

## Cabinet Member Report

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012

**Subject:** Social Housing Supply and Allocation 2012/13

### Summary

This annual report reviews the demand for and supply of social rented housing and low-cost home ownership in 2011/12, and considers supply and demand projections for 2012/13.

The report also makes proposals for the allocation of the supply of social housing in 2012/13 to meet the Council's statutory obligations, meet the varying demands for social housing and to reduce the numbers of people living in Temporary Accommodation who are waiting for social housing.

In particular the report sets out:

- Projected supply and the proposed allocation of social housing for 2012/13.
- An update on the supply of future temporary and social housing
- How new flexibilities relating to the allocation of housing will be made use of, in particular the power to discharge duty into the private rented sector

### Recommendations

- (i) The projected supply and proposed allocation of rented housing, as discussed in paragraph 3.1 and set out in Appendices A, B and B1, be noted
- (ii) The response to the change in Housing Allocations Policy set out in the Localism Bill as set out in paragraph 5.1 is agreed
- (iii) The changes to the Allocations Scheme set out in paragraph 5.1.6 in response to the pan London mobility scheme, 'housing-moves', are approved
- (iv) Specify that clients on the single homeless pathway In line with single homeless applicants bidding through choice based lettings will have a time-limited period in which to bid after which a direct offer will be made as set out in paragraph 5.1.6
- (v) The SBHA youth employment scheme pilot described in paragraph 4.3.10 is supported as a means of increasing employment and resolving overcrowding



City of Westminster

## Cabinet Member Report

Date:	22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2012
Classification:	FOR GENERAL RELEASE
Title of Report:	Supply and Allocation of Social Housing and Low Cost Home Ownership 2012/13
Report of:	Director of Housing
Wards involved:	All
Policy context:	To promote the quality of life for Westminster citizens by working with all our partners to improve the housing experience of our residents and the safety and social care of vulnerable people and their families
Financial summary:	The gross Housing General Fund homelessness budget for 2012-13 is £56m and includes £49 m for the provision of temporary accommodation. The net budget for homelessness is £2.9 m and for temporary accommodation is £4.4 m
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## **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 The supply and allocation of social housing report is published in March each year and reviews the demand for and supply of social rented housing and low-cost home ownership in current year, and considers supply and demand projections for the following year.
- 1.2 The report also makes proposals for the allocation of the supply of social housing in 2012/13 to meet the Council's statutory obligations, meet the varying demands for social housing and reduce the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.
- 1.3 In particular the report sets out:
  - Projected supply and the proposed allocation of social housing for 2012/13.
  - An update on the supply of future temporary and social housing.
  - How new flexibilities that impact on the allocation of social housing will be made use of
  - The factors that impact on numbers of requests for housing advice, homeless applications and acceptances and how homelessness can be prevented
  - The initiatives in place to reduce levels of rough sleeping and meet the needs of vulnerable tenants.
- 1.4 The Allocations Working Group met in January 2012 and has provided valuable feedback on supply and allocation of social housing, in particular the importance of allocating temporary accommodation located in Westminster to households who are working in Westminster

## **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- (i) The projected supply and proposed allocation of rented housing, as discussed in paragraph 3.1 and set out in Appendices A, B and B1, be noted
- (ii) The response to the change in Housing Allocations Policy set out in the Localism Bill as set out in paragraph 5.1 is agreed
- (iii) The changes to the Allocations Scheme set out in paragraph 5.1.6 in response to the pan London mobility scheme, 'housing-moves', are approved
- (iv) Specify that clients on the single homeless pathway In line with single homeless applicants bidding through choice based lettings will have a time-limited period in which to bid after which a direct offer will be made as set out in paragraph 5.1.6
- (v) The SBHA youth employment scheme pilot described in paragraph 4.3.10 is supported as a means of increasing employment and resolving overcrowding

### 3. Social Rented Housing Supply and Allocation Projections

3.1 The following table summarises the position regarding the demand for and allocation of social rented housing over the past three years.

<b>Demand Profile</b>	<b>31.3.09</b>	<b>31.3.10</b>	<b>31.03.11</b>	<b>31.12.11 (year to date)</b>
Homelessness Applications (p.a.)	1153	1125	1170	1072
Homelessness Acceptances (p.a.)	446	378	430	394
Households in Temporary Accommodation (Total)	2454	2041	1726	1783
Bed and Breakfast	361	115	190	233
Stage 2	261	475	559	478
Private Sector Leasing	1655	1353	977	1072
Category A Transfer Applicants	58	46	69	66
<b>Allocation Profile</b>	<b>31.3.09</b>	<b>31.3.10</b>	<b>31.03.11</b>	<b>31.12.11</b>
Homeless Households	515	589	662	391
Tenant Transfers (includes Cat A, OC, Man Tran, CSH)	210	204	233	175
Children Act Panel	12	13	11	19
Mental Health Hostel Move On	12	11	24	13
Cash Incentive	60	47	48	38

#### 3.2 Demand for Social Housing

3.2.1 The demand for social housing in Westminster continues to outstrip the supply of available accommodation to let, whether as a result of homelessness, overcrowding, priority needs or demand from vulnerable groups. This is particularly the case for units of two bedroom or larger, reflecting the make-up of Westminster's social housing stock.

3.2.2 Applications from households, who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness, have increased during 2011/12 in comparison with the numbers received in 2010/11. The number of acceptances remains at c. 40% due to thorough investigation of applications and work to prevent homelessness or divert applicants into other options.

#### 3.3 Supply Projections

- 3.3.1 The projected total supply of lettings of affordable rented accommodation for 2012/13 is 955 an increase of 28 in the total number of lettings forecast for 2011/12.
- 3.3.2 The number of new affordable units projected to be delivered for the next 2 years is 109 rented and 36 intermediate homes in 2012/13 and 15 rented and 36 Intermediate homes in 2013/14. These projections are based upon affordable housing developments that are currently under construction or have secured planning permission and are due to commence building works shortly. Two significant schemes at Cambridge Street SW1 and Seymour Place W1 expected to provide 78 affordable homes which were originally expected to complete in 2011/ 2012 have now slipped into 2012/ 2013 and are not included in the 2012/ 2013 supply.
- 3.3.3 While the majority of the City Council's new affordable housing supply in 2012/13 and 2013/14 will be delivered on S106 sites already under construction , potential also exists for over 1,000 additional affordable homes to be delivered over the next few years from other private led developments where planning has recently been secured or where planning proposals are at an advanced stage, including schemes at Merchants Square (104 affordable Homes) , North Wharf Gardens (145 AH ) , St John's Wood Barracks (59 AH ) , Abell and Cleland House (67 AH) . While the timings of the implementation of this potential 1,000 additional affordable homes is uncertain ,current planning activity indicates that there will be a more positive affordable housing pipeline in future years .
- 3.3.4 In addition to affordable housing delivery through the S106 route Westminster anticipates significant numbers of new homes to be delivered over the next 5 to 15 years on Housing Renewal and Community Build sites.

### **Housing Renewal and Community Build**

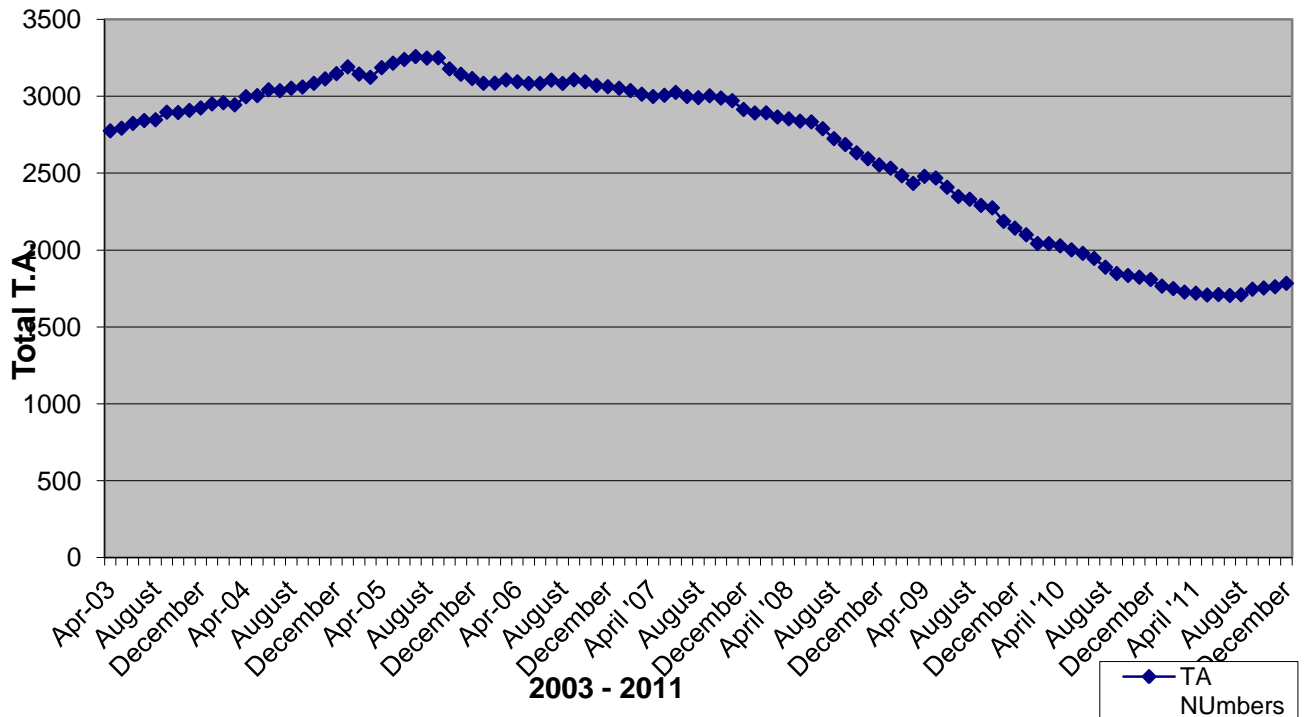
- 3.3.5 The City Council has identified 4 key Housing Renewal Areas at Church Street, Westbourne, Tollgate, and Ebury Bridge Estates where the majority of this new Council affordable housing supply will be delivered.

### **3.4 Temporary Accommodation**

- 3.4.1 The Housing Options Service (HOS) provides the Council's statutory housing assessment and advice function. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide housing under homelessness legislation, where the applicant is homeless, is in priority need and has a local connection. When the supply of suitable affordable accommodation is not available, the Council is required to procure Temporary Accommodation (TA) to provide housing until affordable housing is available.
- 3.4.2 Since 2004 the City Council has, through increased prevention activity, been working towards reducing Temporary Accommodation (TA) reflecting the original government set target to reduce TA numbers. The reduction in TA numbers over

recent years can be seen below highlighting that levels have reduced from over 3100 to c. 1800.

**Total Temporary Accommodation 2003-2011**



**2011/12 Housing Demand Profile**

3.4.3 The demand for social housing in Westminster continues to outstrip the supply of available accommodation to let, whether as a result of homelessness, overcrowding, priority needs or demand from vulnerable groups. This is particularly the case for units of two bedroom or larger, reflecting the make-up of Westminster’s social housing stock.

3.4.4 Applications from households, who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness, have increased during 2011/12 in comparison with the numbers received in 2010/11. As has been described above the level of TA in Westminster has reduced and the table below sets out the numbers of homeless applications, acceptances, rehousing and TA levels over the last three years. Homelessness applications and acceptance levels are much lower than in previous years due to pro-active advice and prevention work by HOS. The following tables illustrate the changes in homeless numbers:



3.4.5 The following table summarises the position regarding the demand for and allocation of social rented housing over the past four years.

	31.3.08	31.3.09	31.3.10	31.3.11	31.12.11
Homelessness Applications (p.a.)	1380	1153	1125	1170	1072
Homelessness Acceptances (p.a.)	522	446	378	430	394
Homeless rehouseings	452	498	557	604	391
Total Temporary Accommodation	2875	2454	2041	1749	1783

3.4.6 Applications from private sector tenants losing their accommodation continues to be high. The following table compares the principal causes of homeless applications (which make up c. 80% of total applications) for the last three months against the same period in 2010.

3.4.7 This information continues to show that whilst there are monthly fluctuations in the reasons for homelessness the principal increase has been a result of the loss of private rented sector tenancy.

