



# A Homelessness Strategy for Merton

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# Foreword

Homelessness is a key issue for Merton to address. This Strategy has its roots in a multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness. It builds on work and initiatives in progress, and identifies new areas for us to tackle.

Our vision is:

**‘To work in partnership to provide lasting housing solutions for the people of Merton’.**

This Strategy embraces the spirit of the Homelessness Act 2002 and seeks to:

- Place a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become, homeless
- Ensure that there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become, homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
- Tackle the causes of homelessness in an integrated, coordinated and strategic way.

It is clear that local authorities and other agencies helping people who are homeless, or who may become homeless, need to do more than simply provide accommodation after people have become homeless. In many cases, early intervention can prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. Once people have been rehoused, they may become homeless again if they are not supported to maintain their home.

Whilst Merton does not have the same level of homelessness as many inner London authorities, it faces similar challenges. There is a net reduction in the available social housing in the borough, accompanied by high house prices and expensive private rented accommodation. Whilst there are some affluent areas in Merton, others are amongst the most income-deprived areas nationally.

Merton does not have a problem of street homelessness, nor is it a high user of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However, where households are living in temporary accommodation, we want to ensure that they play a successful role as part of their local community, with access to, and equal benefit from, all the services available. This means ensuring access to health, education, training and employment opportunities.

For the lifetime of this Strategy, there will not be enough suitable and affordable homes to provide a solution to homelessness in Merton. We are therefore aiming to prevent homelessness wherever possible. We are also aiming to ensure, while people are homeless, that they still have a decent place to live and that they continue to be part of the community.

This five-year Strategy describes what we are going to do to tackle homelessness in Merton. I would like to thank the many different organisations who have worked with us to develop a shared understanding of homelessness, what role they can play in tackling homelessness and what our expectations and hopes are for the future.

Councillor Steve Austin  
Cabinet Member for Housing

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'S.A.' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

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# Part 1 - Context

## Executive Summary

As an outer London borough, Merton does not have the same level of homelessness as many inner London authorities. In 2002/03, Merton accepted a duty for 156 homeless households, In 2001/02, Merton had the lowest number of 173 homelessness acceptances of all London Boroughs. In comparison, in 2001/02, Camden accepted 1,021 households, Hackney 762 and Lambeth 1,110. Merton does not have the problem of street homelessness that is faced by other boroughs, nor is it a high user of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However, Merton does face many similar challenges to other London authorities: high house prices and rental values; a diminishing stock of social housing and pockets of deprivation are all factors that have an effect on levels of homelessness in Merton.

Merton's approach is to prevent homelessness by providing permanent housing solutions before people become homeless. Officers in the Housing Service work to prevent and delay homelessness, through advice work and negotiation with the client and the person responsible for excluding them from their accommodation. This will include friends and family, and landlords. The aim is to enable people to remain in their current accommodation whilst alternative accommodation is found. Merton has been successful in adopting this preventative approach, as illustrated by the low numbers of households accepted as homeless. However, the borough's successful approach to dealing with homeless applications tends to mask the true pressure from homelessness being faced by the authority.

This Strategy aims to provide clients with lasting solutions to their housing needs. This can be achieved in a number of ways. The Council has nomination rights to many of the 40 Registered Social Landlords in the borough in addition to its own housing stock and is looking increasingly towards the private sector as a way of meeting needs. Advice and assistance is offered to everyone seeking help with their housing needs.

The Council recognises that, for some people to maintain their homes, additional support may be required. Some accommodation is provided with support, and new services are being considered to provide 'floating support' to a variety of client groups. This can include advice on benefits issues and tenancy conditions.

A wide range of organisations work together in Merton to ensure appropriate services are in place to meet the diverse needs of households in housing need. A range of appropriate services have been developed, from families with dependant children to young people leaving care, from people with mental health problems to people leaving the armed forces, from teenage parents to ex-offenders. With a clear emphasis on prevention, it is crucial that organisations are geared towards providing services that prevent households becoming either homeless, or threatened with homelessness, in the first place.

This Strategy is set out in three parts:

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- Part 1 : Sets the Homelessness Strategy in context , and explains how the Strategy has been developed and will be delivered and monitored.
  - Part 2 : Sets out the main issues for each objective, and gives examples of some of the actions that will be taken to address them.
  - Part 3 : This is the detailed Action Plan, that sets out each action that will taken to address each Strategic Aim and Objective of the Strategy.
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This is a developing Strategy. Information will continue to be gathered and will influence future developments. The Strategy will be kept under review and will be updated over the 5 year period.



## Strategic Context

### National context

Homelessness has an increasing profile on Central Government's agenda, with a series of legislative and policy initiatives introduced since February 2002. Underpinning these is a greater emphasis on homelessness prevention and early intervention, and tackling the causes of homelessness in a coordinated and strategic way.

The introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002 brought about changes in the way local and central government respond to homelessness. These changes have implications for local government at both a strategic level and in the day-to-day delivery of services to homeless people.

The Homelessness Act 2002 presents a major opportunity for Merton to transform services to homeless and potentially homeless people, so that they focus on enabling people to find and maintain a suitable home. The emphasis is on:

- Shifting away from managing homelessness as a crisis event
- Preventing homelessness arising
- Providing support services to homeless households

There are six key objectives to Central Government's approach to tackling homelessness. They are:

1. To strengthen help to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness
2. To develop more strategic approaches to tackling homelessness
3. To encourage new responses to tackling homelessness

4. To reduce the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children
5. To sustain the two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping
6. To ensure the opportunity of a decent home for all

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All authorities are expected to meet the Government's targets to achieve:

- an end to the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children, except in emergencies, and then for no longer than six weeks; and
- levels of rough sleeping that are two-thirds below the levels recorded in 1998, or lower.

In addition, the Homelessness Directorate has suggested that local authorities agree new local outcomes on homelessness that relate most to the problems faced in their local area, and to the aims and objectives of their Homelessness Strategy. A number of suggested outcomes have been proposed:

- Reduced levels of repeat homelessness
- Reduced levels of homelessness against the main causes
- Reduced inappropriate use of temporary accommodation

For any outcome that is set, the local authority must be confident that they have in place an accurate measure of the extent of the problem, and a system in place to provide a robust measure of future change. This Strategy sets out targets that respond to these challenges.

In addition, the Supporting People Programme has transferred funds for housing-related social support to local authorities from April 2003. This provides a national resource of £1.4 billion in 2003/04 for housing related support to help more than a million vulnerable people sustain independent living. This is a significant change that encourages authorities to address the needs of vulnerable people more holistically.

## Sub - Regional Context

The creation of the London Housing Board, and the need to create sub-regional housing strategies, will set the scene for Merton to make positive contributions to the sub-regional housing agenda.

A sub-regional housing structure has been established, headed by the South West London sub-regional directors group. Three officer groups, Strategy, Development and Allocations, report to the Directors Group. In addition, the group also feeds into the London Supporting People Forum.

Merton is working closely with the six other local authorities in South West London to develop a South-West London Housing Strategy and to maximise the amount of affordable housing for the sub-region. The sub-region has a strong track record of delivery of affordable housing with a high level of take up across the sub-region of Housing Corporation investment.

The South West London Development Group has:

- prioritised schemes from the 2003/04 Housing Corporation bids round for funding. This resulted in an allocation of approximately £120m of Approved Development Programme money and Challenge Fund for the sub region
- agreed a Nominations Agreement and is currently developing this into a working document. A consultation event with RSLs is planned to discuss their key partner role in delivering affordable housing in the sub-region
- identified development opportunities for 2004/05 and beyond. There are many development opportunities in the sub-region for affordable housing, based on a combination of large and small sites. South West London offers a range of strong and sustainable communities, diversity of tenure and the capacity to develop further affordable housing.

In addition, Merton has been instrumental in establishing a network of key stakeholders from each borough involved in the development of Homelessness Strategies. This network will enable cross borough work to effectively address the issues facing the homeless in South West London. The network will also provide a focus for the development of homelessness services within the sub-regional Housing Strategy.

## Corporate Context

### Introduction

Merton's Homelessness Strategy has its foundations in the Housing Strategy. This in turn has its foundations within the Council's business plan, which identifies the Council's vision and objectives.

The Council's Vision, which steers all its work, is:

“To make Merton a great place to live, work and learn”.

The Vision is underpinned by 5 key strategic objectives:

- Education Merton - achievement of standards in excellence in our schools, inclusive access to learning, the arts and sport
- Safe, Clean and Green Merton - a safe and clean environment in our streets and open spaces to improve sustainability and providing a high quality of life for residents
- Caring Merton - support for vulnerable children that equals the standards of the best and support for vulnerable adults that meets their needs while maximising their independence
- Thriving Merton - regeneration of town centres, housing and neighbourhoods to provide an attractive environment in which to live, visit and work
- Equalities Merton - full and equal access to learning, employment services and cultural life and the celebration of diversity



The Council has established the “Road to Excellence” programme, designed to ensure the Council will achieve its vision and priorities. Housing is a key component in the delivery of this programme under the banner of Thriving Merton.

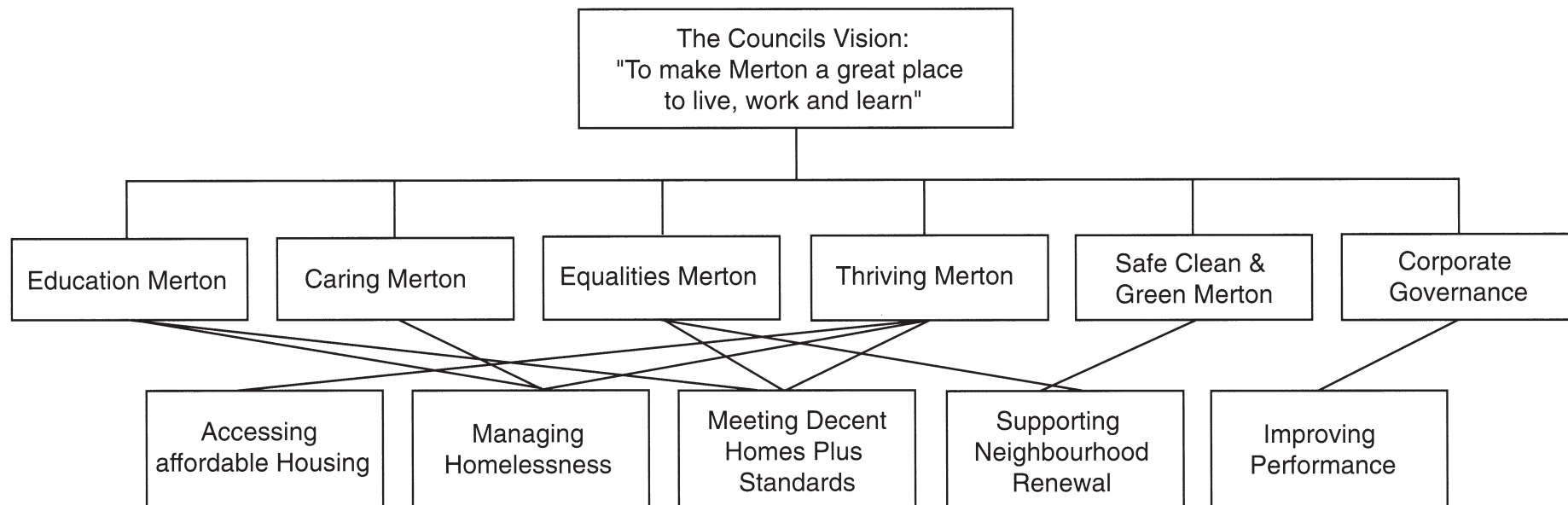
### A Vision For Housing In Merton

Over the next 3 years, Merton will address a number of challenges in order to generate a thriving and efficient housing sector and service. The challenges outlined in Merton’s Housing Strategy are:

- Access to affordable Homes
- Improvements to the Council’s Housing Stock
- Progressing the sub-regional agenda
- Developing and strengthening partnerships

### Links With Corporate Policies And Issues

The five objectives of the Housing Strategy have been informed by the corporate strategic objectives and the challenges described above. The “golden thread” linking them is illustrated below.





More specifically, through the strategic process described above, the Housing Strategy supports all of the London Borough of Merton's key corporate policies and strategies. The main examples of how this is achieved are attached in Appendix 3.

#### Developing Merton's Housing Strategy - The "Golden Thread"

The process to develop the Housing Strategy and action plan is managed on an ongoing basis by the Housing Strategy Team and is supported by the Housing Strategy Review Group (HSRG) and its seven Strategy Sub-Groups covering the following housing topic areas:

- Housing Needs and Supply
- Supported Housing
- Private Sector Housing
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Ethnic Minorities
- Energy
- Homelessness

The HSRG meets monthly throughout the year to consider progress of the Housing Strategy Action Plan, linkages between the respective strategy sub-groups, development of the new Housing Strategy and any other issues impacting on the strategy. The HSRG reports to the Departmental Management Team following each meeting.

The development of the Housing Strategy is led by Merton Council although the strategy itself is owned by a range of stakeholder organisations. This multi-agency ownership of the strategy is achieved in a number of ways:

- The HSRG membership encompasses three of the five Directorates within the Council while the strategy sub-groups have varying corporate and inter-agency levels of membership. Currently, 36% of the membership are external partners. There is a target to ensure that all the strategy groups listed above have at least one-third external members
- The borough's key partners involved in the development and delivery of the housing strategy are signatories to the strategy in recognition of their involvement and joint ownership
- A vigorous consultation process has involved a wide cross-section of Merton's community

## Local Context

The Homelessness Strategy sits under the umbrella of the overall Housing Strategy for Merton. Merton Council aims to have a robust Homelessness Strategy in line with the new legislation, and places the early intervention and the prevention of homelessness at the heart of its strategic planning.

The Council aims to demonstrate:

- A strategic approach to tackling homelessness
- Action to prevent homelessness
- Effective partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies
- An engagement with service users
- Continuous improvement

The Homelessness Strategy is informed by these guiding principles:

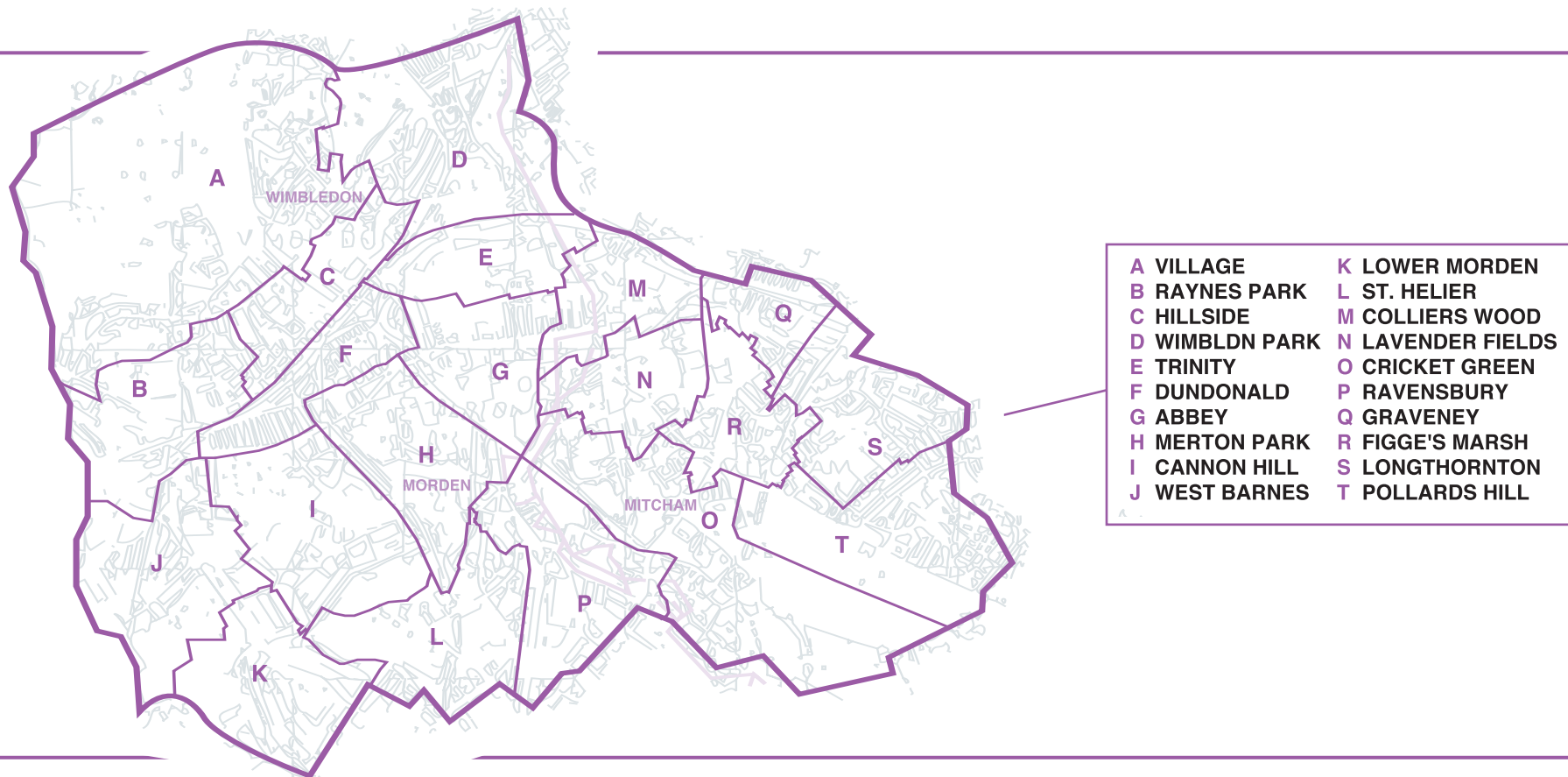
- Having early intervention and prevention as key ingredients in the approach to tackling homelessness



- Delivering high quality services that are holistic and meet the needs of individuals.
- Enabling customers through choice and engagement
- Strategic and long term planning
- Working collaboratively with partners
- Using an evidence based approach to inform policy and strategy development

## Merton in Context - Key Issues

The document 'Homelessness in Merton: A Review of Needs and Services' pulls together the complex variety of needs and the local services that are available to meet them. A draft Review was published in March 2003 as a result of significant work by many organisations. This work has continued to develop our evidence base for the Strategy.



Below is a summary of some key facts that give a flavour of the issues being faced in Merton.

