

Croydon's

HOUSING STRATEGY

2006/10





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FOREWORD



Good quality housing is a basic right of all people and is central to successful communities. People who are homeless or are living in poor housing are less likely to be in work than the wider population. Poor housing conditions are also associated with poor health, fuel poverty and low achievement at school.

A substantial rise in house prices, along with Croydon's relatively small stock of social rented homes, is creating a high demand for affordable housing in the borough. Meeting this demand is essential if we are to tackle homelessness and ensure that low-income households and those providing public services can continue to live and work in the borough. Other challenges are the poor standard of much private sector housing, a number of council properties requiring modernisation, and the need to continue tackling deprivation and anti-social behaviour on our estates.

Our strategy seeks to tackle these complex problems through a coherent approach. We will build affordable housing to meet the needs of residents. For the first time in 20 years Croydon will build new council homes. Home ownership is the aspiration of the majority of people. We will assist more people into ownership through a range of low-cost schemes for households on modest incomes. We have allocated significant resources to bring our housing stock up to the decent home standard and improve conditions in private sector housing. This includes making homes more energy efficient in order to tackle climate change and fuel poverty.

The strategy is not just concerned with buildings, but also with the residents who live in them and their communities. By providing support and installing adaptations, we can help people who are vulnerable or have disabilities to live independently in their own homes. Our programme of community action plans and resident involvement helps to give local people a stake in their communities. We are working effectively with our partners to cut crime, deal with anti-social behaviour and create neighbourhoods where people want and choose to live.

We recognise that the aims and targets are often very ambitious. However, Croydon has a sound track record to build on and a firm commitment, shared by our partners, to provide decent homes and excellent housing services.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dudley Mead".

Councillor Dudley Mead
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing

INTRODUCTION

About this housing strategy

This strategy sets out our plans for housing and housing services in Croydon over the next four years. It is one of the main plans supporting the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy - the over-arching strategy to improve the quality of life of everyone in the borough. And it has a vital role to play in helping the Council achieve its vision: *a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for the whole community.*

The housing strategy covers the full spectrum of services which we provide, or fund and assist others to provide, as well as the policies we have in place to influence and direct the provision and quality of housing, in both the social housing sector (council and housing association homes) and the private market.

We have developed six priorities or themes which, together, encompass everything that we do. These are to:

- maximise the supply of housing and meet housing need
- enable vulnerable people to lead independent lives
- improve housing conditions to ensure a decent home for all
- develop sustainable communities and promote neighbourhood renewal
- promote better and fair access to housing services
- implement and develop the housing strategy.

Each of the following chapters deals with one of these themes and sets out:

- the national and regional objectives and targets which we are working towards the issues and challenges we are facing locally
- our general approach to these issues and our plans for dealing with them the resources available
- the major partnerships and consultative arrangements, together with the chief messages coming out of consultation a summary of housing need, our main aims and future actions
- key documents which you may want to read for more detailed information.

A number of other documents accompany this strategy. The Evidence Base explains in some detail the nature and extent of housing need and other issues, sets out the available resources and expenditure and includes statistical background information. It also includes the housing strategy and business plan statistical appendices - standard returns to the government. The other documents are Partnership and Consultation Structures, and the Equality Impact Assessment of the Housing Strategy. Finally, the 2006/10 Action Plan sets out our future targets and actions. These documents are all available on our website or you can contact us for a hard copy (see page 52 for contact details).

About Croydon

Situated in the outer part of south London, Croydon is a place of contrasts. To the south, much of Croydon is highly affluent green belt; central Croydon provides a major strategic business, retail and transport hub; and north Croydon has more of an inner city character with pockets of significant deprivation alongside more prosperous neighbourhoods. This contrast is typified by a difference in life expectancy of as much as seven years between wards. House prices range from some of the highest in the country to some of the lowest in London and the nature of the housing stock ranges greatly from large, relatively modern and often detached houses in the south, to pre-first world war, high density, terraced or converted housing in the north. The local economy is thriving although not all residents share in the general success, and average incomes are relatively low for this part of the country. There is a diverse ethnic mix - 36% of the population are from ethnic groups other than "white British" - lending the area a cultural richness. There is also a distinct local identity with people far more likely to move home within the borough boundary than residents elsewhere in London, and many strong local communities such as those found in the east of the borough in New Addington and Fieldway.

Croydon has the highest population of all London boroughs, with 340,700 people and 144,100 households¹. The population is growing fast and projections suggest it will grow to 367,400 people by 2016, an increase of 9% since 2001, thus indicating a large potential increase in the need for housing. A range of demographic and social factors have implications for housing policy, for example growing numbers of people living alone and people over 85, and high rates of teenage pregnancy and young people leaving local authority care.

¹ 2006 mid year estimate - Greater London Assembly

Croydon's housing market

The main distinguishing features of the local housing market, compared to London as a whole, are: lower than average house prices, a greater proportion of owner-occupied housing and lower levels of social rented housing (only 17% of the stock is rented by the Council or a housing association). The cost of housing very much reflects the type, from very high cost in the south of the borough to much cheaper housing in the north. The south-east is characterised by areas of large social housing estates. The private-rented market is concentrated mostly in the centre and north-west of the borough, whilst the south of the borough contains a high number of older owner-occupiers, often without a mortgage. Overall, the housing market remains buoyant, with rising prices and sales over the last year.

National and regional policy

Croydon's strategy has been informed by policies developed at a national and London level. We are keen to contribute to these wider aims within the context of the local housing market and needs pertaining in the borough, and are playing an active part at a regional and sub-regional level. In 2003, the Government published *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*, followed by a series of documents in 2005 including a five year plan for housing, and strategies for tackling homelessness and promoting prosperity for all local people. These have emphasised the central role that housing policy plays within the economy and community life of Britain.

The Government's housing-related aims are to:

- ensure every individual in the country has a decent home which they can afford
- create attractive sustainable communities where people want to live and work.

One of the chief policy changes affecting us in the last two years has been the reform of the housing investment framework and the establishment of regional housing boards which, in London, has given rise to a strategy for the capital and the allocation of resources by the London Housing Board in relation to specific programmes. The London Housing Strategy pays particular attention to issues which have a strong relevance for London and, likewise, for Croydon and provides a further set of objectives for local authorities.

In London, the vehicles for capital investment are now the sub-regions. Croydon is joined with six other boroughs - Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth - making up the South-West London Housing Partnership, formed over three years ago. We receive a two-yearly allocation for investment in new homes, empty homes and private

sector renewal. The Partnership published its own strategy in 2004 which sets out the housing issues for the whole area and the ways in which member councils will work together to make the most effective use of resources. The investment process has brought both officers and councillors together and created the opportunity for joint working at a more operational level, with many benefits including the sharing of good ideas and practice, consistent approaches to policy and service delivery, and financial savings (for example through joint procurement of research).

In each of the following chapters, this strategy refers to the raft of national and regional goals we wish to work towards, as well as to the actions and plans agreed by the sub-regional partnership to which Croydon contributes.

Building on past achievements

Many of the issues we face are difficult and intractable ones, and we see the strategy as an ambitious plan. However, we have a very sound record on which we can build and the commitment to reach our goals.

Some of the biggest achievements in the last three years, in a challenging environment, include:

- the Audit Commission has awarded the housing service three stars following the comprehensive performance assessment
- winning a "beacon council" award for involving residents
- investment of £108m in 750 new affordable homes, including 519 social rented and 231 shared ownership homes
- a reduction in the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation from 234 in 2003 to just 38 in March 2006
- a comprehensive homelessness prevention programme reducing the number of households accepted as homeless from 1,291 in 2002/03 to 581 in 2005/06
- selection as regional homelessness champion by the Government in 2006
- successful implementation of Choice, the choice-based lettings scheme, which transformed the allocations system and made it fairer and simpler, together with the launch of the housing options shop offering customers advice on a wide range of housing solutions
- one of the best scores in the country from the Audit Commission - two stars with excellent prospects for improvement - for the Supporting People programme

- an additional 3,154 council homes meet the decent home standard after 3 years of improvement works, with only 17% remaining to improve - the third lowest level in London
- consistently one of the highest energy efficiency ratings in London for council homes (joint third highest in 2006)
- bringing up to standard over 1,200 unfit private sector homes and 580 homes in disrepair
- the development of five community action plans to improve the quality of life in deprived areas.

Partnership working

The strategy makes reference throughout to the joint working arrangements between the Council and a vast array of partners. We would like to express our gratitude to these stakeholders. The commitment and innovation of agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, and the dedication and hard work of residents, have been invaluable in both the development and implementation of our strategic aims, and we are committed to maintaining these fruitful and creative relationships in the coming years.

The Council's record on partnership working and community involvement has received welcome external praise. In 2005, we were awarded beacon council status for "Getting Closer to Communities". Croydon Strategic Partnership has been given the highest "green status" rating by the Government Office for London and has been widely recognised as one of most effective of its kind in the country. The housing service has both contributed to this joint working and benefitted from it by taking advantage of the sound partnership structures in place in the borough.

MORE INFORMATION

- **Croydon Sustainable Community Strategy – 2006/09**
- **A Housing Strategy for South-West London - 2004**
- **Croydon Housing Strategy - Evidence Base**
- **Consultation and Partnership Structures**
- **Croydon Housing Strategy - Equality Impact Assessment**

Documents can be found at www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 1 : **HOUSING NEED AND SUPPLY**



CHAPTER 1 : HOUSING NEED AND SUPPLY

In common with London and the south-east of England, Croydon has a serious shortfall of housing, resulting in high levels of homelessness and relatively high levels of overcrowding. The provision of a range of affordable housing options is essential to meet the housing needs of low and middle income households in the borough and is a principal aim of the Community Strategy.

Priority One: Maximise housing supply and meet housing need

SUMMARY OF NEED

- analysis of house prices and incomes shows that a large and increasing proportion of low and middle income households cannot afford market housing
- a housing need survey (using standard government methodology) provided an estimate of a total shortfall of 29,400 homes over 5 years, of which 21,070 need to be affordable – equating to 4,214 a year; over the last three years, an average of 280 new affordable homes have been built each year
- a projected increase in the number of households – a further 10,000 between 2001 and 2011 – will increase this shortfall; forecasts suggest a disproportionate growth in the number of single person households, lone parents, black and ethnic minority (BME) households and disabled and sensory impaired people
- these supply and demand pressures are creating high levels of homelessness and unmet need with levels of overcrowding increasing and households reluctantly sharing homes or facilities with each other
- the number of households applying for social rented housing is increasing, with 9,500 households on the housing register, of which 2,700 are homeless and 4,700 in other significant housing need; a further 2,000 households are seeking transfers
- rehousing waiting times are particularly long for households needing larger homes and wheelchair-accessible homes
- non-white British households make up 36% of the population but account for 65% of housing register applicants and 61% of homeless applicants.

MAIN AIMS

- increase the supply of housing across all tenures and, in particular, continue to build new affordable homes including those for low cost home ownership
- meet the need for larger properties, properties suitable for wheelchair users, and flats for single vulnerable people
- continue to prevent homelessness and support homeless households
- develop more settled housing solutions in the private sector and further reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation
- promote a full range of housing options, including helping more households into home ownership
- manage the allocation of social rented homes effectively and fairly, balancing the needs of different groups
- reduce the number of empty private sector homes

In 2003, the Government published *Sustainable Communities*, which set out the need for a step change in housing supply, recognising the major shortfall in house building completions over the preceding years and the effects of this on house prices and the ability of people to meet their housing needs and aspirations. Tackling the housing shortage is seen as vital to economic stability, labour market responsiveness and meeting people's housing aspirations. *Homes for All*, launched in January 2005, sets out in detail the actions the Government will take over the following years. Its major themes are the need to increase opportunities for home ownership for those priced out of the housing market, improving the quality and image of private rented accommodation as an important housing option, increasing the amount of social rented housing available, and reducing homelessness and reliance on temporary accommodation.

In London, the problems of housing affordability are particularly acute. The London Housing Strategy, published in June 2005, places a strong emphasis on the need to increase the supply of affordable social rented homes, bring empty homes back into use, and tackle issues such as homelessness and overcrowding. Equally important is the creation of sustainable communities through encouraging mixed neighbourhoods, in terms of income, economic activity, tenure, household size and ethnicity, to promote greater social inclusion. Giving social housing applicants and tenants a greater say about where they want to live, through promoting choice-based lettings schemes and opportunities for moves within and outside of the capital, is also important.

In Croydon, the demand for affordable housing considerably exceeds supply. Although house prices in Croydon remain lower than the London average, household incomes are below the norm for the capital, creating a significant affordability gap for many households. The housing need survey, undertaken in 2002, confirmed the large shortfall in affordable housing and estimated a need for over 4,000 additional affordable homes a year. It suggested that the majority of need is for social rented housing at relatively low rent levels, but there is also some need for low cost home ownership. The original survey data was updated in 2004 and shows that the affordability gap has widened further, as house prices have continued to rise (almost doubling in the 5 years up to 2004) in relation to incomes.

The shortage of affordable housing is also apparent in the levels and types of housing need recorded in the borough over recent years. Since the mid-nineties, homelessness has been an acute problem in the borough, resulting in a year on year increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation up to 2005. The number of households applying on the housing and transfers register has continued to grow, to 11,500 in 2006, with over 4,500 in the top two bands and therefore in significant housing need. Levels of overcrowding have increased across all tenures between 1991 and 2001, and most notably in council housing. There are particularly long waiting times for larger homes, due to a severe shortage in the number of properties becoming available to let, with black and ethnic minority (BME) households disproportionately affected. Our analysis of housing applicants with disabilities shows that there is a need for more wheelchair adapted properties to prevent long waiting times for some households. A recent survey of supported housing schemes showed that a large number of single, vulnerable, people require suitable move-on accommodation.

A number of factors suggest the need for affordable housing will increase in future:

- demographic forecasts show an increase in the number of households, with implications for future housing supply of all tenures, and affordable housing in particular
- a relatively small social rented housing sector in the borough – 17% compared with the London average of 26%
- Right to Buy sales have contributed to a declining stock of council homes and exceeded the number of new social rented homes developed over recent years; however, new regulations in 2003 have meant a significant reduction in sales in the last two years.
- the annual supply of social rented homes becoming available to let has been declining in recent years, in line with the trend in London as a whole
- house prices are predicted to rise further, out-stripping increases in earnings.

Our strategy for addressing the shortage of affordable housing centres on four main areas:

- increasing the supply of housing, in particular the supply of homes for social renting and low cost home ownership
- making the best use of existing housing
- promoting choice and a range of options for people in housing need, including by increasing access to private rented accommodation
- continuing to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation in the borough.

Increasing supply

The Government has set ambitious targets for increasing the supply of housing in London and the south east over the next few years. Following the Barker review, which underlined the need to build more homes to meet the needs of households and the economy, the Government has committed to building an extra 200,000 homes (above 2001 targets) by 2016. It plans to achieve this through an increase in investment resources for new affordable housing, maximising the potential of available land sites across London to deliver new housing quickly, changes to the planning system, and encouraging the rapid development of housing in four new growth areas in the south east, including the Thames Gateway.

The London Plan, published in 2004, set a minimum target for the capital of completing 23,000 homes a year from all sources between 2001 and 2016, whilst aiming towards 30,000 homes a year. The Greater London Authority's 2004 Housing Requirements study updated this to a need for 35,400 additional homes between 2002 and 2012. It set out a longer-term aim that 50% of new homes should be affordable, of which 70% should be social rented and 30% intermediate housing². The new Plan proposes increasing capacity to 31,505 new homes per year from April 2007, to meet the new requirements.

What do these figures mean for Croydon? The 2004 London Plan set a borough target of 850 additional units a year for the period 1997 to 2016. The Early Alterations have increased this to 1,100 per year over the period 2007/8 to 2016/17. As a result, the target for new build homes will rise from 670 to 903 dwellings a year, with the balance provided through other sources such as bringing empty homes back to use. To date, the achievement of the housing provision target has been constrained by the nature of the sites available (often small infill sites) and the small proportion of sites that have been developed, even after planning permission has been granted. However, with a number of major sites to be developed over the next few years, such as the Croydon Gateway site, there is the potential for an increase in new housing provision in future.

In Croydon, increasing the supply of housing to meet local needs is a central aim of our housing strategy. It is essential that local people are able to access decent housing at a price they can afford in order to ensure the continued sustainability of the borough as a thriving economic and social community, as well as preventing the ill-effects of a lack of decent, affordable housing on people's health, life-chances and opportunities.

The Council will be seeking to maximise the re-use of previously developed land and the conversion of existing buildings. It will also encourage appropriate intensification of housing development in areas in accessible locations, with reference to the policies in the London Plan.

The role of planning is increasingly important in maximising the supply of new housing, securing land for new affordable homes and ensuring the right type of housing is built in the right places. A new unitary development plan – the Croydon Plan – was adopted in 2006, which contains detailed analysis of future land availability and housing development sites and sets out the borough's affordable housing

requirements. We will be commissioning a full housing need survey in 2007, along with a housing market assessment, which will provide detailed information about a range of housing needs. This will inform future planning policies for housing provision, affordable housing and housing standards, prepared through the Local Development Framework by 2009.

We have set the following standards and objectives to ensure that future housing development promotes sustainable communities:

- a minimum of 35% of new social rented housing in the 2008/10 affordable housing programme to be larger homes of 3 or more bedrooms, to combat overcrowding
- a high proportion of new housing development to be on brownfield sites, in line with Housing Corporation targets
- the promotion of high standards of design and quality and appropriate density levels for all new developments
- all housing developments to be designed with the need for safety and security in mind
- the promotion of mixed tenure neighbourhoods through encouraging a mix of market, social rented and intermediate housing on new larger sites, to create social and economic sustainability
- all new homes to meet the EcoHomes "excellent" standard to protect the environment (see Chapter Three).

We also recognise that there is a borough-wide (and London-wide) need for larger family homes. The Council will therefore seek to achieve a reasonable component of larger homes (i.e. 3 bedrooms or more) on all housing developments of suitable size, layout and location. Overall, our aim is a balanced housing market that enables local people to access a range of housing that meets their needs and aspirations at prices they can afford.

We are well-placed to deliver new affordable homes. We have an excellent track record in delivering the Housing Corporation's affordable housing programme. In 2004/06, we delivered 370 new social rented homes and 191 new shared ownership homes. We have been successful in attracting additional funding of £20 million, outside of the annual bidding round, for reserve schemes. We have very well-established strategic partnership arrangements with RSLs, through the Housing Association Strategic Partnership, which brings together our preferred partner RSLs, and a number of associated working groups.

² Defined as rented housing with rents above social housing levels but below private sector levels, or low cost home ownership.