Main Causes of Homelessness	Dec-11	Dec-10		Nov-11	Nov-10		Oct-11	Oct-10
Family/Friend Exclusion	33	27		36	31		34	31
Domestic Violence	12	7		7	13		10	12
Loss of Private Sector Tenancy	33	10		62	20		44	25
Arrival From Abroad	1	3		1	2		8	7
Unreasonable to occupy	3	3		7	10		5	12
Left Hospital/Prison/Hostel	7	10		6	8		4	12



## **Housing Benefit Caps**

3.4.8 The 2010 Emergency Budget announced a series of changes to Housing Benefit. The key change was that with effect from April 2011 the level of Local Housing Allowance (the type of housing benefit paid to private sector tenants on low incomes or benefit) has been capped as follows:

- £250 a week for the 1 bed entitlement
- £290 a week for the 2 bed entitlement
- £340 for the 3 bed entitlement
- £400 for the 4 bed or larger entitlement

3.4.9 Westminster's private rented sector comprises c. 55,000 properties. There are a further c. 25,000 social housing properties for rent that are unaffected by the caps. The high value of the housing market in Westminster means that the level of impact is greater in Westminster than other boroughs. The caps have taken effect from April for new claimants but there is a postponement for existing claimants of nine months from the anniversary date of the tenancy meaning that the caps will take effect between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

3.4.10 In total the number of households by bedsize in the private sector in receipt of Housing Benefit where rents are higher than the cap levels in March 2011 was over 5,000. A detailed case by case review has been undertaken for the initial four months of 2011 anniversary claims and this shows that there has been a reduction to c.4200 claims still in payment that will be affected by the cap, reflecting the high levels of population churn in the borough.

### **Westminster's response to the Caps**

3.4.11 To manage the impact of the Housing Benefit caps we have a steering group chaired by the Strategic Director of Housing, Regeneration and Worklessness and with senior membership from Adults Services and Children's Services as well as Benefits Services; the function of this group has been to ensure that all households are informed of the caps, the options open to them and the support available, identify vulnerable households through for example the updated Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) policy and developing protocols for its use. It is envisaged that this group will continue to oversee the Council's response to the benefit changes.

3.4.12 Support Available for Households

All households have been written to about the caps, the letter setting out how the caps will affect each individual claim. A reminder letter is being sent out within three months of the caps being implemented to each affected household.

The letter sets out the support available for tenants affected. To deliver this, the Housing Options Service has been restructured, making use of additional revenue grant funding made available by CLG for Councils to respond to the introduction of the Housing Benefit caps. In particular this funding can be used to:

- Work with landlords to negotiate lower rents and help tenants to remain in their homes wherever possible
- Support the cost of providing additional money advice to PRS tenants
- Provide case work assistance to households moving out or moving into the borough,
- Offer financial assistance with removal or other expenses
- Provide targeted outreach support to more vulnerable people affected by the changes
- Cover additional Temporary Accommodation procurement costs
- Help with any additional out of borough resettlement costs

3.4.13 In addition, the Council has received an increased allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from central government in order to top up Housing Benefit payments for vulnerable benefit claimants. An updated DHP policy has been agreed to ensure that the fund is targeted at the borough's most vulnerable claimants.

3.4.14 A system has been designed by which all Social Workers and other professionals working with Young People when visiting and assessing families would identify whether the household is living in private rented sector accommodation and if they will be affected by the Housing Benefit cap; this exercise is supported by training sessions held for Children's Services officers on the introduction of the caps and the support available. Advice and information sessions have also been held in schools and family centres.

#### 3.4.15 Use of Housing Advice Services

Housing Options have had 289 households approach for advice and assistance due to the LHA cap by the end of January with 89 households approaching in January compared to 44 in December.

A key element of the case management process is the liaison with landlords and this in practice is a lengthy and complex process with several possible outcomes. Initially we look to negotiate a rent reduction to cap level and where this is not possible we work to negotiate a rent reduction to a level where the remaining rent can be met with a DHP award, on the condition that the landlord extends the tenancy by a year. This frequently requires several discussions with landlords

and Housing Options are reliant on the cooperation and timely responses of the landlords they work with.

Where other housing is an option, referrals are made to Westlets, the Housing Options Team sourcing alternative private sector properties within the cap, which are matched to those households who have sought our help to find alternative accommodation. To the end of January more than 90 households have been supported into the private rented sector during 2011/12.

Housing Options have allocated more staff to intensively manage these cases, funded by the Council through CLG money obtained in 2011 to mitigate for the impact of the caps.

#### 3.4.16 Discretionary Housing Payment Applications

Housing Options continue to work closely with the Housing Benefit team, referring appropriate cases for a DHP. To date Housing Options have referred 37 households and 12 awards have been made.

In addition to these referrals from Housing Options, the Housing Benefit team receive DHP claims directly from claimants. From April to December 2011 Housing Benefit received on average 54 DHP claims a month and in January they received 115 and are projecting to receive 144 in February.

### **Impact on Homelessness Levels**

#### 3.4.17 Homeless Rehousings

Given the likely pressures on homeless acceptances during 2012/13 and 2013/14 and the percentage of total rehousings made available to homeless households (currently c. 73%) are to be retained, in particular for larger units.

#### 3.4.18 Temporary Accommodation Level Forecasts

The impact of the LHA caps on homelessness have been modelled and it is estimated that there will be an increase of c. 300 units of TA required during 2012. .

#### 3.4.19 Information Management

Whilst grounded in long term experience of managing homelessness the above figures are estimates and emerging trends, in particular on the numbers and demographics of enquiries to HOS, homeless applications and acceptances are being constantly scrutinised to ensure the Council is targeting resources appropriately. To deliver this, reports are being produced to cover numbers of:

- Approaches to Housing Options
- Homeless applications
- Homeless acceptances including the reasons for homelessness and the composition of the household
- Homeless rehosings each week

#### 3.4.20 Allocation of Temporary Accommodation

Households approaching as homeless are initially placed in B&B pending investigation of their case and, if assessed as homeless, are moved on to self contained accommodation. The increase in homelessness activity has placed increased pressure on B&B usage and as a result the number of block booked units has been increased. This provision provides the Council with considerable control over the management and standards of accommodation, stabilised costs and reduces the movement of households within the B&B portfolio and enables emergency placements of families in immediate housing need. Whilst numbers are increasing it should be noted that total usage of B&B is still less than pre 2009 levels.

Households remain in bed and breakfast and emergency accommodation until either a permanent housing duty is accepted or the homelessness claim is rejected. At this point the household is moved into self-contained second stage temporary accommodation until they are able to bid successfully for a permanent social housing tenancy. This self-contained TA is generally leased from the private rented sector through the Council's TA contractors and the Council is able to charge residents of this accommodation a central government set fee of 90% of Local Housing Allowance plus a management fee of £40 per week subject to a cap of £500 per week. This accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult to source, particularly in higher value areas, both through property owners having alternative markets and taking a decision not to renew leases as they come to an end. Further homelessness numbers are increasing across London meaning that other London boroughs are also under pressure to secure new TA. The impact of reduced availability of self-contained TA at a time when homeless numbers are increasing is that usage of and the length of stay in bed and breakfast is increasing, in particular increasing numbers of families who are in bed and breakfast over six weeks.

#### 3.4.21 Procurement of Temporary Accommodation

There are three issues that will require new procurement of TA during 2012/13:

- The forecast increase in homelessness acceptances following the introduction of Housing Benefit caps

- The current suppliers of TA reducing current supply of TA as lease ends are not renewed
- The current TA funding regime ceases in April 2013 and a new regime will be issued to replace this and this will impact on the commissioning of TA; the uncertainty over this model means that it is difficult to provide landlords with certainty by issuing longer term leases

To respond to the increasing demand at a time of pressure on the market The Council is undertaking the following:

- Engaging RMG as a new contractor to source in-borough accommodation and a total of c. 40 new family sized properties have been sourced in addition to other properties in other neighbouring London boroughs
- Increasing procurement of family sized properties in East London where the Council has primarily focused its out of borough procurement
- Investigating procuring new properties in areas outside of London for those households with little or no local connection

#### 3.4.22 Allocation of Temporary Accommodation

Around 70% of Westminster's TA is in borough, with the majority of the non-Westminster stock in East London. Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 requires the Council to discharge its housing functions (which includes temporary and emergency) in their district 'so far as reasonably practicable.' As a result TA will continue to be secured in borough as far as reasonably practicable, reflecting that the current funding framework of TA is based upon each households individual financial circumstances which in practice means that the great majority of households claim Housing Benefit. As a result of the increasing demand for TA and the reduced availability of private sector accommodation available to households on benefits this will mean that TA will be also be sourced out of borough in areas where it is available.

#### 3.4.23 Homeless Prevention Grant

The increased homeless prevention grant allocation reflects CLG's view that to prevent an increase in homelessness and its associated costs requires additional resources for local authorities. This reflects a bidding exercise when authorities were asked to set out their requirements to manage the impact of the Housing Benefit caps. Westminster bid for £1.6m and received £900K, a far higher allocation than any other authority. As a result Westminster's Homeless Prevention Grant allocation at £8.3m is over £6m more than any other borough and is 20% of London's total allocation. This reflects the impact of rough sleeping in Westminster and the numbers of households affected by the Housing Benefit caps (but other boroughs consistently raise the issue of the distribution of the grant as being unreasonable.)

### 3.4.24 Repossession and Prevention from Eviction Fund

The fund was established in June 2009 for households of all tenures as part of the City Council's City Recovery Programme using CLG grant awarded for this purpose of £85.5k. Any under spend from this grant has been rolled forward annually and a further £69k has also been made available for this purpose from CLG

Since June 2009, 24 loans have been awarded to private and social housing tenants with 14 awarded to date during 2011/12. No loans have been awarded to owner occupiers as the majority of HOS customers facing homelessness are tenants. The aim of the fund is to prevent homelessness due to a one off crisis where there has not been a long history of arrears.

Eight loans have now expired and despite recovery action no repayments have been made. In the main loan recipients have ignored letters. Recovery processes are now being reviewed and may be stepped up. Firstly the WCA money advisor based at the HOS will be writing to households offering additional support. The City Council intends to be flexible on repayments but also wants to promote financial responsibility.

The fund has been reviewed for 2012/13 and it is considered a useful homelessness prevention tool particularly during the economic downturn. It will be reviewed again once the CLG grant is fully spent. The loan budget for 2012/13 will consist of the £69k plus the under spend from the £85.5k grant (currently £23k) plus £10k from the homelessness grant.

## **4. Service Issues that impact upon the supply and allocation of housing**

### **4.1 Affordable Rent Tenure**

Affordable Rent is part of a package of measures announced by the Government in Autumn 2010 to create a more flexible social sector and to create a new funding regime for social housing development.

- 4.1.1 From 2011/12, Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) who have entered into new affordable housing delivery contracts with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for the investment period 2011-2015 will be able to let new rental properties and convert a proportion of existing vacant social rented properties as Affordable Rent where gross rents charged can be up to 80% of local market rent levels for an equivalent property of that size and location. In future only new Affordable Rent proposals will be eligible to be considered for grant funding by the HCA. Social Rent will only be considered for grant funding if provision is linked to the regeneration of existing housing and it is necessary to be provided in order to meet the needs of existing tenants who are to be decanted as a result of regeneration activity.
- 4.1.2 The HCA has also confirmed that as a rule affordable housing delivered through S106 planning conditions will not be eligible for grant funding. However, where it can be evidenced that additional affordable housing can be delivered on these S106 sites with grant, beyond the number of affordable units that can be delivered without grant, applications for grant funding may be considered.
- 4.1.3 In order to guide RPs operating the AR tenure in Westminster, the City Council published an Affordable Rent Statement in September 2011 approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing, setting out affordability guidance and gross rental ranges appropriate for various dwelling sizes provided on an Affordable Rent tenure. The affordability guidance set out in Westminster's Affordable Rent Statement is linked to lower quartile and median income levels of households registered with the City Council for intermediate housing opportunities. This guidance will be updated from time to time to reflect any changes in the profile of Westminster's Housing waiting list and household incomes. Housing's support for RP's as the affordable housing partner on S106 development sites, delivering new affordable housing will be dependent upon Westminster's Affordable Rent guidance being adopted.
- 4.1.4 The ability of Registered Providers to convert existing social housing rent voids to higher affordable rent levels is directly linked to their delivery of new affordable homes programmes and is subject to contract agreements between RPs and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Additional revenues generated by RPs from higher AR rents must be linked to the delivery of new affordable homes. Most of the City Council's key RP providers have now entered into development

contracts with the HCA towards the delivery of additional affordable homes covering the investment period 2011-2015. These contracts set out the number of new affordable homes to be delivered during the 2011-2015 by each RP and how their affordable programme is to be financed. Though limited subsidy in the form of grant will be provided by the HCA (typically £25-30K per new affordable home delivered) to RPs as part of these affordable housing delivery contracts, the bulk of the financing arrangements are being facilitated through the charging of higher rents by RPs on their rental stock including relets of existing stock. RPs have therefore set their rents at levels that enable them to generate the financing needed to deliver the affordable housing delivery contracts agreed with the HCA.