- The London Borough of Merton is a vibrant and diverse outer London borough in south-west London. As a growing borough, its population of 188,000 is projected to increase significantly to 209,000 by 2016.
- The life of the borough is enriched by the diverse cultural backgrounds of its residents - 25% of the population is from an ethnic minority community, having increased from 16% of the population in 1991. Over 40 languages are spoken. The largest minority groups in the borough are the Irish, Indian, Black Caribbean and Black African communities.
- The borough has 5 main centres - Wimbledon, Morden, Mitcham, Colliers Wood and Raynes Park. Deprivation in the borough is clustered in the east. Wards such as Pollards Hill and Cricket Green are among the top 15% of income-deprived wards nationally. In contrast, Wimbledon wards in the north west of the borough are amongst the 5% most affluent wards nationally.
- The unemployment rate in Merton stands at 2.4% compared with an outer London rate of 2.9% (March 2003).
- Certain wards in the borough have high concentrations of specific groups. For example, the St Helier area has a high number of elderly people, whilst there is a concentration of young people in Pollards Hill and a concentration of ethnic minority communities in the Graveney ward.
- There are 77,000 dwellings in Merton. Approximately 85% of these are in the private sector, 6% are properties owned by Registered Social Landlords and 9% are properties owned by the Council.
- The Council's rented housing stock consists of just under 7,000 dwellings. A high number of these are flats. The stock continues to diminish through the Right to Buy (RTB). In the year 2002/03, 196 properties were sold under the Right to Buy scheme. Following the announcement by Central Government to reduce the discount under the scheme from £38k to £16k from 1st April 2003, approximately 300 households made an application under RTB prior to the deadline.

- Approximately 4,300 affordable homes in the borough are provided by approximately 40 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). They provide a range of general needs and specialist housing.
- The private sector market is split between owner occupied and rented housing. Purchase of property in Merton is expensive, with the average property price in the borough standing at £241,000 at March 2003. The cost of private rented property in 2002 ranged from an average of £815 per month for a one-bed and £1,331 per month for a three-bed property. These figures mask the disparity in prices across the borough, with higher prices in Wimbledon and lower prices in Mitcham and Morden.

## Homelessness in Merton

Homelessness can often be seen as having its roots in the inadequate supply of affordable housing. However, it often reflects broader issues, where people face complex social and financial problems that make it difficult for them to sustain tenancies or property ownership. The following section draws on the statistics held by LB Merton relating to homelessness.

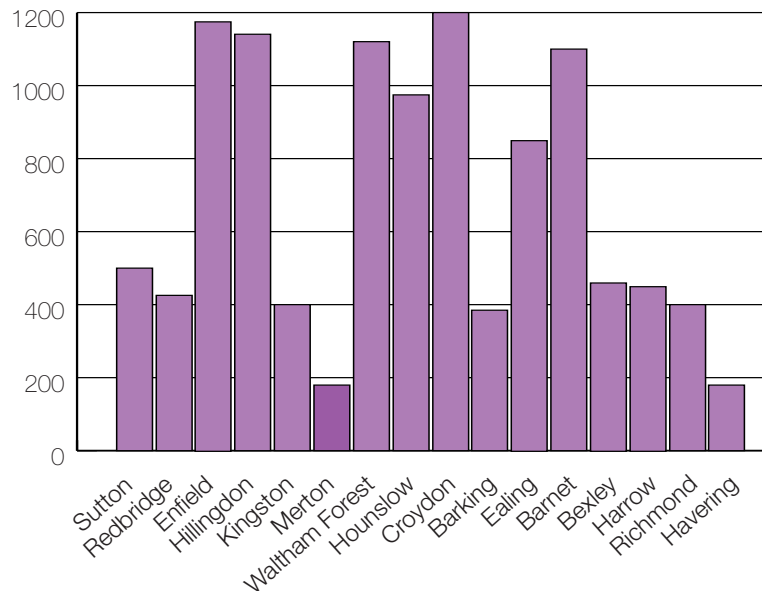
### Merton's Approach To Homelessness

The emphasis is clearly on prevention. A range of preventative strategies are used to avoid households becoming homeless.

As an outer London borough, Merton does not have the same level of homelessness as many inner London authorities. In 2002/03 Merton accepted a duty towards 156 homeless households. The borough's approach to dealing with homeless applications tends to mask the true pressure from homelessness being faced by the authority. In comparison with other outer London boroughs, Merton's homelessness acceptances appear low.



Figure 1: Homelessness Acceptances By Outer London Boroughs 2001/02



Figures currently unavailable for 2002/03.

Merton's approach is to prevent homelessness through its Allocation Scheme, thus providing permanent housing solutions before invoking homelessness procedures. Officers in the Housing Needs Team work to prevent and delay homelessness, through advice work and negotiation with the client and the person responsible for excluding them from their accommodation. This will include friends and family, and landlords. The aim is to enable people to remain in their current accommodation whilst alternative accommodation is found.

The benefits to this approach are two fold:

- 1) The Council minimises expenditure on expensive temporary accommodation.
- 2) Households avoid the difficulties of being accommodated in temporary accommodation.

To give a more accurate reflection of homelessness in Merton, it is important to add in those households for whom the boroughs focus on prevention was successful. In 2002/03, the Housing Needs Team was successful in enabling nearly 100 potentially homeless households to remain in their existing accommodation until permanent housing solutions were found. These households are awarded additional priority on the Housing Register, reflecting the insecure nature of their living arrangements.

Following implementation of the Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme in January 2003, a number of sub-registers are kept. Details of statutory homeless clients and those households who are recorded as potentially homeless on the Housing Register, are kept on separate registers. The numbers being rehoused from both registers are reviewed monthly, so offers can be balanced and adjusted according to prevailing circumstances. In addition to this, a number of special registers have been created which complement the Allocations Scheme and seek to assist people with specific support needs to access permanent rehousing. Together, these strategies enable Merton to be proactive in preventing people from becoming homeless.

#### Statutory Homeless Decisions

The main source of information on homelessness recorded by LB Merton is from the statutory returns that are made to Central Government. It is recognised that this is a partial picture, as information on people

threatened with homelessness and rehoused through the Housing Register is not currently collected in this way. This section analyses information from the statutory returns as a useful starting point to understanding the complex nature of homelessness in Merton.

Since 1998/99, the number of decisions made by LB Merton as to whether the Council owes an applicant a duty under the homelessness legislation, has decreased each year. This trend has continued into 2002/03, although the percentage accepted has slightly increased.

Figure 2: Homelessness Decisions

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Number of Homeless Decisions	1167	925	804	733	631
Homelessness Acceptances	205	242	168	173	156
Percentage Accepted	18%	26%	21%	24%	25%

Of those households approaching the Housing Needs Team, the majority are not accepted as the responsibility of the Local Authority. In 2002/03, the Authority did not accept a fully housing duty for 509 households, representing over 75% of all decisions. It is believed that the high percentage of non-acceptances is due to the way information is collected. This is being investigated in conjunction with the ODPM. The table below gives a breakdown of reasons for households not being accepted as homeless.

Figure 3: Homelessness Applications: Reasons For Negative Decisions  
All clients who approach the Housing Needs Team will be offered advice and assistance on their housing options.

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally homelessness	23	15	17	19	11
Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally homelessness	258	202	111	109	54
Eligible but not homeless	673	462	503	427	441
Ineligible	8	4	5	5	3
Total number of negative decisions	962	683	636	560	509

#### Ethnic Origin Of Households Applying to the Authority as Homeless

In 2002/03, 285 applications were made by white households, 159 by African Caribbean households, 97 by Indian Pakistani or Bangladeshi households, and 148 by households of other ethnic backgrounds. (1 was not known).

Figure 4: Ethnic Origin of Households Applying As Homeless Compared To The General Population 2002/03.

Ethnic origin	% applying as homeless	% in general population
White	41	75
Black (including black mixed race)	23	9
Asian (including Asian mixed race)	14	12
Other (including other mixed race)	21	4



It is evident that 'white' households are significantly under-represented in households applying as homeless, and that households from other ethnic minority groups are over-represented, particularly in the 'black' and 'other' ethnic groups. This suggests that non-white applicants may be suffering higher levels of housing stress and insecurity.

### Composition Of Homeless Households

Of the households accepted by the authority as statutorily homeless in 2002/03, over half had dependent children, 4% were pregnant with no children, 17% had a mental illness or learning disability, 13% had a physical disability and 2% were elderly.

Figure 5: Statutory Homelessness Acceptances By Client Group

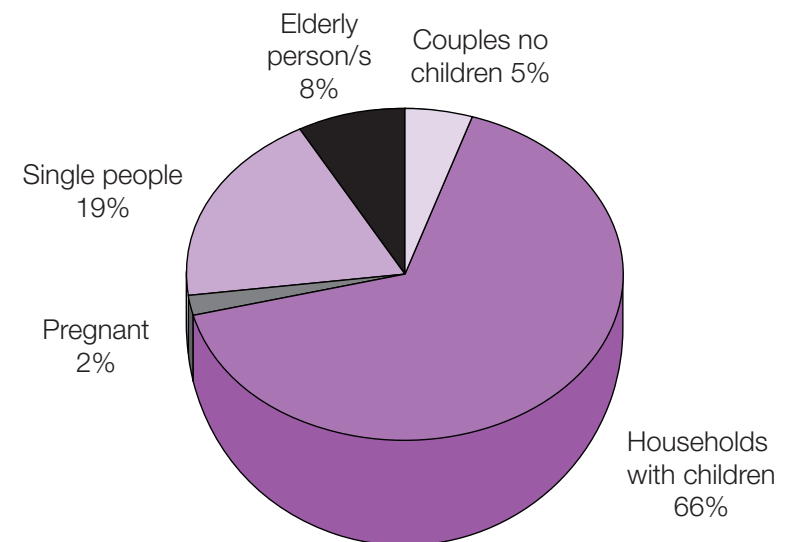
Figures in brackets are percentages for each year

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Dependant children	144 (70%)	155 (64%)	99 (59%)	93 (54%)	94 (60%)
Pregnant/no children	17 (8%)	18 (7%)	10 (6%)	16 (9%)	7 (4%)
Older People	5 (2%)	16 (7%)	9 (5%)	7 (4%)	3 (2%)
Physical disability	23 (12%)	13 (5%)	18 (11%)	25 (14%)	20 (13%)
Mental illness /learning disability	16 (8%)	39 (16%)	32 (19%)	32 (18%)	26 (17%)
Other	0	1 (<1%)	0	0	0
Total	205	242	168	173	156

(Figure may not equal 100% due to rounding)

In 2002/03, there were 96 households on the Housing Register under a direct threat of homelessness, of these 63 (66%) had dependent children, 18 (19%) were single, 2 (2%) were pregnant and 8 (8%) were elderly.

Figure 6: Households On The Housing Register With Insecurity Points (Under A Direct Threat Of Homelessness). Household composition 2002/03.



## Reasons For Statutory Homelessness

Figure 7: Reasons For Statutory Homelessness

Reason for homelessness	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Parents, relatives or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate	62 (30%)	72 (30%)	49 (29%)	79 (46%)	63 (40%)
Loss of accommodation, other than shorthold assured tenancy	59 (29%)	73 (30%)	37 (22%)	27 (16%)	20 (13%)
Relationship breakdown	33 (16%)	35 (14%)	26 (15%)	22 (13%)	20 (13%)
Loss of shorthold assured tenancy	12 (6%)	19 (8%)	24 (14%)	21 (12%)	22 (14%)
Homeless as a result of leaving hospital, care or prison	6 (3%)	9 (4%)	13 (8%)	8 (5%)	7 (4%)
Arrears on mortgage, public, private or Housing Association (RSL) tenancy	20 (10%)	20 (8%)	10 (6%)	11 (6%)	7 (4%)
Emergencies	13 (6%)	14 (6%)	9 (5%)	5 (3%)	15 (10%)
Racially motivated violence or harassment*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 (<1%)
Other forms of harassment*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 (<1%)
Total	205	242	168	173	156

\* statistics have been kept from July 02

Figures in brackets are percentages for each year

Figure may not equal 100% due to rounding

The inability or unwillingness of parents, friends or relatives to accommodate members of their household has been an enduring major cause of homelessness in Merton. Relationship breakdown as a cause has remained relatively static over the past three years and caused homelessness in 13% of cases in both 2001/02 and 2002/03. Violence was recorded in over half of these. Statistics have been kept since July 2002 detailing racially motivated harassment and violence, violence by an associated person and other forms of violence and harassment. To date, two cases have been recorded.

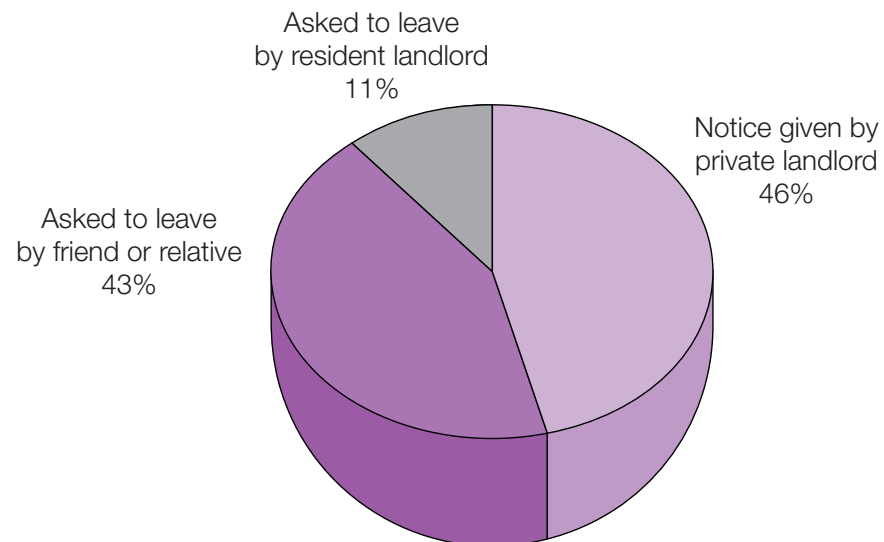
In 2002/03, 13% of households were made homeless due to loss of accommodation in circumstances other than the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. In the majority of cases these are asylum seekers who are no longer able to remain in NASS accommodation following a positive decision on their case. A further 14% of households were homeless due to the loss of an AST.

Repossessions and evictions due to mortgage and rent arrears resulted in homelessness in 11 cases (6%) in 2001/02 and in 7 cases (4%) in 2002/03. Of these, the majority were due to rent arrears in private sector properties.

People leaving institutional care, hospital or prison accounted for homelessness in 5% of cases in 2001/02 and 4% in 2003/4. Emergencies such as fires or floods caused homelessness in 3% of cases in 2001/02, this figure increased significantly in 2003/4 when they were a cause of homelessness in 10% of cases. This was due to an unusually high number of losses of accommodation due to house fires.



Figure 8: Households On The Housing Register With Insecurity Points (Under A Direct Threat Of Homelessness). Reason for Homelessness 2002/03.



Of the 96 households on the Housing Register with insecurity points under a direct threat of homelessness, 46% had been given notice by a private landlord, 43% had been asked to leave by a friend or relative and 11% were asked to leave by a resident landlord.

### Rough sleepers

An evaluation of rough sleeping was conducted in Merton between August and November 2000. On the night of the count, one rough sleeper and one vacated site (bedding and fresh food present) were recorded. Anecdotal evidence points to a general perception that the number of rough sleepers counted was too low and that some rough sleepers had not been found on the night of the count.

Additional consideration needs to be given to those young people who run away from home each year, and are at risk of sleeping rough. During 2002/03, 222 young people ran away from Merton addresses.

## The Role of Merton Council

Merton Council aims to enable people to find an effective solution to their housing needs. This does not necessarily mean offering a property in Council owned accommodation or a nomination an to a Registered Social Landlord. It dose involve offering advice and assistance to all clients seeking help with their housing needs and looking at the private sector as a way of meeting needs. The Council recognises that, for some clients to maintain their homes, some may require additional support. Services are being considered to provide 'floating support' to a variety of client groups. This can include advice on benefits issues and tenancy conditions.

### Prevention, Advice And Assistance

The Council aims to prevent or delay homelessness through housing advice and assessment through the Housing Register.

Merton's Housing Advice Service uses a range of preventative strategies to enable clients to remain in their existing accommodation wherever possible. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities now have a stronger duty to ensure that advice and assistance is provided for certain groups. The Act also requires that an applicant's housing needs are assessed before providing any advice, and that the advice is appropriate to the client and includes information about the availability, location and sources of local accommodation.



Staff within the Housing Needs Team use a range of preventative strategies, including:

- Advice on tenancy rights, including casework - such as writing to landlords and informing them of the legal rights of their tenant or commenting on the validity of a landlords notice to end the tenancy.
- Casework helping clients defend possession proceedings - such as informing and drafting defences to court proceedings.
- Advice and Proceedings on harassment and unlawful eviction, including negotiating with landlords to ensure tenants gain access to accommodation and taking legal proceedings.
- Casework helping owner-occupiers in mortgage difficulties - such as benefit information, advice on income maximisation and negotiating with lender.
- Negotiating to prevent homelessness - such as with parents threatening to exclude children from the family home due to breakdown in communication.
- Advice on Welfare Benefits - such as housing benefit or income support.
- Legal Advice on Family Law - such as rights of occupation of matrimonial home.
- Home visits - lettings caseworkers and Homeless Persons Officers visit to confirm housing circumstances and discuss with excluders reasons for eviction. Officers give advice on alternative housing solutions in order to prevent homelessness.

In 2002/03, Merton's Housing Advice Service managed casework for 844 clients. Areas of advice included advising private rented tenants on their rights (377), helping tenants facing court proceedings or court order (77) and providing advice for those seeking accommodation (65). The statistics also show that few owner-occupiers approached the Council for advice on repossession and mortgage arrears.

A further strand to Merton's approach is to prevent homelessness through its Allocation Scheme, thus providing permanent housing solutions before invoking homelessness procedures. Officers in the Housing Needs Team use the interventions described to prevent and delay homelessness, through advice and negotiation with the client and the person responsible for excluding them from their accommodation. This will include friends and family, and landlords. The aim is to enable potentially homeless people to remain in their current accommodation whilst alternative accommodation is found. Households who are threatened with homelessness, but who are able to make their own temporary accommodation arrangements, will be put on the Housing Register and awarded insecurity points to reflect the insecure nature of their accommodation.

#### The Role Of Housing Benefit

The prompt and efficient payment of housing benefit is crucial in homelessness prevention. Any discussion regarding the development of an effective homelessness strategy has recognised the key role of housing benefit.

It is recognised that the prompt administration of Housing Benefit is crucial in 2 main areas:

- To enable people to remain in their tenancies, particularly in the private rented sector
- To encourage private sector landlords to accommodate new tenants.

A housing option available to people approaching the Council for help with rehousing is to be accommodated in the private rented sector. For private landlords to be encouraged to let their properties, it is clearly important that Housing Benefit is assessed and paid promptly. The Housing Benefit section promotes good relationships with private sector landlords in the borough through dissemination of relevant information. The 2002 Comprehensive Performance Assessment showed that Merton



Benefits Service was 'Fair towards good' with a proven capacity to improve, and achieved the highest score of 4 in the assessment. However, Housing Benefit remains of significant concern to many agencies working to prevent homelessness in Merton.