We have successfully responded to changes in the investment framework for new housing development. In London, investment resources are now channelled to five new housing partnerships organised on a sub-regional basis. Croydon is part of the south-west London Housing Partnership. Together, the seven sub-regional boroughs prepare a development programme that makes best use of the opportunities for development in the sub-region as a whole. A process to select strategic and preferred partner housing associations for south west London was completed in 2005/06. A protocol has been agreed with RSLs to deliver efficient, effective and best value housing management and development services and share knowledge and best practice for the benefit of occupiers.

The south west London housing partnership will continue to make the case for the sub-region, through the development of an updated south west London housing strategy, lobbying for increased resources, and ensuring that opportunities for new development on existing and future sites are fully exploited. We will work closely with RSL partners for the sub-region to ensure sufficient deliverable bids that meet the Housing Corporation's priorities. We will also manage a pipeline of reserve, in-year bids to attract more funding into the sub-region. The 2006/08 affordable housing programme is expected to deliver 393 affordable homes for Croydon, including 268 social rented properties, 111 shared ownership homes and 14 homes for intermediate rent.

With regard to the affordable housing development programme, our strategic housing priorities are for larger homes, wheelchair homes and one-bedroomed homes. We will be developing a larger homes strategy, working with our strategic partner RSLs, to tackle the high level of overcrowding in the borough and long waiting times for large family-sized properties. We will do this by: prioritising the development of larger properties on sites owned by the council or housing associations, pursuing a programme of extensions and de-conversions to create larger properties through funding from the Regional Housing Board of £2m for the sub-region, and requiring larger homes on appropriate sites. We are already making progress in this direction, having achieved the target of 35% larger homes within the south west London housing development programme. We will look to bid for any future additional resources to increase the provision of larger homes. This will help benefit BME groups in particular, given the high level of overcrowding which they experience.

We also aim to increase the provision of new homes suitable for people with mobility disabilities. We have set a requirement for all new homes, where feasible, to be built to the lifetime home standard and for 10% of homes in new developments to be wheelchair-accessible or easily adaptable. We will be providing 12 wheelchair homes within the 2006/08 social rented programme, an increase on previous years. We will also continue to seek a proportion of one-bedroomed properties in appropriately-sized developments, to meet the needs of single vulnerable people, including young people, care leavers and people with mental health problems. We have successfully increased provision for single people over the last two years and developed lettings plans for new one bed schemes to promote sustainable tenancies.

The Council is also keen to explore the potential to increase the supply of affordable housing through a council house-building programme using council-owned land. We will be looking to pilot a small council new-build programme and to evaluate the benefits in relation to other social rented programmes.

We are keen to support people whose aspiration is to own their home and encourage them to take advantage of low cost home ownership initiatives. The Government has set a target of increasing home ownership by one million in the next five years, as a means of sharing the wealth that accrues from ownership of property more widely in society. It is funding a range of shared equity products under the HomeBuy programme, which will enable key workers and others to purchase a stake in a new-build home purchased on the open market. We will promote these schemes, working with the regional zone agent to target social rented tenants and households on the waiting list in greatest housing need. We have been selected by the Government to pilot Social HomeBuy, which enables existing social housing tenants to purchase a share of their home.

Our strategy also gives priority to meeting the continuing demand for key worker housing, as set out in our Key Worker Strategy. In 2004/06 we provided opportunities for 196 key workers to buy a stake in a home on the open market through the HomeBuy scheme. In addition, in 2005/06, 63 of the new shared ownership homes we developed were for key workers. We work closely with local employers and the zone agent to ensure that opportunities for key workers are well publicised. As a result, there has been a very high take up of homes developed in the borough.

Finally, we will continue to promote low cost home ownership through directing further resources at our successful Assisted Private Purchase Scheme (APPS), which provides a grant to council tenants, to enable them to purchase housing on the open market. We have recently increased the grant levels available by £10,000, to fund 40 moves a year, with an average grant of £30,000. Our scheme is therefore one of the most generous and successful in London. APPS has the added benefit of freeing up a council property for use by another household.

This strategy recognises that not all groups will have their accommodation needs met through increasing the supply of conventional housing. We have looked at current provision for gypsies and travellers in the borough and identified some immediate needs: there is a shortage of provision on our permanent gypsy site to meet the needs of newly emerging households within the existing community; there is also a lack of provision for gypsies and travellers passing through the borough, which is giving rise to unauthorised encampments. We are currently supporting a pan-London proposal to commission research to provide us with a full picture of gypsy and traveller housing needs in our borough.

Making the best use of existing homes

In addition to increasing the supply of new homes, we will also take action to maximise the number of empty private sector properties brought back into use. Croydon has the highest level of long-term empty homes in London in 2005. Our empty homes strategy has recently been revised and re-launched, and includes a package of measures which will contribute to London Housing Board targets. These targets, which we have adopted, are to reduce the proportion of empty homes to 2.5% (currently 3.7%) and homes empty for more than six months to 1% (currently 2.5%) by 2016. The package includes: funding from the London Housing Board (an allocation of £3m over the two years to March 2008 for south-west London) which will enable 28 grants for Croydon properties; other financial incentives to owners to lease their properties to housing associations or to let them under the Sponsored Tenancy Scheme (both of which schemes will be purely for the benefit of council nominees); use of planning and enforcement powers such as compulsory purchase orders; and local and sub-regional promotional activities. We will be exploring the viability of using empty dwelling management orders, and working with housing associations to identify properties, including flats above shops in district centres, and thus help regenerate run-down areas.

We also need to ensure that council homes are re-let as quickly as possible once they become vacant. During 2005/06, the average time between a property

becoming empty and being re-let was 36 days and we are aiming to reduce this further by running the repairs and lettings processes together (currently, we do not start to let a property until most outstanding repairs have been done). We are also intending to carry out escorted viewings in 100% of cases to ensure that prospective tenants are aware of what repairs will be completed and can make informed choices about whether to accept offers.

Choice, mobility and allocations

The Government regards choice in housing as fundamental to its vision of creating sustainable communities in which people have actively chosen to live. Croydon was among the first local authorities to introduce a choice-based lettings scheme and has been active in developing and promoting a wide range of housing options for people in housing need. The London Housing Strategy proposes that, by 2008, new housing supply is allocated at regional and sub-regional levels through choice-based lettings schemes and, by 2010, a proportion of re-lets are offered through a pan-London letting scheme.

Croydon's choice-based lettings scheme was introduced in June 2003. This followed extensive consultation and modelling of the proposals to assess the impact on different sections of the community. The old points system was replaced with a much simplified system - based on banding applicants according to broad measures of need - and new information systems have been introduced to enable applicants to see the effect of making different choices of area and property type on likely waiting times. Overall, the new system has created a fairer, simpler to understand and more transparent system and customers have been very positive about the service.

We are contributing towards work to establish a pan-London housing register and a London Accessible Housing Register pilot scheme. Croydon is leading the way in developing the new *Capital Moves* scheme, an initiative to extend choice-based lettings and mobility across the whole of London. We are fronting the bid and actively involved in the steering group to get financial support for this initiative that will support schemes for inter-borough nominations and promote much wider choice.

There is clearly a significant shortfall in social rented housing. Even if we consider only those households in the most urgent housing need, for example homeless households in temporary accommodation, severely overcrowded households, those with high medical needs and those urgently requiring move-on from support housing, we estimate that there is an annual shortfall of 1,500 homes. It is essential, therefore, that in producing our Target Allocations

Policy each year, we plan how best to allocate the supply of social rented housing likely to become available for letting, to achieve fairness and balance the needs of different groups of applicant. We must ensure that homeless households receive a sufficiently high priority through the banding system to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation, but not at the expense of other households in urgent housing need, as it is essential to maintain the credibility of the housing register. We also set lettings targets to ensure fairness for BME and disabled households.

Our strategy for managing the use of the stock effectively over the next three years is guided by the following principles:

- reducing under-occupation by offering sufficiently attractive financial incentives to council tenants willing to move to smaller properties (Special Transfer Payments Scheme). The payment has been increased considerably recently (to a maximum of £8,000) and we are match-funding RSLs to offer the same scheme.
- With funding from the London Mayor, we are also piloting enhanced special transfer payments (£10,000 per room given up) to people releasing homes with four or more bedrooms
- facilitating transfers and mutual exchanges
- reducing the backlog of households in council properties used as temporary accommodation by providing permanent housing options
- promoting options such as Fresh Start and MoveUK, for those willing to move to other parts of the country
- promoting the Assisted Private Purchase Scheme.

In February 2006, the Housing Options Service was opened, providing all residents with easy access to advice on the range of housing options open to them, including alternatives to social rented housing. This service has been successful in the prevention of homelessness and has significantly reduced referrals to the Homeless Persons Service.

We have been active in developing initiatives to increase the supply of decent, accessible housing within the private sector. The Council has been recognised for its innovative work in establishing a range of private sector temporary accommodation schemes for homeless households. Our Sponsored Tenancy Scheme guarantees accommodation for a minimum of two years for homeless households. We have market-rent schemes, managed by our RSL partners, which provide long-term housing (for which the Council and Wandle Housing Association received the Chartered Institute of Housing's Best Funding Solution award in 2003). We also run a private sector leasing scheme of nearly 300 properties.

Over the last year, we have taken steps to promote access to settled homes in the private sector for other households, both as an alternative to temporary accommodation and as an option for council tenants seeking transfers or wishing to move away from Croydon. We believe that private rented housing can provide a solution for many households, with the potential to offer good quality accommodation, a greater choice of properties and areas, and a shorter waiting time compared to social rented housing.

A major objective over the next three years, therefore, is to continue to improve the image and quality of the private rented sector and to promote it as a viable housing option for as many households as possible.

The ways in which we will do this are by:

- working constructively with landlords to raise standards in the private sector (more detail in chapter 3)
- further developing work we have successfully piloted to promote settled housing solutions for homeless households (for example, through making qualifying offers to assured shorthold tenancies)
- providing a new rent deposit scheme for families
- providing financial assistance to families and single homeless people at risk of homelessness to enable them to access private rented accommodation
- operating a scheme to place care-leavers in private rented accommodation and extending this to other vulnerable client groups referred by Social Services.

Homelessness and social inclusion

The Government's strategy for tackling homelessness is set out in the document *Settled Homes; Changing Lives*, published in March 2005. Its overall aims are to reduce and prevent homelessness; reduce the use of temporary accommodation overall, and end the use of unstable, unsuitable temporary accommodation; and sustain reductions in rough sleeping. The emphasis is on solutions which recognise the social and economic causes of homelessness and support people to sustain their homes. The London Housing Strategy recognises homelessness as a major problem in London and sets additional aims, including, ensuring that placement in temporary accommodation does not deepen social exclusion and halving the number of single homeless people placed in bed and breakfast (B&B) hotels.

In 2003, the Council carried out a detailed review of homelessness and produced its Homelessness Strategy, which included a detailed action plan to prevent and reduce homelessness, working closely with local partners. Our homelessness strategy was judged by the ODPM to be 'an exceptionally thorough strategy' and 'an example of good practice', with a particularly strong emphasis on partnership working.

The key actions we have focused on are:

- reducing homelessness by establishing the new Housing Options Service and funding a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness
- increasing the use of good quality, stable, temporary accommodation and reducing the use of B&B, by making better use of private rented homes
- working with a range of partner agencies to ensure that vulnerable people are offered support, and are linked to other services in order to reduce the risk of homelessness.

We have drawn on a range of funding sources to support our homelessness strategy. We currently receive a grant of £0.5 million per year from the Communities and Local Government department (CLG), which is vital in funding a range of initiatives. In addition, we have provided over £150,000 of council funding a year to support voluntary sector agencies working with homeless people. The council has increased its funding to expand the work of the procurement service in providing private rented accommodation to tackle homelessness. As a result, we are emerging as one of the most successful councils in London in preventing homelessness. In 2004/05, 4,500 households approached the Council as potentially homeless and a full housing duty to secure accommodation was accepted for 1,126 households in priority need - an 11% reduction compared to the previous year's figure.

In 2005/06, a similar number of households sought help, but the number of acceptances fell to 580, a further reduction of 48%.

One of our most innovative services is the HAP<25 housing advice project for young people. A partnership between Housing, Social Services and Croydon Association for Young Single Homeless, it provides a multi-agency service for all young people under 25 in housing need, in its own shop front premises. It brings together a housing advice service, joint assessments of need, homelessness prevention initiatives such as mediation, a hostel placement service, employment and training advice, and access to support services, all under one roof. In 2005/06, HAP<25 was selected as runner up in the prestigious Andy Ludlow award for homelessness innovation and was quoted as an example of good practice by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

A particularly exciting initiative is the new integrated service for women experiencing domestic violence. Croydon has established the country's first Family Justice Centre, which brings together in one location all statutory agencies and over 40 voluntary and community agencies to tackle domestic violence. Linked to this are the Council's Sanctuary Project, which provides security works to enable women to remain safely in their homes, and Crocus House, a new accommodation scheme offering short-term emergency accommodation.

Other initiatives that have proved successful in preventing homelessness are: a private sector prevention worker to negotiate with landlords to prevent the loss of tenancies; a floating support service to assist people in danger of losing their accommodation; and a scheme to find settled homes for families that have lost their accommodation. We will be developing a number of new initiatives in 2006/07, including a weekly surgery for single homeless people and a rent deposit scheme for households at risk of homelessness. We will also be extending the use of mediation for people made homeless from the parental home. Our achievements have been recognised through the award of regional champion status on homelessness in 2006.

Our homelessness strategy recognised the contribution of other agencies to reducing homelessness and the importance of a partnership approach. There have been various successes:

- a new home treatment programme for people with mental health problems, developed by the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, has reduced the need for hospital admissions, which frequently led to loss of accommodation in the past
- a six-month post, based in the probation service, led to the development of a housing advice 'toolkit' for probation officers and has helped to reduce homelessness
- a housing options advisor sits on the Priority and Prolific Offenders Panel to advise on housing issues
- the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board funded a one-year housing post to facilitate closer joint working between housing and other agencies and provide better housing information for agencies and young people, resulting in more effective use of supported housing.

This partnership is continuing through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group, involving both statutory and voluntary sector agencies, which has been charged with monitoring progress against the strategy and developing further initiatives.

The Council has recently signed a new local public service agreement with the Government, which includes a target to reduce significantly the number of families, children and young people made homeless through exclusion from the homes of parents, family and friends. We will be building on existing measures, and developing a programme of work to achieve this, including the use of mediation and home visits, assistance with rents and deposits, and continued prevention work through HAP<25 and the Options Service. We will also be looking to develop joint working partnerships with schools and colleges and the early intervention centres that are being established in the borough.

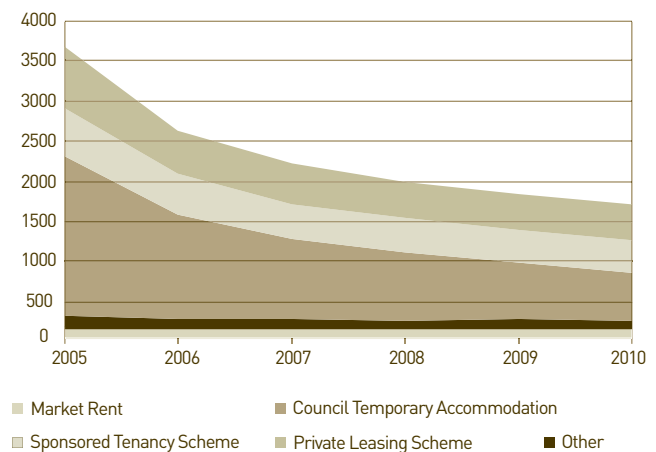
One final element, in reducing homelessness and ensuring people can maintain their tenancies, is the provision of an efficient housing benefit (HB) service. In 2005, Croydon's benefits and revenues team won a major national award from the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. This recognised the excellent work that had taken place to bring the service in-house and radically overhaul it, and the major improvements in performance, relating to processing claims and dealing with claimant enquiries, that followed. 2005/06 saw more improvements with, for example, the time taken to assess new claims falling to 29 days and to assess changes in circumstances to 11 days, both the lowest ever times. As a result, customer satisfaction has increased on nearly all counts in recent years. Changes to how we work in the future centre very much on the use of new technology. We will be introducing mobile working (completing new claims electronically in customers' homes); a trial calculator to help customers see whether they're entitled to HB; and online application forms. We will also be canvassing customers and holding open forums to identify future service improvements.

We are particularly proud of our record in cutting the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households. This has been achieved through developing alternative forms of temporary accommodation in the private sector, which provide good quality, stable homes for homeless households. This enabled us to meet the Government's requirement that, from April 2004, no family with dependent children be placed in B&B, except in an emergency, and then, for no longer than 6 weeks. The number of households in B&B hotels has fallen from a high of 575 in November 2001, to just 38 in March 2006. Since April 2004, no family with dependent children has remained in B&B for longer than 6 weeks. We have set targets to further reduce the number of households in B&B and the time spent in B&B over the next three years.

The Government has set a target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. We have developed a strategy to achieve this by focusing on increased prevention, facilitating access to settled homes in the private sector, and increasing the number of permanent tenancies offered to households in council temporary accommodation. In 2005, we were one of six London boroughs funded by CLG to develop good practice in reducing temporary accommodation. Our scheme to find and offer suitable settled accommodation in the private sector, as a means of preventing homelessness, is proving a popular option among homeless households.

In January 2005, there were 3,681 households in temporary housing. By March 2006, this had fallen by over a 1,000, to 2,600, a reduction of nearly 30%. This places us well on course to halve the use of temporary accommodation by March 2010.

Projected number of households in temporary accommodation



Croydon has a small but persistent problem of rough sleeping. Over the last year, on average, 6 to 9 people are sleeping rough each night, based on information given by local agencies. We work with local agencies to ensure that there is a wide range of services available to help rough sleepers. These include a resource centre for homeless people, an outreach service, a resettlement support worker and a specialist hostel for rough sleepers. There are also 600 bedspaces in supported hostels available for single homeless people in the borough. The multi-agency Rough Sleeping Strategic Group meets regularly to co-ordinate the work of different agencies. In the last year, more than 100 rough sleepers have been helped to resettle in supported housing projects and 20 in permanent accommodation. We will continue to support services that enable rough sleepers to move permanently off the streets.

Our future priorities are: to review our homelessness strategy and ensure we continue to prevent and reduce homelessness; to further reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation; and to achieve the Government's target of reducing placements in temporary accommodation by half. We will also, over the life-time of this Housing Strategy, improve systems for identifying the support needs of homeless people and linking them to appropriate services.