- 4.1.5 The HCA has confirmed that for the investment period 2011-15, an investment programme of around 5,500 new affordable homes has been agreed with partnering RPs operating in the North West London Investment Region. This Investment Region covers 12 London Boroughs including Westminster. However only 1,700 of these new affordable homes have been identified against firm development sites (firm allocations) and only one firm development site totalling 20 new homes has been identified within Westminster. The remaining indicative allocations of approximately 3,800 affordable homes have yet to be identified against actual schemes, which can be anywhere across the 12 Local Authorities in the North West London Investment region.
- 4.1.6 While some RPs have adopted rent levels for AR properties in Westminster in line with City Council guidance, a number of RPs operating in Westminster, have taken a different approach to AR rent setting involving higher rent charges than that set out in the City Council's Affordable Rent Statement. This is because the investment contracts these RPs have entered into with the HCA towards the delivery of their new affordable homes programmes are premised on these higher rental streams in order to achieve their new affordable housing delivery contracts. However, for those RPs proposing higher rents than Westminster guidance, they have generally applied these higher rates to 1 and 2 bedroom properties, rather than larger ones. Some RPs have set rents for 1 and 2 bedroom at a percentage of the equivalent market rate, though no higher than 80% of market rents, while other RPs have capped rents at Local Housing Allowance levels for 1 and 2 bedroom homes. Generally, RPs operating in Westminster will be capping rents charged on 3bed or larger sized properties or letting these at Target Rents, because of affordability difficulties likely to be experienced with higher rents on these properties for households on benefits.
- 4.1.7 Affordable Rent tenancies will have a fixed tenancy period of 2 years as a minimum, though most RPs have adopted 5 years as their standard fixed tenancy period, and there is flexibility to grant longer tenancies. Where an RP decides not to renew a tenancy they will need to give advice and assistance on alternative housing. Affordable Rents will be eligible for Housing Benefit and local



authorities will be able to discharge their homelessness duties through an affordable rent tenancy.

4.1.8 Housing Options has so far advertised a limited number of RP affordable rent tenancy studios, 1 bed and 2bed relets under choice based letting. There has been very limited interest to date from potential bidders in those smaller studio and 1bed units. Consequently, these smaller studio and 1bed homes which have not elicited interest when advertised under choice based lettings are being advertised to registrants on the City Council's intermediate waiting list. Delivery of the rehousing projections to priority groups set out in appendix B are based on take-up of 236 relet nominations to RSL properties by priority groups and any reduction in these numbers will require revision of these projections.

## **4.2 Westminster tenancy strategy and policy**

4.2.1 The Localism Act requires local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy by 2013 to guide registered providers (RP's or housing associations) and RP's need to have regard to this. It is to set out:

- Matters which PRP's should have regard to in the local area
- The types of tenancies on offer
- The circumstances when each tenancy should be offered and granted.

4.2.2 To have maximum influence, the City Council is developing the strategy ahead of the 2013 timetable and has issued a consultation draft, with a response deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> April. Alongside this, a Tenancy Policy is being developed for our own stock in order to issue the new flexible tenancy introduced by the Localism Act and this will also be consulted on. Flexible tenancies replace secure tenancies and can be for a minimum of two years (although guidance from the regulator says five years should be the norm). The tenancy policy is to cover the same areas as the strategy and also:

- Ways in which a tenant can appeal or complain about the length of tenancy offered
- How the needs of vulnerable people are being taken into account (a reasonable degree of stability needs to be offered)
- The advice and assistance that will be provided if a tenancy is not being reissued
- The approach to tenancy management i.e. interventions to sustain tenancies, prevent unnecessary evictions, tackle tenancy fraud and when discretionary successions would be granted.

4.2.3 The strategy and policy are being developed by a steering group of council officers and RP representatives. Their content has also been guided through pre consultation with RP's, City West residents, housing applicants, the Health and

Well Being Business Group, Advice Forum and with officers responsible for services for specialist groups i.e. people with learning difficulties, mental health problems and vulnerable families.

4.2.4 The aims of the strategy are to:

- Promote economic activity and not disincentivise work
- Protect and provide stability for vulnerable people
- Make the best use of the stock
- Be fair and not 'over subsidise' households that don't need it
- Be relatively simple to understand, administer and communicate
- Ensure the 'right' people are housed i.e. those with the highest need.
- Help to enforce the responsibilities of the tenancy agreement

4.2.5 Full use of fixed term tenancies across the whole social sector is supported and it is proposed most tenancies are for five years initially. Life tenancies are proposed for older people in sheltered housing and two year tenancies for young people where they are linked to employment support as this is a group that would not ordinarily have access to social housing. Two year tenancies are also proposed as a way to helping to enforce the responsibilities of the tenancy agreement.

4.2.6 Subject to the Tenancy Strategy and Policy being agreed by the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Allocations Policy will need to be amended to set out the circumstances under which different tenures will be offered.

4.2.7 Near to expiry, a tenancy review will take place which will look at the size of the property and whether the household still requires as many bedrooms, household income and how the tenancy has been conducted. It is expected in most circumstances the tenancy will be renewed. Non renewal is proposed where there is under occupation (with alternatives officered) or where there has been a serious breach of the tenancy agreement or criminality. Income and capital will also be considered and alternative housing options discussed. No absolute upper cap is proposed, whereby tenancies would not be renewed, as there is a preference for charging higher rents where income and capital increases above a threshold and the household wants or needs to stay in their home.

4.3 Housing and employability

4.3.1 Housing Commissioning takes a pro active role in helping residents into work and has long recognised the importance of enabling existing and future tenants to gain skills and access employment opportunities. Improved employment options can lead to better life chances and deliver improved outcomes for participating households leading to more sustainable neighbourhoods.

4.3.2 There are high rates of worklessness in Westminster concentrated in areas of social housing in the north of the city and south of Victoria Street. Recent data indicates that there are 21,000 residents claiming benefits (some of whom will be in employment) and a further 4,000 who are economically inactive (out of work but not in receipt of active benefits). Worklessness and economic inactivity can affect families and individuals for generations. As research from the OECD has found, the mere experience of unemployment will increase the likelihood of future unemployment and reduced future earnings.

### **Wider policy changes affecting our approach**

4.3.3 There are a number of new factors which will influence and shape our future approach to housing and employability:

- A tenancy strategy linking tenancy renewal to certain conditions including employment
- Welfare benefit reforms and the general economic climate
- new housing products including AR and
- An ambitious estate renewal programme.

The Civic Contract sets out broad principles on a fair housing deal for responsible tenants linking the renewing of flexible tenancies to efforts to seek employment. Although this will be developed in more detail in our tenancy strategy it is clear that if implemented there will need to be a clear pathway into an employment and training service for households whose tenancy is being reviewed.

4.3.4 A combination of meeting the Council's statutory housing duties, increasing rents in the social housing sector, new affordable rent products, changes to the welfare benefit system and the general slowdown in the economy will mean that tenants and low income households may face more financial challenges; in meeting their rent, faced with unemployment or trapped in low paid work and unable to take advantage of low cost home ownership products on offer. The availability of appropriate training and employment services for these cohorts of people is therefore very important for housing services. The main programmes commissioned by the DWP are the Work Programme, ESF for Families and the services delivered through Job Centre Plus. However there are 4,000 residents classified as economically inactive in Westminster that are seeking work but not claiming DWP benefits – many of these would previously have been assisted through the Westminster Works programme which has now ended; the Work Programme will only support 10% of workless residents and is unlikely to be able to fund the hardest to help over the next five years.

## **Opportunities**

- 4.3.5 Work is underway on identifying gaps in current provision and the needs of the housing service will be included in any future commissioning strategy on employment and training services. It is intended that we will continue to separately commission the HELP project in 2012 but it is anticipated that meeting the employment and training needs of households in TA would be incorporated into a wider commissioning strategy from 2013/14.
- 4.3.6 Tackling worklessness is a key priority for the City Council and is one of the principles underpinning the Housing Renewal Strategy. The central premise is about ensuring that people living in those communities see better housing but that they also benefit from improved outcomes in other areas particularly improved health and well being and better job prospects.
- 4.3.7 The estate renewal programme brings with it the ability to deliver a significant number and range of opportunities through the development process. Work is underway to scope out how these opportunities will be managed and co-ordinated.

## **Homelessness Employability and Learning Project**

- 4.3.8 The HELP project delivered by Vital Regeneration provides 1-2-1 advice sessions and referrals to training, volunteering, work placement and employment opportunities as well as ESOL, literacy and employment aftercare support for homeless households in temporary accommodation. This project has a successful track record in engaging with these households who typically have but as highlighted above we are keen that this service is commissioned as part of the wider commissioning strategy for worklessness from 2013.

Over the last year (Jan – Dec 2011) HELP has supported 113 clients to achieve:

- 41 Training outcomes
- 18 Volunteer outcomes
- 27 Employment outcomes

## **Construction Training Initiative**

- 4.3.9 Operated by NHHT the Construction and training initiative (CTI) provides training opportunities in the construction industry using RSL development schemes across a number of boroughs. At 31st March 2011 Westminster trainees were working towards qualification in the following trades:

Trade	Numbers
Carpentry	2
Electrical	1
Plumbing	3
Bricklaying	1
Plastering	1

### **InComE Project**

4.3.10 We are piloting a scheme run by Shepherds Bush Housing Association through which SBHA works with young people nominated by the council to get them into training or employment. We offer them a two year tenancy with one of our housing association partners. During this time SBHA works intensively with them to get them into work or training. At the end of the two years, they leave the tenancy and SBHA help them to find and settle into a private sector tenancy. We have funded 10 placements with SBHA through overcrowding grant money and now hope to expand the project using Health funding, as helping young people to move out of overcrowded homes will improve health outcomes for them and the remaining family. The changes in legislation will mean that in future we can offer flexible tenancies in our own stock as well as in housing association stock. If the pilot is a success we hope to expand the project and will consider offering intermediate housing at the end of the two year tenancy.

### 4.3.11 Fair Share Housing Scheme

The Council is exploring the 'Fair Share Housing Scheme' which will provide high quality sub-market rental accommodation in central London on a shared basis, with rents at a third cheaper than private sector rents. Although sharing is prevalent in the private renting sector it is not yet readily available through social housing. This scheme will be very similar to that of the private sector where tenants are responsible for payment of their own rent and contribute to shared costs.

The scheme will be aimed at providing shared accommodation for those that form an integral part of West End life, such as market traders, performing artists and hospitality workers on a London Living Wage. The tenants' circumstances will be reviewed after 2 years and a sharer can move out and either a friend or an interviewed new tenant can move in, again as in the private sector.

An initial pilot will be developed to comprise of up to 25 units in the West End, in areas which are currently allocated for affordable housing initiatives. The units that have been identified are located in areas which are less suitable for family use. To deliver the units we are working in partnership with Barratt London, Dolphin Square Foundation and Soho Housing Association.

#### 4.4 Overcrowding

4.4.1 There are approximately 1,000 council tenants currently registered for a move to a larger property.

4.4.2 We have had a number of initiatives in place for the past few years aimed at addressing the problem of overcrowding, including:

- De-converting and extending a small number of homes to create larger dwellings;
- Encouraging under-occupying households to move out of their homes to make them available for larger households in housing need;
- Awarding extra points to the most overcrowded households to prioritise them for a move into a suitably-sized home;
- Increasing the proportion of larger family-sized homes developed within the new supply programme;
- Visiting households in WCC and RP overcrowded homes
- Providing homework clubs and other activities for children in overcrowded families, to minimise the negative impact of not having enough space at home.
- Offering space saving solutions including bunk-bed and shelving and in some cases reconfiguring wasted space in the home
- Engaging a company to assist under occupiers who are moving with everything from decluttering to hanging curtains in their new home.