The Housing Benefit section has set performance targets. For 2003/04 they are:

- Processing new claims within 56 days
- Paying 60% of new claims within 14 days
- Processing 55% of renewal claims prior to expiry
- Processing change of circumstance in 10 days

The average performance for 2002/03 was:

- The average time for processing new claims was 52 days for claims from council tenants and 61 days for claims from private rented or RSL tenants
- 49% of successful claims from council tenants were paid in 14 days
- 58% of successful claims from private rented or RSL tenants were paid in 14 days
- 52% of renewal claims were processed on time
- Changes in circumstances were processed in an average of 9.7 days

The biggest barrier to the prompt processing of Housing Benefit is that approximately 70% of claimants do not provide all the necessary information when they submit their claims. Staff in Housing Services, Supporting People and in the Financial Assessments Team have been trained to verify Housing Benefit documentation. The introduction of the Verification Framework in 2002 has increased the time taken to input a claim into the computer system by up to 50%. The impact of this has been lessened by increasing staff numbers in the Housing Benefit section and increasing working hours with the payment of overtime.

Each claim is processed in date order. There is currently no policy of fast-tracking certain types of claim (except for a legislative requirement to prioritise a small number of certain types of claim). However, there is a policy to fast-track cases where the claimant has been issued with a notice seeking possession.

There are plans nationally to change the Housing Benefit system. Of particular note in terms of the Homelessness Strategy is that future plans include the possibility of Standard Housing Benefit that will be assessed on the average rent for the type of property, rather than on a specific rent for an individual property. Claimants will be paid this amount regardless of their contractual rent. There will be both winners and losers under this scheme.

The Government is also consulting on its intention to pay claimants direct rather than their landlords (although initially not to include RSL's) which may deter some private landlords from letting to Benefit claimants.

#### Temporary Accommodation

The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households while a decision is made or whilst a permanent housing solution is found. Merton aims to keep the number of households in temporary accommodation to a minimum.

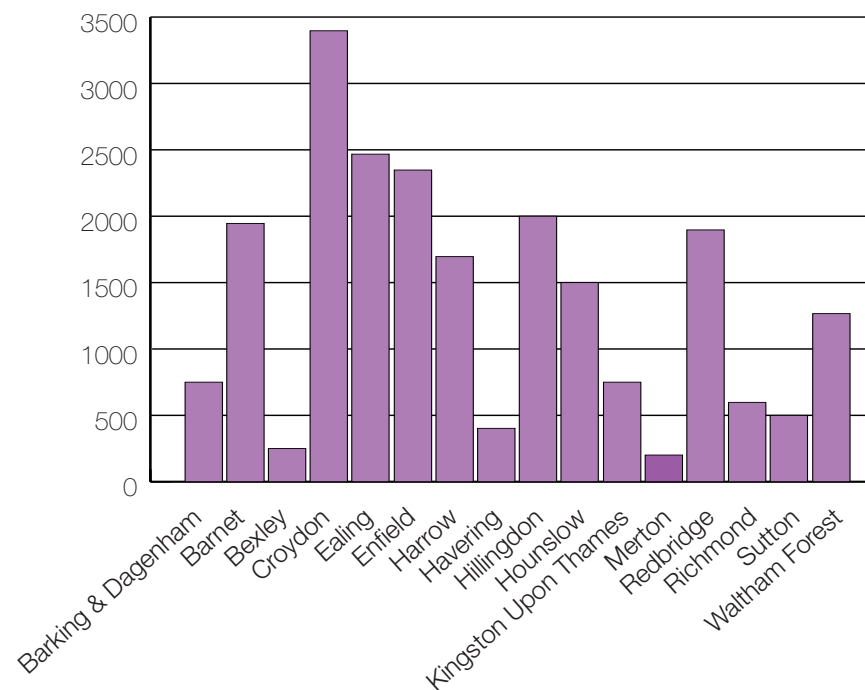
There are Central Government targets to reduce the number of families with children or pregnant women in B&B to zero by March 2004. Merton has an action plan which is targeted at having no homeless families with children accommodated in B&B hotels for more than 6 weeks. Merton achieved this target before March 2003. As at 30th June 2003, Merton has 9 families with children in Bed and Breakfast, 6 of whom have been there for longer than six weeks.

The Council has access to the following forms of temporary accommodation:

- Council owned TA: The Council has 55 units of hostel accommodation. The Temporary Accommodation manager provides support to homeless households placed in hostels and organizes repairs. Many of these units are in a poor condition.
- Bed and Breakfast: The Council is not a high user of B&B accommodation. As at 30th June, there were 49 households in B&B, of which 7 were families with children. The B&B establishment used by the Authority (Hall Place) is a high quality establishment, specifically designed to meet the needs of homeless households.
- RSL owned TA: As part of the Council's 2003/04 B&B Action Plan, 12 units have been made available by Pollards Hill Housing Association on a temporary basis.

There is currently a review of temporary accommodation in the borough. From this review, a temporary accommodation strategy will be developed to provide cost-effective solutions to the needs of Merton residents for temporary accommodation that is of a good standard.

Figure 9: Number Of Households In Temporary Accommodation: March 2003



The data demonstrates Merton's position in relation to other Outer London Boroughs in minimising the use of temporary accommodation.



### Permanent Housing

The Council provides a range of options for people it has a duty to rehouse. The options available include:

- **Council owned:** The Council has approximately 7000 properties. The stock is diminishing every year through the right to buy. For example, 196 units were sold in 2002/03. In 2002/03, a total of 433 allocations were made to Council stock. Of these, 99 were let to homeless households, representing 23% of allocations. As the pressures on the permanent stock continue, the Council also uses other options for meeting household's accommodation needs.
- **Under-occupation moves:** Merton has undertaken to provide financial incentives to tenants who are under-occupying their homes. Tenants under-occupying three bedroom homes are offered a lump sum of £5,000 and tenants under-occupying two bedroom homes £2,500. As a result, a number of family sized properties have been made available for letting with potential benefits for homeless households.
- **Nomination to a Registered Social Landlord:** The Council has nomination rights to many of the 4,300 RSL properties in the borough. Merton nominated approximately 170 households to RSLs for rehousing in 2002/03. Approximately 17% of these nominations are of homeless families.
- **Accessing the private sector:** It may be appropriate for some households to be accommodated in the private sector. Using this as a basis, a rent deposit scheme has been developed which will provide a rent deposit to the landlord. The aim is to offer this service to households accepted as homeless and applicants via the Allocations Scheme who are under a direct threat of homelessness. The Council has appointed a Project Officer to implement this scheme. By June 2003, 7 households have been rehoused into the private rented sector via this route.

- **Out-of-London moves:** The Council is continuing to promote out-of-London moves. An open day was held last year in partnership with the boroughs of Croydon, Sutton and Kingston. 800 people attended the open day. A further open day was held in May 2003. All people accepted as homeless and transfer applicants are advised of out-of-London moves. This scheme has not proved popular with homeless applicants, with 8 households having moved out of London by June 2003.

Other options continue to be developed. A Private Sector Leasing Scheme, whereby private landlords are given a range of incentives to lease their property to the Council, is being investigated.

**Floating Support - Enabling People To Remain In Their Own Homes**  
Support services can be provided within a client's own home to enable them to maintain their tenancies. A variety of support services can be provided in both temporary and permanent accommodation, which can include advice with benefits, budgeting and life skills.

#### a) Permanent accommodation

The Housing Support Team (HST) supports vulnerable people moving into Council tenancies. The HST provides a resettlement service mainly for people with mental health problems ready to move into independent living. The Team provides support right through from monitoring the housing application to seeing clients settled into their new accommodation.

The HST Officer will advise on welfare benefits, grants and, in some cases, assist with funding to purchase essential items. The new tenant will be supported and helped to get utilities connected. Help will also be given to obtain furniture and assistance given for the removal and delivery of the clients' furniture.

The Housing Support Team has a full-time substance misuse floating support worker providing support mainly to people in council tenancies.

Five RSLs currently provide floating support to tenants, including those who may be nominated by the Council. These include:

- Wandle Housing Association (for teenage parents, young people at risk)
- Battersea Churches Housing Association (for single homeless people with support needs)
- Croydon Churches Housing Association (young people at risk)
- Moat Housing Association (single homeless)
- Horizon Housing Group (people with mental health problems)

In addition, Equinox provides a floating support to people with alcohol problems in accommodation provided by Wandle Housing Association.

Tenancy support is included in mental health services provided by the Community Mental Health Teams. CMHTs commission other agencies, including Thames Reach Bondway and Threshold Housing and Support, to provide support.

A bid to the Housing Corporation in 2002 for revenue funding to enable Threshold Housing and Support (THS) to provide floating support to 25 tenants of THS and other housing associations in the borough was unsuccessful.

### **b) Temporary accommodation**

There has been concern at a national level that homeless households in temporary accommodation, particularly those with children, are not able to establish themselves to attain a reasonable quality of life. To achieve this, households need to receive support to ensure that their health, education and social services needs are met. This is particularly the case where the authority place a household out of borough and the support

network is more difficult to maintain. Effective working relationships need to be in place with health, education and social services.

To achieve this LB Merton will ensure that systems are in place to notify partner agencies of placements in temporary accommodation within the borough. This will apply to both households placed by other boroughs within Merton, and also all Merton residents who are placed in temporary accommodation within the borough. Relevant notifications will be made to health, education and social services and support provided as appropriate.

Support is currently provided to households accommodated in temporary accommodation within the borough. The Council's own temporary accommodation is managed by the Temporary Accommodation Manager, who will assist households with a variety of support needs during their stay in temporary accommodation.

Households may also be placed in Bed and Breakfast in Hall Place which is an establishment managed by a private company to provide high quality Bed and Breakfast accommodation for use by Merton Council. Management support is available 24 hours a day to assist households during their stay.

## How the Strategy Has been Developed

### Introduction

It is clear that an effective strategy can only be delivered by all agencies working effectively together. A key element of the process is to ensure that all agencies have a shared knowledge and understanding of homelessness in Merton, and the impact that it can have on people's lives. An inter-agency Homelessness Strategy Team has led on the development of the Strategy, and an inter-agency Homelessness Forum has contributed to, and been consulted on, the Strategy. The first stage was to undertake a comprehensive review of homelessness in Merton,



which forms the evidence base for this Strategy. The Review identified gaps in service provision and emerging needs, as well as identifying where more detailed research and information is needed. Information from the development of the Supporting People Programme was also used to influence this Strategy.

One of the objectives of the Strategy is to continue to develop the evidence base. Work will continue to help us better understand homelessness in Merton. This is a developing Strategy, and new information will influence future developments.

### Consultation With Key Stakeholders

To develop the Strategy, we consulted and involved our partners and homeless people themselves. Agencies have shown a great willingness to be involved, and a commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Merton.

We recognise that working together with stakeholders is essential to effectively deliver the Strategy's outcomes.

Mechanisms for consulting with key stakeholders have included:

#### **1. The Homelessness Forum**

Merton launched its first Homelessness Forum in May 2002. Forums have subsequently been held in October 2002, March and May 2003. The Forum has over 100 members, representing a range of organisations providing services to homeless, potentially homeless people.

Organisations represented include:

- voluntary organisations
- registered social landlords (housing associations)
- health authority
- social services
- housing
- education
- probation
- colleagues from neighbouring boroughs

The Forum acts as a key consultation mechanism for the developing Strategy, and as a source of valuable information relating to homelessness in Merton.

The Forum in March 2003 was integrated into Merton's annual Housing Strategy Conference. The theme of the Conference was 'Moving Forward in Partnership' and over 100 people from a variety of organisations attended. Homelessness was a key element of the conference. Discussions in workshops contributed valuable information that has been used to inform the Homelessness Strategy.

Meetings of the Forum start with presentations by colleagues working in the field of homelessness. Small group workshops give delegates an opportunity to discuss issues of particular relevance to the Homelessness Strategy. A record is made of discussions at the Forum, including the workshop discussions. Newsletters are produced after each Forum and circulated to all members.

A full list of members is attached as Appendix 1.

## **2. The Homelessness Strategy Team**

A Homelessness Strategy Team has been formed to drive forward the development of the Homelessness Strategy for Merton. This Team, which has been meeting monthly since June 2002, has inter-agency representation and is chaired by a member of the voluntary sector.

A full list of members is attached as Appendix 2.

The Strategy Team took the lead on the production of 'Homelessness in Merton: A Review of Needs and Services'. A draft Review was produced for consultation in March 2003 containing a wealth of data which has been used to influence the Homelessness Strategy.

## **3. Focus Groups/Engaging with customers**

A variety of focus groups were held to inform particular elements of the strategy. These groups pulled together people from a variety of agencies and, wherever possible, people who were homeless or had experienced homelessness.

People who become homeless or who are threatened with homelessness have a valuable contribution to make to the Homelessness Strategy. We have consulted with a wide variety of organisations who represent the views of their customers, and customers themselves have been involved wherever possible in the focus groups.

We are conscious that there is a need to develop a consultation strategy that engages effectively with our customers. This a key element of the Action Plan.

## **Impact of the Homelessness Review**

Extensive inter-agency work has been undertaken to establish the evidence on which to base this Homelessness Strategy. 'Homelessness in Merton: a Review of needs and services' was published in March 2003 and distributed for consultation to all our key stakeholders.

The Review highlighted the needs of homeless households, the services that are currently available to meet those needs and highlighted issues to be investigated or addressed. This knowledge has been used to influence the priorities that have been agreed as part of this Strategy. Following publication of the Review, key stakeholders have been involved in and consulted on the emerging priorities and the detailed actions that will be delivered to address these priorities.

Work will continue to be undertaken to improve our knowledge base and the Review will be added to and refined over the life of the Strategy. A copy of the Review can be obtained using the contact details in the section 'Publicising the Strategy'.

The Review identified a range of issues, unmet needs and gaps in services. An important part of the Strategy is to identify which will become the priority for action. A variety of methods have been used to undertake an options analysis to agree which areas should be priorities for action on the Strategy. This has included:

- Annual prioritisation of tasks as part of Merton's service planning process
- Options paper to Housing and Social Services Departmental Management Team
- Discussions with key partners to agree priorities for action



These discussions have focused around the following key criteria:

- Strategic fit
- Cost
- Impact
- Ease of implementation

It is acknowledged that this process needs to be more rigorous and systematically applied. This will be developed over the life of the Strategy.

Some unmet needs or gaps in services will not be met as, currently, they may have not been identified as a priority for action. We will ensure through our monitoring and review process that these needs are revisited (see section on 'Delivering and Monitoring the Strategy') over the life of the Strategy to identify the potential for undertaking future work in these areas.

## Local Vision, Aims and Objectives

The local vision, aims and objectives have emerged throughout the Review and Strategy processes. Suggestions were taken to the Homelessness Forum in May 2003. There was lively discussion and debate amongst Forum members to agree the vision, aims and objectives that the Homelessness Strategy would seek to achieve.

All agencies have a commitment to the responses required by Central Government as part of the Homelessness Act 2002. All agencies have signed up to:

- Placing a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- Ensuring that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become, homeless
- Ensuring that there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become, homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
- Tackling the causes of homelessness in an integrated, coordinated and strategic way

The vision for the Homelessness Strategy for Merton is:

**“To work in partnership to provide lasting housing solutions for the people of Merton”**

The long-term vision of the Homelessness Strategy is to ensure that Merton residents have a range of housing options available to them that suit their individual needs. We will achieve this vision through the pursuit of 4 key aims that lie at the heart of the Strategy.

Part 3 of this Strategy contains the Action Plan. This Plan clearly sets out actions that will be taken to deliver the vision.

We will monitor the Strategy to ensure that we achieve a consistent and significant reduction in homelessness (see section 'Delivering and Monitoring the Strategy').

The Strategic Aims for Merton are to:

### **1. Reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention**

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it occurring in the first place. A primary aim of the Strategy is to ensure that agencies are working together to prevent homelessness.



**2. Maximise housing and support options and choice for all homeless households**

In order to reduce homelessness, it is clearly important that a range of housing options are available that suit people’s needs. This can include housing across both the public and private sectors. In addition, some households will benefit from additional support to enable them to maintain a tenancy.

**3. Develop an effective, evidence based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness in the longer term**

In order for the Strategy to be effective, it is crucial that all agencies have a shared understanding of the needs of homeless households. It is on this evidence base that we can move forward together to plan a set of integrated services. The Review of Homelessness in Merton is the first step in identifying those needs. An element of this work is to ensure that the Homelessness Strategy links together with the wide range of plans and strategies produced by the Council and our partner agencies.

**4. Meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless**

An important element of the Strategy is to meet the enormous variety of needs that homeless households present. The Review of homelessness in Merton clearly identified the needs of individual client groups. This information has been used to ensure that the strategy is able to deliver an appropriate and sensitive range of services.

Underpinning each of these aims are a number of key objectives:

Reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention	Maximise housing and support options and choice for all homeless households	Develop an effective, evidence based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness and social exclusion	Meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming, homeless
1.1 Ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is widely available  1.2 Identify people at risk of homelessness, and target assistance  1.3 Prevent people from becoming homeless as a result of family or relationship breakdown  1.4 Ensure people leaving institutional care do not become homeless	2.1 Enable people in housing crisis to access accommodation when required  2.2 To minimise the length of time households remain in temporary accommodation  2.3 Enable access to affordable and appropriate housing  2.4 To ensure that housing support is available to assist people to move on to more appropriate or to sustain existing accommodation	3.1 Ensure agencies work together effectively to meet the needs of people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, homeless  3.2 Ensure that the needs of people who are homeless are integral to the development of the strategy  3.3 To promote social inclusion through equal access to a) health, b) education, and c) training and employment  3.4 Improve the evidence base	Families with dependant children  Single people  People with a mental health problem  People who misuse drugs and/or alcohol  Ex-offenders  Older people  People with a physical disability  People with HIV/AIDS  People with a learning disability  People fleeing violence

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Key objectives continued:

Reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention		Develop an effective, evidence based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness and social exclusion	Meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming, homeless
1.5 Prevent people becoming homeless from the private sector  1.6 Ensure housing management practices of social landlords work to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness  1.7 Ensure that the Housing Benefit system does not contribute to homelessness	Maximise housing and support options and choice for all homeless households		Ex-military personnel  Ethnic minority communities/ asylum seekers

Where actions are agreed to meet Strategic Aim 4, “To meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming, homeless”, they will appear in the Action Plan within the objectives for Aims 1, 2 and 3 that they seek to address for that particular client group.