In 2006/07, we will:

- link single vulnerable people moved on from supported housing to services providing resettlement or longer-term support
- commission a floating support service to enable more people to receive the support they need
- develop a system of support needs assessments for all homeless people
- develop new tenants' visits to include a more systematic assessment of support needs
- ensure that floating support services contribute to the aim of reducing repeat homelessness and social exclusion among homeless households (more detail in next chapter)
- continue to share information on homeless families in temporary accommodation with other London boroughs through the NOTIFY system.

MAIN ACTIONS

- Deliver the 2006/08 affordable housing programme, including shared ownership, working closely with RSL partners, and manage a pipeline of in-year reserve bids
- Develop our understanding of the local housing market and implement the local affordable housing policy
- Implement the larger homes strategy and empty homes strategy
- Pilot a small council new-build programme and evaluate benefits
- Develop new, cost-effective schemes to increase access to private rented accommodation to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation
- Prevent homelessness through providing housing advice and options, and support to help people sustain their tenancies.

MORE INFORMATION

- Croydon Housing Need Survey 2002
- Croydon's Homelessness Strategy 2003
- Croydon's Empty Property Strategy 2006
- The Croydon Plan 2006
- Croydon Key Worker Housing Strategy

Documents can be found at: www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 2 : **INDEPENDENT LIVING**



CHAPTER TWO : INDEPENDENT LIVING

Enabling people to live as independently as possible is a key aim of Croydon's Community Strategy. The Housing Strategy can make a vital contribution to achieving this goal by providing housing-related support, and by helping people to look after their homes and get the adaptations necessary to living full lives.

Priority Two: Enable vulnerable people to live independent lives

SUMMARY OF NEED

- Croydon has a low level of supported housing provision compared with other boroughs, because of the relatively low level of government grant
- there is a particular shortage of floating support services, and of services for specific client groups
- the lack of opportunities for people to move on from supported housing has led to considerable silting-up: 30% of residents are ready or need to move on, most to general needs housing
- 3,500 people are living in homes which are unsuitable because of a physical or sensory disability
- about 11,000 households living in the private sector (10%) contain one or more members with special needs arising from disability, illness or age-related frailty, and there are 23,000 pensioner-only households
- assessments for urgent adaptations are carried out immediately but the wait for priority 2 cases is up to 10 months and longer for priority 3 cases.

MAIN AIMS

- increase the provision of housing-related support, and make best use of provision through fair and needs-based pathways into and out of supported housing, to reduce silt-up and offer people greater choice
- further improve the quality of supported housing so that all schemes are of a good or excellent standard
- contribute to wider health and social objectives, for example sustaining people on drug rehabilitation programmes and reducing the need for inappropriate institutional care
- develop different models of housing for older people to better meet modern expectations and address longer-term demographic trends
- provide advice, and continue to invest in adaptations and other housing improvements, to enable vulnerable people to remain in their homes
- reduce the time to assess applications for adaptations.

Supported housing

Supporting People, the commissioning and regulatory programme for housing-related support services, was introduced by the Government in April 2003. The programme recognises the value of supported housing in helping vulnerable people to live independently in the community, and in contributing to a range of social objectives. These include:

- reducing repeat offending
- enabling timely hospital discharges
- breaking the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable people and rough sleepers
- reducing the reliance on care provision for those with lower support needs and preventing institutionalisation
- teaching life skills to young people and teenage parents
- assisting people into employment or training
- helping people to sustain drug-and alcohol-free lives.

The last three years have seen major activity in the supported housing world as the Council, its commissioning partners and providers have set up and put into effect the early stages of the programme. The quality of our implementation of the programme has been recognised by the Audit Commission which assessed Croydon as providing a good service with excellent prospects for improvement - one of the best "scores" in the country. We have now reviewed all existing services, and put in place contractual arrangements. A large number of changes have been made - withdrawal and re-configuration of existing services, and commissioning of new services - in order to better meet local requirements and ensure high quality standards.

In April 2006, Croydon had 3,738 units within 197 schemes providing housing-related support services. 3,426 are in accommodation-based provision where people live in particular schemes and receive on-site or visiting support; and 312 are in floating support schemes which assist people in their own homes. Despite the size of this provision, Croydon needs more services, in particular more offering floating support.

In March 2005, we published our five year Supporting People Strategy. The next major review will take place once the Government has published a national strategy, due out in 2007, which could significantly change the direction of the programme and the way in which local authorities work.

Croydon is receiving £8.47m government grant in 2006/07. The Government is working on a new distribution formula which we hope will lead to a much fairer, and higher, share for Croydon in future. Indeed, our allocation will increase to £8.95m in 2007/08. Because of the longer-term uncertainty, however, we have assumed a range of funding scenarios and spending plans. These are set out in our commissioning plan which lists, in order of priority, new schemes we would like to see developed in the borough. The priorities reflect the findings of an extensive needs-mapping exercise. This plan is reviewed annually and the recent announcement will enable us to procure a substantial proportion of schemes identified originally.

In 2006/07, we will be procuring two new floating support services - one for older people with learning disabilities and one for care leavers - and re-configure two services to support 50 more ex-offenders and people with mental health problems at no extra cost. The council is supplementing Supporting People funding from other budgets (a further 390 units) and is funding a new floating support service in 2006/07 for homeless people and people moving from supported to independent housing. Services for a range of other client groups appear high on the list of requirements, full details of which are in the Commissioning Plan.

We also need more accommodation-based schemes which require capital funding. A scheme for five care leavers is currently being built. Other high priorities are "core and cluster" schemes (small blocks of, or neighbouring, flats with a communal facility) for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. This model is popular with service users and is very consistent with integration in the wider community.

Croydon has little gender- or BME-specific provision although consultation on the Supporting People Strategy did not bring out major concerns, perhaps because the overall shortfall in provision requires considerable flexibility of services to meet the needs of all client groups and individuals. However, this will be looked at further given the programme of growth. Race and gender data on people moving into supported housing indicate that the level of access for people from BME communities is fair overall and compares well with the London average, and that access for both men and women is about even.

We have now embarked on a second three-year cycle of scheme reviews. The reviews provide the opportunity to improve quality, to establish how provision works in practice and whether it is meeting local need in the best way possible, and to identify the scope for greater cost efficiency. The first reviews brought about many improvements to standards with all schemes required to meet a satisfactory level. Only a few remaining services do not achieve this level and currently have improvement plans in place. The second round will be very much about lifting standards even further and working with providers to meet good or excellent standards against the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). We will expect all services to reach a level of C against all QAF components and are currently developing more challenging targets with providers.

We will also be developing a range of performance indicators and targets for services, in particular to ascertain the value of Supporting People in relation to wider social care and inclusion objectives. These will include, for example, the proportion of moves which are planned and thus represent positive outcomes for service users.

Making the best use of existing services requires efficient and needs-based pathways into, through, and out of supported housing. The shortage of provision makes it even more imperative that services are accessed by those most in need, and this requires effective referral systems, adequate opportunities for residents to move on from accommodation-based services to independent housing, and good links between services (both supported housing and specialist provision such as residential care) so that people can move on to schemes which better meet their needs. A range of referral mechanisms is in place - these are tailored to the needs of particular client groups. Some of these, such as referral systems for rough sleepers, people with learning disabilities and young homeless people, are particularly well integrated with more mainstream assessment and advice services and they work very effectively. However, some require review and overhaul.

We have identified the need for a central, specialist system for people with mental health problems whose first port of call is usually the borough's homelessness or adult mental health services; a joint housing, health and social services project is under way to develop this system and ensure supported housing is utilised in conjunction with other accommodation such as residential care. We are also increasing the staffing of the young people's hostel referral service so it can assist more people.

We also want to increase the level of move-on into general needs housing to reduce silt-up and free up vacancies for people in greatest need. Poor move-on access is a particular issue for London, linked to the general supply and demand imbalance in social housing and cost of private housing, and the London Housing Strategy considers the development of minimum move-on quotas. In Croydon, we have a move-on quota and have already increased the number of allocations (from 30 in 2002/03 to 54 in 2005/06). We have set a target of housing 60 nominees a year over the next three years, with an additional 15 in 2006/07 to help tackle the backlog.

This increase has been achieved in part through ensuring that a significant proportion of new-build homes are one-bedroomed flats. However, with an estimated 400 people needing to move on each year and only 380 1-bedroom social housing flats becoming available for all housing register applicants, we also need to explore how more people can move into private rented housing. We are funding Croydon Rent in Advance Scheme to help 50 people move on a year and will be increasing this to 100 a year in 2006/07. We will also be working with support providers to develop ways of supporting residents to move on using their own resources, for example through grants and loans. We are aiming to reduce the level of silt-up from a baseline of 23% (needing ordinary housing) which additional Supporting People grant will help to achieve.

We have started to review the role that sheltered housing for older people plays and consider whether it fully meets modern day expectations or whether other housing options should be developed. There are several factors motivating this work:

- increasingly, people would prefer to remain in their own homes but may need support or access to the type of community facilities provided in sheltered housing
- this desire to stay put is becoming more achievable through recent developments such as community alarms and assistive technology for the home
- over the next few years, some council sheltered schemes will require major refurbishment to meet the decent home standard
- some schemes are very unpopular
- the ageing population means that more people in future will need the higher support that is offered in special sheltered or extra care provision.

We have carried out an audit of sheltered housing provision, and will be consulting older residents on their views and aspirations. A long-term older people's housing strategy will be produced in 2007. The remodelling of a number of the Council's old people's care homes is providing the opportunity to develop a new extra care scheme, due to open in summer 2007, and we see the need for more of this type of scheme in the longer term. Croydon, together with two other boroughs in south-west London, has recently developed a scheme for African-Caribbean elders. We will be exploring how else we can meet the needs of ethnic elders as part of the older people's housing strategy.

There are formal partnership working structures in place in relation to the Supporting People programme. The Council is responsible for implementing the programme, but strategic and financial decisions are taken by the Commissioning Body, which includes chief officers from the housing and social services departments, Croydon Primary Care Trust, and London Probation Service. The Steering Group includes commissioning managers responsible for the full range of client groups, as well as provider representatives. It steers the development of the programme and, vitally, provides links with their own agencies, and a range of other groups and forums such as partnership boards.

There is also a provider group with sub-groups representing specific types of organisation such as small, BME and learning disability providers. A survey of providers showed a high level of satisfaction with the arrangements and the Audit Commission claimed partnership working was a strength of the Council. In addition, there are smaller groups which consider the needs of particular client groups. These include the Mental Health and Housing Strategy Sub-Group, and Learning Disability and Housing Strategy Implementation Group. These forums also consider wider issues such as access to mainstream housing for those client groups.

Each year, we hold an inclusive forum, attended by over 100 stakeholders including service users and carers, to consult on all aspects of the programme. The South-West London Supporting People sub-group has proved very valuable in helping to develop good practice and consistent approaches as well as working jointly on schemes or providers which operate across borough boundaries, and we hold a joint inclusive forum each year.

Aids and adaptations

The Council has an annual programme of adaptations to help people with disabilities stay in their homes. We receive a government grant each year specifically for disabled facilities grants (DFGs) which we have to match-fund to the ratio of 60:40. In 2006/07, the allocation is £661k and we are providing a further £439k (£1.1m in total). The Council is committed to allocating the maximum level of local resources to secure full government funding each year. Adaptations for the homes of council tenants are funded through the housing revenue account (£0.75m a year). Although DFGs are means-tested, families with disabled children now get 100% grant, which we have publicised.

Given an average grant of about £10,000, the budget will allow us to adapt the homes of about 90 council tenants and 110 private sector residents a year. The most common types of adaptation are level access showers, stair lifts and ramps.

We will be developing a new adaptations strategy to reduce waiting times and make effective use of resources. This will involve exploring the opportunities for greater efficiency, for example through recycling equipment such as stair lifts and carrying out survey work on council properties in-house, and seeking out good practice for adoption. Over-long waits for assessments are common to many boroughs across the country, largely because of the national shortage of occupational therapists. However, limited resources are a major contributor to waiting times and we will be benchmarking investment levels in Croydon against those in other authorities. We are allocating an extra £250,000 for adaptations to council homes in 2006/07 to help address the backlog and will be setting targets for reducing waiting times.

Other assistance

As well as grant funding, we provide a number of different advice and support services to help vulnerable people remain in their homes. The largest of these projects is Staying Put, the Council's in-house home improvement agency, which supports people in the process of getting both aids and adaptations, and home repairs - this includes the grant application process, carrying out surveys, arranging builders, supervising works and so on. Staying Put staff also carry out minor works such as making practical arrangements when people need to leave hospital but, for example, have temporary mobility restrictions (about 350 people helped a year). In 2005/06, the agency received 412 enquiries, of which 62% turned into jobs, and there is no waiting list for assistance. Information about this type of service across the country has been collected in the past (no longer available) and it indicated that the volume of work in Croydon was relatively very high. We are committed to continuing this service at its existing level in the future. The Supporting People Commissioning Plan includes proposals, should sufficient funding be available in future, to provide an extra resource for adaptations and a service to target people from BME communities.

Other projects include:

- *Staying Put in the Garden*, which carries out essential garden maintenance for older and disabled people in wards with high crime rates (about 150 annually)
- the *Handyperson Project*, which carries out minor repairs to the homes of older and disabled people (both this service and the gardening project have been identified as high priorities by older people)
- the *Safe Project*, which carries out security works to the homes of older people in selected wards to reduce opportunities for, and fear of, crime
- the *MuckBusters Scheme*, which cleans up filthy and verminous homes occupied by vulnerable people referred by Social Services
- the Trips and Falls project and the Hypothermia project (to provide heaters, etc)
- working in partnership with the Fire Brigade to promote fire safety.

All of the above projects are funded to the level of demand, and will continue at existing funding levels in the future.

The social inclusion agenda

This chapter has concentrated on particular housing-led programmes and strategic initiatives. However, the housing service has a considerable role to play in supporting programmes led by other departments or agencies, as part of its various mainstream activities and day-to-day work. The housing service is represented on various partnership groups and works with Social Services and the Primary Care Trust to develop client-based strategies. This ensures that necessary housing contributions are identified and that specific actions and targets are included in plans. Examples of this are the Learning Disability Strategy, Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and the Children's and Young People's Plan. Actions include, typically, prevention of homelessness, provision of housing, facilitating links between professionals in different organisations, and improving access to services through publicity events. The housing service is involved in the introduction of the Children's Trust.

Another example is 'Joining up the front-line', a project being developed by the Social Inclusion Partnership Group to ensure that service providers with linked objectives work together to attain a higher standard of service and avoid people with multiple needs from having to make separate approaches to a number of agencies. We will support the Partnership Group's learning programme to ensure front line staff from other agencies are able to refer housing problems to the appropriate housing service at an early stage, increasing the likelihood of an effective intervention. An example is encouraging health workers to identify and report poor housing conditions.

The recent white paper, *Your Health, Your Care, Your Say*, sets out a key role for housing in the future provision of health and social care services with, for example, health care being provided directly to people's homes (including the concept of "virtual wards"), housing estates providing the focus for health promotion, and sheltered housing providing the infrastructure for the delivery of healthy living services. The development of assistive technology will help people manage in practical terms and link them to alarm schemes or other services which can respond in emergencies or other circumstances. The housing service will continue to work with health and social care partners to develop an understanding of this emerging policy area and to ensure that we help further the aims of enabling health, independence and well-being.

MAIN ACTIONS

- increase the level of provision of housing-related support in 2006/08
- fund additional supported housing services for, in the immediate future, care leavers, older people with learning disabilities, frail elders, ex-offenders, people with mental health problems and single homeless people
- introduce a new service to manage access to mental health supported housing provision, and expand the referral service for young people
- move on a minimum of 60 people a year from supported housing into social housing and 50 into private rented housing, and develop ways to significantly increase the level of move-on access into the private sector
- provide or fund adaptations for 90 council tenants (120 in 2006/07) and 110 private sector residents a year, and support people through the process
- provide a range of services to help people remain in their homes, including the Staying Put, handyman and security works projects
- develop an older people's housing strategy and an adaptations strategy

MORE INFORMATION

- Croydon's Supporting People Strategy 2005 to 2010
- Supporting People Commissioning Plan (annual updates)
- Learning Disability and Housing Strategy

Documents can be found at: www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 3 : **EXISTING HOUSING**



CHAPTER 3 : EXISTING HOUSING

Living in a well-maintained and comfortable home, which can be adequately heated, is a basic right of all people. The vast majority of private sector residents want and can afford to look after their homes, but a minority are unable to do so because of low incomes and savings. Council, housing association and private tenants all look to their landlord to keep their home in good order. Timely investment is essential to protecting this valuable asset. Providing decent housing is one of the priorities within the Community Strategy and makes an important contribution to the regeneration of the borough.

Priority Three: Improve housing conditions to ensure a decent home for all

SUMMARY OF NEED

- 83% of council homes meet the decent home standard as of April 2006. The majority of homes meet three elements of the standard: fitness (100%); repair (99.8%); and thermal comfort (98%) but 16% need new kitchens and bathrooms
- there are small pockets of the stock, including a sheltered scheme and some non-traditional homes, that need comprehensive refurbishment to meet the standard
- the investment required between 2006/07 and 2010/11, to ensure all council homes are brought up to standard, is £49m
- based on 2001/02 figures, two separate research exercises have estimated that 42,000 (37%) and 61,000 (54%) of private sector homes fail the decent home standard
- between 11,000 (45%) and 14,000 (61%) of vulnerable households were living in homes in the private sector which *did* meet the decent home standard (below the government target of 70%)
- the investment required to bring the homes of vulnerable people up to standard is between £97m and £149m
- 9,600 private sector homes (8%) were unfit; under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, 2,500 (2%) were particularly hazardous, and 8% were hazardous enough to warrant enforcement action; 10% of homes were in disrepair

- 20% of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) were unfit against the fitness standard and 75% against the HMO fitness standard
- the average standard assessment procedure (SAP) rating is 71.5 for council stock and 43 for private sector stock; 11% of private homes had a SAP rating below 30³.

MAIN AIMS

COUNCIL HOUSING:

- invest in housing stock to ensure all properties meet the decent home standard by 2010/11
- deliver an efficient and increasingly more cost-effective responsive repairs service
- improve the energy efficiency of council stock
- provide a range of security and environmental improvements, beyond the decent home standard, to meet local quality standards

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING:

- directly invest in, and promote private investment in, housing to raise standards overall
- increase the number and proportion of homes, which are occupied by vulnerable households, meeting the decent home standard, with a focus on energy efficiency
- bring empty private sector homes back into use whilst also raising them to the decent home standard.

³ SAP ratings - see glossary.