4.4.3 Between April to December 2011 179 overcrowded households were rehoused into larger homes.

4.4.4 In addition we have been undertaking home visits to the most overcrowded households to develop a tailored action plan for each household, and to inform the range of solutions we develop in the future. The Cash Incentive Scheme has also been revised to improve the offer to under-occupying households and bring forward a greater number of larger homes for re-letting to overcrowded families. To the end of December 2011, 296 overcrowded households have been visited and given tailor made advice and over the last three years over 1600 households have assisted to relieve pressures of overcrowding

4.4.5 It is likely that proposals will be introduced by central government during 2012 that will see Council Tenants of working age with one or more unoccupied bedrooms have their housing benefit reduced to the rent for a property the correct size for their needs. It is hoped that this change will encourage more under occupiers to take advantage of our Cash Incentive scheme and move to a smaller property thereby freeing up a family sized home. We expect to be able to meet any additional transfer requests to downsize. We will publicise the changes and will review the impact on the Cash Incentive Scheme and implications for the budget if the take up of the scheme increases.

#### 4.5 Mental Health and Housing

- 4.5.2 In Westminster we have developed a wide variety of supported housing services for people who require support to live independently, preventing the need for residential care and inappropriate use of temporary housing. There are currently 372 units of supported housing, ranging from high support 24 hour schemes to semi-independent units with visiting support.
- 4.5.3 Services are jointly commissioned by Housing, Adult Services and NHS Westminster. Everyone housed within these services has a case open and allocated to mental health teams and on the Care Programme Approach (CPA.) In addition there are over 550 units of floating support for people living in their own independent accommodation who require support to prevent the loss of tenancy, the majority as a result of mental ill health.
- 4.5.4 Individuals are supported to move from supported housing into independent living along a pathway of care and support in order to prevent future tenancy breakdown and free up supported housing for people who will require this in the future.
- 4.5.5 There is an established Mental Health Service Users Housing Panel. The panel is currently working to establish their role in our contract monitoring process for the 15 providers of supported housing and has already piloted a peer reviewing process in the context of scheme visits..
- 4.5.6 The range of supported housing services has been expanded since the beginning of the Supporting people programme by opening six new mental health schemes and redeveloping a rough sleepers scheme to work with people with low level mental health problems. A new 24 hour high support service to cater for people recovering from severe and enduring mental illness will be opened in April.
- 4.5.7 There is a strong focus on homeless prevention for people with mental health problems where officers act as mediators or negotiators to prevent people from being evicted from their family homes or from their tenancies.
- 4.5.8 Quarterly training on housing issues for Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT's) are held together with guidance on how to address housing issues for people with mental health problems. In addition bi monthly housing surgeries are facilitated which reinforce the information shared at the housing training and allows mental health practitioners specifically to discuss service users' housing needs. Through the JAS service there are housing and mental health specialists who work alongside the care coordinators in the CMHTs to facilitate move on and resettlement.

- 4.5.9 As part of the pathway of care, mental health services receive an annual quota of independent housing units from the City Council for people with mental health problems living in supported housing who are able to live independently. To support this, a detailed protocol has been established between housing and mental health services. The quota in turn frees up supported housing bed spaces which can then be used for people in hospital or residential care.
- 4.5.10 Readiness for independent accommodation is assessed robustly by care coordinators and housing providers and then again by the panel that accepts or rejects MSH quota applications. The panel only accepts applications for people where all parties are agreed about the service user's readiness for independent living. Once accepted onto the quota the panel members liaise closely with the Housing Options Service who have the capacity to restrict and delay bidding where it is felt that a situation has changed and people can be removed from the quota when necessary. Once people have moved there are a range of community support services available including floating support services that are able to support the person through the move, to settling in and establishing themselves in the community and other support provisions including flexi care, befriending and day services.
- 4.5.11 We have an established mental health referrals panel that works to prevent homelessness and gate keeps all of the mental health placements. The panel where possible avoids using out of borough placements and this is achieved by ensuring that there is a steady flow of people through all of our in borough supported accommodation.

#### 4.6 Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities

- 4.6.1 The Valuing People Now and Housing Delivery Plan (2010 -11) set out to help people with learning disabilities get more choice and control in where they live.
- 4.6.2 The WLDP “Big Plan” identified the need to develop more local housing and support services particularly for people with complex needs. There had been an over reliance on the use of residential care models and an insufficient supply of housing and support models within the borough. Westminster Learning Disability Partnership had to place most people with a complex need out of borough in expensive resources. Service users, families and carer’s demonstrated anxieties around their future and how needs would be met. In particular, older parents were very concerned about the future support options for their adult children.
- 4.6.3 The Westminster Housing strategy 2007 – 2010 for people with a learning disability identified the direct of travel for the housing and support needs of people with a learning disability in Westminster. The Individual Housing and Support Operational Pathway Plan 2008-2011 delivered successfully the targets set out in the three year plan



4.6.4 In 2007 there were 83 placements of residential accommodation and 73 placements of supported living in the borough. In 2012 there are 24 placements of residential accommodation and 170 placements of supported living in the borough. There has been an increase of 32 new units of supported placements in the borough. The map of provision has changed significantly due to the deregistration of registered care (total of 69 placements) In addition to this 26 people have moved on to independent accommodation by accessing the Westminster Housing quota and 23 people have moved back in to the borough to access housing and support models.

4.6.5 A new Housing and Support Strategy is to be published in 2012. Consultation with all key stakeholders is currently underway and an updated needs assessment is being carried out. The key challenges have been identified as being:

- Increasing need for younger people with greater complexity of needs
- An increase in aging population of service users
- Increase in people with Autism requiring highly specialised service
- Greater pressures on adult care and housing budgets

4.6.6 Delivery of Housing Pathway 2011-12

- Since April 2011 to date 2 people have been placed in settled accommodation in borough from NHS
- Since April 2011 to date 2 people have been placed in settled accommodation from Campus defined accommodation
- 5 people have moved from out of borough registered care to in borough settled and supported accommodation
- 36 units of registered care has been deregistered this financial year so far with three more placements pending deregistration
- Dolphin Sq Foundation has provided 5 two bed properties into which people with complex learning disabilities have moved creating further savings and providing a hub model of support in the Queens Park area
- Campus funding has been utilised to part fund the remodeling of Johnson Place which has five flats (four one bedroom and one two bedroom self contained flats). The scheme is now fully operational with one person moving from Campus accommodation in January 2012. This new development will provide significant savings to the Adult Care budget

4.6.7 To support the deliver the housing pathway in 2012/13, the following are priority areas:

- Progress the business case to redevelop 291 Harrow Rd and Elmfield Way; it is envisaged that the provision of a new build specialist autism service for

- 8 people and an extra care model of supported housing for people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities will be operational by 2014/15
- Internal capital bids have been sought to upgrade four services for people with a learning disability in Westminster.
  - Internal capital bid to match fund remodeling of the Harris Centre (part of the Leonora Extra Care provision) to develop four self contained extra care flats for older people with a learning disability
  - Campus Funding will be utilized to remodel Portnall Road into a high support specialist autism scheme for five people. Three people identified for this scheme currently live out of borough in registered care. This service will be operational in April/May 2012 and will provide savings to the adult care budget

#### 4.7 Housing and Physical Disability

- 4.7.1 The CityWest Homes budget for 2011/12 for major adaptations is £650K. In addition, £80K was transferred from the Disability Discrimination Act budget (common parts of buildings) for this financial year only to meet the demand and like for like replacements. Expenditure on adaptations was £620K as of 31 December 2011. Works are prioritised for those tenants who have been assessed as having an urgent and high priority need.
- 4.7.2 CWH had received 121 major adaptations referrals from April 2011 to December 2011 and 37 minor adaptations requests; of these 117 major adaptations are practically complete. There have been 2 cancellations and 2 requests on hold awaiting for clients' decisions regarding transfers to other adapted properties rather than adapting their homes. There were 27 cases still in progress at the time of writing in early January.
- 4.7.3 The target set is to complete as many cases as possible with an average of 6 weeks for Urgent works and 12 weeks for High and Standard priority works from date of receipt of OT recommendation to work commencement. This target has been met to date.
- 4.7.4 The anticipated expenditure level on private sector adaptations in 2011/12 (including those RSL adaptations where grant applications are made to the Council) is anticipated to slightly below the budget of £780k. A target of completing private sector adaptations within 30 weeks is being met with performance from 1 April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011 at 20.4 weeks.
- 4.7.5 A consultation exercise with RSLs about future funding and performance reporting has been undertaken and funding issues are being kept under review by the Council pending a central government decision regarding the responsibilities of RSLs in funding adaptations.

4.7.6 A survey into the user experience of the adaptations process across all tenures was completed and is available on request.

4.7.7 Adult Services re-tendered the Occupational Therapy contract and the new contract was awarded to ABLE2 who commenced their service on the 1 April 2011.

#### 4.8 Rough Sleeping and Associated Street Activity

4.8.1 The current Rough Sleeping Strategy 2010/13 demonstrates the success of the Building Based Services approach, as evidenced by the reduction in core rough sleepers to below 100 on a single night, sustained for over four years. This is a reduction of over half from highs above 200 in 2004 and 2005. All policies identified in the Strategy have been developed within the framework of the necessity to reduce the level of rough sleeping. This entails tackling the rough sleeping continuum including, 'flow', 'stock' and entrenched rough sleepers. The key strategic objectives continue to be to sustain the number of rough sleepers at below 100 and then to as near zero as possible. At the last count in November 2011, 79 core rough sleepers were counted plus 29 individuals from CEE countries who had no recourse to public funds and therefore cannot be accommodated via normal pathways. This confirms that the reduction in the number of rough sleepers is being sustained at under 100 and work is ongoing towards the London Mayor's target of zero rough sleeping across London by December 2012.

4.8.2 The first response to an individual rough sleeping is always to seek a diversion or reconnection to their last settled area or area where they have some service, employment or family ties. Day centres and outreach teams give a 'hard sell' on reconnection, where appropriate, and withdraw services in cases where they feel an individual is not taking up a reasonable option. Referring an individual to hostel accommodation in Westminster is in the main only considered in cases where a person has a longer rough sleeping history in Westminster, where they have no ties to any areas, or where they have a legitimate and documented reason why they cannot return to an area. These people will have been met bedded down in Westminster and have been assessed to have support needs that mean they could not be referred to schemes to help them access the private rented sector. Of the 1900 rough sleepers met in Westminster over 2010/2011, the majority were successfully given reconnection advice. A further 628 met the broad criteria of having 'support needs and no feasible reconnection options' and were booked into hostels in Westminster. Typical presenting issues include: mental health issues below the severe and enduring level (most typically depression, anxiety, personality disorder (stemming from childhood trauma), self harm), substance misuse (alcohol, crack and heroin etc) family breakdown and bereavement, hospital and prison discharge, learning difficulties, domestic violence etc and often these issues are in combination. In terms of institutional

history: 38% of rough sleepers have been in prison in the past, 11% have a history in care and 3% in the armed forces.

- 4.8.3 The Mayor of London's work overseeing the target to reduce rough sleeping to zero by December 2012 has enhanced the focus. As well as targeting the entrenched cohort of rough sleepers those new to rough sleepers, 'flow', has also become a focus for targeted interventions. A new, No Second Night Out Project, (NSNO), was introduced by the GLA in 2011. This entails outreach workers offering access to a NSNO Accommodation Hub in Islington to prevent a person spending a second night on the streets. Once at the Hub reconnection to their last settled address becomes the focus. The Westminster rough sleeping partnership has for over six years focused on reconnection of those new to rough sleeping. Hence we have been cooperating fully with the GLA to ensure that this extends across all London boroughs.
- 4.8.4 The wide selection of presenting issues listed above explains the requirement for the selection of different hostels to meet an individual's needs effectively. In years gone by hostels tended to be large and 'one size fits all' with minimal gatekeeping. It is now well documented that specialised hostels, in good quality accommodation, gatekept for those in most need, deliver better outcomes and the WCC Rough Sleeping Commissioning Team are responsible for ensuring effective gatekeeping, understanding the profile of needs and ensuring the mix of hostels best meets these needs, remodeling where necessary. At present the hostel pathway includes: short term assessment accommodation, a high support hostel for men with substance misuse issues, mixed accommodation including for couples with high support needs, accommodation for people with mental health issues (below the severe and enduring level), accommodation for older men, accommodation for people with alcohol dependency and challenging behaviour, specialist women's accommodation etc and a range of move on accommodation including abstinent accommodation. The pathway will be reviewed over 12/13 to ensure it best meets needs and is working as efficiently as possible. As a starting point for this review all services were audited over 11/12 to look at their move on plans for each and every resident along with a dedicated audit of female rough sleepers' needs.
- 4.8.5 The range of hostels in Westminster and the speed at which they move people on (typically within 1 to 2 years) enable the BBS teams to get vulnerable rough sleepers without other options off the streets reasonably quickly, reducing the toll rough sleeping takes on individuals (and in particular their health) and communities. Once in hostels, support is given to address needs with the aim of recovery, building skills and moving on independently and the majority of residents move on to accommodation outside of Westminster, including the Private Rented Sector (PRS). A tender exercise is taking place to identify provision of shared and self contained PRS accommodation for 12/13.

