, as with permanent homes, but a shortlist of applicants drawn up and put forward to the landlord/agent, who would make the offer. It would be possible for the Council to make the final decision.

CLG Trailblazer funding would be used to set up the necessary systems with Homeconnections, our CBL provider, to list available private sector properties. It will also be used to agree and put in place the procedures with private landlords and letting agencies to advertise and with clients to allow them to express an interest.

Outcome: Choice based lettings for the private sector.

Action Plan

Objective 1: Enhancing Housing Option interviews to include advice on employment and training opportunities.

Lead Officer: Anna Vincini- Homeless Prevention Project Officer

Supported by: Alben Karameros-Regeneration and Community Partnerships training Officer, Michelle Thurston, Peabody Housing Association, Kam Basra, Project Officer Homeconnections.

Managed by: Patrick Odling-Smee, Director Housing Services

Action	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Completed By	Resources	Risks H/M/L
Work with our choice based lettings partners to develop HECS which will link the services provided by our Housing Aid centre to our regeneration and community partnership team.	Development of the HECS project as a base to enable housing advice officers, overcrowding officers and housing advice out reach staff to discuss employment and training opportunities with clients at options interviews.	Currently employment and training opportunities do not feature as part of the housing options service.	<p>Soft launch of HECS.</p> <p>Development of site so that requests for help go straight through to RCP.</p> <p>Issue numbers to all on housing register with leaflet.</p> <p>Develop training programme for staff with RCP.</p> <p>Hard launch with publicity</p>	<p>November 2008</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p>	<p>HECS project funded initially by a grant from the Mayors office.</p> <p>Development of the individual sites is the responsibility of the partner organisations.</p> <p>£20k allocated to project from Trailblazer funding</p>	<p>Possible technical problems with software. M</p> <p>Difficult to track outcomes through to actual take up of employment or training opportunities. M</p> <p>Staff not having time on the front line to discuss employment options with clients interested in housing only. H</p>

			<p>campaign.</p> <p>HECS project to be included in housing options day programmes to promote housing options through the borough</p>	March 2011		
Part fund an employment housing worker with Peabody HA	Part fund an employment housing worker with Peabody HA to conduct outreach, engagement and referral service for residents on the Kings Cross Estate.	Peabody do not currently provide an out reach service to this estate.	<p>Meetings with Islington and Peabody to agree how project will work.</p> <p>Service level agreement accepted by both sides</p> <p>Worker appointed.</p> <p>Regular update meetings between Islington and Peabody on progress and outcomes.</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Funding from trailblazer bid.</p> <p>Peabody to provide management of post and post on costs.</p>	<p>Peabody pull out of project due to uncertainties around funding. M</p> <p>Peabody unable to deliver outcomes. L</p>

Objective 2: Housing and overcrowding.

Lead Officer; Cora Nicholls, Rehousing Manager Islington

Supported by: Susan hailer, Mobility Manager, Islington. Lesley Bugg, Transfer Manager Homes for Islington

Managed by: Karen Lucas, Housing options Manager

Actions	What we intend to do	Current service	Milestones	Completed by	Resources	Risks H/M/L
Increase number of under occupation moves and increase number of under occupiers on the transfer list.	Employ an additional under occupation officer to assist people to move and to identify under occupiers who have not yet applied for a housing transfer.	Islington has a very successful under occupation team, however although the 2007 Housing needs survey identified that there may be as many as 2600 under occupiers in social housing in the borough the number registered for a housing transfer has been steadily falling and now stands at just over 600.	<p>Acquire permission to advertise job from chief executives office.</p> <p>Advertise and recruit to post.</p> <p>New person in post.</p> <p>Identify possible under occupiers using tenancy records.</p> <p>Visit all identified under occupiers.</p>	<p>February 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>April-may 2009</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>March 2011</p>	<p>Islington currently employs 1.5 under occupation officers.</p> <p>Islington has resourced this area heavily by making available £240k per year over the next 2 years through LAA funding to provide a package of incentives and assistance to encourage under occupation moves.</p> <p>Trail blazer funding will allow us to increase the current resource to 2.5</p>	No risks identified

Objective 3: Extending Choice Across Tenure

Lead Officer: Irna van der Palen, Private Sector Partnership Manager Islington

Supported by: Ian Tagg, Procurement Manager, Islington. Ninesh Mutaleb, Homeconnections.

Managed by: Patrick Odling-Smee, Director of Housing Services Islington

Action	What we will do	Current service	Milestones	Completed by	Resources	Risks H/M/L
Expand our CBL scheme to include private rented sector homes with approved landlords	Increase number of housing applicants using the choice based lettings website therefore maximising signposting opportunities for information on employment and training opportunities. Move towards a seamless approach to delivery of housing options through CBL in Islington	Islington currently uses Homeconnections to advertise and let all council and RSL nominations. Private sector opportunities are let using a direct let method system of allocation.	<p>Work out specification of scheme.</p> <p>Appoint temporary member of staff to project manage</p> <p>Develop software requirements with homeconnections</p> <p>Develop training programme for staff.</p> <p>Launch scheme to public.</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>July 2009</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>	Islington is requesting £30 of trailblazer funding to develop the software to enable private sector rented homes to be advertised and let using the homeconnections hardware.	<p>Private landlords unwilling to allow their properties to be advertised. L</p> <p>Supply of private rented homes reduces due to economic factors. M</p> <p>Homeconnections unable to make software usable. L</p>

Budget	Year 1	Year 2
Expenditure		
Development of HECS software	£6000	£3000
Mail out to all service users	£8000	£1000
Training programme for staff	£5000	£1000
Housing options and employment officer	£20,983	£29,983
Publicity campaigns and road shows	£5000	£5000
Under occupation Officer	£41774	£41774
Project officer for private sector CBL	£25000	£25000
Development of software costs	£35200	£6000
Total Expenditure	£146957	£112757
Income		
Grant Funding from CLG	£120,000	£120,000
LBI contribution	£26957	£-7243
Total Income	£146957	£112757

Measuring Success

Objective	Indicator description	Existing indicator	Baseline	Target	
				2009/10	10/11
Housing and Employment	HECS project	Housing and employment	0	250 referrals to Regeneration	250 referrals to Regeneration

		not previously linked in Islington so no existing indicator		and community partnership Team	and community partnership Team
Housing and overcrowding	Under occupation officer	Current target 100 moves per year.	113 moves in 2007/8 600 under occupied households registered on transfer list	130 moves plus additional 100 households registered on transfer list	130 moves plus additional 100 households registered on transfer list
Extending choice Across tenure	Extend CBL scheme to private sector lets			CBL fully operational for private sector.	

Monitoring and Evaluation

The overall trailblazer funding will be monitored on a quarterly basis by a trailblazer steering group which will include lead officers from all projects.

In addition as part of her qualifications for RICS, Wendy Reade will carry out an independent evaluation of the outcomes of each of the projects.