The Government's aim is to ensure all people live in decent housing - defined as housing which is weather-tight, warm and has reasonably modern facilities. It is requiring that all council and housing association homes meet the decent home standard by 2010, and wants to see an increase in the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes in the private sector (70% by 2010, and 75% by 2020). The London Mayor's Energy Strategy requires that no occupied dwelling should have a SAP rating below 30 by 2010 and below 40 by 2016. Under the 1995 Home Energy Conservation Act, the Government requires authorities to enact measures to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in their areas by 30% over 10-15 years (April 1996 being the baseline). A new agenda for private sector housing has been introduced by way of two sets of legal requirements: the new housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS); and licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) to help regulate standards.

Council housing

In April 2006, the Council had 14,193 homes which were rented and 2,045 leasehold dwellings. Council dwellings make up 10% of all homes and 62% of social rented homes. The importance of this stock, in particular for housing people on low incomes who cannot afford private housing, makes it imperative that we invest well to protect the stock for future generations.

Following a long period of sustained investment, 83% of rented homes now meet the decent home standard - the third highest level in London. In the last three years we have installed 1,486 new bathrooms and 2,697 new kitchens.

The Government asked all authorities to appraise the various options for raising funding to meet the decent home standard: these included stock retention, transfer to a housing association, a private finance initiative, and setting up an arms-length management organisation. Following a full appraisal, we consulted residents who gave a resounding vote in favour of the Council retaining the stock, with 94% of those who took part wishing the Council to remain as their landlord. This option was approved by the Government in 2005. Under this option, investment funding to meet the decent home standard is drawn from several sources: the housing revenue account (HRA); the major repairs allowance from the Government; receipts from Right to Buy sales and property disposals; and loans secured against the HRA. In 2006/07, £17m, plus HRA reserves of £1m, is available for major repairs.

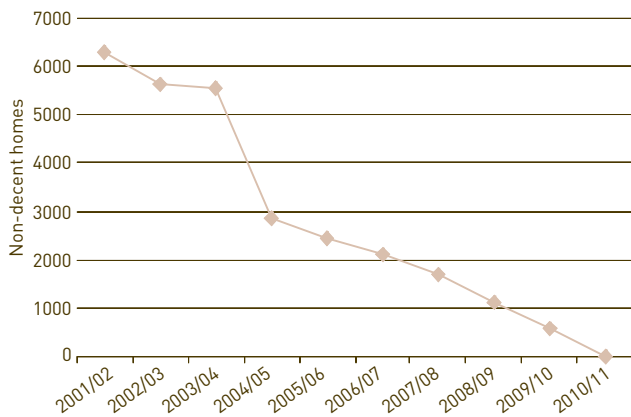
The lion's share of resources (£49m between 2006/07 and 2010/11) will be used for meeting the decent home standard, principally for a large kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme, but also for other major refurbishment and energy efficiency works. We will conduct a rolling stock condition survey to maintain accurate data on improvements made and identify outstanding work required. The Council will replace existing boilers with condensing boilers, install central heating in the 250 last remaining homes which lack space heating (dependent on tenant consent), and increase the thickness of loft insulation to the new 270mm standard. We will be applying external cladding to a number of solid wall construction properties with low energy efficiencies.

External refurbishment work, such as windows and roofs, is planned where properties become non-decent during 2006/07 and 2010/11. Refurbishment work has been carried out to homes of non-traditional construction. In 2003/05 the last five Wates tower blocks were successfully refurbished. The programme will be completed in 2007/08 when 54 Wates houses will be refurbished. In addition, the refurbishment of 57 British Iron and Steel Federation homes will be completed in 2006/07.

One sheltered housing scheme does not meet the standard and will be refurbished in 2008/09 at a cost of £2.7m. After 2010/11 when we have met the decent home standard, we will consider how refurbishment plans in three other sheltered schemes could support the work on the older people's housing strategy and meet changing needs and aspirations (see Chapter Two), for example through changing layout. Mechanisms to harness renewable energy such as photovoltaic panels and solar water heaters will be considered for all refurbishments, following the success of elements such as solar panels in Borough Grange, a recently renovated sheltered scheme.

With the progress made to date and the level of investment proposed, we aim to meet the decent home standard by 2010/11. We have identified a total shortfall of up to £20m on the investment needed to meet the standard and other programme priorities over this period. A range of initiatives are being pursued to meet the shortfall.

Meeting the Decent Home Standard by 2010



Whilst the over-riding priority is to meet the decent home standard, we have set additional targets as a result of residents' feedback. Residents have stated that they want better home security, such as entry-phone systems, and neighbourhood facilities. We have therefore established the Croydon Housing Quality Standard, which sets additional standards in relation to health and safety in the home, street appearance, security, and community and leisure facilities. We have, for example, installed smoke detectors in all homes. A further £24m, between 2006/07 and 2010/11, will be spent on works to achieve the housing quality standard on housing estates through providing a range of security, health and safety and environmental measures, and youth facilities (see Chapter Four).

Similarly, we have developed a sheltered housing quality standard in consultation with representatives from the Sheltered Housing Residents Panel. This sets minimum standards for sheltered housing, such as the choice of adjustable height kitchen units and lever taps, and lists features to be considered as part of a refurbishment programme, for example lifts, wheelchair flats and entry phone systems.

We will continue to manage a programme of cyclical works to maintain the condition of the stock. This will include servicing of gas appliances in around 12,000 homes and testing fire alarms and appliances and electrical circuits. Timely capital investment can reduce the need for repairs - for example, a well-maintained roof is less likely to leak. However, there will always be a need for day-to-day repairs in response to issues such as frozen pipes or vandalism. In 2006/07, we have a budget of £0.9m for cyclical works and £11.2m for responsive repairs.

Given the size of these works programmes, good partnering arrangements with contractors are central to satisfying customers, and achieving efficiency, value for money and commitment to firm deadlines. We have several contracts in place: two companies are undertaking responsive repairs and two others are installing new kitchens. We are benchmarking costs across the companies and with other authorities, and will be considering whether other services could be delivered more efficiently by partnering relationships. The contracts also include performance indicators in relation to environmental sustainability, for example water and energy use.

On a small number of sites where housing stock may not reach an adequate standard without significant investment, we will appraise the options with a view to engaging housing associations to redevelop the sites.

Registered social landlord housing

In April 2006, 9,117 rented properties in Croydon were owned by 41 registered social landlords (RSLs), all housing associations, making up 7% of all homes in the borough. RSLs are the only other source of affordable accommodation for people who cannot afford private housing - they have both social rented housing and homes in shared ownership.

The Government's target to bring social housing up to the decent home standard by 2010 applies equally to RSL stock. RSLs have been conducting stock condition surveys to identify the work needed to meet this target. 90% of RSL homes for rent already meet the standard and this is expected to rise to 96% by April 2007. Currently, 17 RSLs with a quarter of the housing association stock in Croydon have no properties that fail the standard. Four RSLs must improve more than a third of their stock to meet the standard. All RSLs expect that 100% of their homes will meet the standard by 2010.

Private sector housing

Croydon has the largest private housing sector in London. In 2006, there were 116,043 homes, of which about 84% were owned and 16% rented from a private landlord. Given the size of the private housing sector and its importance in meeting housing requirements, a private sector renewal strategy is an intrinsic element of the overall housing strategy. Whilst owner-occupation is the preferred choice of better-off residents, many owners are on low incomes and can have difficulty funding improvements. Private renting has a key role to play also, for example for young people starting out, the more mobile, those with no savings, and many vulnerable groups. Although the majority of private landlords are responsible managers, a minority provide poor quality housing, giving rise to higher levels of unfitness and disrepair in this sector.

Stock condition data indicate a significant level of poor quality or non-decent housing, and this tends to be occupied by poorer households such as pensioners and lone parents. Housing improvement is also a vital contribution to tackling run-down areas and ensuring poorer areas are desirable places to live in; other benefits include better energy efficiency to help low income residents afford to heat their homes.

There are four main tools for achieving the government's decent homes target:

- financial assistance through grants for remedial works
- encouraging owner-occupiers and landlords to bring their homes up to standard using their own resources
- action to force private landlords to deal with hazards and disrepair
- increasing good practice amongst landlords through advice, education, and promoting awareness.

In the two years to March 2005, Croydon spent £4.583m on grants and loans - the third largest programme in London. 1,055 homes were made decent including 747 occupied by vulnerable households (70%). If the most optimistic estimate of the proportion of homes failing the decent home standard is used, this level of progress indicates that the borough is making a more than sufficient contribution to the 2010 national decent homes target.

Funding for grants hails from two sources - the sub-regional element of the London Housing Board pot which is used for energy efficiency and empty homes grants; and local resources targetted at any properties with Category 1 hazards or substantial disrepair (decent homes grants), and at poor condition homes in a group of deprived wards in north-west Croydon. About 50% of all private sector funding is focussed on this deprived area although we will be reviewing the way in which the grants are targetted to ensure fairness and comprehensiveness. Grants enable properties to either fully meet the decent home standard (eg empty property grants) or to meet specific elements such as thermal comfort and repair. In 2006/08, south-west London will be allocated £6m for decent homes and £3m for empty properties, of which Croydon's share is £1m and £0.5m respectively. This will be supplemented by a further £1.4m from our own resources. Smaller-scale projects involve installing safety measures into the homes of families with children under five and renewing defective drains. We are also working in partnership with the Fire Brigade and fitting smoke alarms on its behalf.

Ethnic monitoring of grants indicates that people from BME communities are applying and receiving a fair share of resources. We publicise the service in deprived areas which have high BME populations. One further line of targetting we wish to develop is the identification of the hardest-to-reach, that is people living in social isolation who are quite likely to be vulnerable, through, for example, leaflet drops and home visits.

Given the investment requirements of the stock and the level of available local authority resources, direct council intervention can have only a relatively small impact on stock condition. Encouraging private investment is, therefore, of paramount importance. Croydon will continue to actively promote HouseProud, the equity release scheme; 70 properties were improved through this scheme during 2005/06. Equity release is not always a popular option so, together with other boroughs in south-west London, we are employing two financial assessment officers to visit people and explain the benefits and implications. Of works arranged by Staying Put (see Chapter Two), a small proportion (7% last year) was funded by residents themselves.

The sponsored tenancy and private sector leasing schemes, whilst primarily in place to increase supply, also provide attractive incentives to private landlords to improve their homes. Acceptance into the former scheme is predicated upon properties meeting the decent home standard. Homes leased through the private leasing scheme must be free of Category 1 hazards. Empty homes grants are offered to owners on the basis that they also make a significant contribution to works.

The Council has recently agreed a new housing enforcement policy which states that tough enforcement action will be taken where appropriate, but only once a more collaborative approach has failed. The policy takes into account new duties and powers under recent legislation covering the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The new rating system is highly complex, and Croydon is working with other sub-region members to develop a consistent approach and run joint training. Croydon has had an HMO registration scheme in place since 1993 and is thus well-placed to introduce the new licensing system; we are including as wide a range of properties in our scheme as possible - ie converted houses as well as bedsit-type accommodation - and considering the most effective way of dealing with the properties of landlords found not to be "fit and proper". Again, we will work with south-west London partners to develop common guidance and practice notes. We have a small budget for about 20 HMO grants a year, mainly for fire precautions work, and we provide a 24-hour call-out service for the Fire Brigade and attend fires involving HMOs.

Poor housing management is often the result of lack of awareness rather than wilful non-compliance, and the final strand of the strategy is to work in partnership with landlords and cultivate good practice. Croydon has been an early signatory to the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme, a discretionary scheme aimed at advising and educating landlords, and has so far signed up 40 landlords. Accreditation will be rewarded by financial incentives such as a discounted licensing fee. We have an active private sector forum which provides the opportunity for spreading good practice, and briefing landlords on their responsibilities, the services available to them and giving information beneficial to them (for example, about energy efficiency). The decision to bring the housing benefit service in-house was in line with calls from both this forum and the private tenants forum.

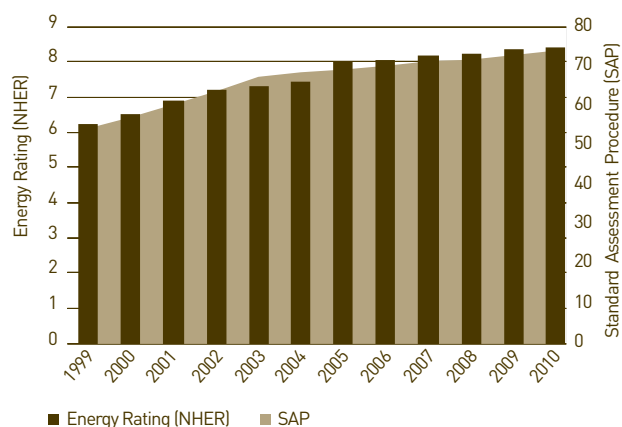
With major changes to legislation, national and local policy, and funding in recent months in respect of private sector renewal, we will need to evaluate local practice and review it as new schemes start to bed down. Croydon has played a leading role in the production of the South-West London Private Sector Housing Strategy, published in April 2006, and the sub-region has provided a valuable working group for sharing and developing good practice. The member boroughs jointly commissioned a stock condition study during 2005, a major benefit of which has been to map out locations likely to have the poorest conditions. This information is used to target publicity about renewal work. Croydon has also been an active member of various national and regional forums including, at present, the private sector sub-group of the London Housing Board. This partnership working will continue to feature in our work as we seek to influence policy and develop best practice.

Energy efficiency

Increasing the energy efficiency of housing has dual benefits - it reduces both fuel poverty and carbon emissions. One of the objectives in the Community Strategy is to reduce fossil fuel use, and adequate thermal comfort is one of the decent home standard criteria and is covered by the HHSRS. The Council's Home Energy Conservation Act Strategy aims to improve overall domestic energy efficiency in Croydon by 34% over the 15 years to 2011. In the first 9 years a 20% improvement has been achieved.

Croydon has had, for the last decade, one of the best energy efficiency ratings in its own stock, in the top 4 boroughs in London and in the top quarter nationally. Central heating, double-glazing and cavity wall insulation have been installed in practically all properties with the result that CO₂ emissions have been reduced by 27% since 1990 and the average running cost has dropped from £690 to £480 per home. The chart below shows the rising energy efficiency rating and targets for further improvement.

Housing Energy Targets



The focus now is very much on advising residents. We give each new tenant an energy advice pack and low energy light bulbs, hold drop-in surgeries, run articles in the tenant newsletter, and appoint residents as energy champions.

We are currently developing a new energy strategy, due out in summer 2007. Its aims are to: provide affordable warmth for tenants, by improving the energy efficiency of the stock, upgrading loft insulation and fitting double glazing; increase tenants' awareness of energy and environmental issues by developing a network of residents to act as energy advisers and champions, and by providing advice and literature; and pursue environmental sustainability within our stock by using condensing boilers when replacing heating systems and fitting new technologies as part of our sheltered block refurbishment programme.

In terms of private sector housing, improving energy efficiency is the central part of the South-West London Housing Partnership's work to bring housing up to the decent home standard. Member boroughs are working with Creative Environmental Networks (CEN), the energy advice centre for the sub-region, to promote Universal Coldbuster Grants (worth £6m in 2006/07 to 2007/08) and help residents arrange improvements such as insulation, heating measures and new boilers.

We are working with CEN on targetting harder-to-reach people to take up grants. Croydon will receive £1m of this funding which will provide grants for 480 homes. This scheme has also been bringing in extra funding through London Energy Efficiency Commitment and Warm Front, amounting to £100,000 in Croydon. In addition, for the next year at least, we are working in partnership with British Gas, which is carrying out discounted cavity wall insulation in a minimum 500 homes a year and paying £50 towards council tax bills as an incentive. We have a target of saving 601 tonnes of carbon emissions through cavity wall and loft insulation over the three years to 2009. We will be exploring the potential for promoting the use of renewable energy through measures such as wind turbines and solar panels.

Building homes with integral energy efficiency features is very cost-effective and we are setting high standards for new developments. Croydon is the first council in the country to require new housing developments to reach the EcoHomes Excellent Standard and we have received national recognition for our adoption of a ground-breaking planning policy whereby any larger developments (with 10 homes or more) are required to produce at least 10% of their energy from on-site renewable sources such as micro-wind turbines.

Environmental sustainability was the theme of our 2006 housing consultative conference, which tapped into a well of concern about climate change, and interest in how changes to housing and domestic life can help to ameliorate the situation. The conference, attended by a wide range of stakeholders, provided a wealth of ideas and suggestions, for example in relation to how people can get involved in reuse and recycling of waste. It also provided the opportunity to brief developers on environmental requirements following which further guidance has been provided.

MAIN ACTIONS

COUNCIL HOUSING:

- install new kitchens and/or bathrooms in up to 4,300 properties by 2010/11
- refurbish a sheltered housing scheme in 2008/09
- refurbish all remaining homes of non-traditional construction
- carry out responsive repairs and cyclical works such as gas servicing, with annual budgets in the region of £11m and £900,000 respectively
- carry out energy efficiency works including central heating in the remaining 250 properties, upgrading of heating systems, installation of loft insulation, and measures such as wind turbines in sheltered housing schemes
- increase energy efficiency awareness of residents through surgeries and energy champions

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING:

- provide grants to bring homes up to standard, with budgets of £1m for energy efficiency measures and £0.5m for empty homes over the period 2006/08, and £1.4m for other housing repairs in 2006/07
- promote HouseProud and aim to improve 50 homes a year through equity release
- enforce adequate standards in private rented housing through implementation of new HMO licensing regulations, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and the local Housing Enforcement Policy
- provide advice to landlords and encourage better standards through the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- work with partners such as CEN and British Gas to advise residents on energy efficiency and fund measures such as cavity wall insulation and new boilers

ALL TENURES:

- set high standards for the energy efficiency of new homes through planning policy.

MORE INFORMATION

- Energy Strategy for Croydon Council's Housing Stock (due out in summer 2007)
- Croydon Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2002
- Building Research Establishment survey of Croydon 2005
- South-West London Private Housing Strategy (full strategy and summary)
- Croydon Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy
- Croydon Housing Renewal Policy

Documents can be found at: www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 4 : **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**



CHAPTER 4 : SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The housing service has an important enabling role to play in developing local communities, promoting social inclusion, reducing crime, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. The promotion of clean and safe neighbourhoods is one aspect of this and links to a number of key aims in the Community Strategy. Effective housing management can contribute to wider strategic objectives such as reducing deprivation, promoting better health and life chances, and renewing neighbourhoods. Levels of housing management performance and resident participation and satisfaction have been consistently high in Croydon. The role of the housing service has been expanding in recent years to take on a more community-based approach which both empowers residents and addresses the wider needs and service requirements on housing estates and in local neighbourhoods.