4.8.6 As well as the emphasis on reconnection and effective accommodation services, the rough sleeping strategy includes a variety of themes including strands to tackle the most long term rough sleepers:

- An intensive case conferencing approach is in place to assist the most long-term, entrenched rough sleepers off the streets. This targeted group are known as the Westminster 168 and every effort is made to find solutions that will enable these individuals to come in doors. All aspects of the lives of the individuals concerned are explored to find creative solutions including personalised budgets. This also includes work to improve cross-border co-operation for this client group, who often move between boroughs on a regular basis. The London Mayor is supporting this model of working across the inner London boroughs.
- Many of the long term group have mental health issues including personality disorders and pilots have commenced to better support workers including rolling out the Department of Health's standard training package on personality disorder and a case discussion clinic with the Waterview (a specialist personality disorder service).

Other strands of work relate to tackling the anti social behavior that can be associated with rough sleeping:

- The City-wide Controlled Drinking Zone continues to be enforced and the teams have supported the introduction of dispersal zones across the borough in response to particular examples of poor behaviour. This enforcement has been enhanced by new legislation ( Sect 27) which empowers the police to exclude individuals from specific area for 24 hours.
- Monthly multi- agency Anti-Social Behaviour meetings continue (attended by the police, BBS, ASBU, SPT, Street Management etc ), specifically targeting rough sleepers and hostel residents and agreeing actions including: warning letters, Acceptable Behaviour Agreements, and ASBOs. The Street Population Team (SPT) is tasked with tackling the behaviour of individuals raised at this meeting. The Rough Sleeping Team also put forward cases for consideration at the new monthly Anti Social Behaviour Action Group meetings, multi agency meetings that seek to address anti social behaviour across the borough.

4.8.7 The number of foreign nationals on the streets of Westminster with no recourse to public funds is a major challenge and can total up to a third of those on the street. A dedicated project 'Operation Ark' started in April 2010 to reduce rough sleeping among EU Nationals and to date has had success in reducing numbers but flow remains high. The lessons learned from Operation Ark are to be extended to other London Boroughs and a Tool Kit is being written to facilitate

this process. The joined up approach with the City Council, UKBA, and the Metropolitan Police has worked well.

- 4.8.8 Work continues with the newly configured drug and alcohol services to ensure individuals misusing substances have access to appropriate treatment and recovery options. Pathways have been remapped to improve communication and clarity for hostel residents.
- 4.8.9 Interventions to confront worklessness in the rough sleeping and hostel populations continues to expand. These interventions identified several gaps in services and the need to further co-ordinate projects including a literacy strategy, resources for hostel workers and Jobs Fairs.

The Literacy Strategy has proved highly successful and won Second Prize at the Andy Ludlow Awards in 2011. A Toolkit has been produced to export the learning and replicate the model which will be launched at an event hosted by the London Mayor in February 2012.

Although affecting relatively small numbers, problem gambling can have a devastating effect on people's lives and keep them trapped on the streets and in hostels. A need was identified to better educate workers and provide better access to support and to this end a dedicated pilot will be starting in 12/13 working with the National Problem Gambling Clinic.

- 4.8.10 Agencies continue to ensure the effective implementation of the Severe Weather Protocol (SWEPS.) Compared to the severe weather during 2009 and 2010 when the SWEPS worked very well and we had at one point identified a potential pool of c200 beds in and out of the City of Westminster. Thus far the 2011/12 winter has been much milder and SWEPS has not been activated.
- 4.8.11 Westminster Council began a Public Consultation in March 2011 on the proposals for a Byelaw to regulate Soup Runs and Rough Sleeping in a designated area in South Westminster. There were many views expressed particularly in relation to the prohibition of rough sleeping in the designated area and as a consequence this element was withdrawn. The intention to designate an area whereby soup runs would not be allowed to operate was also withdrawn in acknowledgement of the sectors cooperation to accept indoor venues as an alternative to distributing food on the streets and relocate away from the Cathedral Piazza and surrounding environs.
- 4.8.12 This is the latest in a series of attempts that have been made to reduce the burden on the local community from soup runs and rough sleeping, and to reduce the counter-productive over-provision of free food on the streets in this part of Westminster, which the Council and many voluntary sector partners believe actively works against attempts to enable move people off the streets.

#### 4.9 Homeless Hostel Refurbishment Programme

4.9.1 Passage House has been completely refurbished through the CLG's Places for Change hostels capital programme. Accommodation at Passage House was shared and the work carried out on the hostel has eliminated sharing. The entrance to the hostel has also been redesigned to enable better control over access to the hostel. This has provided the opportunity for The Passage, with officer support, to remodel the support service whilst continuing to provide 24 hour cover throughout the hostel.

4.9.2 The completion of the Passage House redevelopment completes the 'Place for Change' hostel redevelopment programme in Westminster which has seen capital investment in hostels such as Berwick Street, CUC Soho, Harrow Road, improving the quality of premises, ending sharing of rooms and making the hostels easier to manage.

#### 4.10 Equality and Diversity

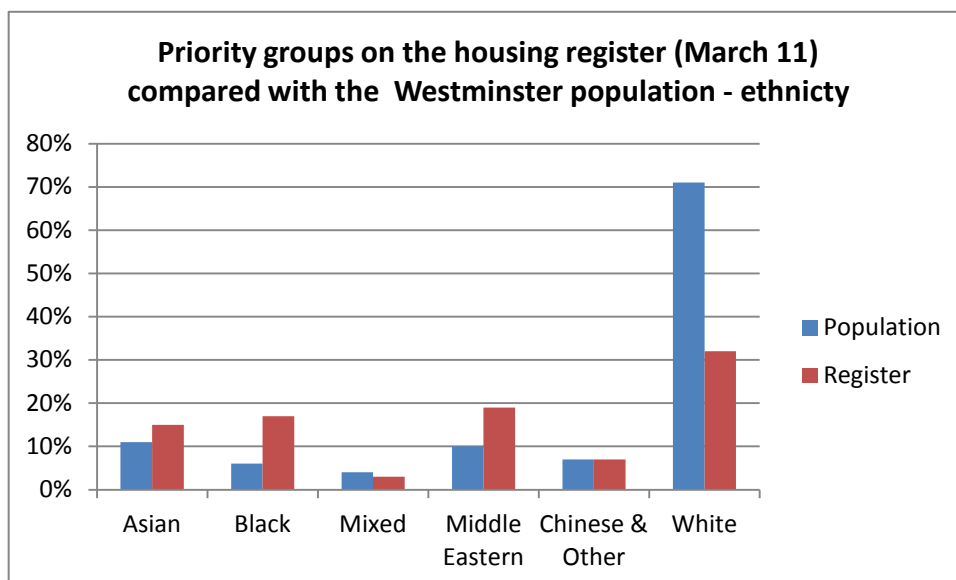
4.10.1 The annual equalities reports looks at access to housing and housing services and outcomes to ensure they are fair and accessible. Key findings for 2010/11 are:

##### **Access to housing**

4.10.2 Ethnic minorities<sup>1</sup> continue to have higher levels of housing need than White British households, making up 72% of priority groups on the housing register compared to their 51% share of the Westminster population. Black and Middle Eastern groups are the most over represented compared to their population share. Ethnic minority households also have a higher need for larger bedroom properties (3 plus bedrooms) and this is most pronounced amongst Asian and Middle Eastern groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnic minorities are defined as all non White British Groups



4.10.3 Homelessness is more of an issue for ethnic minority groups, with these groups making up 79% of the homelessness list. Notably Black Africans and Arabic households are most affected.

4.10.4 The majority (51%) of applicants on the housing registers are between, 25-44, which is a slight over representation when compared to their 45% share of the population. The proportion of older people on the housing registers was similar to their share of the population although young people were under represented making up 7% of the register and 13% of the population. The majority of households with priority for housing have children (69%) and 31% are lone parents.

4.10.5 Like previous years, less than 1% of households on the housing registers need a fully wheel chair adapted property which compares with a 2006 housing needs survey estimate of 1% of Westminster's population overall.

### **Housing outcomes**

4.10.6 Broadly it is expected that lettings to different groups are compatible with their share on the housing register, although this is dependant both on their level of priority and the availability of properties to meet their needs and particularly size of property and also the time lag in lettings from acceptance. During 2010/11:

- 68% of lettings were to ethnic minority groups compared with their 72% share of the housing register. A larger proportion were to White groups (40%), compared with their 33% share of the register. This is due to a shortage of larger bedroom units, which some ethnic minority groups have a greater need for. It is also due to White households making up a larger



proportion of demand in previous years and many properties let in 2010/11 were to people accepted as homeless several years ago (due to the shortage in properties). For example in 2005/6 White groups made up 33% of the homeless list which reduced to 20% in 2010/11.

- In most age bands the percentage of lettings was similar to their proportion on the housing register. Older people needed to make fewer than average bids as there was more availability of properties to meet their needs and preferences. Auto bidding is instigated if older people find making bids difficult. Lettings to people needing adapted or level access properties were similar to their proportion on the register.

#### 4.11 Housing Allocation and Domestic Violence

- 4.11.1 Domestic Violence (DV) continues to be a major focus for the department. DV accounts for approximately 12% of all homeless applications made and housing remains the third highest referrer of cases to the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), behind the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service and the Police. Housing contributes to the cost of providing the IDVA service and was closely involved in the recent service retender, which saw the contract awarded to ADVANCE.
- 4.11.2 The department fully supports the operational work and development of the MARAC and has acted as an example of good practice to other MARACs in respect of their housing input. Housing sits on the Violence Against Women and Girls strategic group to ensure that its departmental objectives fit with the strategic response to DV borough-wide. An example of this is work to redevelop 10 high support beds at Church Army hostel for chaotic rough sleeping women with a history of DV, a group identified as being in significant need with few suitable options.
- 4.11.3 Multi-agency working with other departments around housing and DV remains a priority and the housing DV lead met with inspectors on this issue as part of the recent successful OFSTED inspection.
- 4.11.4 During 2011/12 we have accommodated 5 individuals referred by MARAC to our Single Person's Housing Pathway (see 5.1.6), due to serious safeguarding concerns. This includes two cases where the perpetrator was the victim's son, the victim was a vulnerable adult and other attempts to resolve the issue had failed due to a lack of suitable housing. The development of a DV Quota allows for high risk cases to be referred straight into social housing if ongoing support via the Single Persons Housing Pathway (SPHP) is not required. These policy developments offer the MARAC vital risk management tools which previously did not exist, directly contributing to the safety of the individuals concerned.
- 4.11.5 Housing actively supports the Westminster Domestic Violence Forum. The Housing lead for DV is a WDFV trainer and has delivered 2 x DV awareness

sessions to forum members during the year. Additionally, during the last 12 months bespoke sessions have been delivered on MARAC, housing and DV and DV awareness to HOS (x 2 sessions) SP-funded hostel staff, women's refuge residents, the new Rape Crisis Centre and frontline DV agencies connected to the Forum.

4.11.6 The effectiveness of the response to domestic violence issues at HOS continues to be monitored through an annual mystery shopping exercise.

#### 4.12 Supporting People

The following section provides a summary of the Supporting People programme in Westminster (that funds many voluntary sector provided homelessness services) and how the removal of the ring fence from the grant will be managed.

4.12.1 In Westminster over 4400 people are supported across over 150 housing projects and services including hostels for rough sleepers, sheltered housing for older people, specialist mental health housing services, homes for people with learning disabilities and young persons homeless prevention services.