## Merton’s Vision for Homelessness Over the Next Five Years

Key Aims	Merton’s Vision for 2008
<b>1. To reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention</b>	
Early intervention and prevention are key elements in tackling homelessness. The financial costs of intervention are outweighed by the potential social and economic costs of non-intervention for individuals and communities.	There will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proactive and preventative Housing Advice Service to meet the needs of all client groups.</li> <li>• A range of good quality information available to all clients.</li> <li>• Joint advice to, and joint assessments of, clients with partner agencies.</li> <li>• Effective strategies and joint protocols to prevent people leaving institutions from becoming homeless.</li> </ul>

*Continued over page*

Key Aims continued:

<p><b>2. To maximise housing &amp; support options and choice for all homeless households</b></p>	
<p>It will become increasingly difficult to access affordable housing across all sectors over the next five years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The price of home ownership is prohibitively high for many residents.</li> <li>• Access to the private rented sector is restrictive with above average incomes required to rent most properties.</li> <li>• The availability of social housing continues to reduce.</li> </ul> <p>Some people will need support to take on a new tenancy, or to maintain an existing one, if they are to avoid becoming homeless again.</p>	<p>There will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coordinated approach to the development of affordable housing through effective partnerships with Registered Social Landlords.</li> <li>• Increased access to low home ownership and affordable private rented sector housing.</li> <li>• Approximately 400 new affordable homes built in Merton between 2003 and 2006.</li> <li>• A range of housing and support options that meet a variety of needs.</li> <li>• Temporary accommodation that is of a good standard where the support needs of households are identified and addressed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. To develop an effective, evidence based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness in the longer term</b></p>	
<p>The development of effective partnerships is crucial to address homelessness. The Council cannot deliver services in isolation. Unless strong and effective partnerships are in place, addressing homelessness issues will be severely constrained.</p>	<p>There will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong multi-agency partnerships that address the underlying causes of homelessness.</li> <li>• An effective strategy that addresses homelessness issues on a sub-regional basis.</li> <li>• Sound evidence on which to develop future strategies.</li> <li>• A people focused service that is built on the needs of our customers.</li> </ul>

<p><b>4. To meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless</b></p>	
<p>An important element of the Strategy is to meet the variety of needs that homeless households present. This Strategy seeks to ensure that people's needs are comprehensively addressed and that homeless households do not become socially excluded.</p>	<p>There will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic Minority and Learning Disability Housing Strategies that have been fully implemented.</li> <li>• Homelessness policies and actions to address the needs of ethnic minority and other under-represented communities.</li> <li>• Client based housing strategies that build on an inter-agency understanding of the needs of each client group.</li> <li>• A coordinated approach that links the Homelessness Strategy with Corporate and other agency's strategies to ensure the social inclusion of households.</li> </ul>



## Resources

The long-term vision, aims and objectives of the Strategy are ambitious, but are achievable through effective joint working.

Many agencies, through their work in both the statutory and voluntary sector, contribute to achieving the vision. However, resources are not currently easily identifiable as being specifically allocated to work on homelessness. For example, the Community Mental Health Teams at the NHS Trust will play a key role in supporting people with mental health problems and preventing homelessness, but it is not possible to break this down to a cost on homelessness services. We will work across the Council and our partner agencies to identify and lever in other funding sources to implement the actions.

The Homelessness Directorate is responsible for taking forward the new approach to homelessness, working together with local authorities, the voluntary sector and other organisations. It has invested over £100m in 2002/03 and has a budget of £260m over the next three years.

LB Merton has been allocated:

- an additional £91.5k in 2002/03, and a further £50k in 2003/04 from the funding allocated to assist in reducing the numbers of families with children in Bed and Breakfast
- an additional £25k in both 2002/03 and 2003/04 from the priority needs funding related to the extension of the priority needs groups

This money has been spent on a variety of initiatives. They are:

- Increasing the number of under-occupation moves
- Incentive payments to landlords to increase opportunities for rehousing in the private sector

- Bringing a number of vacant RSL dwellings up to the required standard for use as temporary accommodation on a short-term basis. These dwellings are due for redevelopment as part of a neighbourhood renewal programme
- Recruitment of a Project Officer to develop new housing initiatives
- Investment in information technology

These additional resources will clearly be important in achieving the vision. However, an important element of the Strategy will be to review how existing resources are committed.

As an Authority with increasing demand and limited resources, it is essential that we consider all available options to ensure that the finite resources we have are put to best advantage. A key part of this Strategy has therefore been to focus on identifying how our financial resources are best directed to meet our priorities in both the short and long term.

The work undertaken to develop this Strategy has highlighted the need to develop a range of services for which funding is currently not available. In order to assess whether an option is viable, we have assessed it against a number of criteria. They are:

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Strategic Fit	: How well does it fit with delivering our vision?
Cost	: What is the overall cost to the Council of implementing the scheme?
Impact	: Will it making a significant contribution to tackling the problem?
Ease of implementation	: How easy will the service be to implement?

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It was agreed that options 1-6 and option 9 be recommended for implementation. These schemes require additional monies to be allocated in order to fund them. The resources for these initiatives will be considered as part of the annual budget setting process for 2004/05.

Option	Service	Strategic fit	Cost	Impact	Ease of implementation	SCORE
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#### Services for households in priority need

1	Mediation Service	1	2	1	2	6
2	Improved security measures for victims of domestic violence	1	2	2	2	7
3	Improvement of vulnerability assessments	1	2	1	2	6
4	Out of London Scheme	1	3	2	2	8
5	Lettings direct to the private sector	1	4	1	2	8
6	Finders scheme	1	2	2	2	7

#### Services for non-statutory homeless households

7	Package of mediation, Out of London and lettings into the private rented sector	2	4	2	2	10
8	Rent deposit/rent in advance scheme for families with dependant children who have been declared intentionally homelessness	3	3	2	2	10

#### Generic services

9	Protection of property service	3	1	3	1	8
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NB:1 = Good fit/low cost/high impact/easy to implement

The Housing Needs Service is the key player in delivering the Homelessness Strategy. The cost of this service is approximately £1m. The Housing Needs Team provides the following services:

- Housing Advice
- Registration and allocations
- Homeless Persons Unit
- Projects and Policy
- Home sales and initiatives

The Supporting People Programme became operational from 1 April 2003. The total Supporting People budget for Merton is £3.45m for 2003/04. This money funds 34 organisations to provide over 60 services to Merton residents.

In addition, LB Merton provides approximately £1.8m of grants to a variety of organisations. The work of many of these will contribute to the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy. They include:

Organisation	Role
Care and Repair	Provide a range of home improvement advice to help elderly and vulnerable owner-occupiers remain in their homes
Carers Support Merton	Provides range of services to support people carers
Christian Care	Run a van delivering furniture to homeless families. They also befriend vulnerable people.
Grenfell Housing Association	Provide a range of temporary supported accommodation for young single homeless

Continued over page



Grant fund organisations continued

Organisation	Role
MASH	Direct access hostel providing 24 hour advice & accommodation for young single homeless.
Merton Asylum Welcome	Runs a weekly one-stop shop for refugees & asylum seekers.
Merton Citizen's Advice Bureau	Provides generalist welfare and consumer advice as well as debt management.
Merton Money Advice	Works with a wide range of voluntary organizations delivering generalist and specialist welfare benefit advice.
Merton Race Equality Partnership	Support people from ethnic minorities who have experienced racial discrimination and harassment.
Merton Volunteer Bureau	Recruits and places volunteers. Supports volunteers with a history of mental health problems. Runs a help service for isolated elderly and physically disabled people.
Victim Support Merton	Provides support to victims of crime. Specialist services for victims of racially motivated crimes and domestic violence
Wandsworth & Merton Law Centre	Provides free legal advice to people living on low incomes including refugees, people with mental health problems and unemployed people

## Delivering and Monitoring the Strategy

The aim of the Strategy is to develop jointly agreed strategic aims and objectives that set out priorities for action with partners, service providers and people who use homelessness services over a five-year period.

In order to achieve the agreed aims and objectives, an Action Plan has been agreed. This is Part 3 of the Strategy. The Action Plan sets out in detail what will be done, who will do it, how it will be resourced and when it will be achieved.

It is clearly important that progress in delivering the Strategy is monitored effectively. The monitoring of the Strategy is an integral part of LB Merton's corporate business planning process. The Homelessness Strategy Team will oversee the monitoring, review and development of the Homelessness Strategy.

The process for monitoring progress against the Strategy is as follows:

- The majority of the actions in the Action Plan are contained within agreed Council team plans. These are monitored on a quarterly basis by Departmental Management Teams
- Where actions are not monitored by the Departmental Management Teams, the lead officer will be advised of the requirement to provide a quarterly update on progress
- A progress report will be provided on a bi-annual basis to the Homelessness Forum
- An annual review will be presented to the Homelessness Forum to revise and update the Strategy and Action Plan
- A full Strategy review will be undertaken at the end of year 2 (2004/05), and again at the end of the Strategy period in March 2008.

## Publicising the Strategy

All members of the Homelessness Forum have been integral in the development of this Strategy. Copies have been sent to all Forum members following the submission of the Strategy to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 31 July 2003. The Homelessness Strategy will be officially launched in September 2003 at a meeting of the Homelessness Forum.

Copies of the Strategy and the Review of Homelessness are available:

On Merton's web site: [www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)  
or by writing to:

Housing Strategy and Development Team  
Housing and Social Services Department  
5th floor, Civic Centre  
London Borough of Merton  
London Road  
Morden  
Surrey  
SM4 5DX

By e-mailing: [strategy&development@merton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy&development@merton.gov.uk)  
or by phoning: 020 8545 3685

## Part 2 - The Priorities for Action

The Homelessness Review is the evidence base from which the priorities for action have been jointly agreed. It is not the intention of this section to replicate the very detailed information that is contained in the Homelessness Review. Key elements have been extracted and are summarised in this section to illustrate why particular actions are being prioritised. A full copy of the Homelessness Review can be obtained by using the contact details in the section 'Publicising the Strategy'.

This section summarises, for each Strategic Objective, the main issues arising from the Review and consultation and gives examples of actions that are contained in the Action Plan.

For Strategic Aim 4, 'Meeting the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or who are at risk of becoming homeless', for each action, the figures in brackets represent the particular objective that is being met.

Part 3 of the Strategy contains the Action Plan. This Action Plan lists in detail all the actions that will contribute to achieving these priorities.





## Strategic Aim 1: Reduce The Incidence Of Homelessness Through Prevention

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it occurring in the first place. A primary aim of the Strategy is to ensure that agencies are working together to prevent homelessness. The following objectives have been jointly agreed to assist in meeting this aim. This section lists these objectives, and gives examples of actions that will be taken. These, and other actions, are detailed in the Action Plan.

### Objective 1.1 Ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and the prevention of homelessness, is widely available

Local advice and information services are an essential component of the Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy aims to ensure that the housing needs of all applicants will be assessed before providing advice and assistance. The advice will be appropriate to the applicants needs and will include information about the availability, location and sources of local accommodation. The Strategy also aims to ensure that information is widely available to all those who need it.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need for a tailored advice and information service that met the specific needs of the various client groups
- There is a need for improved joint working to make advice and information more widely available to meet the specific needs of the various client groups

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Our strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To revise the Housing Advice Service to ensure people are aware of the range of options available to meet their specific needs
- To produce a suite of quality assured, plain English public information
- To undertake a detailed gap analysis of existing literature to determine necessary additions

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### Objective 1.2 Identify people at risk of homelessness, and target assistance

Prevention is the key to managing demand and reducing the use of temporary accommodation. As a starting point, it is important that there is a philosophy adopted based on the belief that every case is preventable. It is important to have a good understanding of the reasons why people can become homelessness in order to be able to target tailored assistance.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to improve the evidence base of the risk factors leading to homelessness / repeat homelessness
- There is a need to improve the arrangements for identifying vulnerable households at risk of homelessness



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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To undertake a review of needs and services and develop client group specific housing strategies
- To introduce joint vulnerability assessments
- To carry out home visits to all priority need applicants who are threatened with homelessness

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#### Objective 1.3 Prevent people becoming homeless as a result of family or relationship breakdown

A key element of the Strategy is to reduce levels of homelessness against the main causes. Family or relationship breakdown remains the main cause of homelessness in Merton, representing 40% of homelessness acceptances during 2002/03. In addition, during 2002/03, 222 young people in Merton ran away from home from Merton addresses.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is currently no service that assists families to resolve difficulties that can lead to members of the household becoming homeless
- Violence is a factor in many households who become homeless as a result of family or relationship breakdown
- There has been consultation with the police and education on young runaways. There is an acknowledgement that services need to be improved for this client group on an inter-agency basis.

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To establish a pilot mediation scheme
- To establish a range of physical security measures to enable people at risk of homelessness or homeless through violence to remain at, or return home
- To minimise the risk of family breakdown by increasing the use of respite care for people with learning disabilities
- Housing Advice to attend a one-stop shop run by Connexions and provide training to Connexions staff

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#### Objective 1.4 Ensure people leaving institutional care do not become homeless

A key element of the Strategy is to ensure effective plans are in place to avoid people leaving institutional care becoming homeless. This includes plans for young people leaving care, people leaving prison, people being discharged from the Armed Forces and those being discharged from hospital.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to ensure that advice and information is widely available to professionals and customers who are leaving institutional care
- There is a need to ensure effective joint working arrangements are in place to ensure a return to appropriate housing

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To ensure targets set in the joint hospital discharge protocols are met
  - To ensure all young people leaving care have a Personal Housing Plan
  - To ensure a joint advice post between London Probation Area and LB Merton (see also 1.1)
- 

#### Objective 1.5 Undertake work to prevent people becoming homeless from the private sector

A key element of the Strategy is to reduce the number of people becoming homeless from the private sector. This is one of the main causes of homelessness in Merton. In 2002/03, 14% of homeless acceptances were due to loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Poor conditions and poor management can cause some private tenants to become homeless. The improvement of standards in private sector housing is an important element in enabling owners and tenants, particularly those who are elderly or disabled, to remain in their homes.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to provide more information to private landlords
- There is a need to ensure standards in the private sector are improved
- There is a need to undertake work to prevent asylum seekers becoming homeless once NASS gives notice from temporary accommodation

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To produce an information pack for landlords
  - To develop a web based interactive noticeboard for landlords
  - To provide support to residents in the private sector through, inter alia, the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants and the Community Alarm Scheme
  - To provide advice and assistance about repairs and home improvements to 25 elderly or vulnerable people each month
  - To carry out research on best practice in meeting the needs of asylum seekers who cease to receive support from NASS (3.4)
- 

#### Objective 1.6 Ensure housing management practices of social landlords work to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness

Housing management practices of both the Local Authority and RSLs can play a key role in the prevention of homelessness. This can include ensuring that the best use is made of the housing stock, and that issues such as racial harassment are responded to appropriately.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to undertake a programme of work of reviewing both LBM and RSL housing management policies, practices and procedures to ensure effective joint working and to learn from best practice
- There is a need to ensure racial harassment is tackled effectively
- There is a need to maximise the use of the existing social housing stock



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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To undertake a review of LBM and RSL Housing Management policies and practices to ensure that they work to prevent homelessness
- To ensure that racial harassment is identified and dealt with appropriately to minimise the possibility of homelessness
- To ensure that 100% of LBM voids are re-let within an average of 5 weeks

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#### Objective 1.7 Ensure that the housing benefit system does not contribute to homelessness

The prompt and efficient payment of housing benefit is crucial in the prevention of homelessness. Any discussion regarding the development of an effective homelessness strategy has involved the key role of housing benefit. It is recognised that the prompt administration of housing benefit is crucial in 2 main areas. Firstly, to enable people to remain in their tenancies, particularly in the private rented sector and secondly, to encourage private sector landlords to accommodate new tenants.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to improve the number of people making a successful claim. The biggest barrier to the prompt processing of Housing Benefit is that approximately 70% of claimants do not provide all the necessary information when they submit their claims.
- There is a need to ensure all professionals are aware of all relevant HB issues
- There is a need to ensure that landlords are aware of all relevant HB issues to encourage them to accommodate customers on Benefits.

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To identify funding for a pre-checking service
  - To establish an inter-agency Housing Benefit Forum
  - To develop a web-based interactive notice board for landlords
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## Strategic Aim 2: Maximise Housing and Support Options and Choice for all Homeless Households

A key aim of the Strategy is to maximise the housing and support options and choice for Merton residents. There is currently a lack of affordable housing in the private sector and reducing levels of social housing. The following objectives have been jointly agreed to assist in meeting this aim. This section lists these priorities for action, and gives examples of actions that will be taken. These, and other actions, are detailed in the Action Plan.

### Objective 2.1 Enable people in housing crises to access accommodation when required

An aim of this Strategy is to ensure stable and secure long term housing for homeless people. However, it is also important to ensure that suitable temporary accommodation is available for homeless households. Bed and Breakfast accommodation may need to be used in an emergency.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- The temporary accommodation hostels owned by the Council are in poor condition and have shared use facilities
- There is inadequate financial provision for the maintenance of these properties
- There is a need to review the short-term leases of Council properties to voluntary organisations who help non-priority homeless people. There is a need to review both the provision and the long-term management and maintenance of these properties

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To review the suitability and use of the Council's own temporary accommodation
- To review the use and occupation of properties leased by the Council to enable voluntary organisations to provide a range of services
- To convert 20 units at Hall Place into self-contained units by March 2004

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### Objective 2.2: To minimise the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation

This Strategy aims too ensure that we reduce the use of Bed & Breakfast hotels for homeless families with children. Merton has been successful in meeting the Central Government's target of ending the use of B&B for homeless families with children, except in emergencies, and then for no longer than 6 weeks. This Strategy aims to ensure that we continue to meet this target and to ensure that households spend a minimum amount of time in other forms of temporary accommodation.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- LB Merton does not make significant use of B&B hotels. The B&B accommodation that is used within the borough is an establishment recently converted into high quality temporary accommodation specifically for homeless households
- LB Merton has already met the Central Government target. The challenge is to ensure we continue to maintain this standard



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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To devise a programme that reduces the reliance on LB Merton temporary housing stock
- To ensure that no families with children are in B&B for more than 6 weeks, and that the number of families in B&B for less than 6 weeks does not exceed 6
- To reduce the number of single people in B&B from 34 to 20 by March 2006
- To ensure households spend no more than 35 weeks in temporary hostel accommodation

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#### Objective 2.3 Enable access to affordable and appropriate housing

In order to minimise homelessness, it is clearly important that a range of housing options are available that meet peoples needs. This can include access to housing across both the public and private sectors. There is a need to ensure that the homes people are living in are of a decent standard.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a net loss of social housing in Merton as the social housing built by RSLs is not adequate to compensate for the continued reduction through Right to Buy in Local Authority stock. There is a need to investigate alternative provision of affordable housing in the borough.
- Housing in the private sector is expensive, both in terms of house purchase and private renting. There is a need to work closely with private sector landlords to increase the range of affordable private sector lets

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To complete over 400 affordable homes between April 2003 and March 2006
- To undertake a review of land and property owned by LB Merton to identify suitable developments opportunities for affordable housing
- To reduce the number of non-decent homes in the Council housing stock by one-third by March 2004
- To increase lettings in the private sector by 50 through a combination of the Rent Deposit Scheme and Private Sector Leasing by end of March 2004
- To increase home ownership options through Tenants Incentive Scheme, Shared Ownership and Right to Buy

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#### Objective 2.4 Ensure that housing support is available to assist people to move on to more appropriate, or to sustain existing accommodation

The Supporting People Strategy is an integral part of the Homelessness Strategy. LB Merton has undertaken a review of the supply of accommodation and support services for a wide range of clients in preparation for the introduction of the Supporting People Programme in April 2003. One aim of the programme is to enable local authorities to develop a more flexible range of services, including floating support not tied to particular properties.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to ensure that the schemes that are being funded through the Supported People Programme are regularly reviewed to ensure that the best range of services are provided to meet the needs of each client group
  - There is a need to identify the potential for expanding the floating support scheme to more client groups
  - There is a need to review the support given to vulnerable tenants
  - There is a need to increase the supply of move-on accommodation with support for young people and people with mental health problems
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To review 100% of Supporting People funded schemes by March 2006
  - To provide eight 1-bed flats with support for move-on accommodation for young people by March 2004
  - To provide five 1-bed flats with support for move-on accommodation for people with a mental health problem by March 2004
  - To consider the potential for increasing support services to vulnerable tenants
- 

## Strategic Aim 3: Develop An Effective, Evidence Based Inter-Agency Strategy That Minimises Homelessness and Social Exclusion

We will continue to develop the evidence base on which to refine the Strategy over the forthcoming years. A key aim of this Strategy is to ensure that the key partners have a joint understanding of the issues and work effectively together to address them. If agencies are working together effectively, the incidence of homelessness will reduce in the longer term. The following objectives have been jointly agreed to assist in meeting this aim. This section lists these objectives and gives examples of actions that will be taken. These, and other actions, are detailed in the Action Plan.