Priority Four: Develop sustainable communities and promote neighbourhood renewal

SUMMARY OF NEED

- there are significant differences in unemployment rates, benefit dependence levels and life expectancy between different parts of the borough
- deprivation is concentrated in two main areas of Croydon: the north-west and south-east; Fieldway is the most deprived ward in the borough and is among the poorest 20% of wards in the country
- smaller pockets of deprivation are dispersed throughout the borough, mostly related to social housing estates
- fear of crime remains high, despite a 10% reduction in recorded crime over the past 3 years and a crime rate that is well below the London average
- the Council receives around 1,500 complaints a year from tenants and leaseholders about anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, vandalism, abandoned cars, criminal damage, noise and litter
- about 140 complaints of racial harassment are received each year
- top priorities for residents of council-managed estates are safer, cleaner estates and neighbourhoods, and more youth provision.

MAIN AIMS

- ensure improvements in social housing take place in neighbourhood renewal areas
- tackle anti-social behaviour, and racial and other harassment, through a range of civil and criminal enforcement measures
- continue to provide a high-performing housing management service in relation, for example, to empty properties, lettings and tenancy management
- maximise opportunities for resident participation
- promote sustainable communities through community action plans, aimed at empowering local residents and co-ordinating local services, and through activities and opportunities for involvement of young people
- achieve high standards of cleanliness and maintenance on estates
- develop a community investment approach, combining the efforts of all front line staff, to engage and strengthen local communities.

Many people are not sharing fully in the wealth of the nation and are, consequently, suffering deprivation such as poor educational attainment, poor health, high crime levels, and worklessness. Such deprivation is linked to particular areas, often where there is a concentration of social housing, and it is very difficult to lift such neighbourhoods out of poverty. The Government has placed considerable emphasis on the creation of sustainable communities, defined as places where people want to live and work. Sustainable communities are predicated upon good access to jobs, excellent services, the chance to get engaged in the life of the community, and cleaner and safer physical environments. A key aim is to narrow the gap between the average and worst off areas to make sure that all residents have the same opportunities, the same choice, and the same chance to share in prosperity. The two main means of addressing this are funding initiatives in poorer areas and ensuring more mixed neighbourhoods in terms of, for example, economic activity and tenure, to create more sustainable communities.

The housing service has a vital role in tackling the causes and symptoms of deprivation such as anti-social behaviour, poor housing conditions and the condition of the environment. In Croydon, we have long recognised the need to reach beyond our traditional housing management role to develop strategies for engaging residents and empowering local communities. An effective housing management service can promote safe and attractive places to live through good design of buildings, streetscapes, and wider environments, cleaner and safer estates, and tackling anti-social behaviour, vandalism and empty homes. In Croydon, we take pride in delivering a well-run housing management service and have invested heavily in community-led initiatives, recognising the real difference that they can make to the quality of people's lives.

Neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion

The Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, published in 2001, set out the vision that 'within 10 to 20 years, no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live'. In order to support its strategy, the Government allocates Neighbourhood Renewal Fund grant to those local authorities it considers most deprived to enable them, in partnership with their local strategic partnerships, to tackle deprivation.

Croydon is one of 80 local authorities in the country allocated funding because of the level of deprivation and inequality. We have been allocated £1m for each of 2006/07 and 2007/08, a significant increase (42%) on previous years. The Government's focus is on schemes which narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country. Performance is measured through a series of floor targets covering educational attainment, health inequalities, decent homes, crime and employment.

Croydon's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy focuses on the areas with the greatest concentration of deprivation: Fieldway and New Addington, and nine wards in north-west Croydon. Other smaller pockets of deprivation are identified within some other wards, such as the Shrublands, Old Lodge Lane and Tollers Lane estates. Funding has been used to support the SAFE project, schemes for older people, such as the gardening scheme, the hypothermia project and the trips and falls project and improvements to private sector housing.

The housing service contributes to neighbourhood renewal in a number of ways. First, work to improve the housing stock is directed at making homes decent in the most deprived areas. In relation to the housing floor targets (relating to decent homes), we have already made good progress in achieving the decent home standard for council homes in north-west Croydon. Our private sector housing renewal programme is largely focused on improving private sector housing conditions in the same area, to meet the decent home standard for vulnerable households, including families with children. In New Addington and Fieldway a kitchen and bathroom modernisation programme is well under way, which will bring most homes in that area up to a decent standard.

A second strand of work is an active community development programme to promote opportunities for residents to engage more effectively in improving services and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods. Five years ago, the Council set up a dedicated community development team to implement an innovative programme of community action plans (CAPs) for local authority housing estates across the borough. Over the last five years, CAPs have been developed on six estates - Handcroft Road, Shrublands, Waddon, Monks Hill, Tollers Lane and Croftleigh Avenue. In each area, extensive consultation has been undertaken with residents to seek their views and hopes for the future of their community. The action plans which are developed tackle problems highlighted by local people and set targets agreed with all organisations providing services - council departments such as the youth service, the police, and health services. Typically, these have focused on improving housing management, providing facilities and activities for young people, and community safety measures such as improved street lighting and CCTV.

The CAP programme has been highly successful and helped earn the council a UK housing award for good practice in resident involvement in 2002. CAPs are fundamentally about promoting participation, giving residents a stake in their community, and prioritising the measures of greatest importance to local people. They have resulted in the introduction of advice surgeries, the provision of computer training, video, drama and arts projects, health and fitness classes, ball games courts, sports coaching and youth clubs for younger people, and social events and lunch clubs for older residents. In a survey of Monks Hill residents in November 2005, over half of respondents thought their ability to get involved in local groups, activities and decision-making had improved as a result of the CAP. We plan to extend the CAP programme to further estates, with greater emphasis on a community investment approach, which will engage other front line housing staff, such as tenancy officers, resident participation officers and neighbourhood wardens in supporting community development activities.

Another area in which the housing service has been active in community development is its work with young people. This has focused on improving opportunities for youth engagement through setting up a youth forum in Broad Green; involving neighbourhood wardens in organising sports and other activities for young people and setting up youth groups; and providing youth involvement training for residents and officers. Over the next two years, the council will extend its youth involvement work to up to four estates, mirroring the location of CAPs, to be followed by a review of its effectiveness.

Resident involvement

Resident participation underpins the Council's commitment to involving local people in decisions about their community and the management of their homes. Croydon's excellent practice has earned us two highly prestigious awards. In 2005, the Council won beacon council status for its approach to "getting closer to communities": this award recognised work across the Council, including that within the housing service. In 2006, we won a further beacon council award, this time for our work to improve housing services through resident involvement, which was judged to be 'outstanding'. The awards entail disseminating good practice to other local authorities.

Development of consultation arrangements in recent years has followed several principles:

- increasing participation by enabling people to get involved in ways that suit them
- extending opportunities to take part in issues concerning council-owned estates to all people living on those estates regardless of tenure
- maximising participation by minority groups or groups with specific requirements - such as people from BME communities and disabled people.

The current structure involves:

- Community Housing Panels (CHPs), open to all residents on estates - these panels led to an increase of 23% attendance at local meetings
- Tenant and Leaseholder Panel - people elected by the CHPs discuss high level issues such as rent levels, anti-social behaviour and repairs policies
- the Housing Sounding Board, with over 950 members. This provides an alternative means for tenants and other residents to get involved, rather than attending meetings. People can give their views through the internet or by email, can participate in phone or face-to-face surveys, or in focus groups, and they can choose which issues they wish to be consulted on.
- specialist forums for disabled residents, sheltered housing tenants, BME communities, and young people
- a range of working groups that focus on particular matters, such as abandoned vehicles and parking
- representation from community housing panels at neighbourhood partnership meetings to ensure an exchange of information and co-ordination of effort
- resident representation at panels to evaluate tender submissions and select contractors for major projects.

In addition to a small team of staff, we have an annual budget of about £85,000 for grants for residents' associations, a resource centre, meeting rooms, equipment loan, and a training programme. We also work with local housing associations, via Croydon Resident Participation Network, to share good practice, resources and experience.

The views of residents constantly influence the way in which we work and the actions taken on estates. One recent major example was setting the level at which the neighbourhood warden service operates at one which tenants are willing to fund through their rents. Major plans for the future include sustaining and further increasing BME involvement; introducing consultation online over the next three years including voting via e-mail and text-message; and ensuring front line officers and neighbourhood wardens promote this work and themselves maintain good contact with residents as part of their daily duties.

Safe neighbourhoods

Promoting community safety is crucial to building sustainable communities where people are happy to live. Despite significant falls in recorded crime levels in the borough over the last two years, including violent crime, burglary and vehicle crime, fear of crime remains a major concern of local residents. People in social housing are most likely to perceive crime and anti-social behaviour as problems in their area. The evidence of recorded crimes on council estates shows that, whilst rates of serious crime are low, there is a high incidence of lower level crimes. This picture is confirmed by tenants and leaseholders, who consistently list their main concerns as abandoned vehicles, graffiti, vandalism, estate security and litter.

Our 2005 housing consultative conference was held on the theme of safer neighbourhoods, and brought together agencies, landlords and residents to discuss issues and propose solutions. Local residents have been engaged through regular discussion of issues at community housing panels, and through the Housing Sounding Board, neighbourhood partnership meetings, and at open public meetings on estates where problems have arisen. In Fieldway and New Addington, we have carried out improvements to communal areas to 'design out' crime, following detailed consultation with local residents. Later in the year, we will be holding a conference on anti-social behaviour for residents.

A raft of new powers has been introduced to enable social landlords to take action and we have used these, where necessary, to tackle the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Last year, we set up a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Team to lead on enforcement action and to support local residents, housing staff and other agencies to develop strategies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour. The team has been highly successful in reducing the level of anti-social behaviour overall, through taking effective, robust action at an early stage. This includes the use of mediation services, anti-social behaviour orders, injunctions, demoted tenancies, acceptable behaviour contracts and possession action. The team also has an important role in supporting and empowering the community through publicising successful action and encouraging residents to report problems early on.

The council has established a database and casework management system for all anti-social behaviour cases, which is helping to improve intelligence and identify hotspots. We work closely with the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour at a strategic and a casework level through the Corporate Community Protection Team and Anti-Social Behaviour Forum. Housing staff attend multi-agency group meetings and contribute to monitoring and enforcement measures through the Priority Prolific Offender Steering Group led by the police and probation services. We also work with these agencies on the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) for people who pose a serious risk to themselves or the public.

We continue to attach a high priority to tackling racial harassment through promoting a multi-agency approach in conjunction with the police, registered social landlords (RSLs), other council departments, community groups and residents. We give the same priority to cases of harassment on grounds of disability, gender and sexuality. We are committed to taking swift, effective action and have recently established a new in-house solicitor post and a private sector racial harassment caseworker. In 2003, we conducted a major campaign with the Police to tackle serious entrenched racial harassment in Waddon, using a suite of measures and high profile publicity to get across the message that such activity was intolerable. This led to a fall in the number of racial harassment complaints.

Croydon Racial Incident Panel brings together the Police, Victim Support, solicitors and local agencies to co-ordinate action on challenging cases. Other initiatives include surgeries with community groups, providing training for local RSLs, and developing a victim support strategy in conjunction with other local partners. The Police attend the Housing Department's Racial Harassment Strategy Group meetings.

The last few years have seen the development and expansion of our neighbourhood warden service, with all the main council estates covered. Neighbourhood wardens offer a visible, uniformed presence, which has a major impact in reducing the fear of crime and promoting community safety. Residents say that they are reassured by this presence. In many areas, wardens are working closely with the police force's safer neighbourhood teams to ensure that community safety resources are well co-ordinated. They also attend neighbourhood partnership meetings. In some areas, neighbourhood wardens are engaged in positive initiatives to engage young people, for example, by helping to run local youth clubs. We are piloting the extension of the service to a housing association estate and will consider further expansion if successful.

One further initiative we fund is Croydon Community Mediation Service which helps to resolve neighbour disputes in a non-confrontational manner.

Our priorities for the future are to promote positive behaviour, tackle anti-social behaviour, and engage and support local communities. We will continue to take action in support of these objectives, ensuring that we listen to the concerns voiced by local residents. We will also take on board the aims of the *Respect* agenda, including the emphasis placed on housing management services in strengthening communities.

Over the next three years, we aim to:

- work more closely with local RSL landlords and tenants, looking at the potential for: sharing resources, good practice and expertise; joint training; case conferences and collecting evidence
- increase the visibility and impact of local community safety initiatives through good publicity and communication (such as articles in the resident newsletter), ensuring close co-ordination of activities with other community safety agencies, and continuing to engage residents and local community groups
- continue to tackle anti-social behaviour and harassment quickly and effectively through the use of new surveillance equipment, greater emphasis on witness support and considering the use of new powers such as demoted tenancies
- promote community action and facilities to divert young people away from crime
- maintain our focus on fundamental housing management activities - cleaning, caretaking and other council services such as grounds maintenance and street lighting.

Clean neighbourhoods

For people to feel a sense of pride in their local community, it is important to maintain the cleanliness and attractiveness of housing estates. Tenants and leaseholders have consistently told us that clean and safe estates are their top priority.

In the last few years the Council has undertaken a major review and re-organisation of its caretaking and cleaning services. This has resulted in improved standards, more frequent cleaning services and closer monitoring of performance. We have established our own local cleaning standards against which sites are inspected and assessed on a regular basis. During recent checks, 85% have been found to be good (using our own local standard) and we are aiming to increase this to 95%. According to the national litter grading standard, our streets are achieving the highest grades of A and B. We would like to see national cleanliness standards applied to all estates in the borough, whether they are council- or housing association-owned and are keen to promote our services to achieve a uniform standard where estates have more than one landlord.

The Council's Streetscene service deals with litter and fly-tipping, graffiti and nuisance vehicles, taking enforcement action where necessary. Streetscene staff ensure residents' concerns are identified through the community housing panels and estate inspections. Neighbourhood wardens and caretakers are working more closely with the parking service and achieving the speedier removal of abandoned or illegally parked vehicles.

Our 2006 housing conference considered ways to achieve cleaner neighbourhoods and increase waste reduction and recycling. Currently we have 70 housing estate recycling sites for residents of flats who cannot access the doorstep green box scheme. We plan to increase this to 100 sites. We are also considering the promotion of recycling among residents of sheltered schemes.

Maintaining and improving the appearance of local estates is important to residents. An annual budget of £0.5m is allocated to environmental and security works on estates and in communal areas of blocks of flats. All residents are invited to submit proposals and the budget is devolved to residents with decisions made by local housing panels. Typical works include entry-phone systems, landscaping, lighting upgrades, and anti-parking measures such as bollards. A further £60,000 is spent at the discretion of district managers for minor jobs which address specific issues raised by residents.

Overall, council tenants and leaseholders express a high degree of satisfaction with their local neighbourhoods – a MORI survey carried out in 2004 showed that 68% of tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Our tenants survey also recorded high levels of satisfaction with services such as refuse collection, grounds maintenance and street cleaning. In order to achieve further improvements, it is important that we work in partnership with residents, other social landlords and contractors.

The key actions we will be taking in future are:

- ensuring that day to day services like rubbish removal, grounds maintenance, cleaning and caretaking, are provided in a cost effective and sustainable way
- involving residents in agreeing standards and monitoring the cleanliness of common areas, to ensure accurate feedback to contractors
- working with RSLs to ensure that national standards of cleanliness are applied across the borough, and to develop cost-effective solutions, perhaps through joint procurement
- continuing to provide environmental improvements to enhance the appearance of local estates.

MAIN ACTIONS

- extend the number of community action plans to ten by 2010
- focus resources for decent homes on deprived areas
- extend youth involvement work by setting up four more forums over the next two years
- work with housing associations to achieve consistent standards of cleanliness across estates, developing cost-effective solutions such as joint procurement
- carry out £0.5m programme of environmental improvements annually
- develop an ethnic minority resident involvement strategy
- disseminate good practice on resident consultation to other organisations
- improve community safety by prompt tackling of anti-social behaviour using a tool-box approach
- work more closely with housing associations, by sharing resources, expertise and training, and co-ordinate action to tackle anti-social behaviour and racial harassment
- review the neighbourhood warden service.

MORE INFORMATION

- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2002-2005
- Croydon Decennial Health Atlas 2004
- Croydon's Crime Reduction Strategy 2006-2009
- Croydon's Tenant Compact
- Beacon Council award for involving residents
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Documents can be found at: www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 5 : **FAIR ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE**



CHAPTER 5 : FAIR ACCESS & CUSTOMER CARE

As well as providing housing services, we put a premium on making them as accessible as possible to local people. This involves using a full range of customer contact facilities which suit different needs, a focus on customer care in all our dealings with the public, involving people in how services are run, and meeting the varied requirements of a diverse population. One of the six themes of the Community Strategy is to *provide better and fairer access, and value diversity*, and much of the work of the housing service is closely integrated with what is happening corporately.

Priority Five: Promote better and fair access to housing services

SUMMARY OF NEED

- each day, we receive over 700 phone calls and 200 personal callers to the office about housing matters
- a high proportion of customers are from disadvantaged groups - for example 65% of housing register applicants are from ethnic minority communities, 24% of people living in council homes have a limiting long-term illness, and 23% of households living in council stock are lone parents with dependent children
- 26,000 households live on council-managed estates, including non-council tenants.

MAIN AIMS

- provide user-friendly and accessible services and information
- deal with customers courteously, sensitively and efficiently
- increase the use of the internet and other electronic means to achieve maximum openness of services
- provide equality of opportunity and choice for disadvantaged sectors of the population
- increase customer involvement and feedback.

Customer care and accessible information

In 2004, the Council introduced a major new programme, *Customer Focus*, and radically overhauled customer contact systems. It's notably, the former switchboard system was replaced with a contact centre, staffed by advisers (and supported by an information database) who can handle many of the more straightforward enquiries directly rather than referring them to back office staff. This has the benefits of a one-stop shop for callers and a greater guarantee that enquiries are answered immediately without "going around the houses". For housing customers, there are specialist staff who are trained in all housing processes and service areas. At present, these staff are taking over 3,000 calls weekly and dealing with up to 50% directly. Our target is for 60% of calls to be dealt with directly by 2007: achieving this requires us to map out processes and provide flow charts for advisers depending on the particular circumstances of callers, and to train staff. Obviously, many calls are quite complex and will always have to be referred to expert staff in the back office for detailed advice and follow-up action.

A similar one-stop approach is used in our reception areas for personal callers. We have recently introduced an automatic queuing system which will be used to assess waiting times, busy times and so on, to help us work out how best to improve the service.

We have an ongoing programme of mystery shopping to assess the quality of responses to people calling in at the office, telephoning, writing or emailing us. This includes checking the speed of response, quality of advice, and helpfulness of staff. Croydon is also part of a mystery shopping syndicate with 11 other London authorities and this provides comparative information; Croydon has been performing at or above both national and syndicate averages against all elements.

