

Title:	SWLHP Overcrowding Project – update on activities
Date:	5th October 2009
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Executive Summary:	This report gives an update on the work of the SWLHP overcrowding project, which has been running for 20 months.

SWLHP OVERCROWDING UPDATE REPORT

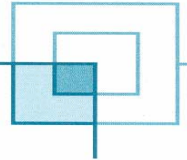
Background

The South West London Housing Partnership's overcrowding project is an initiative funded with grant provided by the Communities and Local Government Department. The grant provides funding for a project manager working across the boroughs in the sub-region. The project is a response to the Government's drive to find solutions to the problem of overcrowding, particularly in the affordable housing sector in London. It covers both local authority and housing association partners' activities in this area.

There are four streams of work within the project:

- i. Raising the performance across boroughs on dealing with under-occupation and co-ordinating use of the CLG overcrowding funding in boroughs in the sub-region.
- ii. Developing increased options for over-crowded households
- iii. Setting up an under-occupation scheme for RSLs in the sub-region
- iv. Working on sub-regional and London wide liaison and events

The SWLHP overcrowding project has been running since December 2007 when I was employed to carry out, oversee and develop the work. A lot of work has been undertaken and achieved in this time, including mapping practice in both Housing Associations and Local Authorities across South West London on overcrowding.



Key projects and new, current work include:

Perfect Fit South West London

This is a scheme that has been implemented for under occupying RSL tenants across the sub region and is managed by Priscilla Mazava who is based at Wandle Housing Association. The scheme was launched in July. There are 10 RSL's registered on the scheme and a database of 155 Under Occupiers all wishing to move to smaller accommodation. To date RSL's have contributed 6 properties to the scheme and viewings are being set up. We have a target to achieve of 30 moves in the first year.

HCR Group moves pilot

HCR are a company who facilitate moves out of London into the private sector. SWLHP is giving each borough in the sub region a total of £30,000 to enable approximately 10 of these moves to take place over the next year.

Boroughs will identify the tenants that wish to move under this scheme and then contact HCR who will set up viewings for them in their chosen area. As this scheme is designed to assist boroughs tackle their overcrowding problem by offering another option to their tenants, eligible tenants must be either:

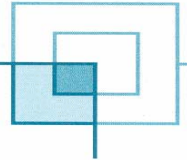
- Severely overcrowded (lacking two or more bedrooms) or overcrowded.
- Under occupying, with the resulting void then being allocated to a severely overcrowded or overcrowded family.
- A non-overcrowded or under occupied tenant whose property is then used to re-house a severely overcrowded or overcrowded family.
- A split household whereby overcrowding is reduced by moving members of the household out of the property and the family members remaining then come off the transfer list.

Your Move pilot

Your Move is a scheme whereby boroughs renovate one or two bedroom properties in desirable areas to a high specification to encourage Under Occupiers to move.

SWLHP are giving each borough in the sub region a total of £40,000 to enable at least 4 of these renovations to take place over the coming year.

As this scheme is being introduced to tackle overcrowding the properties that are released by the Under Occupiers must be allocated to a severely



overcrowded (lacking two or more bedrooms) or overcrowded family, in accordance with boroughs own Allocations Policies.

South London overcrowding training day

In conjunction with South East London, South West London are running a training day for all staff involved in under occupation and overcrowding work, to be held in November 2009.

The kinds of topics being discussed will include mitigation, mutual exchanges, private rented sector, low cost home ownership, Seaside and Country Homes and extensions and deconversions.

The aim of the day is to share good practice and enable officers to network and learn new ideas.

Space Management training days

Two training days have been set up for officers to learn more about space management when visiting overcrowded families in their homes and offering solutions to how they could live more comfortably. Similar events have taken place in East London and are highly recommended.

Sutton's pilot with owner occupying under occupiers

Sutton are looking at how to pilot a scheme whereby owner occupying under occupiers are assisted into residential care whilst their property is leased to an overcrowded family and any income is used to pay for the residential care. It is thought that there are approximately 20 households in Sutton that would be interested in participating in such a scheme. If it proves successful then other boroughs in the sub region may also implement such a scheme.

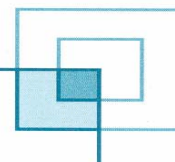
Ongoing work/projects include:

Extensions and deconversions

The sub-region has an allocation of £2.63m (from the GLA Targeted Funding Stream) for 2009/11 and will use this to extend or convert 48 units in local authority ownership during this period.

Croydon's Croylease Scheme

This is a pilot scheme whereby private landlords lease their properties to the council for a period of 5 years, renewable to 10 years. The scheme currently requires 3 bedroom houses only, however this may change in



the future depending on its success. The current aim is to lease up to fifty 3 bedroom houses for 5 years and so far 6 overcrowded families have been re-housed into these properties.

Kingston's Breathing Space scheme

This is a scheme for overcrowded families to move into private rented properties on a temporary basis whilst retaining their position on the housing register and continuing to bid for permanent properties. There was a target of 45 moves in the first two years of the scheme which has now been achieved and the scheme is now on hold.

Sub regional Under Occupation protocol

A protocol has been devised for boroughs to follow when an Under Occupier expresses a wish to move to a different borough within the sub region. So far none of these moves have occurred however Sutton and Wandsworth may have one on the pipeline.

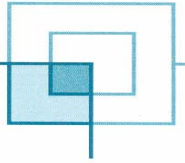
Under Occupation/overcrowding officers groups

Every quarter the Under Occupation officers and overcrowding officers from each borough meet to discuss their work, share good practice or new developments and also to talk through particular problems or issues. This group also provides a forum for officers to be updated on key policy/funding changes from central Government.

Data collection

CLG have requested baseline figures for overcrowded and under-occupied households as at April 2008 and April 2009 and continue to collect quarterly figures. Housing associations are responsible for providing their data to the relevant borough/s so that boroughs can then relay the data, plus their own figures, to CLG.

For further information on overcrowding/under occupation in South West London please contact:



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