**Objective 3.1 Ensure agencies work together effectively and cohesively to meet the needs of people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, homeless**

A key aim of this Strategy is to bring local agencies together, so that their work can be better coordinated and more effective. Effective joint working will result in higher quality, more efficient and more cost effective services. It is important that we work effectively with colleagues in neighbouring boroughs to maximise opportunities for sub-regional working.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- Many areas of effective joint working have been highlighted as part of the work to develop the Strategy
- There is a need to develop strategies on a cross-borough basis to maximise housing and support opportunities and choice
- There is a need to ensure that children who are homeless/ at risk of homelessness are effectively safeguarded



- There is a need to learn from good practice from other boroughs
  - There is a need to continue to develop homelessness services on an inter-agency basis
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To work with sub-regional authorities to develop an integrated housing Strategy that contributes to minimising homelessness
  - All frontline housing staff to receive basic child protection awareness training
  - Mental Health Trust to report annually to ACPC on implementation of Climbie action plan
  - To set up networking with at least 3 critical friends in other London Boroughs to share good practice
  - To promote effective joint working by holding an inter-agency Homelessness Forum at least bi-annually
- 

### Objective 3.2 Ensure that the needs of people who are homeless are integral to the development of the strategy

Homeless people have an active role to play in tackling homelessness. Promoting choice and facilitating engagement are key elements. We have a commitment to working with homeless people and their families to identify sustainable solutions to homelessness. An objective of this Strategy is to enable homeless people to actively pursue their own solutions to deal with their homelessness, with the support of information and advice on housing options. Engaging service users and former service users in the planning delivery and review of services is part of providing quality services.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- The views of clients have mainly been represented by agencies who work with homeless households
  - LB Merton currently does not have a systematic way of engaging with service users or former users
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To devise a programme that ensures the effective consultation with homeless people
  - To devise suitable methods for clients approaching the Housing Needs Team to provide feedback on an on-going basis
-



### Objective 3.3 To promote social inclusion through equal access to a) health, b) education, and c) training and employment

This Strategy aims to improve the quality of life of homeless households and promote social inclusion. In order to achieve this, we need to have high quality and holistic services that meet the diverse needs of homeless people.

3.3a Health: Homeless people of ten suffer from poor health, along with difficulties in accessing health services. Providing appropriate and secure housing is one of the most effective ways of improving health outcomes for homeless people. Ensuring that homeless people are linked to, and able to access, appropriate health services is a crucial step in improving health outcomes. It is the aim of this Strategy to ensure that homeless people, particularly those with children, have access to health services.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to review the current Health Visiting, Community Nursing and School Nursing Service to ensure that the needs of the local population are effectively targeted.
- There is a need to encourage families placed in temporary accommodation to register with a local GP, and thus gain access to the mainstream health services
- There is need to be able to track households in temporary accommodation to ensure their health needs can be identified and met

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To complete a Review of Health Visiting, School Nursing and Community Nursing Services by 2004
- Families with children under 5 to be referred to local GPs attached Health Visitor within 4 weeks of initial visit by Health Visitor
- To improve the information provided by the HPU to the Health Visiting service to ensure the health needs of households placed in TA can be identified and met

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3.3b Education: Homelessness can have a detrimental effect on a child's education. Disruption can lead to poor academic performance and lower attainments in SATS and GCSEs. This can mean that children of homeless families are likely to have less access to higher education and fewer opportunities generally after they leave school. The Social Inclusion Team provides specialist support for homeless children and their families in accessing education. Routing people into education, training and employment (see 3.3c) is essential in breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty. For children and young people, attending school is the first step in developing skills for employment in later life. There is also a role for adult education. Providing opportunities for adults to increase their skills is a key component in enabling access to employment opportunities.



Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a recognition that children need to be supported to attain educational achievements and thus develop skills for employment in later life
  - There is a need to support children whose families are homeless to minimise the disruption to their education
  - There is a need to provide a range of education opportunities for adults to increase their opportunities for employment
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To enable children of asylum seekers to have access to education
  - To support vulnerable young people to transfer into post 16 education
  - To formulate a Basic Skills Strategy for the Borough
  - To widen participation in adult education by raising awareness of opportunities for men and people from ethnic minorities
- 

3.3c Training and employment opportunities: Merton is committed to providing a range of life skills for people facing economic and social exclusion, and who face becoming homeless. Access to education and training opportunities is vital in stopping the cycle of homelessness. People in employment and training are less likely to experience debt and isolation, and employment is recognised as a way of breaking the cycle of no job and no home.

We will work with local services to ensure that young people are linked into education and training programmes, and have access to advice and guidance services. We will liaise with the LEA, Social Services and

Environment and Regeneration Services in the development of the Identification Tracking Referral (IRT) programme, and ensure appropriate links with the Local Strategic Partnership and key partners who are working towards ensuring that young people have the technical and lifeskills that will prevent them from becoming homeless, eg Connexions.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a recognition that people in employment and training are less likely to experience debt and isolation, and that employment is recognised as a way of breaking the cycle of no job and no home
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To develop the People's Network to provide training and learning opportunities for all
  - To implement a borough wide Workforce Development Strategy
  - LB Merton to provide 20 work placements in the Authority for children in need/leaving care per annum
  - All CMHTs to have a Vocational Worker by March 2004
-

### Objective 3.4 Improve the evidence base

In order for this Strategy to be effective, it is clearly important that it is based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant issues. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken to inform this Strategy. This work has been published in the document 'Homelessness in Merton: a Review of Needs and Services'. This Review, and the consultation undertaken to develop the Strategy, highlighted a number of areas where we need to improve our knowledge.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- Good progress has been made in developing a baseline assessment of the needs of homeless people and the services that are currently available
- It is difficult to get a complete picture of customers using the range of services for homelessness people as information systems are not well developed

There is a need to build on this evidence base. Many actions to undertake further work / research are contained in the Action Plan. Some are detailed below

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Our Strategy therefore contains the following actions:

- To carry out a private sector stock condition survey during 2003/04
  - To carry out a Housing Needs survey during 2004/05
  - To computerise homelessness information in the Housing Needs Team and use as the main source of information and performance reporting
  - To develop a research proposal to identify housing needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities
- 

## Strategic Aim 4: Meet the Diverse Needs of All People who are Homeless, Or at Risk Of Becoming Homeless

A key aim of the Strategy is to ensure that the individual needs of each household is met. This section highlights the key issues for each client group, and the priorities for action that have been agreed. This section is divided into the various client groups that the Homelessness Strategy seeks to assist. The priorities for action have been jointly agreed. The figures in brackets after each action relates to the objective that it seeks to achieve. They are detailed in the Action Plan under the relevant objective that they aim to meet.

### Families With Dependant children

Families with dependant children are the largest group assisted by the Council under homelessness legislation, but the least is known about the reasons they become homeless, or their support needs. Families with dependant children accounted for 60% of statutory homelessness acceptances in 2002/03. They are projected to remain the largest homeless group assisted by the authority. In 2001/02, pregnant households accounted for 9% of acceptances and in 2002/03 accounted for 4%.

The Bed and Breakfast Unit has highlighted the negative impact upon children of living in temporary accommodation and set Merton a target of eliminating bed and breakfast use for families or pregnant households for more than 6 weeks (except in emergencies) by April 2003. Merton achieved this target ahead of the deadline.



Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a lack of information and understanding of the needs and reasons for homelessness for households with dependant children
  - There is a lack of support in temporary accommodation and in new secure tenancies
  - There is inadequate provision for 16 and 17 year olds lone parents
  - There is a need to ensure effective joint working when families are intentionally homeless
  - There is a shortage of 2 bedroom properties to accommodate small families
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To undertake research into why families with children become homeless (3.4)
  - To identify risk factors that can lead to homelessness (3.4)
  - To investigate the support needs of homeless families (3.4)
  - To investigate the adequacy of current housing provision and support for teenage lone parents (3.4)
  - To implement the joint protocol on intentionally homeless families (3.1)
  - 50% of new developments to be 2 bedroom (2.3)
  - To continue and expand the Rent Deposit Scheme to increase supply (2.3)
- 

### Young People (16-25)

While young single people may not be in priority need, they can face particular problems when threatened with homelessness. They may not have developed the life skills to live independently and may lack the experience, knowledge and confidence to both initiate and maintain a tenancy. They can also face problems accessing private rented accommodation due to their low income and landlords perceptions. Housing options are further limited for the under 18s, as they have restricted access to welfare benefits and can only hold a tenancy if guaranteed by Social Services. They are also more likely to sleep rough; 222 young people ran away from Merton addresses in 2002/03.

Leaving home at a young age can affect a young persons life chances and, without adequate support, they can be vulnerable to long term social exclusion. Maintaining levels of resettlement and support for young people in temporary accommodation and during their move to permanent accommodation is key to young people being able to live independently.

The Homelessness Act 2002 extended priority need to 16&17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers. Merton has not accepted any 18-20 year old care leavers as statutory homeless, but has accepted three 16 and 17 year olds during 2002/03. Initially, applications from this group were low, but have now started to increase. Current trends suggest demand is likely to increase, particularly as information about the new provision becomes more widespread. Research undertaken by the London Housing Unit over an 8 week period in 2002 suggests that as many as 41 16&17 year olds and 87 18-20 year olds were known to Social Services. While all would not be homeless, these figures indicate a potential for increased demand.

Reasons young people become homeless are complex and their family relationship can have broken down for a number of reasons such as abuse, domestic violence, drug use, and conflict over parental rules and standards differences. A recent report on Youth homelessness and substance use was submitted to the drugs and alcohol research unit. Its key finding was “that substance use was the second most common factor given for homelessness - with parents often asking young people to leave home for relatively minor drug or alcohol use”.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is an inadequate supply of move-on and supported move-on accommodation
- There is insufficient private sector accommodation for young people and no availability of an advance deposit scheme
- There is a shortage of supported temporary housing for 16-21 year olds
- There is no mediation service to help families become reconciled and a lack of support for the whole family
- There is a need to undertake work with young runaways to better understand their issues and need for support
- There is no furniture project for young people

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To review the provision of temporary supported housing (2.1)
  - To improve working with private landlords to facilitate moves into the private sector (2.1)
  - To establish a pilot mediation service to prevent homelessness due to family breakdown (1.3)
  - Housing Advice to attend One-Stop-Shop run by Connexions and provide training to Connexions staff (1.1)
  - To undertake analysis of missing youth statistics from the police (3.4)
  - To make young people aware of the furniture project (2.1)
- 

#### People With A Mental Health Problem

A comprehensive Pathways survey was undertaken in 1996 to give a picture of housing and support needs of people with a mental health problem who were on the caseload of front line staff. The survey showed that there were just over 500 people living in Merton who were in contact with a mental health service at that time. 80% lived either in their own home, or with family and friends. The remainder lived in supported accommodation. Specific housing needs identified in the survey, and which are still outstanding, are for self-contained accommodation with some form of flexible support. The proportion of people with mental health problems who were declared statutorily homeless in Merton has increased from 8% in 1998/99, to 17% in 2002/03.



Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to further develop joint working arrangements
  - There is a need to increase the spectrum of housing and support options for people with a mental health problem
  - There is a need to reduce the number of delayed discharge of patients due to lack of suitable accommodation within the borough
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- 100% of all clients on enchaned CPA to have accommodation needs assessed (1.2)
  - To provide 5 units of move-on accommodation by March 2004 (2.3)
  - To recruit 3 Carer Support Workers by March 2006 (1.3)
  - All CHMTs to have Vocational Worker by March 2004 (3.3)
  - 50% reduction in delayed discharges due to lack of suitable accommodation (1.2)
- 

### People Who Misuse Drugs/Alcohol

Drug and alcohol misuse affects all sections of society. Illegal drug use/misuse tends to be most prevalent amongst the most affluent and most deprived in society. Having a stable home is essential to enable those who misuse drugs and/or alcohol to resolve other issues, which can tie them to particular behaviour patterns. In Merton, 75% of the clients of the Aftercare and Resettlement Service were without a permanent home of their own. A recent report on youth homelessness and substance use was submitted to the drugs and alcohol research unit. Its key finding was “that substance use was the second most common factor given for homelessness - with parents often asking young people to leave home for relatively minor drug or alcohol use”.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to improve awareness of substance misuse issues and the role of the floating support worker
- There is a need to increase the spectrum of housing and support options for people with a substance misuse problem, particularly move-on accommodation
- There is a need to improve vocational services for people who misuse substances

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- Establish inter-agency policies and procedures to make the most effective use of the substance misuse floating support worker (1.2)
- To hold a Carers Conference to raise awareness of opportunities for support for both clients and carers (1.3)
- Investigate the potential for an Adult Placement Scheme for substance misusers (2.3)
- Establish effective networks that provide clients with access to training and education (3.3)

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### Ex-Offenders

The complex nature of this client group and the needs with which they present can only be addressed through a combination of joint working arrangements between statutory partners and the voluntary sector. Prevention work around homelessness is crucial in the management of both the risk of harm and crime reduction strategies. Annually, over 100 ex-offenders require specialist housing advice and accommodation assistance. One in three prisoners lose their tenancies whilst in prison (social exclusion report on re-offending 2002).

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to extend and improve the advice offered to ex-offenders
- There is a need to improve awareness of housing issues affecting ex-offenders

- There is a need to undertake work to prevent clients losing their accommodation whilst they are in prison
- There is a need to increase the range of housing and support options for ex-offenders

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To establish a joint advice post between the London Probation Area and Housing Needs Team (1.1)
  - LPA and Housing Needs Team to undertake programme of joint training on housing issues (3.1)
  - To ensure clients who are temporarily absent from their accommodation continue to receive the Housing Benefit to which they are entitled (1.7)
  - To purchase seven 1-bed flats in the private sector to accommodate ex-offenders with medium support needs by March 2004 (2.3)
  - To develop a protocol with Kew bail hostel for the effective resettlement in Merton of offenders who are currently placed outside of the borough (2.2)
-



### Older People

Few older people apply to LB Merton as homeless. Less than 10 older people per annum approach Social Services with an issue relating to homelessness. Three older people were accepted as homeless during 2002/03. In order to maintain this position there is a clear need to continue to provide a range of housing options and support for older people to meet their needs.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- Many older people are living with families and carers who, without support, would be unable to continue to care for them
- There is an issue about the most appropriate form of accommodation provided should an older person become homeless. Neither Bed and Breakfast nor residential care may be appropriate
- There is a need to undertake research work to better understand the housing and support needs of older people from ethnic minority groups

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To review support mechanisms to carers of older people to prevent family breakdown (3.4)
  - To develop a protocol on meeting the needs of older people who find themselves in housing crisis to ensure they are placed in suitable temporary accommodation (2.1)
  - To undertake research into the housing and support needs of older people, including ethnic elders and asylum seeker elders (3.4)
- 

### People With A Physical Disability (Including Sensory Impairment/ HIV/AIDS)

The key principles guiding services to people with a physical disability / sensory impairment include the maintenance of independence, ensuring support is available in all tenures and having fair access to services. 20 people with a physical disability were accepted as homeless in 2002/03.

For people with HIV/AIDS, development of combination therapy means that people are now staying well for longer and maintaining independent lives. People need access to appropriate accommodation that is clean, warm and free from damp in order to maintain health and independence.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a lack of detailed information on the numbers and housing needs of people with a physical disability
- There is a need to ensure the provision of a suitable range of accommodation that meets the needs of people with a physical disability
- There is a need for specialist housing advice for people with HIV/AIDS
- There may be a lack of larger accommodation to meet the needs of large families



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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To provide two 3-bed houses and two 2-bed bungalows for people with a physical disability by March 2004 (2.3)
  - To provide support to residents through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (1.5)
  - Continue to support the specialist advice worker at CAB for people with HIV/AIDS (1.1)
  - To investigate the need for larger family accommodation for people with HIV/AIDS (3.4)
- 

### People With A Learning Disability

The Pathways Research completed in November 1999, identified that over half of people with learning disabilities in the Borough live with parents or other relatives. As the age of carers increases, there is likely to be more people with learning disabilities who are at risk of homelessness. The research also identified that there is a limited range of accommodation for people with learning disabilities in the Borough.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- People with learning disabilities are more likely to become homeless when a carer or guardian has died or is unable to look after them.
  - There is a need to increase support to carers by increasing access to respite care services
  - There is a need to consider alternative ways of promoting housing and support options to clients and carers of people with a learning disability
  - There is a high demand for self-contained 1-bed flats for this client group
- 

Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To develop inter-agency policies and procedures in the event that a carer can no longer look after the person with learning disabilities (1.2)
  - To produce a directory of housing and support options and publish promotional information (1.1)
  - Increase the number of people using respite care from 30 to 50 per annum (1.3)
  - To provide six 1-bed self-contained flats within walking distance of each other (2.2)
-



### People Fleeing Violence

Under the 2002 Housing Act people fleeing all types of violence can be in priority need, not just those experiencing domestic violence. Other types of violence may include racial harassment, homophobic crime, and crime and violence from neighbours as well as domestic violence. Violence is not only physical and can include verbal or mental abuse.

Statistics about all forms of violence have only been kept by the Housing Needs Team since July 2002. As a result, two homelessness acceptances have been recorded. Merton does have a racial harassment problem and between April and October 2002, 15 cases were reported in the Council housing stock. Reported instances of homophobic crime are low, but are increasing slightly, although there is no pattern to the reported instances.