4.12.2 The level of acute housing related support need presented in Westminster in particular by rough sleepers is unique in the country and to meet this need has required an active partnership between Social Care, Criminal Justice, primary health, Community Protection, housing and homelessness services and the voluntary sector. In order to respond effectively to the demands of the SP regime the City Council has put in place effective local decision-making and planning structures.

4.12.3 Supporting People has been characterised since 2003 by annual grant announcements that reduced Westminster's grant allocation by £1.5m between 2003-2010 and have not included additional resources for new development or inflationary uplifts.

4.12.4 The programme is viewed nationally as an Invest to Save preventative programme and a recent exercise using the national benefits realisation model developed by Cap Gemini and used as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review analysis identified that the spending on Supporting people in Westminster provided a saving to the Westminster of £27m. The grant is used to commission 44 voluntary and community sector agencies to provide services under contracts awarded and approved through the Council's Procurement Code. This follows the 'Strategy for Supporting People Services 2009-13' contract award report approved in 2009 by DCB, CRB and Cabinet member that set out the medium-term procurement strategy for each service. The implementation of this plan and the negotiations with service providers taking place reflect the current economic climate and the need for further efficiencies.

4.12.5 Responding to this challenging financial climate has required a robust approach to managing efficiencies. In total £2.6m of savings were delivered during 2011/12 through the removal of funding from services that are not strategically relevant or delivered from properties that are no longer fit for purpose, the outcome of competitive tendering and negotiating down contract values. A further £1.1m of savings will be delivered during 2012/13 the result of negotiating savings with service providers to provide services more efficiently.

## **5. New Policy proposals**

### **5.1 Changes to Allocations and Homelessness legislation from the Localities Act**

The following section sets out the Council's response to the changes in Allocations legislation proposed in the Localities Act. At the time of writing these have not yet been enacted and a separate report making recommendations to the Council's Allocations Policy will be presented once the legislation and code of guidance has been agreed and published. Assuming there are no major changes in the final legislation the recommendations will follow the principles set out below:

#### **5.1.1 Discharge of Duty in the Private Sector**

Prior to the commencement of the new Act, homeless applicants to whom WCC has a duty could be offered a private sector letting but were not obliged to accept it and could instead decide to wait for an offer of social housing. The law will now allow the council to discharge its rehousing duty through an offer of suitable private rented accommodation.

This is a change for which Westminster has lobbied for many years in order to move away from the situation where a person is housed in good quality private sector accommodation but still considered to be 'homeless' because the accommodation is provided as temporary accommodation while a duty to rehouse permanently in social housing is retained.

It is intended to offer private sector solutions whenever possible to new homeless applicants who have the capacity to maintain a tenancy. The property offered must be suitable and there is a large body of caselaw clarifying what needs to be taken into account to ensure a property is suitable for the particular household. It must be affordable, of the right size and the location will need to take into account matters such as employment, schools, and community links.

The revised London Housing Strategy suggests that discharge of duty should be within a housing authority's own area and Westminster will seek to ensure as much private sector property meeting the above conditions as possible is identified within Westminster. However as set out above the availability of private sector properties to households on benefits, particularly larger units, is reducing following changes to welfare benefits. As a result affordable private sector properties are also likely to be outside Westminster.

The ability to discharge duty in the private sector does not apply to the households in temporary accommodation to whom the council had accepted a duty prior to the commencement of the new flexibilities

### 5.1.2 Waiting lists

The Localism Act will give back to local authorities the freedom to determine which categories of applicants should qualify to join their housing waiting lists. This reverses changes introduced in 2002 (although the Secretary of State will continue to determine centrally that some groups are ineligible and this includes people from abroad subject to immigration control.)

Prior to 2002 there were groups of applicants who did not qualify for housing in Westminster e.g. those with less than two years residence. After 2002 we managed the change in the law requiring open waiting lists by giving these groups very low priority so that they effectively had no chance of rehousing. We are now able to revert to the position of finding them ineligible which is more straightforward and transparent for potential applicants.

Ineligible applicants will be those who are:

1	Under 18 years of age (This does not apply to young people living in a foster home or in residential care provided by Social and Community Services for whom re-housing under the Children Act has been agreed and who are within 6 months of their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday).
2	Not been continually resident in Westminster for three years at the date of application. (This does not apply to people detained in an institution or hospital or in the armed services or serving a custodial sentence outside Westminster, but who lived continuously in Westminster for at least three years prior to entering institution/services/custody).
3	Not currently living permanently in the UK.
4	Who jointly or singly own or part own or are purchasing a property (including purchases on shared ownership) which is reasonable to occupy.
5	Whose household's total gross income from all sources exceeds the threshold for the higher rate of income tax (currently calculated as income of £35,001) or whose household's total savings and capital assets exceeds £64,893. Applicants whose household has capital assets of up to £64,893 will be assumed to accrue a pro-rata income of £5 per annum for each £100 of asset. This assumed sum will be added to other income ( <i>Supply and Allocation of Social Housing and Low Cost Home Ownership 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006</i> ).
6	Tenants (of any landlord) with rent or other arrears. <i>Mid Year review of the Supply and Allocation of Social Housing and Low Cost home Ownership 9 December 2002 (section 1)</i> .

7	Accommodated in Westminster by another local authority that retains the responsibility for re-housing whether under s193, Housing Act 1996 or any other duty by which the other local authority retains responsibility for their accommodation.
8	Has within the last five years moved out of or sold or otherwise disposed of a property where it would have been possible and reasonable to remain.
9	Has moved within the last five years into inappropriate accommodation to attract or increase priority for re-housing.
10	Has moved into the current home and caused the household to be statutorily overcrowded or to contain a Band A Hazard assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System
11	In the last five years has applied to a local authority for assistance under the Housing Act 1996 and been found intentionally homeless.
12	In the last five years has applied to Westminster City Council or another local authority for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in order to create or increase priority under Part 6.
13	A person to whom s.167(2C) of the Housing Act 1996 applies which concerns those guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make a person unsuitable to be a tenant.

It is proposed therefore to amend the Allocation Scheme to state that these categories of person do not qualify to join Westminster's housing register. It is recommended that:

- Section 4 is amended to apply to those who jointly or singly own or part own or are purchasing a property (including purchases on shared ownership), removing the 'reasonable to occupy'
- section 13 is amended to include a household in which a person has been prosecuted and found guilty of anti-social behaviour including for example theft, public disorder offences etc.

It should be noted that these exclusions may not apply to homeless applicants as they do not over-ride our duties under the Housing Act 1996 Part 7.

### 5.1.3 Transfers

It is no longer a requirement to incorporate general tenant transfers in the authority's allocation scheme. However, in Westminster we intend to continue as at present and set out all our allocation policies including transfers in our scheme.

#### 5.1.4 Choice Based Lettings

There is no longer a requirement to introduce a choice based lettings scheme. We intend to continue to offer choice to most applicants but have already introduced limits to the length of time some applicants are allowed to bid before being made a direct offer and ceasing our housing duty if the offer is refused.

#### 5.1.5 Pan London Housing Mobility

The pan London scheme, called *housingmoves*, is to be launched in mid May 2012. Westminster joined on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The Housing Allocation Scheme states:

*9.2 The pan London mobility scheme will commence in 2011/12 and the details of the scheme are being developed at the time of writing. A proportion of Westminster's lettings (expected to be a maximum of 5% of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes) will go to applicants on this scheme. The scheme will be reciprocal so the number of Westminster tenants moving out should balance the number of nominees moving in.*

Now that the scheme is fully developed it is proposed to replace this with:

Westminster participates in the pan-London mobility (PLM) scheme *housingmoves* and accordingly up to 5% of the properties that become available to the Council for re-letting or nomination each year will be made available to transferring tenants from other boroughs under those arrangements.

The decision as to which of our vacancies will be put forward to the operators of PLM for applicants from other boroughs will be made by the Choice and Lettings Manager at the Housing Options Service and approved by the Housing Needs Manager. Properties over three bedrooms are not included in the scheme. Properties selected will be of standard flatted stock in the areas in which we get most supply in both the north and south of Westminster. They will be a mixture of WCC stock and RP stock to which we have nomination rights. Houses will not be put forward as there are so few in Westminster and they are in such high demand from our own tenants.

As a result of our participation in PLM, existing tenants of Westminster can make transfer applications through PLM to be considered for vacancies in other London local authority areas.

#### Single Persons Pathway

- 5.1.6 The single person's housing pathway provides a more supportive housing option for single people with vulnerabilities, with people moving on from one of the

designated SPHP schemes once they are ready for independence. These clients will be given points and will be able to bid for a suitable property via the Choice Based Lettings scheme, unless it has been determined that a direct offer would be more suitable. In line with single homeless applicants, they will be given sufficient time in which to bid successfully for a property. It is anticipated that this period will be around six weeks based upon the flow of properties and will be reviewed regularly. If they have not successfully bid within this time, the client may be made a direct offer of accommodation. If the client refuses the offer, the council will make no further offers and will cease providing the client with temporary accommodation.

## **5.2 Additional Points for Employment**

The 2011/12 Supply and Allocations Report recommended the award of additional points for residency and employment and set out that the 2012/13 would review the implementation of this and the purpose of this section is to describe the impact of the implementation of this

- 5.2.1 Westminster's new Housing Allocation Scheme was published in October 2011 and includes additional points for applicants with ten years' residence in Westminster and additional points for those in employment for a minimum of two years. These points are effective from 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012.
- 5.2.2 As demand matches supply for studio and one bedroom properties waiting times will not be influenced by the award of additional points for employment as there is sufficient accommodation available for all priority groups seeking studio and one bedroom properties. These points will therefore not be applicable to single applicants
- 5.2.3 Existing applicants requiring family sized accommodation and eligible for the additional points were written to on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 advising them to provide the relevant documents for proof of their residence and employment by 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011 to ensure that the new points can be applied to applications on 30<sup>th</sup> January. Tenants identified as already living in Westminster for ten years were given the points automatically and therefore not required to provide proof.
- 5.2.4 The impact on the lettings figures and waiting times will not be known until after the points have been applied to applications from 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Prior to implementing the changes in the new scheme there were approximately 11,500 households registered, of these approximately 5,000 had priority.
- 5.2.5 There are currently (as at 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012) 3,749 priority households registered for housing. Of these 2,670 applicants require a family sized property (2-bedroom or larger) with 2,545 households eligible to apply for employment



points. 148 households have currently been assessed as eligible for employment points. Of these 76 are homeless households and 72 are council tenants.

	Number of potential applicants eligible for Employment Points	Applicants with Employment Points	% of applicants with Employment Points within each group
Homeless	1,509	76	5%
Tenants Overcrowded	920	72	7%
Tenants with Category A Medical Priority	48	0	0%
Tenants	968	72	7%
Waiting List	68	0	0%

5.2.6 Analysis of the 148 households is provided and is broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and mobility category of the main applicant compared with the total number of households registered and eligible to apply for employment points.

