



We opened the Housing Options Centre, with a focus on preventing homelessness.

Chapter 12 Housing

Introduction

We aim to deliver sustained investment to provide decent homes for all Lewisham's residents and responsive and effective housing services which operate to the highest standards of quality and equality. We work closely with partners for the well-being of Lewisham's communities, linking housing to the wider agenda, maximising the supply and choice of affordable housing and creating balanced communities.

Strategic objectives

We aim to provide an excellent, accessible customer-focused housing service which promotes sustainable communities. Our key objectives include:

- working collaboratively, to help successfully deliver the Council's mixed approach to the achievement of the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- to listen and learn from what tenants tell us, encouraging involvement and engagement from all sections of the tenant and leaseholder population
- to work in partnership to deliver value for money services and improved efficiency, with a specific focus on securing a best value repairs and maintenance service.

Performance against 2005/06 top level commitments

We delivered a number of key actions to help drive up the housing comprehensive performance assessment score.

We:

- reorganised the Housing Service to ensure consistently excellent services are provided across the borough. We have also created a new client to drive through improvements in the Repairs Service.
- limited the use of bed and breakfast despite substantial demand by homeless households
- progressed our work to address the main recommendations of the Audit Commission's report on repairs and maintenance, linking this to our wider service improvement work
- put in place a robust service improvement plan, monitored regularly at a senior level to ensure delivery, which addresses Audit Commission best practice as set out in its Key Lines of Enquiry.



Key achievements in 2005/06

We also worked closely with tenants to support the setting up of both an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) Steering Group and shadow ALMO board. They will work in partnership with us to set up a new organisation to manage and deliver Decent Homes improvements to over 12,000 tenants and manage over 4,000 leasehold homes. We also supported work to take forward the other options for achieving the Decent Homes Standard across Lewisham – which include Phoenix Community Housing and other areas pursuing the stock transfer option and Brockley and Chrysalis PFI.

We did not further improve our performance in re-letting empty properties, failing to achieve our challenging target of 4.75 weeks. However, we have now centralised responsibility for void management and ensuring that best practice is followed by all areas. We expect that the use of consistent practice will ensure high-quality service delivery in all areas, leading to performance improvements over the coming year.

During the year we also:

- produced a *Leaseholders' Handbook*
- carried out a mock inspection of housing management to assess the quality of our services and help our planning for future service improvements
- opened the Housing Options Centre, with a focus on preventing homelessness
- developed the benefits of benchmarking and working with other similar organisations to share good practice
- continued to increase the proportion of planned to responsive works (increased from 37% to 51%)
- made and kept appointments for over 96% of non-emergency repair jobs, exceeding our 95% target; we completed these repairs within just over 10 days on average
- launched the new Tenant Participation Compact Summary
- relaunched the Handyperson scheme, through funding from the Government Office for London and the South East London Housing Partnership (SELHP)
- reviewed the Housing Assistance Policy
- extended the Choice Based Letting Scheme (Homesearch) to all bed sizes
- held our second equalities summit, developing a Housing Equalities and Diversity Strategy supported by a robust action plan
- increased the level of tenancy profiling (details of who lives in our properties) to over 50%.

To ensure we delivered the best services for our estates we:

- continued to keep all tenants and residents informed about when routine cleaning tasks are to take place – and did our best to keep to these times
- deep cleaned all blocks at least once during the year
- inspected most blocks at least once a month to ensure the cleaning standards are being maintained
- reglazed most broken windows within 24 hours of report
- refurbished a further nine play areas.



Key commitments for 2006/07

To help drive up the housing CPA score we will continue to set challenging targets and use the mock inspection of the housing management service as the key tool to move the service from its current one star rating to two stars.

Linked to this improved performance, and as part of the agenda to deliver decent homes in Lewisham, we will establish an arms length management organisation (ALMO) and the appropriate governance arrangement for a successful organisation. Brockley PFI should achieve financial close and progress be made in procuring PFI4 for Street properties in Rushey Green, Sydenham and Forest Hill and the Sydenham Hill estate. Work will continue to support the proposed stock transfer areas. We will also continue to support Phoenix Community Housing, as they take forward the community gateway model for stock transfer in the Bellingham, Bankfoot and John Henry neighbourhoods.

The current Best Value review of homelessness will lead to improvements in the way the service is delivered and put in place a clear path to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.

Other actions to be taken during the coming year to improve services are set out below.

Other commitments for 2006/07

During 2006/07 we will:

- introduce the housing health and safety rating system and launch compulsory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing, in line with government timescales
- improve the satisfaction levels of all residents with the housing management service
- introduce a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic violence
- implement the key recommendations of the housing equalities action plan and strategy
- put in place modern arrangements for delivering the repairs service
- having reorganised the repairs and maintenance function and identified £1 million in efficiency savings, be reinvesting this money in repairs during 2006/07
- work to drive up our performance in re-letting empty properties
- increase participation in decision making by BME and other hard to reach groups
- ensure tenancy profiling covers all our tenants
- carry out a leasehold satisfaction survey
- continue to work, through Supporting People and other stakeholders, to improve housing services
- implement stage 2 of the Sheltered Housing Strategy
- further develop a new system, Caseworks, for mapping and monitoring anti-social behaviour.

To ensure we deliver the best for our estates we will continue to keep all tenants and residents informed when routine cleaning tasks are to take place, deep clean all blocks, at least once during the year, and inspect blocks at least once a month to ensure the cleaning standards are being maintained.