Domestic violence accounts for one-quarter of all recorded crime nationally. It has the highest rate of repeat crime and can have wide-ranging effects on those experiencing it. In 2002/03, 13 households in Merton were found to be homeless due to domestic violence from a partner. Although the numbers accepted as homeless due to domestic violence have fallen since 1998 in Merton, as a percentage of all acceptances, domestic violence has remained an enduring feature of homelessness.

These figures are likely to underestimate those losing their homes due to domestic violence, as help will often be sought first from friends or family rather than the local authority. Approaching the Local Authority will often be a last resort and made by clients with lower incomes and fewer other options.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need for more refuges/placements for families fleeing domestic violence
- There is a need to extend provision of security measures to all groups facing violence
- There is a need to improve our understanding of housing and support issues of people suffering violence

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To improve security to assist victims of violence to remain in/returning to their homes (1.3)
  - To undertake research into supply of refuge spaces, both in Merton and out-of-borough (3.4)
  - To improve the evidence base by improving monitoring of domestic violence incidents (3.4)
  - To investigate support for people fleeing domestic violence who repeatedly present as homeless (3.4)
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### Ex-Military Personnel

Activity in this client group has generally been fairly low. When Her Majesty's Forces have arranged for the discharge of their personnel they have (in the main) given full and fair warning to allow the Council to provide appropriate advice and assistance on housing options. There have been no placements made by the Homeless Persons Unit in relation to this client group since the legislative changes.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is very low activity relating to housing issues for this client group, and no unmet needs have been identified

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- The Housing Needs Team will continue to liaise closely with Her Majesty's Forces and the Soldier, Sailors and Airforce Families Association to plan for the needs of this client group (1.4)
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### Ethnic Minority Communities

Our information shows that households from ethnic minority communities are more likely to be in housing need than white households. Ethnic minority applicants are over-represented on the Housing Register, and in households who approach Merton's Homeless Persons Unit for assistance. In 2002/03, 23% of Merton's homeless applicants were Black households, compared to their 9% share in the population. 14% of homeless applicants were Asian households, compared to 12% in the population, and 21% are households were from other ethnic groups, compared to 4% in the population respectively.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a need to improve awareness of housing options for households from ethnic minorities
- Ethnic minority communities are over-represented in customers seeking general housing advice, indicating high levels of housing stress and insecurity, which in turn may be a precursor to increased risks of homelessness
- There is a need to undertake research into the housing and support needs of ethnic minority households
- Data from Merton's Housing Register and Transfer List shows that Asian households and households from "other" ethnic groups are more likely to require larger homes. The shortage of supply of larger homes is likely to result in households staying in overcrowded conditions in the private sector, increasing the risk of homelessness



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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To undertake an awareness campaign to increase awareness of available housing options (1.1)
  - To ensure fair access to social housing through monitoring of lettings by ethnicity (2.3)
  - To ensure linkage between the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy to ensure the housing issues of ethnic minority households are effectively addressed (3.2)
  - To develop proposals for sheltered housing accommodation for African Caribbean elders (2.3)
  - To work with RSL partners to increase the supply of large accommodation to meet the needs of ethnic minority households (2.3)
- 

### Asylum Seekers

Since 2000, homeless applicants who are asylum seekers have been referred directly to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for accommodation and assistance during their application period.

As at March 2003, there were 932 asylum seeking households placed in temporary accommodation in Merton, 653 households were supported by NASS, and 279 by LB Merton.

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is no provision for Asylum seekers once they have received a decision on their asylum applications, as they cease to receive support from NASS and are given 28 days to leave their accommodation
- Asylum seekers in priority need can approach local authorities for assistance once they cease to receive support from NASS following a positive decision on their asylum application. They can be assisted either through the Council's Housing Register or via the Homeless Persons Unit. Merton's Supporting People Strategy has identified the need for floating support for this group to provide resettlement and tenancy support
- Those not in priority need have to rely on existing accommodation for the single homeless, which is often inappropriate for the cultural needs of asylum seekers. Lack of support can also lead to deterioration in their mental health as a result of the trauma they experienced
- There is a need to ensure that asylum seekers have access to health care

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Our Strategy therefore includes the following actions:

- To work jointly with our partners to prevent asylum seekers who cease to receive NASS support from becoming homeless. (3.1)
- To carry out research on best practice in meeting the needs of asylum seekers who cease to receive support from NASS (3.4)
- Health visitor for Homeless families to attend Asylum Welcome on a weekly basis to assess health needs (3.3)

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#### Non-Priority Homeless People

The number of clients not in priority need, but homeless, has declined since 1998. In 1999 they accounted for 22% of all decisions. By 2002/03, this had reduced to 11%. This does not necessarily mean there are less non-priority homeless households in Merton, but more likely that less clients are approaching the Council as they believe they will not be assisted.

Merton's information systems do not allow sophisticated analysis of the non-priority homeless, although it is clear black and ethnic minorities are over represented. Anecdotal evidence indicates a large proportion of the non-priority homeless are single. While Merton has very few street homeless (1 rough sleeper was found in the last Rough Sleeper Count in 2000), this group is likely to include people who are sleeping on floors of living in inadequate accommodation. Greater analysis is needed to understand who the non-priority homeless are, the reasons they are homeless and what assistance is most beneficial.

The 2002 Homelessness Act gives local authorities new powers to provide accommodation for the non-priority homeless. This is in addition to the requirement under the 1996 Housing Act for Councils to give advice and assistance in securing accommodation. The right advice can be key to preventing rough sleeping and reducing periods of instability in a clients life, which can lead to them becoming vulnerable.

These services are currently available to non-priority homeless people. As part of the options appraisal undertaken to determine which new initiatives should be developed, it has been agreed that, currently, London Borough of Merton is not in a position to expand services to this group. This will be monitored over the life of Strategy. (See section on Resources)

Main points arising from the Homelessness Review and from consultation:

- There is a lack of affordable private sector accommodation for non-priority homeless

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Our Strategy therefore contains the following actions:

- Improving working with private landlords to facilitate moves into the private sector
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# Part 3 - The Action Plan

This section contains the detailed actions that will be achieved in Merton over the next 5 years. These actions have been prioritised as part of the Review of Homelessness and the extensive consultation to develop this inter-agency Strategy.

The majority of these actions are programmed to be achieved in Years 1 and 2 (2003/04 and 2004/05). During these 2 years, we will be undertaking research to develop our evidence base. This information will assist us in determining further priorities for action over years 3 to 5.

We will be undertaking a full review of the Homelessness Strategy at the end of Year 2 and again at the end of Year 5. See Section : 'Delivering and monitoring the Strategy'.

The Action Plan aims to set out SMART targets. These are targets that are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timebound

Whilst we have achieved this in most cases, in a number of areas, we are at the stage of improving our awareness of issues and identifying the potential for particular pieces of work. As this work is progressed, it will be possible to develop further outcome based targets in the future.

Some of the actions will have an impact for all households. Others are specifically in response to meeting the diverse needs of the various client groups that we aim to support. The Action Plan therefore contains a column that identifies the client group as follows:

ALL	: All households
FAM	: Families with dependant children
YP	: Young people
MH	: People with a mental health problem
OFF	: Ex-offenders
ELD	: Older people
PD	: People with a physical disability
HIV	: People with HIV/AIDS
LD	: People with a learning disability
VIOL	: People fleeing violence
EX	: Ex-military personnel
EM	: People from ethnic minorities
AS	: Asylum seekers

Many of the actions do not require additional funding to be made available. These we have termed 'Resource Neutral'.

Others will require additional funding if these actions are to be achieved. These have been split into 2 categories:

1. Growth – priority. These are actions that are deemed to be very important to delivering the Strategy and achieving our Vision.
2. Growth – desirable. These are actions that have been highlighted as good practice examples that we would wish to see implemented as part of the Strategy.

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
1	Strategic Aim 1: To reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention					
2	Objective 1.1: To ensure advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is widely available					
3	To develop a proactive and preventative Housing Advice Service that meets the needs of all client groups.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and revise the Housing Advice Service to ensure people have a range of options available to meet their needs.</li> <li>2. MerHAG to undertake a baseline audit of advice and information services provided by RSLs.</li> <li>3. Conduct an annual review of the Housing Advice Service in housing needs to target resources and aid service development.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 1</li> <li>3. Years 1-5</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 &amp; 3. Housing Advice Team Leader</li> <li>2. MerHAG</li> </ol>
4	To ensure information is made widely available.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All existing published documentation will be reviewed and either replaced or updated.</li> <li>2. The use of Public Relations to advertise the functions of Housing Needs will be explored.</li> <li>3. The use of the intranet and internet to publish information will be explored.</li> <li>4. Make ODPM produced Housing Advice more widely available.</li> <li>5. Undertake detailed gap analysis of existing literature to determine necessary additions.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 1</li> <li>3. Year 1</li> <li>4. Year 1</li> <li>5. Year 1</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)</li> </ol>
5	To complete all the required written protocols, procedures and public documentation for the Housing Needs service.	Completion and use of a suite of well written, quality assured and plain English procedures, protocols and public documents by March 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)
6	To increase awareness of housing issues for frontline staff, community groups, faith groups and other relevant organisations.	To hold a minimum of 6 sessions per annum.	ALL	Resource	Year 1-5	Housing Needs Manager
7	To improve information and advice to young people.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Housing advice to attend One Stop Shop run by Connexions and provide training to Connexions staff.</li> <li>2. To develop a housing education programme in schools to advise young people of housing options.</li> </ol>	YP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resource neutral</li> <li>2. Growth-desirable</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Years 1-5</li> <li>2. Year 2</li> </ol>	Housing Advice Team Leader
8	To increase awareness of housing opportunities to people with mental health problems.	Housing representative to attend CMHT team meetings at least 6-monthly.	MH	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Needs Manager
9	Promote housing options to clients and carers of people who use/misuse substances.	DAAT to work with Housing Advice Service to provide relevant advice for people misusing substances. Ensure links between DAAT and Housing Advice Service relating to the needs of carers.	SM	Resource neutral	Year 1	DAAT Coordinator

# A Homelessness Strategy for Merton Action Plan

Year 1 = Aug 2003/04, Year 2 = 2004/05, Year 3 = 2005/06, Year 4 = 2006/07, Year 5 = 2007/08

Row no.	Action	Target	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
10	Establish joint post between London Probation Area and Housing Needs section.	Postholder to provide advice to ex-offenders to prevent homelessness for this client group. Officer in post summer 2003.	OFF	Growth - part funding agreed by LPA	Year 1	Partnership Development Manager (Housing) LPA.
11	Ensure relevant housing advice and information is available at Probation Resource Centres and local courts.	Relevant literature to be distributed as part of Housing Advice Strategy.	OFF	Growth - desirable	Year 2	Housing Advice Team Leader
12	Continue to support the specialist advice worker at CAB for people with HIV/AIDS.	1 advice worker based at Morden CAB.	HIV/AIDS	Resource neutral - funding thr' AIDS Support Grant	Year 1	Physical Disability Service Manager
13	Promote housing options to carers and guardians of people with learning disabilities.	1. Produce a directory of options and publish promotional information. 2. Develop and implement distribution and communication plan.	LD	Growth - desirable	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	LD Partnership Manager
14	To increase awareness of housing opportunities to people suffering domestic violence.	1. Housing representative to attend Domestic Violence Forum and ensure information is disseminated to partner agencies. 2. Victim Support to meet with and update agencies across the borough providing services to this client group.	VIOL	Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	1. Principal Housing Strategy Officer 2. Victim Support
15	Undertake awareness campaign to inform ethnic minority communities about housing options available, with the aim of meeting different needs and preventing homelessness.	To improve the quality of advice to ethnic minority people through multi-agency training and to develop project which promotes housing options through videos.	EM	Growth - desirable	Year 2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
16	Objective 1.2: To identify people at risk of homelessness, and target assistance					
17	Improve arrangements for identifying vulnerable households.	To introduce joint vulnerability assessments by March 2005.	ALL	Growth - priority	Year 2	Housing Needs Manager
18	To carry out home visits to all priority need applicants who are threatened with homelessness.	To carry out home visits to priority need applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 5 working days of receiving an application.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Principal Homeless Casework Officer
19	To provide a one-to-one interview to people who have received a Bailiff appointment.	Provide a one-to-one interview within 1 working day to people who have received a Bailiff appointment.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Advice Team Leader



Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
20	To develop a co-ordinated and decentralised referral and nomination procedure to temporary supported accommodation for young people in greatest need.	1. Establish inter-agency working group and work programme. 2. Present recommendations to MYSHF.	YP	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Principal Housing Strategy Officer
21	CMHTs to incorporate accommodation needs within mental health assessments of clients.	1. 100% of clients on enhanced CPA to include assessment of housing need. 2. 50% reduction in delayed discharge from hospital.	MH	Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust
22	Ensure awareness and effective use of post of Floating Support Worker (substance misuse) to ensure clients are adequately supported.	1. Establish inter-agency policy and procedures. 2. Develop and implement distribution and communication plan.	SM	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1	DAAT Coordinator
23	Provide a housing advice surgery within the local probation office to identify and assess clients who may be homeless as a result of being discharged from prison.	To provide 12 surgeries per annum.	OFF	Growth - desirable	Year 2	Housing Advice Team Leader
24	Ensure that Learning Disabilities Social Workers work with carers and guardians to make provision for the person with a learning disability in the event that they can no longer support and care for them.	1. Establish inter-agency policy and procedures by September 2004. 2. Develop and implement distribution and communication plan.	LD	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	LD Partnership Manager
25	Ensure the needs of people fleeing domestic violence are effectively targeted.	1. To ensure that staff are aware of the joint Housing and Social Services protocol. 2. Ensure staff are updated on relevant changes in law. 3. Develop and maintain links with relevant agencies.	VIOL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5 3. Years 1-5	Homeless Persons Team Leader
26	Implement and further develop the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy to address housing needs of ethnic minority households, including homeless households.	The Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team to work with the Homelessness Forum to implement agreed targets and further develop actions needed.	EM	Resource neutral	Year 1-2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
27	Objective 1.3: To prevent people from becoming homeless as a result of family or relationship breakdown					
28	Establish a mediation service to assist in the prevention of homelessness due to family/relationship breakdown.	1. To establish a pilot mediation service. 2. To work with MPAC to investigate potential for mediation service which includes family reconciliation.	FAM YP	1. Growth - priority 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	1. Housing Needs Manager 2. Principal Housing Strategy Officer

Row no.	Action	Target	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
29	Increase support provided to people caring for someone with a mental health problem to prevent family breakdown.	1. Recruit 1 Carer Support Worker by March 2004. 2. Recruit 2 additional Carer Support Workers by March 2006. 3. 100% Carers Assessments undertaken where carer cares for person on enhanced CPA.	MH	1. Resource neutral 2. Growth - priority 3. Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 3 3. Years 1-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust
30	Review support mechanisms provided to carers and consider measures to prevent family breakdown for older people and people with physical disabilities.	Review Carers Strategy by March 2004.	PD	Resource neutral	Year 1	Older People Service Manager/Physical Disabilities Service Manager
31	Increase the use of respite care for people with learning disabilities	Increase number of people using respite care per annum from 30 to 50.	LD	Resource neutral	Year 2	LD Partnership Manager
32	Increase awareness and opportunities for respite care for people who misuse substances.	Hold Carers Conference for substance misusers in September 2003 to raise awareness of opportunities for support for both clients and carers.	LD	Resource neutral	Year 1	DAAT Coordinator
33	Establish physical security measures to enable people at risk of becoming homeless through violence to remain/return home.	50% reduction in homeless acceptances for this client group by March 2008.	VIOL	Growth - priority	Year 2	Homeless Persons Team Leader
34	Objective 1.4: To ensure people leaving institutional care do not become homeless					
35	Continue to implement joint protocols on hospital discharge and return to appropriate housing.	1. No more than 16 delayed discharges per week across all hospitals (to 31/12/03). 2. To enable people to be discharged from hospital within 3 working days of fit for discharge date (from 01/01/04).	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5	Hospital Discharge Team (Social Services)
36	Implement Through and Aftercare Policy to ensure that all young people who have been looked after by the Council receive: 1. A Personal Housing Plan 2. A Pathway Plan	1. 100% young people leaving care to have Personal Housing Plan. 2. 100% young people leaving care to have a Pathway Plan.	YP	Growth - priority	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	1. Manager 16+ Team/ Housing Needs Manager 2. Manager 16+ Team
37	To ensure that the accommodation needs of care leavers are planned.	Undertake detailed analysis of 27 care leavers including their care plans and housing needs over the next 3 years.	YP	Resource neutral	Years 1-3	Children's Strategy Manager
38	Continue to liaise closely with HM Forces and SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airforce Families Association) to plan for the needs of ex-military personnel.	Work with HM Forces and SSAFA to develop appropriate discharge plans.	EX	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Advice Team Leader

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
39	Objective 1.5: To undertake work to prevent people becoming homeless from the private sector					
40	Develop protocol for people made homeless due to ending of ASTs.	Protocol to be developed and implemented by March 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Housing Advice Team Leader
41	Ensure accurate advice on Housing Benefits is provided to private rented sector clients who are substance misusers about their legal rights and entry to residential drug treatment.	Issue guidance notes for clients.	SM	Resource neutral	Year 1	Phipps Bridge District Estates Manager
42	Continue to provide support to residents in the private sector through: statutory and voluntary assistance in the maintenance and adaptation of property, Community Alarm scheme, Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.	1. Achieve the planned 45 Disabled Facilities Grants in 2003/04. 2. To increase MASCOT customers by 67 to 1460 by March 2004.	ELD PD	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 2	1. Environmental Health Manager 2. MASCOT manager
43	Information pack to landlords, to include information on assistance and support available to elderly tenants and those with a physical disability.	1. Publish information pack. 2. Develop and implement distribution and communication plan.	ELD PD	Growth - desirable	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Older People Service Manager/ Physical Disabilities Services Manager
44	Provide advice and assistance about repairs and home improvements to elderly or vulnerable people to help them to live independently in their own homes.	Provide advice to 25 clients per month.	ELD/Vulnerable people	Resource neutral	Year 1	Care and Repair Manager
45	Work to prevent asylum seekers who cease to receive NASS support from becoming homeless.	1. Network with neighbouring boroughs to identify common issues with regards to sylum seekers and ascertain level of need. 2. Work with other agencies to identify level of homelessness and overcrowding relating to asylum seekers leaving their NASS accommodation in search of support in Merton. 3. Work to prevent homelessness through liason with private landlords and housing benefit service. 4. Work with community groups working with asylum seekers to ensure that asylum seekers receive appropriate support and assistance.	AS	Growth - desirable	Years 2-5	Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)
46	Objective 1.6: To ensure housing management practices of social landlords work to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness					
47	Review LBM & RSL Housing Management policies and practices to ensure that they work to prevent homelessness.	Complete review by March 2005.	ALL	Growth - desirable	Year 2	Housing Manager (Central)/MerHAG