### Gender

	Number of potential applicants eligible for Employment Points	Applicants with Employment Points	% of applicants with Employment Points within each group
Male	762	67	8%
Female	1,783	81	4%

### Age

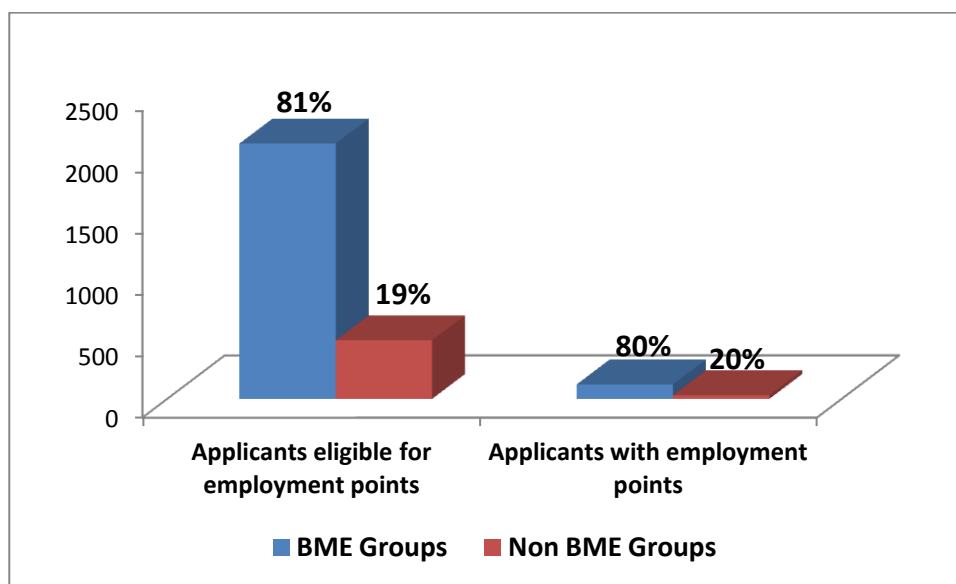
	Number of potential applicants eligible for Employment Points	Applicants with Employment Points	% of applicants with Employment Points within each group
Under 25's	228	3	1%
26-30	336	16	5%
31-35	456	27	6%
36-40	464	28	6%
41-45	480	35	7%
46-50	296	22	7%
51-55	143	12	8%
56+	142	5	3%

### Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of potential applicants eligible for Employment Points	Applicants with Employment	% of applicants with Employment Points within each
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		<b>Points</b>	<b>group</b>
Asian Bangladeshi	308	21	6%
Asian Other	111	9	8%
Asian Pakistani	25	0	0%
Asian Indian	20	1	5%
<b>Total Asian</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6%</b>
Black African	307	13	4%
Black Caribbean	99	9	8%
Black Other	74	5	6%
<b>Total Black</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5%</b>
Chinese	24	1	4%
Other	148	9	6%
<b>Total Chinese &amp; Other</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5%</b>
Middle Eastern Arab	385	16	4%
Middle Eastern Iranian	33	1	3%
Middle Eastern North African	95	10	10%
Other Middle Eastern	87	3	3%
<b>Total Middle Eastern</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5%</b>
Mixed White and Black African	16	0	0%
Mixed White Black Caribbean	19	1	5%
Mixed White and Asian	18	1	5%
Mixed Other	28	1	3%
<b>Total Mixed</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>
Unknown	164	10	6%
Not willing to classify	43	4	9%
<b>Total Unknown</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6%</b>
White Unknown	48	2	4%
White British	223	12	5%
White European	205	14	6%
White Irish	21	1	5%
White Other	60	4	6%
<b>Total White</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>2,561</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>TOTAL BME*</b>	<b>2,083</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>5%</b>

*\*Definition of all non white groups (excludes unknowns and all white unknowns and white British)*



### Mobility Category

5.2.7 As stated in the EIA Westminster's Allocations Scheme actively promotes the needs of disabled groups by being designed to ensure that applicants with mobility problems are prioritised for accommodation that is suitable for them according to their mobility category:

Household status	Property status
<b>Category 1:</b> Those who use a wheelchair all the time	<b>Category 1:</b> Property is fully wheelchair accessible
<b>Category 2:</b> Those who use a wheelchair some of the time	<b>Category 2:</b> Property is suitable where a member of the household uses a wheelchair outside the home but can manage in the home without one
<b>Category 3:</b> Those who require level access accommodation with no stairs	<b>Category 3:</b> No more than three stairs to access property and no internal stairs. May be lifted
<b>Category 4:</b> Everyone else	<b>Category 4:</b> All other properties

5.2.8 Applicants requiring wheelchair accommodation are offered suitable properties via direct offers. There are currently three households assessed with mobility category 3 registered with workers points compared with 147 overall on the list eligible to apply.

### Impact on position on waiting list (Highest placed 10 cases)

5.2.9 A sample of the ten applications highest placed on the waiting list who are in employment across all the bed sizes and priority groups was analysed to ascertain the impact this award would have if the employment points were to be

applied to applications now. The table below illustrates the difference the award of the points has on those households in employment, with the final column 'difference' showing the number of places each household would move up the waiting list.

Note: The sample cases below focused on the changes in the position of those with employment points only as at 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012 (excludes households that may have residence points or both);

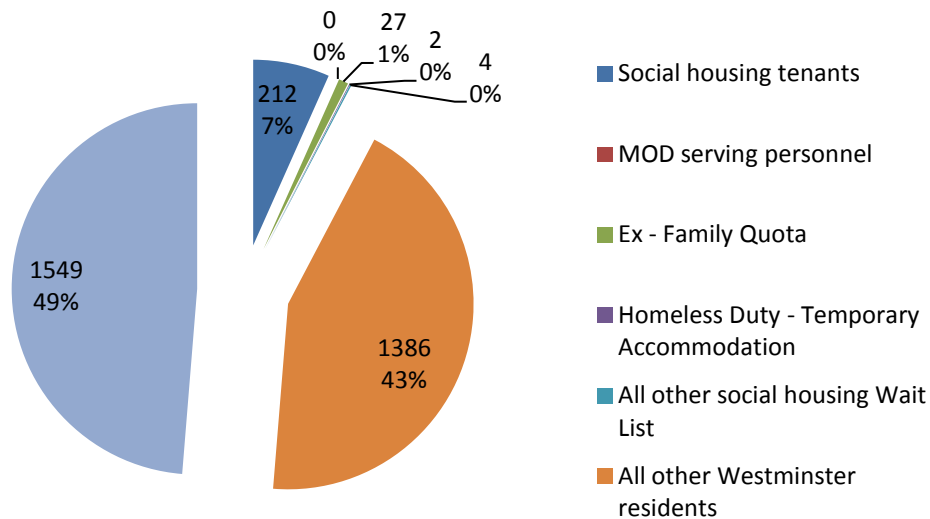
## Impact on Waiting List Position of cases with employment points only

Bed Size	List	Current Points	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Current Position	Position with +50 employment points	Difference
2	Homeless	150	49	Asian Other	F	60	4	56
2	Homeless	150	34	Bangladeshi	M	105	5	100
2	Homeless	150	51	White European	M	106	6	100
2	Homeless	150	46	Black Caribbean	M	112	7	105
2	Homeless	150	28	Bangladeshi	F	122	8	114
2	Homeless	150	35	North African	F	154	9	145
2	Homeless	150	39	Asian Other	M	195	10	185
2	Homeless	150	46	Bangladeshi	F	196	11	185
2	Homeless	150	43	Arab	M	198	12	186
2	Homeless	150	41	Black Caribbean	F	232	13	219
2	Tenants	300	32	White European	F	10	1	9
2	Tenants	300	28	White British	F	23	2	21
2	Tenants	300	46	Arab	M	25	3	22
2	Tenants	100	45	Black Caribbean	F	27	26	1
2	Tenants	100	51	Other Mixed Ethnicity	M	35	27	8
2	Tenants	100	34	Arab	F	45	28	17
2	Tenants	100	51	Black Caribbean	F	47	29	18
2	Tenants	100	40	Unknown	F	55	30	25
2	Tenants	100	46	North African	M	58	31	27
2	Tenants	100	31	Arab	F	61	32	29
3	Homeless	150	41	Bangladeshi	M	10	2	8
3	Homeless	150	42	Bangladeshi	F	27	3	24
3	Homeless	150	42	North African	M	42	4	38
3	Homeless	150	41	Arab	F	75	5	70
3	Homeless	150	38	Black African	F	88	6	82
3	Homeless	150	42	White European	F	121	7	114
3	Homeless	150	33	Bangladeshi	F	148	8	140
3	Homeless	150	39	Bangladeshi	M	152	9	143
3	Homeless	150	50	White	F	159	10	149
3	Homeless	150	41	Black African	M	168	11	157
3	Tenants	300	39	White European	M	1	1	0
3	Tenants	300	41	Bangladeshi	M	10	2	8
3	Tenants	300	55	North African	M	19	3	16
3	Tenants	300	49	White British	M	21	4	17
3	Tenants	300	38	North African	F	24	5	19
3	Tenants	300	37	Asian Other	F	25	6	19
3	Tenants	200	32	Bangladeshi	F	72	7	65
3	Tenants	200	41	Unknown	F	78	8	70
3	Tenants	100	47	White British	M	86	9	77
3	Tenants	100	41	Bangladeshi	F	113	10	103
4	Homeless	150	43	Not willing to classify	F	5	1	4
4	Homeless	150	49	Bangladeshi	F	39	2	37
4	Homeless	150	58	Black African	M	67	3	64
4	Homeless	150	43	Black African	F	82	4	78
5	Homeless	150	59	Black African	M	3	1	2
4	Tenants	300	46	Bangladeshi	F	11	1	10
4	Tenants	300	51	Bangladeshi	M	13	2	11
4	Tenants	300	51	Bangladeshi	M	15	3	12
4	Tenants	200	48	Asian Other	M	38	24	14
4	Tenants	200	38	Black African	F	39	25	14
4	Tenants	200	50	Black African	M	40	26	14
4	Tenants	200	31	Mixed Black Caribbean	F	53	27	26
4	Tenants	200	36	Arab	F	48	28	20
4	Tenants	100	40	Black Other	F	78	65	13

## 6. Review of Intermediate Housing

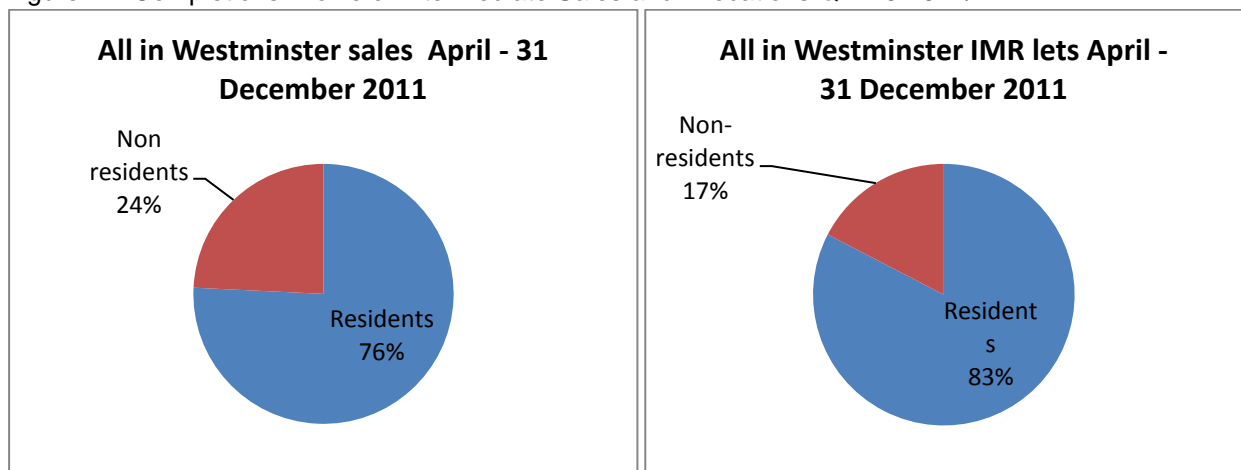
- 6.1 Demand for intermediate housing grew by 619 new full registrations for the Homeownership Westminster service for the first nine months of 2011/12. There are now 3,180 households on the register with the narrow majority already living in Westminster. The graph below shows the breakdown of households on the register overall as at 31 December 2011.

Figure 1 – Homeownership Westminster Registrations



- 6.2 Households with a proven residency connection continue to be given first offer of all intermediate housing opportunities, after which a cascade is made to non-residents that can prove established local employment (12 months+). The charts below demonstrate that the majority of opportunities are secured by households living locally. Intermediate rent tends to have a higher take up of residents than Shared Ownership sales, as the lower monthly outgoings costs are attractive to registrants, and financial capacity for a deposit and ability to secure a mortgage don't prevent take up.

Figure 2 – Completions Profile of Intermediate Sales and Allocations Q1 – 3 2011/12



- 6.3 There is a shift towards a greater proportion of intermediate housing opportunities being offered for rent as opposed to low cost home ownership in the foreseeable future. There will be 36 new build Shared Ownership opportunities delivered in 2012/13, but it seems likely that the number of rental properties available through the service will exceed low cost home ownership. While new build intermediate rent as a product is no longer supported by HCA grant funding, Registered Providers with four year development programmes agreed with the HCA are able to convert a proportion of void social rent properties to an Affordable Rent tenure. (Paragraphs 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 refers).
- 6.4 Conservative estimates are that somewhere between 25% - 50% of void properties could be converted by Registered Providers to an Affordable Rent product. It's difficult to predict numbers, but potentially around 70 – 90 studios and one bedroom flats per annum might be converted.
- 6.5 Applicants with the highest degree of need (Housing Act definition) will receive bidding priority for the opportunities. But as the stock profile in Westminster is predominately studio or one bed flats, there is a surplus of supply against the waiting list demand for family size homes. Therefore, as touched on in paragraph 4.1.5, officers are looking at the potential to cascade offers on studio and one bed Affordable Rent properties to the intermediate housing register so that the City Council does not lose its nomination rights to the properties by being unable to let them to the social housing wait list.