Together with ongoing customer satisfaction surveys, whether of people who have visited the office, or received a service such as a repair or help with a complaint about racial harassment, the results of the programme are providing a wealth of data about how we are doing and how we can best improve. Recent changes following customer feedback include, for example, changes to the repair appointment system, simplification of the housing application form and accompanying information, changes to information and leaflets provided to homeless people, and training for contact centre staff on help available for people experiencing domestic violence.

The Government is particularly keen that public services should be delivered electronically and has set national e-service delivery standards, some of which relate specifically to housing. This will, firstly, keep services up-to-date with the growing use of the internet (a survey of housing applicants indicated a strong preference for having an on-line housing application form) and, secondly, lead to financial savings. We will be using the standards as good practice guidance in developing our website and other electronic systems. We have already met the national 2005 target of handling all processes electronically; customers can, for example, make payments and book appointments on-line, and download minutes of meetings.

Further work will involve:

- putting customer application forms on the website during 2006 and, in 2007, introducing intelligent forms which enable people to enter their details on line and assess their eligibility
- a major review of the structure and housing content of the website in 2006
- an on-line survey package for gathering data on customer needs and views
- piloting the webcasting of community housing panels, and e-voting for resident consultation exercises
- hand-held devices to facilitate mobile working
- increased electronic storage of documents.

For some of our customers (especially older and disabled people), communication and service access by electronic and internet means is not the most popular option, and we are continuing to offer literature and information in traditional formats which include large print and audio tape. We have in place the *Resident Checked Group*, a small group of customers who give feedback on how we can make leaflets more user-friendly in terms of content and presentation. So far, we have made numerous changes, for example to the neighbourhood services handbook and new tenants welcome booklet. In future, we will be referring standard letters to the group as well as more glossy publications. We will be continuing to send out several publications such as *Leasehold News*, *the Private Tenant*, *Landlords' Newsletter* and *Sheltered Housing News*. We also publish the quarterly *Open House*, which goes to council tenants and to people in all other tenures living on council estates, and which won a national Communications in Housing award.

A strong focus is placed on how staff treat customers with high standards expected in terms of courtesy, respect and sensitivity, and there is an extensive and ongoing programme of customer care training as well as written guidance and regular discussions at team meetings. Training courses include those raising awareness of specific needs, for example related to race and disability.

In a recent survey in *Open House*, 74% of residents said they were satisfied with the overall housing service, similar to the level of satisfaction with the home (73%). Satisfaction amongst leaseholders is lower (at 51%) as is their satisfaction with their homes (61%).

Meeting diverse needs

Croydon is a very diverse borough in terms of ethnic origin and religion, and housing service customers are more likely than the general population to be from disadvantaged groups such as disabled or frail people, people vulnerable because of their age, and lone parents. This diversity creates some specific needs, for example in relation to communication and housing requirements. Our commitment is to meeting this full range of needs wherever possible in order to create an inclusive service which promotes equality of opportunity and choice for all customers. A range of recent or planned legislation, in relation to race, ability and gender, is requiring public bodies to develop schemes which will promote equality of opportunity. One of the best value performance indicators - the equality standard (BVPI 3) – sets out standards for what authorities should be doing in relation to monitoring, consultation and involvement, equality impact assessment, and target-setting. Croydon Council has already assessed itself as reaching Level 4 of the standard (5 being the highest). This standard has recently been revised and we will be assessing ourselves against the new criteria. Although the standard relates to race, disability and gender, the Council's applies it further - to age, religion and sexuality.

Many of our services are geared particularly to the needs of equality target groups. These include for example:

- advice and supportive action for people experiencing racial or homophobic harassment, or domestic violence
- adaptations for disabled people
- supported housing for a range of vulnerable groups
- concessionary repairs for older council tenants
- recreational facilities for younger residents.

However, we also need to make certain that mainstream services address specific needs too. This strategy has mentioned some of the ways we do this for example, by ensuring a proportion of new homes are for larger families who are more likely to be ethnic minority residents. The new-build programme includes wheelchair-accessible homes. Our offices are accessible to people with physical disabilities and we offer information in other formats such as large print or in other languages. Our resident participation mechanisms recognise, when arranging meetings, the needs of people with child care commitments or of older people who may not like to go out at night.

In order to gauge the equality impact of what we are doing, that is to identify any unfair outcomes and how to overcome barriers to equality, we have a programme of impact assessments of all new policies and services, significant changes to existing ones, or to ongoing services. In the next two years, this will include assessments of:

- new strategies - older people's housing and major adaptations strategies
- funding programmes - kitchens and bathrooms and new housing development
- existing service areas - housing register, homelessness, housing advice and income management.

Monitoring by race and disability is carried out in relation to key service areas. Perhaps the most critical area of monitoring relates to housing allocations which are analysed by race to ensure that ethnic minority households are receiving a fair share of available properties. Similarly, we analyse waiting times for disabled applicants to help assess whether their chances of rehousing are affected by a lack of suitable properties. This work helps to ensure that the policies themselves are not unintentionally discriminatory. Analysis indicates that allocations are broadly fair and waiting times consistent; however, there are some underlying problems, such as the shortage of social housing in areas which are preferred by ethnic minorities and shortage of wheelchair homes, which are difficult to resolve in the shorter term.

Other areas of the service are also carefully monitored but we recognise there are gaps – for example, in our monitoring of people by disability. We therefore want to extend monitoring, further develop performance indicators and set targets for improved performance in relation to critical service areas.

The Council has published its disability equality strategy (more widely referred to as the disability equality scheme), setting out a three-year action plan for undertaking research, to better understand the impact of policies, and for making improvements to services. Key housing-related actions are incorporated into this scheme.

We are working with other south-west London boroughs to develop a sub-regional BME housing strategy. Research has been undertaken, including a stakeholder event and collation of cross-borough needs data, to identify the key priorities which have informed the action plan. Working together, we will be:

- improving data collection and consultation with BME communities
- ensuring that all the work of the sub-region - homelessness, private sector renewal, choice-based lettings and so on - incorporates a BME dimension
- sharing good practice and agreeing common approaches.

As part of developing this strategy, we have carried out an equality impact assessment. This included consultation with Croydon Disability Forum, Mental Health Forum and BME Forum to identify the high level issues and barriers to equality. There are a number of other forums which provide opportunities for consultation and joint working on equality issues. These include the sheltered housing panel and disabled residents group; a number of partnership boards led by health and social services with representation from service users, carers and voluntary agencies; and corporate equality groups.

MAIN ACTIONS

- collect customer feedback through, for example, mystery shopping, satisfaction surveys and the Resident Checked Group, and act on findings
- make full use of electronic means of communication, for example on-line and intelligent application forms and methods of resident participation
- continue to produce information in written and alternative formats, and publish a range of newsletters
- undertake equality impact assessments of new policies and services, or of major changes
- produce and implement equality schemes in relation to race, disability and gender, and inform these through ongoing monitoring and consultation

MORE INFORMATION

- Equality Impact Assessment (Housing Strategy) 2006
- Croydon Disability Equality Strategy

Documents can be found at: www.croydon.gov.uk

CHAPTER 6 : **IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY**



CHAPTER 6 : IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed following ongoing research and consultation over the last few years. A draft document was circulated widely for comment and the final version was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 11 December 2006. It is not set in stone and will be reviewed on at least an annual basis and adapted to meet changes in circumstances, for example as new trends in need become apparent and legislation is introduced. We will also monitor the success of implementation closely, and review policies and services where outcomes are not as anticipated.

Priority Six: Implement and develop the housing strategy

This chapter sets out, firstly, the processes for performance monitoring, annual review and further development of the strategy, including some of the main consultation mechanisms and partnership arrangements. Secondly, and recognising that the aims and targets set out in the strategy are often very ambitious, it sets out how we will aim to be an efficient, cost-effective organisation which equips its staff with the resources and skills to meet the challenge.

Service planning and performance management

The strategy provides the overall steer and constant reference point for the housing service. It is brought to life largely through the annual service planning process which involves, at all levels of the organisation, setting out the work for the year ahead. This review, which links closely to the budget-setting process, provides the opportunity to evaluate current policies and services, and to assess the impact of new national or regional policies, opportunities, and of what is happening locally. The process also links in closely with corporate service planning and with updates to plans such as the Community Strategy which have a bearing on what we do. The service plan is filtered down to all staff via job reviews which ensure that responsibility for specific tasks and targets is allocated. In addition, specialist teams are charged with directing and reviewing progress, at a detailed level, of specific projects, programmes and contracts.

Throughout the year, performance against the plan is monitored and reviewed, through supervision of staff, a host of review groups, monthly financial reports, and through the performance management framework. This framework involves a number of performance indicators which can act as warning lights to the senior management team. The indicators are considered on a monthly or quarterly basis and action taken where necessary. Most of these are locally set ones but they also include the best value indicators (BVPIs) which are brought together in the Council's Performance Plan. Performance monitoring and service review frequently involves customers and partners, for example the quarterly Performance Monitoring Group (involving residents from the Housing Sounding Board) and Racial Harassment Group (involving RSLs).

An extensive partnership structure ensures that ongoing dialogue takes place. It provides the opportunity for the Council to keep its ear to the ground and find out what is happening whether in terms of changing need, the success of policies, resident and customer views and aspirations, and ideas for how we can improve or better meet needs. And it ensures that we are working in tandem with partner agencies, making the best use of our pooled resources and applying a consistent approach. In this vein we are contributing to the work in the Council to achieve Beacon Status for increasing voluntary and community sector service delivery.

Strategy development

We have in place a comprehensive information-gathering and consultation programme to aid our understanding and provide a basis for joint working with partners. This includes, firstly, ongoing monitoring of people applying to us for, and receiving, services to establish levels and types of demand; this is accompanied by ethnic and other diversity monitoring to assess the fairness of access or to highlight specific needs. Secondly, we carry out one-off or periodic surveys and pieces of research into housing need. The major surveys anticipated in the next year or so are the housing need survey (or housing market assessment) and rolling council stock condition survey. However, there will be a range of more specific surveys, for example of single homeless people.

Thirdly, we are continuously undertaking customer satisfaction surveys. Again, this will involve larger surveys such as the tenant satisfaction survey (for the BVPI) as well as smaller ones involving people receiving particular services. Fourthly, we will continue to do audits of good practice in other organisations and benchmarking of performance.

And finally, a wide spectrum of arrangements exists for consulting residents, partners and other stakeholders in order, for example, to work up or test out ideas, decide priorities, and agree or reject proposals. These include forums of particular types of partner with common remits, such as the housing associations strategic group and private sector forum (landlords); special interest groups involving different kinds of organisation, such as the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group and Supporting People Inclusive Forum; and resident groups such as the community housing panels, Stock Investment Working Group, and community action plan forums. Each year, we hold a conference bringing together all stakeholders to discuss major issues or themes. The Housing Service is also represented on a number of other forums which are led by other departments or organisations, such as partnership boards dealing with services for disabled and older people, and social inclusion, and the domestic violence joint planning team. A list of these groups and forums is provided in the supporting document *Partnership Structure*.

Equipping the workforce

In recognition of the value the Council puts on its staff, we are formally recognised as an Investor in People. A survey of all council staff in 2005 showed that housing officers have a good understanding of the objectives of the service. We have an ongoing training programme to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge needed to do their jobs, and various briefing and consultation mechanisms including information cascades from senior managers to all staff, team meetings, six-monthly managers forums, and the staff newsletter *Housing Matters*.

Increasing efficiency

Perhaps the single most important thing affecting our ability to provide an excellent service and implement this strategy is the level of resources.

Croydon already has a good track record on providing value for money. The cost of our housing management service, in 2004/05, was the fourth lowest in London. We compare our performance against that of other boroughs using best value performance indicators and are using the Audit Commission's upper thresholds as targets. During the last year, we collected 97.7% of rent from tenants, the 7th highest score in London, and are aiming to increase this to 98% from 2007/08. In January 2006, rent arrears stood at their lowest level in nine years. This history of continuous improvement has been achieved through dedicated income recovery officers, a strong management focus, a performance culture (for example, through competition between income teams in the different districts), close liaison with the housing benefit service, and use of technology such as SMS texting. In order to achieve further improvement, we have since September 2006 required advance rent payments equal to two weeks' gross rent from the point of tenancy sign-up, and we will be trialling an increase in income officers to see if this brings about a corresponding increase in rent income.

The 2004 Gershon Review identified the need and scope for public sector efficiency savings in relation to “back office” spending such as procurement, transactions and policy-making, in order to free up more resources for front-line services. Further to this, the Government required local authorities and other bodies to identify cashable or non-cashable (increasing outputs for the same funding) efficiencies. In 2005/06, Croydon was securing £952,000 worth of savings on housing-related expenditure. This was achieved through: developing alternative models of temporary accommodation for homeless households; decommissioning supported housing services which met neither local need nor quality standards; and centralisation and new partnering contracts in relation to the repairs service.

Other indicators of efficiency include:

- temporary accommodation costs have been falling in Croydon at a time when they were rising elsewhere in London
- the effective delivery of the housing association development programme led to £20m funding over and above the base programme
- government Supporting People data for 2003/04 showed that the unit costs of supported housing in Croydon were well below the London average and only slightly above the national average.

In 2006/07, we anticipate we will achieve a further £1.6m of annual savings bringing the total to over £2.5m. This will include savings from the new customer contact arrangements, from re-configuring some supported housing services to either cut costs or assist more service users at the same cost, and through the ongoing responsive repairs partnering contract.

Ongoing consultation on the strategy

We welcome comments on this strategy from residents, partner agencies and other stakeholders. Contact details are given in the box, top right of this page. The action plan will be updated annually throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

COMMENTING ON THE STRATEGY

If you would like to make any comments on this strategy, or you would like more copies, please contact:

**Strategy & Communication Section
Housing Department
Taberner House
Park Lane
Croydon CR9 1DH**

email: hsg-strategy@croydon.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1 : **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**



APPENDIX 1 : GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affordable

Non-market housing provided to those whose needs are not met by the market. This includes two sub-categories: social housing, where rent levels are set in line with the Government's rent restructuring regime and intermediate housing which includes a mix of low cost home ownership and other reduced cost housing for rent.

Barker Report

Review of Housing Supply, published in 2004, sets out the findings of a government-commissioned review, led by Kate Barker, into the issues underlying lack of supply and responsiveness of housing, and a number of recommendations for increasing supply of both market and affordable housing and creating a more stable housing market.

BME

Black and/or ethnic minority.

BME RSL

A registered social landlord (see below), the board of which is made up of at least 80% of people from BME communities.

Community Action Plan (CAP)

A plan of action led by local residents to ensure integrated services on estates in line with the priorities of council tenants, leaseholders and other residents on council estates.

Croydon Plan

Croydon's replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted in July 2006.

Choice-based lettings

A system for allocating social housing which allows applicants to express their preferences and make decisions about the kind of home they want to live in and amount of time they feel able to wait.

Decent Home Standard

This is a national standard which requires homes to be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. Homes are assessed against four different elements: heating, unfitness, disrepair and age of facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Communities and Local Government (CLG)

The government department responsible for housing, regional and local government, and regeneration.

Development Planning Document (DPD)

A planning document, independently examined by an inspector, which forms part of the development plan for the area. DPDs will replace UDP policies and contain the key planning policies used in deciding planning applications.

Disabled facilities grant (DFG)

A grant available from the Council for disabled people who need to carry out aids and adaptations to their home in order to manage. There is a means-test for adult applicants. The Government funds local authorities to provide these grants on the basis that the authorities match-fund them.

Eco-home standard

A rating system which assesses homes in relation to their potential impact on the environment for example usage of energy, water and materials and propensity to create pollution or promote health.

Gershon Review

A review by Sir Peter Gershon into public sector efficiency. Recommendations for greater efficiency relate to back office, procurement, transaction service and policy-making functions, and to increasing the productive time of frontline professionals.

HomeBuy

A range of low-cost home ownership products to help first-time buyers get a foot on the property ladder. The products include: New Build HomeBuy (shared ownership with a housing association); Open Market HomeBuy, where someone part-buys a property and gets a loan from a housing association for the rest; and Social HomeBuy, where housing association and local authority tenants are helped to buy their current home.

House in multiple occupation (HMO)

A dwelling which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household. This includes bedsits, shared houses, households with lodgers, hostels, bed and breakfast hotels, and converted houses.

HMO fitness standard

HMOs are measured against the general fitness standard (see unfit housing below) and the HMO standard set out in S352 of the 1985 Housing Act. To meet the standard and be fit for human habitation, dwellings have to meet a range of criteria, relating, amongst other things, to facilities for food preparation and bathing, and means of escape in the event of fire.

HouseProud

A scheme which enables home owners to borrow money against their property, which becomes payable when they move out or die and the property is sold on, and which enables them to carry out home improvements or adaptations.

Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS)

A system for assessing risks and hazards which replaces the former minimum standard a property should reach to be deemed fit (fitness standard).

Lifetime Home Standard

The standard incorporates 16 design standards in relation to, for example, space, level access and suitability for future adaptation, that make homes more flexible, convenient, safe and accessible, and that accommodate the changing needs of occupants throughout their lives.

Local area agreement (LAA)

Local area agreements are agreements between central and local government with the aim of achieving local solutions that meet local needs, whilst also contributing to national priorities and standards set by central government. They also aim to improve local performance and enhance efficiency.

Local Development Framework

In future, this will replace the Unitary Development Plan. Instead of a single plan, it will comprise a number of separate planning documents - Local Development Documents - covering different aspects of planning policy.

Local public service agreement (LPSA)

An LPSA is a voluntary agreement between the Government and an individual local authority whereby the council agrees to a number of 'stretch' targets - relating to public service improvements in return for central government grant and/or additional freedoms and flexibilities (from statutory requirements or regulation).

Market Housing

Unsubsidised private sector housing to buy or rent on the open market.

Notify

An IT system which enables local authorities placing homeless households in temporary accommodation to notify various statutory agencies (social services, education and health) in the host borough (where the accommodation is located).

Registered social landlord (RSL)

Social landlords which are registered with the Housing Corporation. In Croydon, these are all housing associations.

Section 106 agreements

An agreement made between the local authority and property developers requiring an input which is of benefit to the community. This may be by using a proportion of the site for affordable housing or a payment to develop affordable housing elsewhere, or a requirement to build a community amenity such as a school or leisure facility.

Shared ownership

A form of ownership, which is more affordable to people on lower incomes or limited resources, whereby the purchaser buys only a part of the home and pays rent on the remainder to a registered social landlord which has built the home or which will buy the remaining part if it is an existing property. The resident can choose, over a period of time, to increase the proportion s/he owns.