Following the transfer of the internal cleaning aspects of Caretaking into Housing, we are working to develop and implement a number of new initiatives around the internal cleaning and tree maintenance on estates, which will be set out in a revised service agreement. Following consultation this year, with all tenant and resident associations, we will work to adopt a new set of service standards for the cleanliness of internal areas and a process for monitoring and recording.

Housing

Best value ref no.	Indicator	Lewisham performance			Comparative performance in other areas					Lewisham targets				Performance against target
		Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Actual 2005/06	Best England quartile 04/05	Best London quartile 04/05	Greenwich 04/05	Southwark 04/05	Bromley 04/05	Target 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Target 2007/08	Target 2008/09	
Private sector dwellings														
BV64	number of private sector dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished during 2002/3 as a direct result of action by the local authority	78	68	231	56.25	301.25	106	174	186	200	220	240	260	well exceeds target
local	percentage of private sector housing unfit made fit as a result of action by the local authority		4.70%	4.39%							4.40%	4.45%	4.50%	
Local authority housing														
BV184a	proportion of LA homes that were not decent on 1st April (current financial year)	65.10%	59.40%	53.60%	21%	30%	62%	44%		59.40%	53.71% (59.40%)	52% (59.40%)	26%	exceeds target
BV184b	percentage change in the number of homes that were not decent between 1 April 2005 and 1 April 2006	8.80%	14.86%	5.20%	22.60%	14.90%	8.10%	14.50%		1%	1%	1%	1%	well exceeds target
BV63	energy efficiency: average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings	60	67	67	68	69	67	57		69	71	72	73	on target
BV66a	local authority rent collection and arrears: proportion of rent collected (including those from previous years)	95.33%	95.66%	95.17%	98.33%	97.59%	94.41%	91.31%		96.5%	96.5% (97%)	97.5% (97%)	97.5%	on target
BV66b	local authority rent collection and arrears recovery - 7 weeks rent arrears		new for 2005/06	11.40%							10%	9%	8%	
BV66c	local authority rent collection and arrears recovery - Notices of Seeking Possession		new for 2005/06	35%							32%	32%	32%	
BV66d	local authority rent collection and arrears recovery - evictions		new for 2005/06	0.73%							0.72%	0.71%	0.7%	

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local	local authority rent collection and arrears: proportion of rent collected (excluding current tenant arrears from previous years)	99.39%	99.18%	98.31%										99.75%	99.85%	99.85%	99.85%	on target
BV212	average time taken to relet local authority housing (days)		new for 2005/06	35										33.25	31	29	28	off target
BV164	does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing and follow the 'good practice standards' for social landlords on tackling harassment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	on target
Housing repairs																		
BV185	percentage of housing repair jobs (not emergency) for which an appointment was both made and kept by the authority	92.80%	96.72%	96.72%	90.40%	97.10%	66%	98.30%	-	95%	97% (95.7%)	97% (96.4%)						on target
local	average time to complete non-urgent responsive housing repairs (calendar days)	10.87	10.46	10.24										10	9.50	9	9	on target
local	percentage of urgent repairs completed within government time limits	95.36%	94.27%	96.72%										96%	97%	97%	97%	on target
Homelessness																		
local	proportion of homelessness applications which the authority makes a decision on and issues written notification to the applicant within 33 working days	73.94%	79.56%	67.30%										81%	83%	85%	85%	way off target
local	average time to accept people as homeless (days)	63.10	37.75	52.55										35	to be deleted			way off target

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BV183a	average length of stay in Bed & Breakfast accommodation of dependent children and pregnant women	0	0	0	1	5	5	6	20	0	4	4	0	on target
BV183b	average length of stay in hostel accommodation of dependent children and pregnant women		amended for 2005/06	27.02	0	0	23	19	13	28	40	30	30	on target
BV213	proportion of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service(s), and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved the situation		new for 2005/06	0.47							0.47	0.47	0.47	
BV214	proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years		new for 2005/06	0%							0.57%	0.57%	0.57%	
BV203	percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation	new for 2004/05	9.39%	33.41%	-6.94	5.01	-6.68	38	21.66		25%	20%	15%	
BV202	number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority	new for 2004/05	3	0	0	1	5	7	0	3	3	1	1	well exceeds target
Resident satisfaction														
BV74a	percentage of council tenants stating that they are very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord	63%	62%	62%	83%	72%	71%	62%		68%	79%	79%	79%	off target

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BV74b	percentage of council tenants stating that they are very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord - ethnic minority	59%	59%	59%	80%	67%	63%	57%	-	68%	69%	70%	70%	way off target
BV74c	percentage of council tenants stating that they are very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord - non-ethnic minority	66%	64%	64%	84%	74%	74%	65%	-	68%	70%	72%	72%	off target
BV75a	percentage of council tenants stating they are very or fairly satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision making	41%	42%	42%	69%	60%	60%	52%	-	55%	56%	58%	58%	way off target
BV75b	percentage of council tenants stating they are very or fairly satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision making - ethnic minority	38%	37%	37%	73%	60%	58%	52%	-	55%	39%	55%	55%	way off target
BV75c	percentage of council tenants stating they are very or fairly satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision making - non-ethnic minority	42%	45%	45%	70%	62%	60%	52%	-	55%	43%	55%	55%	way off target