



Housing

1. Introduction

Good housing leads to good health and is linked to improved communities, reducing crime, improving employment opportunities and educational achievement¹. Poor housing, as well as homelessness, can exacerbate existing health problems or cause new ones.

The [Localism Bill](#) will aim to ensure that Boroughs make fundamental changes to the Council's homelessness duties, the allocation of affordable housing, the nature of affordable housing tenancies and the financing of affordable housing. The Bill is expected to become law later in the year. It will present Housing Strategy and Services with a number of opportunities and changes in the way services are provided, including:

- Social landlords will be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time, minimum length of tenancy will be two years;
- Local Authorities will have greater freedom to set their own Allocation Policy about who should be able to go on the Council's waiting list for social housing in their area;
- Local Authorities will be allowed to meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality, privately-rented homes;
- The current Housing Revenue Account subsidy system will be abolished and replaced with a Self-Financing system, allowing decisions to be made at a local level;
- The establishment of a national home swap scheme; and
- Social tenants will be provided with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account, including Tenant Panels.

2. The Local Picture

The demand for both social and private housing in the Borough has markedly increased. The number of household in Hounslow is increasing faster than the population as the average size of households is reducing.

According to the 2001 Census, there were 83,944 households in Hounslow, while the Department of Communities and Local Government estimate in 2008 was 92,000. This equates to an average yearly increase in households of almost 1% per year, and all indications show this trend is set to continue. The number of households in Hounslow is growing at a greater rate than the averages for West London, Outer London and London as a whole. ([Figure 1](#))

2.1 Tenure

Hounslow's Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) 2009/10 estimated that there are 95,193 dwellings in the Borough. Of these, 71.5% were privately owned with the remainder owned either by the Local Authority or a Registered Provider. The Greater London Authority's low household projections estimate that in 2006, the average household size in Hounslow was 2.51 persons per household, projected to decrease to 2.37 persons by 2026.

¹ Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) on Housing Renewal which came into force in 2002.



2.2 Social Housing Demand and Allocation

The number of people wishing to join the Council Housing Waiting List has grown year-on-year in Hounslow. The number of new cases who joined the Waiting List in 2009/10 was 3,222, which grew in 2010/11 to 3,670 new cases for the year. There are 1,719 new cases for 2011/12 year to date.

The Allocation Plan figures showed a significant decrease in the number of housing allocations in 2010/11 (down by 29% on the previous year), with a total of 617 allocations. ([Table 1](#))

2.3 Social Housing Management

The day-to-day management responsibility for the Borough's housing stock of 13,490 properties (correct as of April 2010) is delegated to its Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Hounslow Homes. Formed in 2002, Hounslow Homes was one of the first eight ALMOs in England and was awarded the highest (three-star) rating by the Audit Commission for excellent housing services in May 2005. A peer review in late 2010 upheld the assessment of Hounslow Homes as an excellent provider in terms of services and performance. In 2006, the £100 million refurbishment programme of the Borough's housing stock was completed, bringing the homes in line with the Decent Homes standard, four years ahead of the Government's deadline.

In addition to the properties managed by Hounslow Homes, there are a number of Registered Providers who have a combined social housing stock of 6,970 properties in the Borough. In total with properties owned by the Council, this means that 22% of all dwellings in the Borough (95,190) are classified as social housing, slightly lower than the London average. ([Table 2](#))

2.4 New Build and Affordable Housing

The Council's current Pledge 3, to 'create a new partnership with local businesses and housing associations to create jobs and build 2,500 affordable homes to rent or buy', highlights the importance placed on the delivery of new homes. There were 537 new affordable homes completed in 2010/11, which exceeded the target of 500. The 2011/12 target is to deliver 250 new affordable homes in the Borough. ([Table 3](#))

There are several affordable intermediate tenure housing schemes that operate in the Borough. Two of the most popular are:

- First Steps Shared Ownership – Applicants purchase a brand new or resale home with a mortgage of a share in that home, starting at 25% of the home's full market value. The applicant will also pay rent, initially capped at 3%, on the part owned by the housing provider. The scheme is designed such that the applicant's monthly housing costs will be approximately 20% lower than if the applicant was to buy the home outright on the open market or rent it privately.
- First Steps Intermediate Rent – Applicants rent a brand new or refurbished home at less than the market rate, normally 20% lower than a similar home in a similar area if the applicant was renting from a private landlord. Furthermore, the applicant has the assurance that their home is built, managed and let by a partner provider.

Other affordable intermediate tenure housing schemes include Social Homebuy, HomeBuy Direct, FirstBuy, Home Ownership for people with long-term disabilities and Older People's Shared Ownership.