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
48	To ensure efficient use of LBM housing stock.	1. 90% of voids to be pre-allocated in 2003/04. 2. 100% of voids relet within an average of 5 weeks in 2003/04. 3. 25 under-occupation moves in 2003/04.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1 3. Year 1	Registration and Allocation Team Leader
49	Work with LAWN on promotion of out-of-London moves.	Achieve 20 out of London moves by March 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Home Sales and Initiatives Officer
50	Mental Health Trust to ensure RSLs are aware of support from the Trust to proactively sustain clients in social housing.	Reduce applications to Mental Health Placement Panel through loss of social housing to 6 per year.	MH	Resource neutral	Years 2-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust
51	Review housing management and Housing Needs policies on domestic violence and racial harassment to ensure they are up to date, relevant, take account of legislative changes and incorporate good practice.	1. Complete reviews by March 2005. 2. Review management transfer policies to ensure they meet the needs of people fleeing violence.	VIOL	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Housing Manager (Central)
52	To ensure that racial harassment is identified and dealt with appropriately to minimise the possibility of homelessness.	1. Housing Service to follow the CRE Code of Practice for rented housing and the Guidance for Social Landlords in tackling Racial Harassment. 2. Improve responses to racial harassment in partnership with RSLs.	EM	Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Year 2	1. District Housing Managers 2. District Housing Manager (Central)
53	Objective 1.7: To ensure the Housing Benefit system does not contribute to homelessness					
54	To improve communication with relevant professionals to keep them up to date on HB issues.	1. Establish inter-agency HB Forum to meet at least 6 monthly. 2. Hold HB awareness Forum with RSLs on at least a 6 monthly basis.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5	Benefits Manager
55	Meet targets set for efficient administration of HB.	1. Process new claims in 56 days. 2. Pay 60% new claims in 14 days. 3. Process 55% of renewal claims prior to expiry. 4. Process change of circumstances in 10 days.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Benefits Manager
56	To improve services that assist claimants in making a successful claim.	To identify potential funding for a pre-checking service.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Benefits Manager
57	To publish and distribute to partner agencies the policy on accessing the discretionary housing benefit scheme.	1. To develop a communications strategy about discretionary housing benefit. 2. To publish information on the website.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1	Benefits Manager
58	Ensure payment of HB to temporarily absent clients.	To ensure clients who are temporarily absent (eg due to drug rehab/prison) continue to receive the benefit they are entitled to.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Benefits Manager

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
59	Improve information and communication with private landlords to encourage them to take households on benefits.	1. Develop interactive web based notice board. 2. To produce a landlords newsletter on a quarterly basis. 3. To hold a private sector landlords Forum at least 6 monthly.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5 3. Years 1-5	Housing Strategy and Development Manager/Benefits Manager
60	Work with Housing Benefits to address issue of expensive accommodation for people with HIV/AIDS.	Identify issues and agree way forward.	HIV/AIDS	Resource neutral	Year 2	Service Manager - HIV/AIDS/ Benefits Manager
61	STRATEGIC AIM 2: To maximise housing and support options and choice for all homeless households					
62	Objective 2.1: To enable people in housing crisis to access accommodation when required					
63	Improve the quality of temporary accommodation.	1. To review the condition and alternative uses for Merton's temporary accommodation. 2. To convert 20 units at Hall Place into self-contained units by March 2004. 3. To assess sustainability of properties leased to voluntary organisations.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1 3. Year 1	1, 3 & 4. Principal Development Officer 2. Housing Needs Manager
64	Contract with a storage/removal firm to provide protection of property whilst households are in temporary accommodation.	To let contract during 2004/05.	ALL	Growth - priority	Year 2	Homeless Persons Team Leader
65	Ensure furniture is available for households in need.	1. To continue to support Christian Care in providing a furniture store for all households in need. 2. To ensure young people/single people are aware of this service.	ALL YP	1. Grant provided to March 2004. Bidding required for future years 2. Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Year 1	1. Principal Housing Strategy Officer 2. Christian Care
66	Identify suitable accommodation for young single and non-priority homeless people.	Establish working group to establish feasibility of developing an assisted tenancy scheme.	YP	Growth - desirable	Year 2	Housing Advice Team Leader
67	Ensure that supported housing schemes provide a suitable environment for meeting the housing and support needs of young people.	To complete Review of MASH and the Gables.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Housing Strategy Officer

# A Homelessness Strategy for Merton Action Plan

Year 1 = Aug 2003/04, Year 2 = 2004/05, Year 3 = 2005/06, Year 4 = 2006/07, Year 5 = 2007/08

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
68	Increase the availability of temporary accommodation for 16/17 year olds.	6 places for 16/17 year olds to be provided at YMCA Wimbledon.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 2	Principal Housing Strategy Officer/ YMCA
69	Address the needs of older people in housing crisis.	1. Assess availability of suitable temporary accommodation. 2. Plan provision.	ELD	Growth - desirable	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Service Manager (Older People)/ Homeless Persons Team Leader
70	Ensure offender accommodation providers have licenced emergency bed spaces.	To achieve 4 licenced bedspaces in Merton.	OFF	Resource neutral	Year 1	Partnership Development Manager (Housing), LPA
71	Provide adequate supply of bedspaces for offenders who are misusing substances.	1. LPA to report on evaluation on previous scheme and identify need to be met. 2. DAAT to consider funding of identified bed spaces for clients on Drug Treatment and Testing Orders.	OFF SM	1. Resource neutral 2. Growth - desirable	Year 1	1. Partnership Development Manager (Housing), LPA 2. DAAT Coordinator
72	Objective 2.2: To minimise the length of time households stay in temporary accommodation					
73	To lessen the reliance of LBM on temporary housing within the Council housing stock.	To devise a programme that reduces reliance of LBM on temporary housing within LBM stock.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Homeless Persons Team Leader
74	To minimise the length of time households remain in temporary hostel accommodation.	Households to spend no more than 35 weeks in hostel accommodation.	ALL	Revenue neutral	Year 1	Homeless Persons Team Leader
75	End the use of bed and breakfast for households with dependant children/pregnant women (except in an emergency).	1. Average length of stay in B&B for families with children not to exceed 6 weeks. 2. Number of families with children in B&B for less than 6 weeks not to exceed 6.	FAM	Funding through PSA - to be confirmed	1. Year 1 2. Year 1	Housing Needs Manager
76	To reduce the number of single people in B&B.	To reduce the number of single people in B&B from 34 to 20 by March 2006.	YP	Funding through PSA - to be confirmed	Years 1-3	Housing Needs Manager

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
77	Objective 2.3: To enable access to affordable and appropriate housing					
78	Maximise the supply of new affordable homes in the Borough.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete work on 120 affordable homes in 2003/04.</li> <li>2. Complete work on 110 affordable homes in 2004/05.</li> <li>3. Complete work on 180 affordable homes in 2005/06.</li> </ol>	ALL	1. Funding secured. 2 & 3. Funding to be bid for from the London Housing Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 2</li> <li>3. Year 3</li> </ol>	Principal Development Officer
79	Negotiate for provision of units of affordable housing on developments of sites of 15+ units.	Minimum 30% units on sites of 15+ units to be affordable housing.	ALL	Funding through S106 agreement with developer	Years 1-5	Development Control Manager/Principal Development Officer
80	Identify suitable development opportunities for affordable housing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete review of land and property held in HRA by summer 2004.</li> <li>2. Complete site mapping exercise with preferred partner RSLs to enable preferred partners to effectively target resources.</li> <li>3. Continue to work closely with South West London Local Authorities to maximise the provision of affordable housing for the sub region.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 2</li> <li>2. Year 2</li> <li>3. Years 1-5</li> </ol>	Principal Development Officer
81	To improve the quality of accommodation in the social housing stock.	<p>To reduce the number of non-decent homes in Council housing stock:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By one-third by March 2004.</li> <li>2. Eliminate completely by March 2010.</li> </ol>	ALL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resource neutral</li> <li>2. Growth - priority</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 7</li> </ol>	Housing Stock Manager
82	Ensure that the best use is made of Council owned sheltered accommodation.	Establish and implement a review of sheltered accommodation by October 2004.	ELD	Resource neutral	Year 2	Principal Development Officer
83	Maximise the potential of the private sector to provide a range of housing options.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To produce a Private Sector Housing Strategy in line with the Best Value Review of Private Sector Housing in 2004/05.</li> <li>2. Increase lettings in the private sector by 50 units through combination of rent deposit scheme and private sector leasing by March 2004.</li> <li>3. Establish Empty Properties Strategy and bring 40 empty properties back into use by March 2004.</li> <li>4. Investigate Compulsory leasing scheme.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 2</li> <li>2. Year 1</li> <li>3. Year 1</li> <li>4. Year 1</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Principal Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>2. Policy Team Leader. 3 &amp; 4 Principal Development Officer</li> </ol>

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
84	Increase housing options for aspiring homeowners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fully spend the Tenants Incentive Scheme allocated amount of £157k and assist 6-7 households move into the private sector.</li> <li>2. Promote alternative housing tenures from council tenants to people in housing need and homeless applicants by local publicity campaigns - 2 per year and an ongoing publicity initiative.</li> <li>3. Encourage access to shared ownership and compile database.</li> <li>4. Complete all RTB applications within required timescales.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 1-5</li> <li>3. Years 1-5</li> <li>4. Years 1-5</li> </ol>	Home Sales and Initiatives Officer
85	Increase choice in allocations for Merton.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree a Choice in Allocations scheme for Merton by March 2004.</li> <li>2. To implement the Choice in Allocations scheme by December 2004.</li> </ol>	ALL	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 2</li> </ol>	Housing Needs Manager
86	Meet the demand for 2 bed properties for families with dependant children.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 50% of new developments to be 2 bedroom.</li> <li>2. Investigate potential to increase supply of 2 bed properties through review of nominations agreements thr' SW London Borough Partners Forum.</li> </ol>	FAM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual bids for funding to London Housing Board</li> <li>2. Resource neutral</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 2</li> </ol>	Principal Development Officer
87	Increase housing and support opportunities for people who misuse substances.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate viability of extending Hope Foundation ODAAT Adult Placement Scheme to Merton.</li> <li>2. Investigate potential for expanding LB Merton Adult Placement Scheme to people who misuse substances.</li> </ol>	SM	Resource neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year 1</li> <li>2. Year 1</li> </ol>	DAAT Coordinator
88	Increase the housing and support options for ex-offenders	Seven 1-bed flats purchased in the private sector for ex-offenders with medium support needs by March 2004.	OFF	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Development Officer
89	Support the resettlement of offenders who have been placed outside of the borough.	To develop a protocol with Kew bail hostel for the effective resettlement into Merton accommodation.	OFF	Resource neutral	Year 1	Partnership Development Manager (housing), LPA
90	Increase housing opportunities for people with a physical disability.	2x3 bed houses, and 2x2 bed bungalows by March 2004.	PD	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Development Officer
91	Increase the number of units for people with learning disabilities.	Six 1-bed self-contained flats within the borough in walking distance of each other by March 2006.	LD	Annual bids for funding to London Housing Board	Year 3	Principal Development Officer
92	Promote use of the Adult Placement Scheme.	Increase the number of Learning Disabilities users from 6-10 by March 2005.	LD	Resource neutral	Year 2	LD Partnership Manager/ Housing Support Team Manager



Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
93	Ensure fair access to social housing.	1. Extend ethnic monitoring of lettings to include 'quality' of offers (area and type of accommodation). 2. Extend ethnic monitoring programme to include shared ownership.	EM	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
94	Work with RSL partners to increase the supply of larger housing to meet the needs of the Asian community and household of the 'other' ethnic group.	40% of new developments to be larger homes (3 and 4 bed).	EM	Annual bids for funding to London Housing Board	Years 1-5	Principal Development Officer
95	Further develop proposals for sheltered accommodation for African Caribbean elders.	Support bid for funding and identify revenue resources.	EM ELD	Growth - desirable	Year 1	Principal Housing Policy Officer
96	Objective 2.4: To ensure that housing support is available to assist people to move on to more appropriate, or to sustain existing, accommodation					
97	Review Supporting People Funded schemes for women fleeing domestic violence, ex-offenders, young people leaving care/teenage parents, single homeless people and Merton Care & Repair.	To review schemes by March 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Supporting People Manager
98	Review Supporting People Funded Schemes for mental health clients, people with a learning disability, services for people who misuse drugs/alcohol.	To review schemes by March 2005.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 2	Supporting People Manager
99	Review Supporting Schemes for people with HIV/AIDS, people with a physical disability, and sheltered accommodation.	To review schemes by March 2006.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 3	Supporting People Manager
100	Provide accommodation and support for young people.	To provide 8 one-bed flats with support for move-on accommodation for young people by March 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Development Officer
101	Provide accommodation and support for people with a mental health problem.	To provide 5 one-bed flats with support for move-on accommodation for people with a mental health problem by March 2004.	MH	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Development Officer
102	Increase opportunities for housing support.	1. Use Good Practice from other Local Authorities to review the provision. 2. Review the Housing Support Team to consider expanding role and remit.	1. LD 2. ALL	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	LD Partnership Manager
103	Objective 3.1: To ensure existing services are working together effectively to meet the needs of people who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless					
104	Work with South West London sub-regional authorities to develop an integrated housing strategy that contributes to minimising homelessness.	1. Contribute to a sub-regional housing strategy. 2. Develop sub-regional objectives. 3. Incorporate sub-regional nomination protocol in LBM procedures.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1 3. Year 2	Principal Housing Strategy Officer

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Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
105	Improve joint working with other London boroughs and learn from good practice.	Set up networking with at least three critical friends in other London boroughs to meet; share information and best practice; and develop services.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Needs Manager
106	Improve joint working through the inter-agency Homelessness Forum.	Homelessness Forum to meet at least twice a year.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Homelessness Strategy Manager
107	Improve joint working through the inter-agency Homelessness Strategy Team.	Homelessness Strategy Team to meet at least 4 times per year.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Homelessness Strategy Manager
108	Continue programme of information sharing events to share knowledge of housing options.	Hold 2 themed promotional open days per annum on housing options.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Registration & Allocation Team Leader
109	Improve joint working between partner organisations (eg Health; Social Services; Probation; RSLs; and voluntary organisations).	Annual event to promote partnership working in housing needs to increase involvement of ethnic minority and community groups.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Needs Manager
110	Ensure the needs of households placed in temporary accommodation within Merton are met.	To implement the NOTIFY system within Merton to ensure the health, social and education needs of households placed in TA in Merton are met within the timescales from the ALG.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Homeless Casework Officer
111	Ensure children who are homeless/are at risk of homelessness, are safeguarded.	1. Housing representation on ACPC. 2. Housing staff to receive basic child protection awareness training.	FAM	Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	1. Housing Needs Manager 2. Training Manager
112	Ensure children who are living with a person with a mental health problem are safeguarded.	1. Where appropriate, children's needs/risks to be incorporated into the adults CPA care plan. 2. Report annually to ACPC on implementation of Climbie action plan.	FAM	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust
113	Ensure services are working together effectively to provide suitable advice for intentionally homeless families/those ineligible for assistance due to immigration status.	To implement joint housing and social services protocol by March 2004.	FAM	Growth priority	Year 1	Housing Needs Manager/Head of Children's Services
114	Improve partnership working for Youth Service Provision.	Focus work on key partnerships, for example with Connexions, colleges, police, YOS, DAAT and YAP.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Head of Youth Service
115	Education department to work with partners to reduce youth crime.	To work with CAD and MPAC to develop a detached youth work post.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Head of Youth Service

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
116	Ensure that the Mental Health Trust and LBM work together to effectively meet the needs of Merton clients.	1. Continue to implement, monitor and develop the agreed protocol encompassing risk management of clients between the Trust and the Housing Department. 2. The Trust and LB housing to meet monthly at the Housing Placement Panel to discuss responsibility for effective joint working for individual clients.	MH	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 1-5 2. Years 1-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust/Housing Needs Manager
117	LPA to provide training to Housing Needs section on OASys / Housing Needs to provide training to LPA on Housing issues.	Undertake joint training sessions.	OFF	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Needs Manager/Partnership Development Manager (Housing), LPA
118	Ensure housing is fully integrated in the crime and disorder agenda.	Housing Representative to attend Multi-agency Public Protection Panel.	OFF	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Housing Needs Manager
119	Ensure effective joint working in provision of services to asylum seekers.	1. Effective management of programme on behalf of government. 2. Excellent liaison arrangements with partner agencies including Social Services; NASS; accommodation providers.	AS	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	Homeless Persons Team Leader
120	Objective 3.2: To ensure that the needs of people who are homeless are integral to the development of the strategy					
121	Ensure that consultation with homeless people forms an integral part of the corporate 'Inclusionary Consultation Strategy'.	To devise a programme that ensures the effective consultation with homeless people.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 2	Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)
122	Ensure the needs of ethnic minority households are integral to the Homelessness Strategy.	Maintain link between the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team and the Homelessness Forum and to develop and implement joint actions and targets.	EM	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Principal Housing Policy Officer
123	Objective 3.3: To promote social inclusion through equal access to health, education, training and employment					
124	Objective 3.3b: Health					
125	Undertake a review of Health Visiting, School Nursing and Community Nursing to ensure the needs of the local population are effectively targeted.	To complete a Review of Health Visiting, School Nursing and Community Nursing.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 2	Head of Nursing, Merton & Sutton PCT

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
126	Ensure Health Visitors School Nurses and Specialist Nurses are aware of households placed in temporary accommodation to ensure targeting of health services on vulnerable client groups.	1. To agree information required. HPU to provide weekly computerised list to Health Visitor for Homeless Families for action and dissemination. 2. To participate in the pan-London NOTIFY project to identify households placed in LB Merton by other boroughs and monitor movement of households in and out of TA.	ALL	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5	Health Visitor for the Homeless/ Homeless Team Leader
127	Ensure households with children placed in temporary accommodation in West Merton are able to access health services.	1. Health visitor to make contact with all households in B&B/TA in West Merton and encourage registration with local GP. 2. Families with children under 5 to be referred to local GPs attached Health Visitor within 4 weeks of initial visit.	FAM	Resource neutral	1. Years 1-5 2. Years 1-5	Health Visitor for the Homeless
128	Ensure the health needs of asylum seekers and refugees are met.	1. To review the Health Visitor post for refugees and sylum seekers following ending of funding in March 2003. 2. Health Visitor for Homeless to attend Asylum Welcome on weekly basis to address health needs.	AS	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5	Health Visitor for the Homeless
129	Objective 3.3b: Education					
130	Increase profile of adult education.	Raise profile of adult education through awareness raising events and improved monitoring.	ALL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Head of Community Education
131	Widen participation in adult education.	1. To maintain number of learning opportunities at present levels. 2. To provide new learning opportunities in the east of the borough which is an identified area of need. 3. To use Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to deliver range of projects targeted to ethnic minority groups. 4. To develop marketing initiatives to encourage men to take up learning opportunities.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 1 3. Year 1 4. Year 1	Head of Community Education
132	Improve the life chances of children in need and in care.	To progress work around accessing vulnerable children through: The Local Preventative Strategy. The Base Project - ensuring 12 vulnerable young people transfer into post 16 education. Espero Project - enabling asylum seekers to have access to education. The Youth Intervention Support Project - working with 8-10yr olds.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Head of Access, Opportunity and Inclusion (Education)

