Change-In-Spaces
Overcrowding and Under-Occupation

Pallovi Chatterjee & Carrie-Ann Singer
Contents

• Regional situation
• Causes and Effects
• Definitions
• Overcrowding in Hounslow
• Tackling Overcrowding
• Downsizers and Under-Occupation
• Around 207,000 of London’s households are overcrowded.

• London’s overall overcrowding rate has risen from 5.4 per cent of households in 1995/1998 to 6.8 per cent of households in 2005/08.

• Around 102,000 of London’s overcrowded households (49 per cent) live in social housing.

• December 07 – Government planned to reduce the number of people living in overcrowded housing conditions.

• CLG funds 38 pathfinder schemes, this includes all 33 London Boroughs
Causes of Overcrowding

Two key factors which contribute to the increase in overcrowding:

**Failure of housing supply to match demand**

- Fewer tenancies available as people unable to buy or rent on the open market.
- Increasingly younger age profile of tenants.
- As a consequence housing waiting lists have grown while lettings have fallen.

**Failure to provide large enough homes**

- 17% of new homes delivered by Housing Associations in London had 3 bedrooms or more in 07/08.
- 40% of the requirement for new social housing in London is for homes with 4 or more bedrooms.
Effects of Overcrowding

Overcrowding has significant negative impacts on families including:

Health
• Children 25% more likely to suffer severe-ill health and disability during childhood/early adult hood.
• Exacerbates stress and depression.

Educational attainment
• Children’s ability to learn at school and study at home.
• Children miss school more frequently due to illness and infection.

Economic impacts
• Lower educational attainment can lead to disadvantage in the labour market.
• Increased risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour.
• Pressures on local authorities to deal with homelessness that arises from overcrowding.
Definitions of Overcrowding

There are currently a number of different definitions and measures of overcrowding including:

- Statutory Overcrowding
- Bedroom Standard
- Severe Overcrowding
Statutory Overcrowding (Housing Act 1985 part X)

Defines a dwelling as overcrowded if the number of persons sleeping in it exceeds a permitted number, based on the room or space standard:

**The Room Standard** is breached if the number of people sleeping in a dwelling, and the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation, are such that two people of opposite sexes who are not living together as husband and wife must sleep in the same room. Children under 10 do not count.

**The Space Standard** specifies the maximum number of people who may sleep in a dwelling, and in the available rooms within it, having regard to (i) the number of available rooms of 50 square feet or more and (ii) the floor area of each room. Two calculations are required and the lower number applies. Babies under one year old do not count, and children between one and ten count as half.

For the purposes of these standards, a room is considered to be “available as sleeping accommodation” if it is “of a type normally used in the locality either as a bedroom or a living room”.

The bedroom standard is one that is commonly used by social housing providers and is based on the composition of the household and their ages. Bedrooms are notionally allocated to members of the household based on consideration of age, sex, marital status and relationship of household members.

According to the standard, a separate bedroom is allocated to each of the following:

- Married or cohabiting couples
- Adult aged 21 years or more
- Pair of adolescents aged 10 – 20 years of the same sex
- A pair of children under 10 years regardless of sex

**Severe Overcrowding**

With regard to the bedroom standard, severe overcrowding is defined as two or more bedrooms below the bedroom standard.
Hounslow Allocation Policy

Hounslow has not yet adopted the Bedroom standard to calculate levels of overcrowding.

Our current allocation policy states a separate bedroom is to be allocated to each of the following:

- Married or cohabiting couple
- Adult aged 18 or more (but not if this results in a 4 or more bedroom need)
- Pair of children under 7 regardless of sex
- Pair of children over 10 same sex (but less than 5 years age gap)

- Properties are allocated by number of bedrooms and number of bed spaces available eg 3 bedroom property with 2 double bedrooms and 1 single bedroom can only be allocated to a family of 5 or less
Overcrowding in Hounslow

- 2384 members registered to transfer within social housing
- 628 are considered to be overcrowded families
- 101 of these families are severely overcrowded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Bedrooms</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data compiled Aug 2010
Strategy to tackle overcrowding

Moving families to larger properties
- Work in partnership with RSLs to increase the housing supply
- Utilising the Private Rented Sector
- Maximise the use of existing stock, focusing on incentivising under-occupiers to downsize

Improving current living conditions
- Extensions and Conversions of existing properties
- Providing realistic housing options advice
- Offer in-situ solutions to relieve some of the effects of overcrowding
Overcrowding Project Officers

• Recruited in August 2009

• Primarily focused on data collection and cleansing

• Visits to severely overcrowded tenants

• Provide Housing Options

• Liaison with Housing Client & Partnerships – RSL prioritising in lettings plan

• Liaison with Allocations team – specific adverts in Locata for severely overcrowded families
Housing options

- Locata
- HomeSwapper
- Letstart
- Current Affordable Housing Schemes
- InComE
- Space saving furniture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of bedrooms</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>In-situ</th>
<th>Possible extension</th>
<th>Rehoused specific</th>
<th>Rehoused total</th>
<th>Cancelled</th>
<th>Change of circs</th>
<th>Housing options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data compiled Aug 2010
Under-Occupation

Our main focus for increasing the availability of family sized housing is to utilise existing stock which is currently being under-occupied.

Definitions –

Under-Occupier
Households who release two or more bedrooms

Downsizer
Households are releasing one bedroom

Under-Occupation in Hounslow

- 1\textsuperscript{st} April 2010, 136 households registered to downsize to smaller homes

- 39 households are considered to be under-occupiers

- 92 households are currently residing in family sized homes (3+)

London Borough of Hounslow
## Family sized homes in current stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bed Size</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>3974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bed</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 bed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 bed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- In October 09 it was estimated that there are potentially 1155 (27%) households who could downsize.
- 359 of these households have been contacted so far to see if they would be interested in downsizing.
Incentives for downsizers

- Trading Places - £1000 for each bedroom released
- High priority to move on Locata
- Assistance with bidding on Locata
- Help registering for schemes
- Accompanied viewings
- Help with organising move
- Offer of financial help with removals
Housing Options

- Locata Choice Based Lettings
- Sheltered Housing (60+)
- Seaside & Country Homes (60+)
- Homeswapper – mutual exchange
- LetStart – renting privately
- Current Affordable Housing Schemes
Under-occupation progress

72% General housing stock
3% RSLs
8% Sheltered & Older Persons Housing
16% SS&CH
1% To be rehoused

64 Downsizers have moved since 1.8.09 to date
There are currently 163 tenants registered to downsize
• Questions
Carrie-Ann Singer & Pallovi Chatterjee
Change-In-Spaces
Overcrowding & Under-Occupancy Team
changeinspaces@hounslow.gov.uk
0208 583 6739/4246