2.5 Homelessness

The number of homeless applications to the Council increased by 36% in 2009/10, to 449, the first upward trend in homeless applications since 2004. Although the Borough achieved its homelessness prevention target for 2010/11 with the support of advisory bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, 376 people were deemed to be homeless during that year (around 53% of all homeless applications). ([Figure 2](#))

Hounslow continues to provide comprehensive housing advice and assistance, not just for those who approach the Borough as homeless, but also to those who could have housing needs in the future. In 2010/11, the Housing Advice team delivered ten outreach sessions to schools, colleges, local community groups and advisory bodies outlining the current and future picture of social housing in the Borough, the current Government's plans for social housing and the housing options available.

In 2010/11, Hounslow provided the first full year of homeless prevention returns to the Department of Communities and Local Government. A total of 514 homeless preventions were reported. ([Table 4](#))

2.7 Temporary Accommodation Use

The Council achieved the Government's target to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation by 50%. From the 2004 baseline figure to the end of the second quarter in 2010/11, Hounslow reported 579 cases in temporary accommodation. This trend in reduction was not sustainable, due to a growing number of registered newly homeless cases which resulted in an increase of 87% more cases under investigation during 2010/11. Per thousand households, there were 6.49 households in use as Temporary Accommodation in Hounslow at the end of 2010, considerably lower than the London average of 10.83 Temporary Accommodation households per 1,000 households. ([Table 5](#))

2.8 Rough Sleepers

Hounslow has reported single figures for rough sleepers for the past 11 years, using the Department of Communities and Local Government guidance for conducting counts. The last estimate (end 2010) was four rough sleepers. This was an increase of one person on the previous count. Only six of the 33 London Boroughs reported rough sleepers in double figures or higher during 2010, with Westminster (147), City of London (29) and Kensington and Chelsea (13) having the highest figures.

The homeless charity Broadway now publishes quarterly London rough sleeper's statistics from its Combined Homelessness And Information Network (CHAIN) database. CHAIN data showed a considerably higher number of rough sleepers in Hounslow for the 3rd quarter of 2010/11 than the Borough's estimate: 22 rough sleepers for the 3rd quarter, falling to 13 in the 4th quarter. This information will be monitored and used in conjunction with other existing data sources to help future planning for rough sleepers in the Borough.

2.9 Private Sector Housing

The Private Sector Housing service aims to improve the quality of housing by:

- Increasing the amount of private sector housing in decent condition, especially homes occupied by vulnerable groups;
- Improving access to suitable housing for people with disabilities; and



- Identifying and regulating houses in multiple occupations (HMOs) so that standards are improved and maintained.

The service aims to increase the supply of affordable housing by reducing both the number of long-term vacant dwellings (through improvement and returning them to productive use) and the demand for temporary accommodation (through improving the condition of existing private rented homes). The Private Sector Housing service aims to help tackle fuel poverty and climate change by making homes more affordable to heat and improving their energy efficiency, thereby reducing carbon dioxide production.

2.9.1 Enforcement Team

Enforcement and licensing activity improved 439 dwellings and brought 51 empty homes back into use during 2010/11, securing decent housing conditions for 490 Hounslow families or individual residents. This was delivered by improving:

- 268 HMO dwelling units (89 new HMO licences were issued);
- 171 individual (non-HMO) dwellings; and
- 51 long-term empty properties, which were returned to productive housing use.

2.9.2 Home Improvement Team

The Home Improvement service helps vulnerable residents with adaptations and repairs to help them remain independently and safely in their homes. The service delivers mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide adaptations for disabled people, provides a Care and Repair service which offers support and advice to older and disabled people about aspects of carrying out work to their property, and operates a handyperson scheme, providing practical help and assistance to older and disabled people. The handyperson scheme also enables safe discharge from hospital by helping to prevent subsequent falls by carrying out home safety checks.

During 2010/11, the Home Improvement service:

- Delivered 133 DFGs;
- Reduced the average time taken to approve grants to 13 weeks;
- Carried out 703 handyperson jobs for 429 clients; and
- Carried out 175 home safety checks.

3. Priorities

The priority areas for Hounslow in 2011/12 in Housing and Homelessness are to:

- Maximise the delivery of affordable housing;
- Focus on preventing homelessness;
- Inspect and improve private rented properties and bring empty properties back into use;
- Review the housing allocations policy;
- Review older people's care and support; and
- Implement the self-financing Housing Revenue Account.



4. Summary of Need

The following table summarises the need for Housing in the Borough of Hounslow.

SUMMARY OF NEED: CHECKLIST	
Is need increasing over time?	Yes
Is need greater than the London average?	No
Is there qualitative intelligence indicating that need is substantially unmet?	Yes
Is there an external inspection or report suggesting need is unmet?	Yes
Are quality indicators worsening over time?	N/A
Are quality indicators worse than the London average?	N/A
Is there an intervention of proven effectiveness to address the need which is not currently delivered in Hounslow (or not delivered enough)?	No