

Kensington and Chelsea Advice Forum
Housing Department: Information and Figures

1. Local Housing Allowance Caps and Homelessness

- 1.1 2770 RBKC households affected by the caps from January 2012 (estimate based on Housing Benefit information)
- 1.2 1100 may be in `priority need for assistance (1996 Housing Act, Part VII). This estimate is based on the number of residents aged over 70, households with dependent children, and 25% of single people.
- 1.3 325 homeless applications between 1 April and 30 June 2011. Of these:
 - 113 applications from private sector tenants
 - 16 approached due to LHA caps (eg landlord issuing notice as there is no intention to renew the tenancy)
- 1.4 No rent reductions have been possible for residents threatened with homelessness due to LHA caps.
- 1.5 No homeless applicants affected by the LHA caps have opted to be re-housed to alternative private rented accommodation with assistance from the Council. Note that the Localism Bill, that allows for the discharge of a homelessness duty into the private sector (without the subject's agreement) is currently before Parliament, and therefore Local Authorities do not yet have this power. RBKC has not yet formed a view on this power.

2. Local Housing Allowance Caps and Discretionary Housing Benefit

- 2.1 12 applications for Discretionary Housing Payment since 1 April from households that will be affected by capping, due to circumstances relating to age, ill health, poor advice, inaccurate previous claim etc. 9 applications for DHP were successful (meeting 100% of shortfall), and 3 applications refused.
- 2.2 Housing Benefit does not, at present, have statistics for the number of households for whom LHA has been reduced within the caps due to a material change in their circumstances.

3. 2011 Allocations Scheme

Figures shown are for Quarter 1 2011 (April – June) unless otherwise stated

- 3.1 71 single people have been re-housed permanently.
- 3.2 35 households with more than one person have been re-housed permanently (3 being couples without dependents).
- 3.3 26 households re-housed, where the eldest child 17 or under.
- 3.4 1 household re-housed, where the eldest child was 18 to 20 years of age.

- 3.5 5 households re-housed, where the eldest child was 21 or over. This includes 3 homeless households, 1 under-occupier, and 1 household where the older child had been awarded maximum medical points. In addition, 2 households with non-dependents aged 21 or over have been re-housed.
- 3.6 225 households had been awarded 750 points or more at the end of June 2011.
- 3.7 Average waiting times for re-housing to 2, 3, and 4 bedroom properties (from date of priority):

Waiting times: Years

Year	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
08/09	2.29	3.84	4.07
09/10	2.83	3.83	4.86
10/11	2.85	4.47	4.77
11/12 Q1	4.09	5.65	5.40

3.8 Volume of applications to the Common Housing Register

Month 10-11	Number of CHR Registrations	Month 11-12	Number of CHR Registrations
April	289	April	110
May	200	May	125
June	172	June	130
July	176	July	114
August	154	August	
September	143	September	
October	129	October	
November	136	November	
December	86	December	
January	109	January	
February	99	February	
March	129	March	
Total	1822	Total	479

3.9 Qualification for an additional bedroom to accommodate 'Visiting Children'.

An extra bedroom (usually a change from studio to one bed) may be recommended for parents or guardians that care for and accommodate children. The Council does not stipulate a minimum number of hours or days for week allotted for such care, but considers each case on its individual merits. For example, the Council may consider:

- Residence Orders
- Affidavits signed by both guardians before a legal representative affirming the split care arrangements
- Information from Social Services, GPs, Schools

3.10 Assistance with the completion of CHR forms.

The Housing Opportunities Team (which includes the CHR Team) can offer advice by telephone, email, and in writing. If required, an appointment can be made at the Town Hall (020-7361-3008 – Housingline).

RBKC Customer Services have been advised of this assistance. The reference in the KCAF information request to the 'Council Information Manager' and the target to 'complete 10 new CHR applications a day' is unclear.

4. Advice and Support for Social Housing Tenants Threatened with Eviction

- 4.1 TMO and Registered Providers can and have been advised to refer tenants threatened with eviction to the Council's Tenancy Support Services (Social Inclusion Team). This includes households and single persons.
- 4.2 Tenancy Support Officers will provide intensive advice, support, and signposting (where appropriate) with the intention of maintaining the tenancy and preventing homelessness.
- 4.3 From 1 April to 16 September 2011, the Tenancy Support Services received 49 new referrals (37 TMO and 12 RP).

From 1 April to 16 September 2011, the Tenancy Support Services closed 51 cases (35 TMO and 16 RP). 46 successfully completed programme of support, 2 lost or refused contact, 1 died, 1 moved into a RP property, 1 moved into LA sheltered housing.