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
133	Objective 3.3c: Training and employment					
134	Increase training and learning opportunities in the borough.	To develop the People's Network to provide training and learning opportunities for all.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Head of Community Education
135	Improve strategic leadership in adult education.	1. Formulate a Basic Skills Strategy for the Borough by July 2004. 2. Implement borough wide Workforce Development Strategy by July 2004.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Head of Community Education
136	Develop key skills and lifeskills of those who are homeless and potentially homeless.	1. Work with partners to implement targeted training programmes. 2. To maximise opportunities from ESF and other external funding regimes. 3. Develop exit strategies throughout lifetime of projects.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Years 2-5 2. Years 2-5 3. Years 2-5	Head of Partnerships
137	Provide work experience in the authority for looked after children or children leaving care.	Provide work experience to 20 young people.	YP	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	Children's Strategy Manager
138	Implement the Mental Health Trust Vocational Services Strategy.	1. All CMHTs to have Vocational Worker by March 2004. 2. 100% of clients on enhanced CPA to have vocational needs assessed and plans in place to address them.	MH	Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Years 1-5	Borough Director, Mental Health Trust
139	Review Mental Health Day services.	To complete review of Mental Health Day Services and produce strategy by September 2004.	MH	Resource neutral	Year 2	Joint Commissioning Manager, Mental Health Services
140	Establish effective networks that provide substance misuse clients with access to training and education.	Link Housing Needs Team with Progress2Work, Progress2Work Link up, and Merton DAAT and substance misuse treatment agencies to improve employment opportunities for this client group.	SM	Resource neutral	Year 1	DAAT Coordinator
141	Objective 3.4: To improve the evidence base (figures in brackets identify which of the above objectives this research will meet)					
142	Ensure robust information on housing needs in the borough, focussing on affordability, needs of specific client groups and condition of private sector housing stock (3.4).	1. To carry out a private sector stock condition survey during 2003/04. 2. To carry out a Housing Needs Survey during 2004/05.	ALL	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 1 2. Year 2	1. Environmental Health Manager 2. Principal Housing Strategy Manager

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Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
143	Computerise homelessness information in the Housing Needs Section.	To fully use the Academy module for homelessness and associated tasks and produce all performance and management information from the module by October 2003.	ALL	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Homeless Casework Officer
144	Undertake analysis of repeat homelessness to identify needs and services required to ensure reduced incidence (3.4).	1. To develop the evidence base for repeated homelessness, including main reasons for repeats. 2. To establish outcome measures for reducing repeat homelessness. 3. To analyse repeat homelessness related to domestic violence.	ALL	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2 3. Year 2	Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)
145	Identify housing and support needs of teenage lone parents (2.4).	Work in partnership with Teenage Pregnancy Task Force to complete needs assessment by March 2004.	FAM YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Housing Strategy Officer
146	Increase the understanding of why households with dependant children become homeless (1.2).	Undertake work to develop multi-agency protocol that highlights people at risk and targets assistance by March 2005.	FAM	Resource neutral	Year 2	Policy Team Leader (Housing Needs)
147	Increase the understanding of why young people become homeless (1.2).	Undertake work to develop multi-agency protocol that highlights people at risk and targets assistance by March 2005.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 2	Policy Team Leader Housing Needs)
148	Increase the understanding on young runaways (1.2).	Complete analysis into missing youth statistics from the police.	YP	Resource neutral	Year 1	Children's Strategy Manager
149	Undertake research into housing and related needs of older people, including ethnic elders and asylum seekers elders (1.2).	1. Complete project into needs of ethnic elders. 2. Complete project into housing needs of older people.	ELD AS	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
150	Undertake review of needs and services and develop specific housing strategied for elderly people and people with a physical disability (1.2).	1. Complete reviews. 2. Produce strategies.	ELD PD	Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 3	Principal Housing Strategy Officer
151	Investigate the need for larger family accommodation for people with HIV/AIDS (2.2).	Complete review and make recommendations.	HIV/AIDS	Resource neutral	Year 2	Principal Housing Strategy Officer
152	Improve the monitoring of domestic violence in Council properties (1.6).	Monthly statistics to be provided and necessary action taken.	VIOL	Resource neutral	Years 1-5	District Housing Managers

Row no.	Action	Target/Success Measures	Client Group(s)	Resources	When	Lead
153	Ensure that victims of domestic violence are able to access suitable accommodation (2.2).	1. Undertake research to identify if supply of refuge spaces is adequate. 2. Investigate through the sub-regional Allocations Working Group the establishment of a cross-borough protocol to facilitate out-of-borough moves where victims of domestic violence are in danger in the vicinity.	VIOL	1. Resource neutral 2. Resource neutral	1. Year 2 2. Year 2	1. Principal Housing Strategy Manager 2. Housing Needs Manager
154	Identify needs of African women who are homeless due to domestic violence (2.2).	South London's African Women's Organisation to undertake research that identifies housing and support needs.	VIOL EM	Resource neutral	Year 1	South London African Women's Organisation
155	Develop research project to identify reasons why ethnic minority communities are over-represented in priority and non-priority homeless applicants (1.2).	Develop research proposal to identify housing needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities, either as part of the proposed Housing Needs Survey or as a standalone project.	EM	Growth-desirable	Year 2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
156	Develop research project to identify, amongst other needs, hidden homelessness amongst ethnic minority households in the private sector, in particular amongst Asian households, who are disproportionately affected by overcrowding (1.3).	Develop research proposal to identify housing needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities, either as part of the proposed Housing Needs Survey or as a standalone project.	EM	Growth-desirable	Year 2	Principal Housing Policy Officer
157	Obtain and analyse demographic data, including Census 2001 data, by ethnicity (3.4).	Analyse demographic data down to neighbourhood and output area level.	EM	Resource neutral	Year 1	Principal Housing Policy Officer

# Appendix 1: Members of the Homelessness Forum

We would like to express our thanks to the significant number of organisations that have contributed to the development of this first Homelessness Strategy for Merton. We look forward to working together into the future.

## Registered Social landlords

Ability Housing Association  
Anchor Housing  
Ashley Homes  
Battersea Churches Housing Trust  
Beaver Housing Society  
Bourne Housing Society  
Central & Cecil Housing Trust  
Crown Housing Association  
Croydon Churches Housing Association  
Croydon Peoples Housing Association  
Ekaya Housing Association  
English Churches Housing  
Family Housing Association  
Grenfell Housing Association  
Haig Homes  
Hanover Housing Association  
Harding Housing Association  
Horizon Housing Group  
Hyde Housing Association  
Kingston Churches Housing Association  
London & Quadrant Housing Trust  
Merton United Charities  
Millat Asian Housing Association  
Moat Housing Group  
Orbit Housing Association  
Pollards Hill Housing Association  
Presentation Housing Association

Shaftesbury Housing Association  
Solon Wandsworth Housing Association  
South London Family Housing Association  
St Christopher's Fellowship  
St Pancras & Humanist HA  
Strutton Housing Association  
Threshold Housing Advice  
Threshold Housing & Support  
Tower Housing Association  
Wandle Housing Association  
Warden Housing Association  
Wilberforce Housing Association  
Wimbledon YMCA

## External Organisations

Christian Care  
Citizens Advice Bureau  
Connexions  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Faith In Action  
Kingston Churches Against Homelessness  
London Probation Area (SW)  
Mencap  
Mental Health Trust  
Merton Mind  
Merton Refuge Ltd  
Merton Refuge Ltd  
Merton Tenants and Residents Federation  
Merton Voluntary Services Council  
Merton Volunteer Bureau  
Merton Volunteer Bureau  
Merton Youth Awareness Project  
Merton Youth Offending Team  
Merton Youth Service  
Merton Youth Service  
Shelter  
South London Tamil Welfare Group  
Springfield Hospital  
Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust  
Thames Reach Bondway  
Wandsworth and Merton Law Centre  
Youth Awareness Project

## London Borough of Merton Teams

Children's Strategy Team (Social Services)  
District Housing Offices (Housing Services)  
Drug and Alcohol Action Team (Social Services)  
Head of Partnerships (Chief Executives)  
Housing Benefit (Financial Services)  
Housing Needs Team (Housing Services)  
Housing Strategy and Development Team  
Housing Support Team (Social Services)  
Learning Disability Services (Social Services/PCT)  
Older Peoples Services (Social Services)  
Access, Opportunity and Inclusion Division  
Planning and Commissioning Team Community Group Services (Social Services)  
Services for people with a physical disability (Social Services)  
Social Inclusion Team (Education)  
Supporting People Team (Social Services)  
Temporary Accommodation Manager (Housing Services)  
Tenant Participation Manager (Housing Services)  
Youth Offending Service (Chief Executives)

## Other Boroughs

London Borough of Ealing  
London Borough of Croydon  
London Borough of Kingston  
London Borough of Sutton  
London Borough of Wandsworth



## Appendix 2: Members of the Homlessness Strategy Group

Craig Chalmers	Mental Health Trust
Paul Coke	16+ Team, LBM
Steve Boucher	Grenfell Housing Association
Michael Furnival Adams	Housing Strategy and Development, LBM
Cecily Herdman	Housing Strategy and Development, LBM
David Jobbins	Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust
Steve Langley	Housing Needs Team, LBM
Julian Martin	Housing Strategy and Development, LBM
Jane Nottage	Housing Strategy and Development, LBM
Ray O'Shea	Housing Advice Service, LBM
Glyn Peckham	Housing Benefit, LBM
Graham Slater (Chair)	Threshold Housing and Support
John Threadgold	Shelter
David Wright	Children's Services, LBM
Janet Yerbury	Education (Access, Opportunities and Inclusion), LBM

# Appendix 3: Links Between The Housing Strategy and Corporate Policies and Plans

Corporate Strategy	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Housing response
Asset Management Plan	This plans aims to ensure that the Council's assets are provided and used in a way that maximises the contribution they make to the Council's strategic objectives.	Meeting the Decent Homes Standard Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness Accessing Affordable Housing
Community Plan	Safe and Green	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	Lifelong learning	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
	Supporting Local Business	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	A caring community	Managing Homelessness Meeting Decent Homes Standard Accessing Affordable Housing
Best Value Performance Plan 2003	Education Merton	Managing Homelessness Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	A safe, clean and green Merton	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	A Caring Merton	Managing Homelessness Meeting Decent Homes Standard Accessing Affordable Housing
	A Thriving Merton	Meeting Decent Homes Standard Accessing Affordable Housing Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
	Equalities Merton	Improving Performance Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Meeting Decent Homes Standard Managing Homelessness Accessing Affordable Housing

Capital Strategy	A strategic approach to prioritising investment decisions for the Council's capital resources and ensuring that they are consistent with the Council's strategic objectives and budget	Meeting Decent Homes Standard Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
Neighbourhood Renewal/ Local Strategic Partnership	The strategy is emerging but is driven by the vision of "bridging the gap between the most and the least deprived areas of Merton"	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Accessing Affordable Housing Managing Homelessness
The Merton Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002-05	Reduce the involvement of young people in crime	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
	Increase public reassurance, improve quality of life and reduce the fear of crime and disorder	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	Reduce the incidence of hate crime	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
	Reduce crime related to drug and alcohol misuse	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal Managing Homelessness
	Reduce the incidence of street crime	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	Reduce the incidence of burglary	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
	Reduce the incidence of reported motor vehicle crime	Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal
Supporting People Interim Strategy 2003	To increase the supply of accommodation related support, which is appropriate to the needs of Merton residents	Managing Homelessness Accessing Affordable Housing Supporting Neighbourhood Renewal

# Appendix 4: Links Between The Homelessness Strategy And Related Strategies and Plans

The key plans and strategies that relate most closely to meeting the vision for the Homelessness Strategy are listed below.

STRATEGY/PLAN	MAIN LNKS WITH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY
Addressing the Housing Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic People	A Government integrated plan to tackle issues relevant to minority ethnic people.
Adult Learning Plan	Focuses on providing a community based accessible adult learning service, which effectively meets the needs of local people. This will be achieved by providing a range of quality learning opportunities, which are responsive to the needs of the diverse community.
Carers Strategy	A Strategy to provide support to carers to enable them to continue to support the people they care for. Good support services will minimise the risk of people becoming homeless in the future.
Children's Strategic Plan 2002 - 2005	Draws together existing plans for those children at risk of social exclusion and proposes overall strategic priorities for Merton. Produced by partnership between Social Services, Health and Education and the voluntary sector.
Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice in Rented Housing	The code is designed to minimise racial discrimination and promote good race relations. It also requires Local Authorities to monitor access to services.
DTLR Good practice Guidelines in dealing with Racial Harassment in Social Housing	The guide sets out 5 principles of good practice for social landlords in tackling racial harassment. These are multi agency working, prevention and publicity, encouraging reporting and monitoring, supporting victims and witnesses and action against perpetrators.
Education Development Plan	Sets out priorities for schools improvement. Current priorities include raising attainment at various stages of education and narrowing the attainment gap.
Empty Homes Strategy	An action plan for bringing back into use empty private sector properties in the borough.
Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy	Looking at housing issues facing ethnic minority communities which will include asylum seekers.
Health Improvement Programme Action Plan	Plan designed to improve health and reduce inequalities.
Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities	Plans to improve the range of options for supported living, to make better use of existing provision and empower people with learning disabilities through an effective referral and assessment process.
Joint Investment Plan for Older People	Key priorities includes reducing the need for elderly people to move away from their own home and development of intermediate care in Merton.

Joint Investment Plan for people with Learning Disabilities	A range of priorities aimed at enabling people to live as independently as possible.
Merton Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002 - 2005	Key priorities are to target anti social behaviour and to increase the emphasis on protecting and diverting young people from becoming involved in crime.
Merton Drug and Alcohol Action Team Plan 2003 - 2004	Priority to maximise access to accommodation and employment for people in drug treatment and to prevent homelessness as a result of substance misuse.
Merton's Community Plan 2002 - 2004	Identifies the improvements needed in the borough to make it a better place for all the residents and businesses.
Merton's Housing Plans 2002-2005 and update	Identifying housing issues across all tenures in the borough and plans to address them.
National Probation Service Integrated Strategy 2001-2004	Key priority is to seek more effective development of move on accommodation and supported housing for high risk offenders through the development of joint strategies with the local authority.
National Service Framework for Mental Health	This includes the priority to create a comprehensive range of community based mental health services to enable people to be supported at home.
National Service Framework for Older People	Includes plans for the development of a strategy for developing intermediate care in Merton.
National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV - An Implementation Plan	Aims to reduce the transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the prevalence of undiagnosed HIV and STIs, unintended pregnancy rates and the stigma associated with HIV and STIs.
Private Sector Housing Strategy	A strategy identifying key issues and potential in the private housing sector and setting out actions to ensure that the private housing sector in Merton is accessible and well maintained.
Race Equality Scheme	A three year action plan and strategy summarising Merton's approach to race equality.
Supporting People Interim Strategy 2003 - 04	Key information on needs and services from this strategy has been used to inform the homelessness review.
Teenage Pregnancy Strategy 2001 - 2011	The major priorities are better support for teenage parents, better preventative advice about sex and relationships and better contraceptive advice.
Youth Justice Plan for Merton 2002 - 2005	Key priority to ensure that all young people either subject to community interventions or on release from custody, have satisfactory accommodation.

# Glossary of Terms

ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee	LAWN	Local Authorities with The North (scheme for moving households to the North of England)
ADP	Approved Development Programme	LBM	London Borough of Merton
ALG	Association of Local Government	LEA	Local Education Authority
AST	Assured Shorthold Tenancy	LPA	London Probation Area
B&B	Bed and Breakfast	MASH	Merton Action for Single Homeless
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau	MerHAG	Merton Housing Association Group
CAD	Crime and Disorder	MPAC	Merton Partnership Against Crime
CMHT	Community Mental Health Team	MYSHF	Merton Young Single Homelessness Forum
CPA	Care Programme Approach (for people with a mental health problem)	NASS	National Asylum Support Service
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment	NHS	National Health Service
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality	OASys	Offender Assessment System
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Team	ODAAAT	One Day At A Time (adult placement service)
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions	ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
ESF	European Social Fund	PST	Primary Care Trust
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education	PSA	Public Service Agreement
GP	General Practitioner (Doctor)	PSL	Private Sector Leasing
HB	Housing Benefit	RSL	Registered Social Landlord
HC	Housing Corporation	RTB	Right to Buy
HPU	Homeless Persons Unit	SATS	Standardised Assessment Tests
HRA	Housing Revenue Account	SSAFA	Soldier, Sailors and Airforce Families Association
HSRG	Housing Services Review Group	TA	Temporary Accommodation to the north of England)
HST	Housing Support Team	YAP	Youth Awareness Project
IRT	Information, retrieval, tracking	YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
LA	Local Authority	YOS	Youth Offending Service

# Contacts

If you have any comments or questions about this Strategy, please do not hesitate to contact Jane Nottage at the following address.

Housing Strategy and Development Team  
Housing and Social Services Department  
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London Borough of Merton  
London Road  
Morden  
Surrey  
SM4 5DX

By e-mailing: [strategy&development@merton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy&development@merton.gov.uk)  
or by phoning: 020 8545 3685

# Notes

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If you would like more information in your own language, please contact us at the address shown in the bottom box.

**Albanian** Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresen e dhene ne kutine me poshte.

**Arabic** إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية الرجاء الاتصال بنا في العنوان المدون ضمن الإطار أدناه.

**Bengali** যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় লেখা আরও তথ্য চান তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন, তলার বক্ সে আমাদের ঠিকানা রয়েছে।

**Chinese** 如果你需要用中文印成的資料，請按低端方格內提供的地址與我們聯系。

**Farsi** اگر مایل به اطلاعات بیشتر به زبان خود هستید، لطفاً با ما از طریق آدرس زیر تماس بگیرید.

**French** Pour tout renseignement complémentaire dans votre propre langue, veuillez nous contacter à l'adresse figurant dans l'encadré du bas.

**Gujarati** જો તમને તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં વધારે માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને નીચે અંતમાં આપેલા ખાનામાં દર્શાવેલા સરનામે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

**Punjabi** ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

**Somali** Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.

**Spanish** Si usted desea mas informacion en su propia lengua, por favor contactenos en la direccion al pie del formato.

**Tamil** உங்கள் மொழியில் மேலதிக தகவலைப் பெற விரும்பினால், அடியிலுள்ள பெட்டிக்குள் தரப்பட்டுள்ள விவரத்தில் எம்முடன் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

**Urdu** اگر آپ اپنی زبان میں مزید معلومات حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہم سے اس پتے پر رابطہ قائم کریں جو کہ نیچے کے بکس میں درج ہے۔

You can also get this information in large print, in Braille and on tape.

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