Social housing

Housing provided by either the council or a registered social landlord at an affordable rent (below the market rent level).

Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating

A government-specified dwelling energy rating. It is based on the calculated annual energy cost for space and water heating. It assumes a standard occupancy pattern based on floor area. The rating uses a 1 to 100 scale, and the higher the number, the better the rating.

Sustainable community

The government defines this as meeting a number of success criteria including: a flourishing local economy, strong leadership, effective participation by residents, voluntary and business sectors, safe and healthy environment and public spaces, good transport, adaptable buildings, decent homes of mixed tenure, good quality public services including education and leisure, a diverse and vibrant culture, community pride and "sense of place".

Unfit housing

Housing which does not meet the minimum fitness standard set out in S604 of the 1985 Housing Act, meaning it is not fit for human habitation. Fitness is measured against a range of criteria, all of which must be met, relating, amongst other things, to structural stability, state of repair, amenities such as bathroom and kitchen facilities, and provision of lighting and services such as water and drainage. This standard has been replaced in 2006 by the housing health and safety rating system. See also the HMO fitness standard.

APPENDIX 2 : **HOUSING ACTION PLAN**



PRIORITY 1 : MAXIMISE THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING AND MEET HOUSING NEED

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When	Who	Funding source
Objective 1.1 ~ Increase the supply and range of housing to help meet local needs					
To ensure that more people can be housed in affordable social rented and shared ownership homes	<p>Deliver 2006/08 housing programme of £35m to produce 393 new affordable homes, including 268 social rented, 14 rented at intermediate rent levels, and 111 new homes for low cost home ownership</p> <p>Deliver 34 council-built homes in 2008/09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ deliver housing programmes for the Council and the Housing Corporation to maximise new additional homes produced by registered social landlord (RSL) partners ■ ensure RSLs identify development opportunities for funding that meet local, sub-regional and regional priorities ■ maximise funding for new housing by managing a pipeline of schemes to encompass new in-year bids ■ pilot a council new-build programme and evaluate benefits in relation to other social rented programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ ongoing ■ 2006 - 2008 ■ 2007/09 	DD (F&I)	NAHP HIP London Mayor
To promote a balanced housing market that enables people to access good quality homes in the tenure of their choice	Contribute to the London Mayor's housing provision target for London, including through new build, non-self contained units and empty properties brought back to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify and allocate sufficient supply of land in the Local Development Framework in order to maximize housing supply ■ promote quality, security, flexibility and accessibility in new housing and pursue a balanced mix of dwelling size, tenure and type to meet local needs through preparation and adoption of local planning policies and the development control process. ■ negotiate section 106 agreement terms with developers to maximise overall provision of affordable housing and ensure the appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure to meet local needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 	DD (F&I) DDP	NAHP
To ensure housing is available to meet a range of specific needs	<p>Minimum of 35% of new social rented homes to have 3 or more bedrooms</p> <p>100% of new council homes to have 3 and 4 bedrooms</p> <p>15% of new developments to be led by BME RSLs</p> <p>10% new homes accessible to, or adaptable for, people using wheelchairs</p> <p>100% of new homes to meet lifetime home standard where feasible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop a larger homes strategy to address overcrowding, including by implementing an extension and conversion programme (12 homes), prioritising larger homes on council and RSL owned land, and identifying suitable sites ■ work with BME RSLs and their mainstream partners to ensure new housing meets the needs of BME households ■ work with strategic and preferred partner RSLs to increase the level of wheelchair homes within the new build programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/07 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/07 	DD (F&I)	NAHP

Objective 1.2 ~ Make the best use of existing homes

To meet housing need by bringing empty private sector properties back into use	Return 650 private sector empty homes back into use between April 2006 and April 2009	■ 2006/10	DD (PS)	GF SWL
Reduce the proportion of properties which are empty to 2.5%, and empty for more than 6 months to 1%, by 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ implement measures set out in the newly revised Empty Property Strategy, including enforcement action and compulsory purchase orders, empty property hotline, using planning powers, and, potentially, using empty dwelling management orders ■ work with south west London boroughs to make successful bids for funding to reduce empty homes through the use of empty home grants 	■ 2006/08		SWL
Reduce the proportion of longer-term empty homes to the London average by 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ work with RSL partners to identify run-down properties suitable for development and flats above shops to help regenerate district centres 	■ 2006/10		

To meet housing need by promoting mobility and making the best use of existing social housing	Enable 450 social rented tenants a year to move to homes which better meet their needs through transfers, mutual exchanges and mobility schemes	■ 2006/10	DD (N&R)	HIP HRA London Mayor
Participate in pan-London choice-based lettings scheme by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provide increased incentives to under-occupying Council and HA tenants to move to smaller homes, through the Special Transfer Payment scheme ■ pilot enhanced under-occupation payments to tenants in homes with four or more bedrooms and assess success ■ encourage and enable transfers and mutual exchanges between tenants 	■ 2006/10		
Reduce the average time to re-let empty council homes to 30 days from 2007/08 and 28 days by 2008/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ operate the Fresh Start scheme to assist households to move to social housing tenancies and, in future, private sector tenancies, in other parts of the country ■ participate in the introduction of a bidding model for cross-borough choice-based lettings scheme ■ implement measures to reduce voids in council stock, by pre-allocating properties, making offers of properties available for letting within 3 days in 85% of cases, and ensuring quick take-up of properties 	■ 2006/10		
No more than 150 empty council homes at any one time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ implement measures to reduce voids in council stock, by pre-allocating properties, making offers of properties available for letting within 3 days in 85% of cases, and ensuring quick take-up of properties 	■ 2006/07		

Objective 1.3 ~ Promote a range of housing options to help people meet their needs

Help more people move into private rented housing, reduce the use of temporary accommodation and minimise stays in B&B accommodation	Achieve the Government's target of a 50% reduction in households in temporary accommodation by December 2010	■ 2006/10	DD (N&R)	CLG GF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ continue to develop temporary accommodation schemes that are cost effective and give access to good quality private sector accommodation, through private sector leasing, Sponsored Tenancy Scheme, and market rent scheme 			

Ensure that no family remains in B&B accommodation for more than 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop schemes to assist households in urgent need of accommodation to access private rented housing, through deposits for single homeless people, new deposit loan and bond schemes, rent in advance scheme and a placement scheme for care leavers 	2006/07	DD (N&R)	GF CLG SSD
Reduce the number of households in B&B at any one time to 10 by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly review the temporary accommodation strategy and monitor progress against reduction targets 	2006/10		
Reduce the average length of stay in B&B to 10 days for families and single people by 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage households in suitable private sector temporary accommodation to take up qualifying offers 	2006/10		CLG
100 households a year accept qualifying offers of private sector accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage hostel bedspaces for single homeless people effectively, through partnership working and the Hostel Placement Co-ordinator subject to funding, increase by four the number of pitches on the existing site for gypsies and travellers 	2008		CLG
To help more low income households into home ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 270 low cost homes through the Open Market HomeBuy programme for key workers and other households in need in 2006/08 Complete 379 low cost homes through New Build HomeBuy for other households in need in 2006/08 	2006/10	DD (N&R)	LAP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay incentive grants to council tenants, under the APPS scheme, to buy homes on the open market and release homes for social renting for people on lower incomes work with the zone agent and local employers to deliver the Open Market HomeBuy programme for key workers and other priority groups, including council tenants, housing register applicants and households in temporary accommodation pilot Social HomeBuy and evaluate 	2006/10	DD (F&I)	Homebuy / Key worker Living Prog

Objective 1.4 ~ Prevent homelessness and increase social inclusion of homeless people

Reduce the number of people made homeless through prevention measures and housing advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent homelessness in 20% of cases and defer homelessness in 40% of cases of applicants approaching the Council Secure an annual 5% reduction in the number made homeless against the 3 main causes of homelessness 	2006/10	DD (N&R)	CLG GF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support a range of initiatives, set out in the Homelessness Strategy, including family mediation and home visits, prevention of eviction in the private sector, the Sanctuary Project, single homeless surgeries, HAP<25, outreach sessions, schemes to prevent homelessness by enabling access to private rented accommodation, and general housing advice review the homelessness strategy 	2007/08		

<p>Achieve, by 2009, a 27% reduction in homelessness arising from exclusion from the homes of parents, relatives and friends, amongst families with children and young people (LPSA target)</p> <p>At least 7 homelessness cases prevented by council intervention per 1,000 households in borough (BVPI 213)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ promote joint work and protocols with the Prison Service, Probation Service, Community Groups, private landlords, Drug & Alcohol Action Team, the Leaving Care and Independence Service, hospitals and the Adult Mental Health Service to prevent and reduce homelessness ■ resource work to reduce homelessness among families with children and young people to meet LPSA target ■ manage a programme of grants to support housing advice and homelessness prevention work undertaken by voluntary organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/07 ■ 2006/10 	<p>LPSA</p> <p>CLG GF</p>
<p>Ensure that all people entitled to help with their rent receive housing benefit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use new technology to enhance service to claimants and increase efficiency, including a trial calculator and on-line applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 	<p>HB</p>
<p>To reduce repeat homelessness and the risk of social exclusion by providing support to homeless people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ review and develop role of the Temporary Accommodation Resettlement service and homeless families floating support service to ensure effective support for homeless households ■ develop system of support needs assessments and co-ordinate the provision of support for single homeless people and people moving from supported housing ■ commission a new floating support service for vulnerable single people, including single homeless, rehoused in permanent or private sector accommodation ■ implement actions to ensure effective referral processes and high take up of housing support services for vulnerable homeless people ■ review effectiveness of referral and liaison protocols with substance misuse agencies, hospitals, prisons and probation ■ continue to use the Notify system to pass details of homeless households to other statutory services and ensuring continuing health, education and social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/08 ■ 2006/08 ■ 2006/07 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/08 ■ 2006/10 	<p>CLG GF SP</p> <p>DD (N&R)</p> <p>CLG GF SP</p>
<p>Ensure that rough sleepers are contacted, advised and helped into appropriate housing so they do not have to live on the streets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ work with a range of agencies to provide outreach services, emergency accommodation, move-on, referral to specialist provision and action to address related crime or begging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 	<p>DD (F&I)</p> <p>GF SP</p>

PRIORITY 2 : ENABLE VULNERABLE PEOPLE TO LEAD INDEPENDENT LIVES

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When	Who	Funding source
Objective 2.1 ~ Implement the Supporting People Strategy and ensure a wide range of quality supported housing services					
Increase the number of vulnerable people with support needs receiving housing-related support	Implement the Supporting People Commissioning Plan & procure the maximum number of new services in accordance with government grant levels and strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fund a wide range of housing support services for the full range of client groups with support needs, and develop a procurement programme to utilise increased grant funding for a range of services through the Supporting People framework, develop more independent forms of accommodation for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems to reduce reliance on inappropriate residential care update the commissioning plan taking into account new needs, changing priorities (based on ongoing research, updated needs data and scheme review findings) and funding, including the Government's new distribution mechanism for awarding grant to local authorities 	2006/10	DD (SSI)	SP
	Increase the number of housing-related support units from the current level of 3,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> procure new floating support services for care leavers, older people with learning disabilities and people moving from supported housing to settled accommodation 	2006/07		SP CLG
	Provide floating or resettlement support to 100% of people moved from supported housing to new housing developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconfigure an accommodation-based scheme for ex-offenders to increase number of people supported from 12 to 33 (new element to be both accommodation-based and floating support) 	2006/07		SP
	Increase access to supported housing for people with substance misuse histories, from current level of 104 a year to 115 in 2006/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconfigure the scheme for homeless people with mental health problems to support an additional 30 people at any one time complete a new-build scheme for care leavers 	2006/07		SP SP/ADP
Ensure all supported housing schemes funded by the Council are of good quality and good value for money	100% of schemes to score a minimum of C against all elements of the quality assessment framework by March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor standards and performance in supported housing and ensure quality through a programme of scheme reviews, provider accreditation, enforcement of contractual obligations, and benchmarking with other authorities 	2006/10	DD (SSI)	SP
	95% of schemes to score B against at least one element, and 75% to score B against all elements by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a performance management framework and culture of continuous improvement, to include performance indicators for measuring outcomes for service users and contribution to Community Strategy priorities (eg throughput & tenancy sustainment rates) 	2006/07		

100% of schemes to have a written quality improvement plan by March 2008

<p>Ensure that supported housing is made available to the people most in need, through fair access routes and timely move-on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rehouse supported housing residents into social housing through the new move-on process ■ increase access to the private rented sector by funding extra move-on services through CRIAS and CAYSH ■ work with providers to identify ways of reducing barriers to the private rented sector for residents moving with their own resources ■ introduce a new referral system for people applying for mental health supported housing services, with eligibility and prioritisation criteria ■ improve advice offered on supported housing and related services to potential service users, through a regularly updated local directory of Supporting People services and mystery shopping programme 	<p>2006/07 2006/07 2006/07</p>	<p>DD (SS)I DD (N&R) CLG GF</p>
<p>Reduce silt-up of short-term accommodation-based supported housing schemes (from 30% in 2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase level of move-on into council and housing association homes (from 54 in 2005) to 75 a year 	<p>2007/08</p>	
<p>Increase number of supported housing residents helped to move on into private tenancies to at least 100 a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase number of planned departures from short-term supported housing schemes (535, 555 and 575 in 06/07, 07/08 and 08/09 respectively) 	<p>2006/10</p>	

Objective 2.2 ~ Meet the housing needs of older and disabled people

<p>Enable older people, and people with disabilities and sensory impairments, to live independently in their own homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop an adaptations strategy with actions to make better use of resources and equipment, and to reduce assessment waiting times ■ fund a programme (worth £1.85m in 2006/07) of major adaptation works to the homes of council tenants and disabled facilities grants for private sector residents ■ support private sector residents through the process of applying for grants and/or getting adaptations work and home repairs through the Staying Put home improvement agency ■ deliver a range of schemes for older and disabled private residents, eg home re-arrangements to allow timely hospital discharges; security measures for older people (Safe Project); essential garden maintenance (Staying Put in the Garden); Muckbusters (cleaning up filthy & verminous homes); Croydon Careline, and handyperson services 	<p>2007/08 2006/10 2006/10</p>	<p>DD (PS) HRA DFG GF</p>
<p>Enable about 90 council tenants (120 in 2006/07) and 110 private sector occupants a year to get major aids and adaptations to their homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduce the time to carry out occupational therapy assessments of applicants for major adaptations 	<p>2006/10</p>	
<p>Enable 250 patients a year to leave hospital in a timely manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contribute to borough-wide target to increase the number of older people supported to live at home (to 80 per 1,000 of the population by 2008) 	<p>2006/10</p>	

<p>Offer a range of housing options to older people to meet different needs and preferences</p>	<p>Increase the provision of extra care (special sheltered) housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop a 40-unit extra care scheme as part of the New4Old project ■ develop an older people's housing strategy, based on projections of need, consultation with residents, and feasibility study of existing schemes ■ review existing sheltered housing model to identify ways in which existing provision can meet different needs eg for retirement housing, services to people in the wider community and services for people with special needs 	<p>2008</p> <p>2007/08</p> <p>2007/08</p>	<p>DD (SSI)</p> <p>SSD</p>
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Objective 2.3 ~ Contribute to, and influence, wider health and social inclusion plans and objectives

<p>Ensure housing and housing services promote and enable better health, independence and well-being, and reduce health inequalities</p>	<p>Incorporate targets into all relevant client-based plans to support the borough's health and social care strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop housing strategies for specific client groups including people with mental health problems and people with substance misuse histories ■ implement the learning disability and housing strategy ■ implement and monitor housing targets in various plans such as the children's and young people's plan and teenage pregnancy strategy 	<p>2007/09</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p>	<p>DD (SSI)</p>
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PRIORITY 3 : IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS TO ENSURE A DECENT HOME FOR ALL

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When - the timescale	Who - lead	Funding source
Objective 3.1 ~ Improve the quality of council homes					
To increase the number and proportion of homes that are warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities	85% of homes to meet the decent home standard in 2006/07, 88% in 2007/08, 92% in 2008/09 and 100% in 2010/11 The percentage change in the number of non-decent homes to be 12%, 20% and 33% respectively in the next three years 100% of homes to continue to be free of Category 1 hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ deliver annual major repairs and improvement programme, totalling £17m in 2006/07, and £89m over 5 years, for new kitchens and bathrooms, repairs and energy efficiency ■ continue with a major kitchen and bathroom modernisation programme ■ refurbish one sheltered housing scheme with bedsits in line with the sheltered housing quality standard ■ refurbish 54 Wates houses and 57 BISF homes ■ when carrying out major works, ensure compliance with Croydon's quality standard and sheltered housing quality standard (eg environmental and security works) ■ regular reviews of stock investment plan with residents ■ carry out options appraisals of small sites requiring very high levels of investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006 to 2010/11 ■ 2006 to 2010/11 ■ 2008/2009 ■ 2006/08 ■ 2006 to 2010 ■ annually ■ 2006/10 	DD (F&I)	HRA MRA
To keep council homes in a good state of repair in the most cost-effective way	Achieve efficiency target of £600,000 in 2006/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ undertake annual programme of responsive repairs (budget approx. £11m a year) ■ undertake annual programme of cyclical works (budget approx £900,000 a year) ■ compare ratio of responsive: planned repairs with best practice figures of 30:70 ■ streamline procedures and identify other efficiency measures under partnering contracts for responsive repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 	DD (F&I)	HRA
To ensure the health and safety of council tenants	All properties to be free of asbestos by March 2007 100% of stock to have an annual gas service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ complete the asbestos removal programme, removing asbestos from 380 properties ■ maintain current level of gas servicing and raise awareness among tenants of annual servicing requirement through publicity including leaflets and articles in Open House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/07 ■ 2006/10 	DD (F&I)	