- 4.4 Social Housing Tenants may also receive prevention advice and support from the Housing and Homelessness Assessment Team (HHAT refer cases requiring intensive tenancy support to the Social Inclusion Team), and other Council services such as Housing Benefit.
- 4.5 Social Housing Tenants may also contact the Housing Options Team for general housing advice. For example, tenants may attend the drop-in sessions at The Hub, Kensal road on Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons.
- 4.6 The Council's Environmental Health Services have established a protocol with the TMO and RBKC RPs for addressing disrepair. The protocol places the onus on landlords to address disrepair, and performance will be monitored.

5. Proposed Legislative Changes and Impact on Tenancy Length

- 5.1 It has been reported that Laura Johnson, speaking at the Older Persons Forum on Tuesday 6 September, stated that from April 2012 the Council will no longer offer tenancies for life. This is not the case. Ms Johnson stated that the Council (along with partner RPs) are still in the process of evaluating and considering the impact of the Localism Bill and specifically the issue of tenancy length.
- 5.2 The Localism Bill sets out the following reforms.

In *Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing*, the Government set out the reform of social housing. The Localism Bill (which is currently before Parliament and due to become law in the New Year) gives the necessary legislative change to allow these reforms to take place. In regards to tenure, the key changes are:

- Local authorities and housing associations will be able to let social housing on fixed term rather than lifetime tenancies. The fixed term must be for a minimum of five years, with two year tenancies being granted only in 'exceptional circumstances'.
- Housing associations will be able to offer a new type of tenure; Affordable Rent. It is intended to help those who would not otherwise be able to afford adequate housing in the market. Terms of the Affordable Rent tenancies would be set for at least two years and up to a maximum of 80% 'of local market rents'.
- Legislation will be used to create a new local authority fixed term flexible tenancies, minimum of five years, with two year tenancies being granted only in 'exceptional circumstances'. This is in addition to, not replacing, secure and introductory tenancies. These will have similar rights to secure tenancies, and can be set with any term length from 2 years to a lifetime tenancy.
- All new secure and flexible tenancies will include a right to one succession for a spouse or partner, and additional succession rights can be added if the landlord wishes.

It is recognised in *Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing* that certain groups will require social housing, for example older people, and those living with a long term illness or disability. There is no clear definition of these groups offered centrally.

The production of a Strategic Tenancy Policy is a new requirement placed upon Local Authorities by the Localism Bill. The Policy must '*set out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by local social landlords in the borough regarding their own policies on the grant and re-issue of tenancies*' (*Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing* p.22).

In summary it must:

- Describe the high level objectives that Registered Providers (RPs) in the area should have regard to in their own tenancy policies
- Detail where landlord tenancy policies can be found
- Be developed in statutory consultation with RPs and residents
- Be consistent with our Allocations Policy (as both are designed to communicate how housing need and our statutory requirements will be met)

The Council must produce a Strategic Tenancy Policy within 12 months of the enactment of the Localism Bill, anticipated to be April 2012. At present we are exploring what these changes mean to the Royal Borough and discussing some of the options. We will consult with residents, Registered Providers and advice agencies once a draft policy has been developed. However this is not yet been drafted, but once we have we will make advice agencies aware of this document for consultation. We do not anticipate this happening until sometime next year.

6. Wornington Green Redevelopment

- 6.1 All residents on the Wornington Green Estate were contacted in July 2011 with the news that Mansell, the contractor for the first stage enabling works for the

Worlington Green regeneration scheme had left the site. The phase of work for which Mansell were responsible covered demolition, site clearance and disconnecting gas, electric and water supplies so that the site is safe and secure. This first phase has therefore slowed down, and the residents most directly affected by this, who are due to move into the first phase homes when complete, have all been informed individually.

- 6.2 The selection process for a new contractor for Phase 1 is now underway. Good progress is being made and a shortlist has now been selected and Catalyst Housing Group is on track to appoint a new contractor by November 2011.
- 6.3 In the meantime, and to keep any delay to a minimum, Catalyst will be continuing some of the work under its direct control. This involves the groundworks and foundations for the first block and this work is out to tender with an expected start date on site in October 2011.
- 6.4 The full construction programme should start again in January 2012. This contracting delay has not altered the proposals, and the estate regeneration is planned to proceed unchanged.

7. Working with the Voluntary Sector

- 7.1 To be discussed at the Kensington and Chelsea Advice Forum

8. Lettings Figures

- 8.1 Please refer to the attached Annual Lettings Paper 2010 /11.
- 8.2 All new build social housing within the Borough will be developed to lifetime home standards, and a target of 10% wheelchair accessible properties has been established. However, it is important to note the lack of accessible housing within the Borough, as the following figures demonstrate.

AHR category	TMO	RSL	TOTAL
A – Wheelchair accessible throughout	0	0	0
B – Wheelchair accessible essential rooms	0	2	2
C- Lifetime Homes	23	128	151
D- Easy access	3	263	266
E- Step-free	1006	707	1713
E+- Minimal steps	1873	1318	3191
F- General needs	3745	6193	9938
G- Not assessed	70	1544	1614
Total	6720	10155	16875

Figures correct at June 2009

22 September 2011