## **7. Financial Implications**

### **7.1 Homelessness**

7.1.1 The gross Housing General Fund homelessness budget for 2012/13 is £56m and includes £49m for the provision of temporary accommodation. The net budget for homelessness is £2.9m and for temporary accommodation is £4.4m

### **7.2 Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate (HHSD) Grant**

7.2.1 For 2012/13 the City Council has been awarded a revenue grant of £8.35m for reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services aimed at reducing the numbers of rough sleepers.

### **7.3 Supporting People**

7.3.1 As described above the former Supporting People grant allocation is now included as Formula Grant and the total planned expenditure is £13.4m

### **7.4 Capital Expenditure – Housing and Physical Disability**

7.4.1 The 2012/13 budget for gross capital expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants to private sector tenants is £800k. This budget is contained within the Housing General Fund capital programme.

7.4.2 In 2012/13, the HRA capital budget for Aids and Adaptations is £6m.

### **7.5 Capital Expenditure – Affordable Housing**

7.5.1 Within the Housing General Fund capital programme for 2012/13 there is £Xm for the funding of new affordable housing supply via housing associations. This is combined with HCA Funding and Section 106 opportunities to maximise the supply of affordable homes.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 Local Authorities have a legal duty under the Housing Act 1996 to assist people if they have nowhere to live and satisfy the criteria below :-

- Eligible for assistance in accordance with section 185 of the Housing Act 1996
- Homeless in accordance with section 175 of the Housing Act 1996.
- Priority Need (e.g. a family with children, pregnant, vulnerable due to old age, disabilities, mental health, care leavers, domestic violence)Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996
- Intentionality – whether or not someone has done or failed to do something which was a deliberate act the consequence of which led to the loss of their home in accordance with section 191 of the Housing Act 1996.
- Local Connection under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996



8.2 The City Council is therefore required to allocate housing in accordance with its allocation scheme pursuant to the Housing Act 1996. The options set out in this report are consistent with the City Council's allocation scheme.

8.3 By virtue of Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 many Housing Authorities are required to prepare and update a homeless strategy. However, being an excellent authority, the City Council is exempted from that requirement by virtue of Article 3 of the Local Authorities' Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) Order 2005. This is a non statutory report prepared outside the homelessness regime

## **9. Staffing Implications**

9.1 There are none

## **10. Outstanding Issues**

10.1 There are none.

## **11. Performance Plan Implications**

11.1 Recommendations of this report support the following Business Plan aim:  
To promote the quality of life for Westminster citizens by working with all our partners to improve the housing experience of our residents and the safety and social care of vulnerable people and their families

## **12. Consultation**

12.1 The Allocations Working Group has provided valuable feedback on policy and service issues. Ongoing consultation on housing supply and allocations issues is also carried out with key stakeholders both within and outside the Council, through meetings with RSL's, the Housing Options Service Improvement Group and Partners Forum and the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

## **13. Crime and Disorder Act**

13.1 There are no Crime and Disorder Act issues arising from this report.

## **14 Health and Safety Issues**

14.1 There are none.

## **15. Co-operation with Health Authorities**

15.1 Westminster Primary Care Trust are a member of the Supporting People Commissioning Body and are fully engaged in the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy through the Health and Homelessness Steering Group.

## **16. Human Rights Act 1998**

16.1 There are no Human Rights Act issues arising directly from this report.

## **17. Risk Management Implications**

17.1 The projections contained in this report are based upon information received from partners about levels of future supply of accommodation, based upon previous years' levels of vacancies within social housing properties. Risks about the delivery of the different p[riorities and targets linked to this report are set out in the Housing Risk Analysis, reviewed by Housing Board quarterly.

## **16. Reason(s) for Decision(s)**

16.1 The proposals contained in this report set out the issues related to the development of allocation projections of the supply of social housing for 2012/13 to meet the Council's statutory obligations, meet the varying demands for social housing and to reduce the numbers of people living in Temporary Accommodation who are waiting for social housing

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT OR WISH TO INSPECT ANY OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS, PLEASE CONTACT GREGORY ROBERTS ON 020 7641 2834; EMAIL ADDRESS grobert2@westminster.gov.uk; FAX NUMBER 020 7641 1904
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## **Background Papers**

Appendix A

**SUPPLY OF RENTED ACCOMMODATION PROJECTIONS 2012/13**

	<b>2012/13 Projection</b>
<b>WCC Stock</b>	431
Casual voids and returned from major works	14
Returned from conversion/rehab.	
<b>HA Stock</b>	
2. First Let Nominations	109
3. Relet Nominations (inc. Homebuy)	236
<u>Total Net Voids</u>	<b>790</b>
<b>WCC Stock</b>	
4. Transfer (Existing WCC Tenants)	180
5. Less Decants for Major Works (-)	-15
<u>Total Gross Voids</u>	<b>955</b>

**Appendix B – Supply of Rented Accommodation 2012/13 –  
projections by property size**

Supply	Bedsize						Total
	Studio	1	2	3	4	5+	
WCC Casual voids	131	193	70	27	9	1	<b>431</b>
Return from rehab	0	5	4	4	1		14
HA Stock all nominations	73	83	110	65	13	1	345
<b>Total Net Voids</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>790</b>
WCC Transfers	37	74	36	27	6	0	<b>180</b>
Less Decants for major works	-4	-6	-2	-2	-1		<b>-16</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>955</b>

## Appendix B1 – Allocations projections of rented housing 2012/13 by property size

All allocations will be made via the City Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme except for those individuals who are identified for direct offers of accommodation. The following tables form a projection only but include all groups who access social housing; the actual allocation will be made after considering all the relevant issues relating to any applicant and his/ her household and will depend upon the bidding preferences of individuals under Choice.

### Family size accommodation

Category	Bed Size	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	TOTAL
<b>Tenant Transfers</b>						
Decants/Major Works		8	3	0	0	11
Cash incentives		18	1	0	0	19
Community Care Nominations		1	0	0	0	1
Children Act Rehousing		0	1	0	0	1
Medical, management transfer		23	14	4	0	41
Overcrowded		17	26	7	1	51
Pan London Mobility Scheme		13	7	0	0	20
<b>TOTAL Tenant Transfers</b>		<b>80</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Housing Register</b>						
Homeless		117	54	12	1	184
Category A		5	6	2	0	13
Community Care Nominations		1	0	0	0	1
Children Act Panel		2	1	1	0	4
Second Succession		3	0	0	0	3
Reciprocals		1	1	0	0	2
RSL and private severe overcrowded		9	7	2	0	18
<b>TOTAL Housing Register</b>		<b>138</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>TOTAL Family Lettings</b>		<b>218</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>369</b>

### Studio and One Bedroom Accommodation

	Studio and one beds*
Homeless including community supported housing	180
Other community supportive housing	129
Homeless split households	10
Cash Incentive	49
Pathways and small quotas; studio to one bed transfers	203
Pan London Mobility Scheme	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>586</b>
<b>Total of all Lettings</b>	<b>955</b>

\*The high level of supply of studio and one bedroom properties means that broader quotas can be set.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Affordable Housing**

Subsidised, low cost housing for rent or shared ownership.

### **Asylum Seeker**

Any person who has lodged an appeal for asylum but whose application has not yet been resolved (Home Office definition).

### **BBS**

Buildings Based Services for Rough Sleepers

### **Cash Incentive Scheme (CIS)**

Scheme offering financial and other assistance to encourage tenants occupying a property too large for their needs to move to smaller accommodation. Also applies to tenants moving out of WCC accommodation altogether.

### **Casual Void**

A vacant home which has become available at “no cost” to the Council, i.e. where the Council have not had to rehouse a tenant, either directly or indirectly, to create the void, eg. a tenant who moves into the private sector.

### **CLG –Communities and Local Government**

Formerly Department of Communities and Local Government, now abbreviated to Communities and Local Government. The Government department currently responsible for local government and housing.

### **Decant**

A permanent or temporary move of a tenant to allow major works/ refurbishment to be carried out, or prior to demolition and redevelopment.

### **English Partnerships (now part of HCA)**

Government agency responsible for promoting sustainable regeneration, housing, strategic brownfield development and best practice.

### **Family Quota**

Scheme for rehousing sons and daughters of existing tenants and leaseholders.

### **First Let Nominations**

Lettings from RSL housing not previously available to the City Council, e.g. newly built.

### **Floating Support**

A support service provided to people living in their own home, that is not a condition of residence, as opposed to a hostel or supported housing scheme.

### **GOL -Government Office for London**

Regional Government office covering the capital responsible for allocating resources and monitoring local authority housing strategies.

### **GLA -Greater London Authority**

Local authority responsible for certain strategic services (e.g. transportation, planning, etc) covering the whole of London. From 2008 the Mayor of London has responsibility at the strategic level for housing.

### **Homelessness Act 2002**

A new Act which reforms the legislation on homelessness and the allocation of social housing, and introduces a statutory requirement to carry out a homelessness audit or review and publish a homelessness strategy.

### **Homes and Communities Agency**

The Homes and Communities Agency is the new new housing and regeneration agency for England. It has been formed to join up the delivery of housing and regeneration, bringing together the functions of English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation, and a range of work carried out by the Communities and Local Government Department, including delivery in the areas of decent homes, housing market renewal, housing PFI, housing growth and urban regeneration.

### **Hostel Reciprocal**

An agreement whereby the Council nominates a vulnerable person to whom there is a statutory homelessness duty to a voluntary sector hostel for initial assessment and rehabilitation, and in turn the hostel has the right to nominate a person for social housing by the Council.

### **Housing Corporation**

Government agency responsible for funding and monitoring Registered Social Landlords principally housing associations. (Now Homes and Communities Agency)

### **Housing Register**

A list of those requesting and eligible for council housing.

### **Key Worker**

People who are considered essential workers such as nurses, teachers, social workers and police officers.

### **LDA –London Development Agency**

Regional agency responsible for delivering the Mayor of London's Plan and economic objectives.

### **London Councils**

An organisation representing the London local authorities, formerly called Association of London Government

### **Move On Quota**

A rehousing quota available to a number of agencies working with rough sleepers.

### **Net Voids**

Total supply excluding tenant transfers, exchanges and reciprocals.

### **Primary Care Trust (PCT)**

The statutory organisation responsible for commissioning and providing primary health care services (GPs, community nursing etc). A PCT for the whole of Westminster came into effect in April 2002.

### **Priority Need**

Section 189(1) of the Housing Act 1996 defines the following groups as being in priority need:

- Pregnant Women
- Household with dependent children
- Those vulnerable because of mental-health, physical disability, old age or other special reason.
- A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster.

This has since been amended by the homelessness Priority Need Order (see below).

### **Priority Need Order**

A statutory instrument, which came into effect on 31 July 2002, and which extends the categories of people who are classified as in priority need of housing assistance – to include 16/17 year olds, care leavers aged 18 – 21 and those leaving institutions.

### **Priority Rehousing Group**

The City Council has identified a number of groups of applicants who should receive priority consideration for rehousing because of their housing need (e.g. Category A Medical).

### **Reciprocal**

Exchange of nomination rights with another social landlord.

### **Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)**

Social landlords including housing associations and local housing companies registered with the Housing Corporation.

### **Relet Nominations**

Nominations to existing RSL stock.

### **Right to Buy (RTB)**

A statutory scheme that enables secure tenants to purchase their home at a discount, the level of which depends upon the length of public sector tenancy up to a maximum level.

### **Stage 2 Accommodation**

Self-contained, temporary housing.

### **Starter Homes Initiative**

A government initiative to fund shared ownership schemes for key workers.

### **Supporting People**

Funding framework for housing related support services for vulnerable people.

### **Vulnerable**

A priority need category under Section 189(1), Part VIII, Housing Act 1996 (see Priority Need).



**For completion by Cabinet Member**

**Declaration of Interest**

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....  
NAME:

- I have to declare an interest

State nature of interest .....

.....

Signed ..... Date .....  
NAME:

(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled Supply and Allocation of Social Housing and Low Cost Home Ownership 2010/11 and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed .....

Cabinet Member for .....

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment: .....

.....

.....

NOTE: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Legal and Administrative Services, the Director of Finance and Resources and, if there are staffing implications, the Director of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should

take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

**Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy and Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed for any call-in request to be received.**