Objective 3.2 ~ Improve the quality of private sector homes

<p>To increase the number and proportion of homes that are warm, weather-proof and have reasonably modern facilities</p>	<p>Bring about 460 homes up to the decent home standard a year.</p> <p>Increase the proportion of homes meeting the decent home standard from a baseline of between 37% and 54% in 2001/2002</p> <p>Bring about 280 homes occupied by vulnerable households up to the decent home standard a year, and increase the proportion of homes meeting the decent home standard from a baseline of between 45% and 61% in 2001/2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver the Housing Renewal Grants Programme and, in 2006/08, improve 514 homes at a cost of £3.033m ■ Award about 215 energy grants a year through Creative Environmental Networks ■ Award decent homes grants to about 7 accredited landlords a year ■ Promote HouseProud & encourage 50 owner-occupiers a year to fund improvements through equity release ■ Implement the new Housing Enforcement Policy and the new housing health and safety rating system, and take action to reduce hazards ■ Accredited landlords meeting appropriate standards under the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme ■ Inform and educate landlords through the Private Sector Housing Forum and landlord newsletter ■ ensure all homes receiving empty property grants or accepted into the sponsored tenancy scheme are brought up to the decent home standard, and homes taken on through the private sector leasing scheme made free of Category 1 hazards 	<p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p>	<p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p>	<p>GF</p> <p>SWL</p> <p>GF</p> <p>GF</p>
<p>Promote adequate standards in houses in multiple occupation</p>	<p>Licence about 150 HMOs, make 80 free of category 1 hazards, and bring a further 100 up to standard (including category 2 hazards), each year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ implement new HMO licensing legislation, introduce compulsory and discretionary licensing schemes, and transfer properties from the former local registration scheme ■ carry out a small programme of HMO grants, mainly for fire precautions works ■ continue to provide a 24-hour call-out service in conjunction with the Fire Brigade in the event of a fire in an HMO 	<p>from 2006/07</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p>	<p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p>	<p>GF</p> <p>GF</p> <p>GF</p>
<p>To ensure the health, safety and security of private sector residents</p>	<p>Safety and/or security measures installed for about 260 families with children a year</p> <p>Carry out fire safety audits in 500 homes a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ install safety measures to reduce the risk of accidents amongst families with under-5s through the Home Safety Service ■ conduct fire safety audits and fit smoke alarms on behalf of the Fire Brigade ■ repair and renew about 250 defective drains a year 	<p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p>	<p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p>	<p>GF</p> <p>GF</p> <p>GF</p>

Objective 3.3 ~ Improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes

<p>Improve energy efficiency in housing stock to reduce carbon emissions and air pollution</p>	<p>Improve domestic energy efficiency across all tenures in Croydon by 34% over 15 years to 2011</p> <p>Contribute to the London Mayor's energy efficiency target of ensuring that no home has a SAP rating below 30 by 2010 (from a baseline of 11% in 2002)</p> <p>Save 601 tonnes of carbon emissions through cavity wall and loft insulation from 2006 to 2009</p> <p>Contribute to achievement of UK air quality objective in Croydon of an annual average nitrogen dioxide level of 40 µg/m³</p> <p>Increase SAP rating in council stock to 72.3 by 2007, 73.2 by 2008, 73.9 by 2009, and 74.7 by 2010</p> <p>All new housing developments to reach the Ecohomes excellent standard, and larger developments to produce at least 10% of energy from renewable sources</p>	<p>Council stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ improve energy efficiency of homes through a programme of works including installation of central heating in 250 homes, fitting double glazing, over-cladding homes with solid walls, and upgrading loft insulation in 4,500 properties to ensure that all properties have loft insulation at least 200mm thick ■ Ensure upgraded condensing boilers meet nitrogen oxides class 5 rating ■ consider micro-renewable energy sources as part of refurbishment of a sheltered housing scheme ■ revise the energy and environmental strategy ■ provide advice to tenants eg through the advice pack, drop-in surgeries and training of resident "energy champions" ■ develop a new energy and environmental strategy <p>Private sector stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ improve the energy efficiency of about 215 homes through Coldbuster energy efficiency grants ■ provide advice to residents and enable them to access other funding sources, ie through CEN, for energy efficiency works ■ work with British Gas to provide cavity wall & loft insulation in about 500 privately owned homes ■ Ensure condensing boilers installed as a result of grants rated for energy efficiency <p>New housing stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use planning policy to place requirements on developers in relation to energy efficiency and encourage initiatives such as wind turbines and solar panels ■ provide advice for developers on cost-effective ways of meeting environmental standards through the website and CEN 	<p>March 2011</p> <p>2006/11</p> <p>2008/09</p> <p>2006/07</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>Summer 2007</p> <p>2006/08</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/07</p> <p>2006/11</p> <p>2006/10</p> <p>2006/10</p>	<p>DD (F&I)</p> <p>DD (PS)</p>
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PRIORITY 4 : DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND PROMOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When	Who - lead	Funding source
Objective 4.1 ~ Contribute to neighbourhood renewal and promote social inclusion					
To improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the borough and reduce gaps between these and other areas	200 private sector homes a year in NW Croydon to be made decent Most of the improvement in bringing social housing into decent condition to take place in neighbourhood renewal areas (ODPM PSA 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus resources for improving private sector housing conditions on NW Croydon, through HouseProud, Decent Homes and Healthy Croydon grants Focus most of the modernisation programme on neighbourhood renewal wards Support residents forum in New Addington and Fieldway to act as a sounding board for consultation on neighbourhood renewal initiatives Develop and support a new North West Croydon residents' forum in partnership with RSL partners to enable resident involvement in key decisions on the NW Croydon Regeneration Agency Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2006/10 2006/11 2006/10 2006/07 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD (PS) DD (F&I) DD (HM) DD (HM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GF HRA MRA
Objective 4.2 ~ Improve community safety and promote community cohesion					
To reduce crime and ensure that people feel safe in their local communities	Contribute to achievement of Safer Croydon Partnership target to reduce crime by 20% by 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the neighbourhood warden service to assess the effectiveness of the targeting of the service in the areas covered Carry out works to improve the design of open and communal spaces in Fieldway and reduce the fear of crime by installing maps at entrances to the estate and improving signage throughout the estate to improve safety and give a sense of place Fit security measures to the homes of older people through the SAFE project (350 homes a year) Deliver annual programme of £200k for fitting security doors to council properties Work with housing associations to ensure that new homes meet <i>Secured by Design</i> standards where possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2007/08 2006/10 2006/10 2006/10 2006/10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DD (HM) HRA DD (PS) DD (HM) DD (F&I) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NR Fund HRA

<p>To ensure that racial harassment, domestic violence and other hate crimes are tackled quickly and effectively</p>	<p>Follow-up action taken in response to 100% racial harassment incidents reported to the department</p> <p>Continue to achieve 90% compliance with BVPI 225 (range of actions and standards relating to tackling domestic violence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure an effective, multi-agency approach to tackling racial harassment through regular strategic meetings, involving the Council, RSLs, the police and local community organisations ■ Operate the Sanctuary Project with the police to install security measures in the homes of victims of domestic violence and other hate crimes ■ Extend the existing policy covering racial harassment involving council tenants to other hate crimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/07 	<p>DD (HM) DD (N&R)</p>
<p>Prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>Achieve a reduction in the fear of crime among council tenants from a 2002 baseline of 61%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tackle all cases of anti-social behaviour using a tool-box approach within timescales ■ Work more closely with housing associations, through sharing expertise, training and other resources, to ensure co-ordinated action in response to anti-social behaviour ■ Contribute to a joint strategic approach to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour through involvement in multi-agency forums such as the Corporate Community Protection Team, Anti-Social Behaviour Forum, Prolific and Priority Offender Steering Group and MAPPA ■ Hold a conference for residents and launch a new anti-social behaviour policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ Jan 2007 	<p>DD (HM) DD (N&R)</p>

Objective 4.3 ~ Promote sustainable communities that enhance residents' quality of life

<p>Improve housing management to meet residents' needs</p>	<p>95% of sites inspected assessed as 'good' against local cleaning standard</p> <p>Increase housing estate recycling sites to 100.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review delivery of housing management support services through neighbourhood wardens and neighbourhood caretakers ■ Introduce visits to new tenants to identify and record tenants' needs and assess ability to pay rent ■ pilot the extension of the neighbourhood warden service to housing association estates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2007/08 ■ 2006/07 ■ 2007/08 	<p>DD (HM)</p>
<p>Improve physical quality of neighbourhoods</p>	<p>95% of sites inspected assessed as 'good' against local cleaning standard</p> <p>Increase housing estate recycling sites to 100.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver annual programme of environmental improvements based on residents' priorities ■ Develop joint work with RSLs to achieve high standards of cleanliness and environmental sustainability on housing estates, and assess the potential to market council cleaning and housing management services to RSLs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ By July 2007 	<p>DD (HM) HIRA</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Involve neighbourhood caretakers and wardens in reporting environmental issues, such as abandoned cars, graffiti, grass cutting and grounds maintenance, and monitoring contractors' performance 	■ 2006/10		NF/GF
Engage residents and support community development to improve local services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase number of CAPs to ten by 2010 	■ 2006/10	DD (HM)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase youth housing forums to five by 2010 	■ 2006/07		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase membership of credit union by 100 by March 2007 	■ 2006/10		Lottery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further develop Community Action Plan (CAP) programme to promote public participation and enable residents to have a stake in their community. 	■ 2006/07		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-launch Community Development Forum to coordinate work of agencies and joint community projects 	■ 2006/10		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seek funding for new playgrounds and multi-use games areas on estates and increase activities for young people such as youth clubs and supervised sports sessions on estates in partnership with Youth Service where appropriate 	■ 2006/10		HIRA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase engagement of young people through youth forums and develop effective borough-wide youth forum 	■ 2006/10		HIRA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support delivery of youth provision strategy for NW Croydon and Fieldway/New Addington 	■ 2006/10		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote membership of credit union among residents 	■ 2006/10		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide annual grants totalling £20,000 to support local organisations in community development in New Addington and Fieldway 	■ 2006/10		NIR/HIRA

Objective 4.4 ~ Improve opportunities for participation and consultation among residents

Ensure tenants, leaseholders and other estate residents are actively involved in how estates are managed and services delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase satisfaction with opportunities for participation (BVPI 75) by 10% 	■ each at specific intervals	DD (HM)	HIRA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase membership of the Housing Sounding Board to 1,100 by 2008 (from baseline of 950 in 2006) 	■ March 2008		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethnic profile of HSB members to match community profile (each ethnic grouping to within 10 percentage points) 	■ 2006/10		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote Croydon's good practice on involving tenants through beacon days for other councils and landlords 	■ 2006/07		

PRIORITY 5 : PROMOTE BETTER AND FAIR ACCESS TO HOUSING SERVICES

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When	Who - lead	Funding source
Objective 5.1 ~ Achieve a high level of customer care and satisfaction with services					
Ensure customers receive prompt and efficient responses to enquiries and are dealt with sensitively and courteously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the proportion of phone calls dealt with by the contact centre to 60% by 2007 100% of letters to be answered within 15 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to transfer appropriate housing functions and activities into the contact centre continue to train contact centre advisers and to provide information necessary to handling calls directly use information from the new Qmatic system in the reception in providing an efficient service undertake a programme of mystery shopping to monitor customer care comply with performance standards in the customer charter in relation to letters, phone calls and office visits undertake a programme of customer care and equality awareness training for frontline staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing 2006/10 2006/10 2006/10 2006/10 2006/10 	DD (SSI)	HRA GF
Make full use of new technology to increase the accessibility of information and services for customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with National e-Service Delivery Standards 100% of transactions to be capable of electronic service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop online interactive services, including housing applications, repairs reporting and resident consultation, and develop use of intelligent forms review the structure and content of the website, and manage content increase efficiency through mobile working devices and electronic storage of documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2006/10 2006/07 ongoing 2007/08 	DD (SSI)	GF HRA
Ensure that customers and stakeholders have up-to-date written information on housing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a range of publications and newsletters for residents, local RSLs, private sector tenants and landlords, in plain English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce <i>Open House, Leasehold News, Sheltered Housing News, Jigsaw, Landlords News, Housing Advice News</i> and the <i>Supporting People Newsletter</i> Offer leaflets and publications in a range of formats that meet diverse needs where costs permit Refer all new customer literature to the <i>Resident Checked Group</i> for input and approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> each at specific intervals, ongoing 2006/10 	All DDs	GF HRA
Ensure that customers feel satisfied with housing services and can influence how they are provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase satisfaction with housing services to 76% of all tenants, 75% of BME tenants and 80% of white tenants (BVPI 74) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out local research into customer opinion, such as exit surveys and focus groups operate a formal complaints system and ensure prompt responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2006/10 2006/10 	DD (SSI)	GF HRA

100% of Stage 1 complaints to be answered within 20 days, and Stage 2 complaints within 25 days

Objective 5.2 ~ Promote equality and diversity in service delivery

Ensure housing services are fair, promote equality and meet anti-discrimination legal duties	implement requirements of race and disability discrimination legislation and implement action plans under the Council's	annual reviews	All DDs
Achieve minimum of level 4 against original Equality Standard (BVPI 3) by 2008	- Disability Equality Scheme	2006/10	
Comply with the CRE's Code of Practice on rented housing and Code of Practice on racial harassment (BVPI 164)	- Gender Equality Scheme	2007/10	
	- Race Equality Scheme	2006/10	
Publish housing action plan as part of the Council's Disability Equality Scheme (by December 2006) and Gender Equality Scheme (April 2006)	conduct equality impact assessments of all new policies and services in relation to race, disability and gender	2006/10	
	monitor allocations of housing by ethnicity, disability, special needs/vulnerability, and household type and review policies where evidence of inequality	2006/10	
Housing allocations fair for all ethnic groups (ethnic profile of applicants to match that of people rehoused)	improve equality monitoring and establish a set of equality performance indicators relating to key service areas	2007/08	
	monitor performance against the new Equality Standard	2006/07	
	analyse all customer and housing need surveys by equality target groups	2006/10	
	Ensure needs of vulnerable groups are considered in pan-London Choice bidding model	pan-London timetable	

Objective 5.3 ~ Improve opportunities for participation and consultation among customers

Ensure non-tenant customers are involved and consulted on how services are delivered	include relevant residents of all tenures in consultation mechanisms and forums relating to how council-owned estates are managed	2006/10	DD (HM)
Hold one private tenants conference and two Supporting People Inclusive Forums (one being a joint south-west London event) a year	maintain a range of participation structures including the private tenants forum, Supporting People Inclusive Forum, and resident involvement in supported housing scheme reviews	2006/10	All DDs

PRIORITY 6 : IMPLEMENT AND DEVELOP THE HOUSING STRATEGY

Why - the aim	What - the target	How - the means	When	Who - lead
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Objective 6.1 ~ Implement, review and update the Strategy

<p>Ensure that the objectives of the strategy are met and that they continue to reflect the borough's priorities</p>	<p>Produce monthly and quarterly performance data on critical and best value performance indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ involve managers and staff in developing the annual housing service plan, which includes key objectives and targets for housing ■ set annual budgets in accordance with resources available, and strategy and service plan objectives and priorities ■ produce regular data and reports to enable monitoring and management of performance across all areas of service delivery ■ hold regular review/project groups to direct and monitor performance against specific service areas and to review programmes in relation to relevant factors such as changing needs or opportunities ■ involve customers and residents in performance management mechanisms ■ review progress against the housing strategy action plan on an annual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 	<p>DD (F&I) All DDs</p>
<p>Ensure that the strategy is based on sound, up-to-date information</p>	<p>Housing strategy continues to be Fit for Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ commission a housing need survey/housing market assessment ■ carry out a rolling council stock condition survey ■ undertake a programme of research including surveys into housing needs, resident and customer views and priorities, and benchmarking with other organisations, and including information about equality target groups ■ assess implications of emerging national and regional policy relating to housing, and contribute to wider borough plans such as the Community Strategy, and crime, neighbourhood renewal and health plans ■ produce an assessment of and strategy for meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers (through GLA commissioned research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2007/08 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2006/10 ■ 2007/08 	<p>All DDs</p>

Consult on the Housing Strategy and involve stakeholders in its development and implementation	Hold an annual stakeholder consultative conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilise a range of consultation forums and exercises to seek the views on key issues and priorities of all stakeholders including residents, service users and partner agencies, and involve stakeholders in developing proposals, plans, policies and procedures 	2006/10	All DDs
Ensure staff are equipped to implement the Council's plans	Retain Investors in People status in 2007 Job reviews and learning plans completed for 100% staff annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake a programme of training & development communicate plans to staff through monthly cascades, regular one-to-one and team meetings, and <i>Housing Matters</i> newsletter 	2006/10 2006/10	All DDs
Work effectively with partners to meet local and wider strategic priorities	Completion of updated south-west London housing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a range of local partnerships with other statutory bodies, advocacy groups, service providers and contractors ensure housing service representation at forums led by other departments or agencies eg partnership boards and Healthy Croydon Partnership, and ensure co-ordination between the housing strategy and other borough plans work with other boroughs in the South West London Housing Partnership on joint funding programmes, a revised sub-regional strategy, development of common approaches and of co-ordinated solutions to cross-borough needs, and sharing of good practice work with the GLA and other boroughs in London, attend regional forums, and work with the ALG to lobby the national government on behalf of the capital Review housing elements and targets of the Community Strategy annually, and monitor progress four-monthly 	2006/10 2006/10 2006/10	All DDs

Objective 6.2 ~ Increase efficiency and maximise resources for strategic actions

To offer good value for money and cost effectiveness and enable available resources to go further	Achieve efficiency savings of £2.54m in 2006/07 and a minimum of this in following years, including savings achieved in earlier years which are sustained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to seek opportunities for savings on back office functions such as procurement and transactions in order to release resources for direct service delivery, and produce annual efficiency statements bring about, or sustain, savings in relation to temporary accommodation, Supporting People, council stock investment and customer contact facilities manage HRA, General Fund and HIP budgets in line with corporate guidelines 	2006/10 2006/10 2006/10	All DDs
To maximise income from resident charges	Increase proportion of rent collected to 98% in 2007/08 onwards (BVPI 66a) Increase collection rate of service charges to 90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain the strong focus on rent collection through dedicated teams and new initiative of advance rent payments work with new external contractor to send out service charge invoices and chase payments and arrears to prescribed timescales 	2006/07 2006/10	DD (HM)

KEY

Funding source:

HRA – Housing Revenue Account

GF – General fund

NAHP – National Affordable Housing Programme

LAP – local authority programme (capital investment)

HIP – Housing Investment Programme

CLG – Communities and Local Government department (grant to council)

SP – Supporting People

HB – Housing Benefit

SSD – Social Services Department

MRA – Major Repairs Allowance

SWL – south-west London (sub-regional capital allocation)

ADP – Approved Development Programme

NR – Neighbourhood Renewal funding

Lead officers:

DD (N&R) – Divisional Director (Needs and Resources)

DD (HM) – Divisional Director (Housing Management)

DD (PS) – Divisional Director (Private Sector)

DD (F&I) – Divisional Director (Finance & Investment)

DD (SSI) – Divisional Director (Strategy & Service Improvement)

All DDs – all divisional directors of housing

DDP – Divisional Director of Planning (Urban Regeneration)



**For a copy of this document in large print
please contact the Strategy and Communications
Section in the Housing Department on 020 8726 6100
or email: elaine.wadsworth@croydon.gov.uk**