

Homelessness and housing need in Hammersmith

This paper aims to provide an overview of homelessness and housing need issues in the borough, in the light of our attracting increasing interest from charities working with these groups. Key points are

- Increasing numbers of rough sleepers
- The disproportionately high number of people from Eastern Europe who are sleeping rough or who are homeless which particularly affects this borough
- Average life span of a long term homeless person is 30 years less than average (inequality is even starker for women)
- The impact of the housing benefit cap on families in the borough especially larger families who could stand to be up to £100/week worse off
- The problems of accessing affordable and social housing locally especially for larger families
- The large number of organisations working on this issue locally – but the absence of a forum or network to bring them together

The paper also gives brief details of the organisations known to be working in the borough on these issues. It briefly reviews “what works” with younger homeless people.

What is homelessness?

Homelessness is more than rough sleeping. The law defines as homeless anyone who does not have a legal right to occupy any accommodation or whose accommodation is unsuitable to live in. This covers people who are living with friends or family without any supporting legal agreement and people whose accommodation is unsuitable because it is overcrowded or because they are threatened with violence if they live there. (Source; St Mungo's Homeless trends and predictions 2011). Most homeless people are not sleeping on the streets.

Being legally homeless does not give people a right to housing unless they have children or are more vulnerable than other homeless people. They do, however, have a right to advice.

Rough sleepers

Counting the number of rough sleepers is difficult. Local authorities have to take an annual census on a specific day but there is little guidance about how they should conduct this. Homelessness organisations also count rough sleepers but, whilst counting individuals, do so over a longer period of time. This results in very different numbers. Thus, in the Autumn of 2011, the Local authority census of rough sleepers recorded 8 people sleeping rough in Hammersmith and Fulham. This was the same as the previous year but considerably higher than in the years from 2000 – 2008. Prior to that, numbers of street sleepers had been around 13. 8 is around the middle of the range for London but this range goes from 0 for a number of outer boroughs to 106 for Westminster. Most are around 6 – 15. (DCLG figures)

However, Broadway London, which compiles its own quarterly statistics around homelessness has identified a much larger number of rough sleepers. For 2011/12, they identified 219 rough sleepers, 95 of whom had slept rough for the first time during that period. Most of those 95 were only seen sleeping rough on one occasion. A smaller group of 41 people were known to have slept rough during this period and in the two previous years. Of those, more than half had been seen sleeping rough during this period on between 6 and 20 occasions. According to the Broadway census, 32% of those sleeping rough in the borough during this period were from Poland, rising to 44% if all Eastern and Central European nationalities were included. 36% of rough sleepers were from the UK, 9% from Africa; all other nationalities individually accounted for at most 3%.

Of 190 homeless people contacted by outreach teams during the year and who arrived in some form of temporary accommodation

42 had problems with alcohol only

11 with drugs only

20 with mental health only

39 had alcohol or drugs and mental health problems

21 had problems with all three

Within the same group

8% had experience of the armed forces and 8% had been in care of some kind

45% had been in prison

Causes and impact of homelessness and rough sleeping

Research by St Mungo's suggests that for most rough sleepers, the break up of a relationship is the trigger for losing their home. However, most rough sleepers seem to have underlying family and relationship problems which are more difficult than most peoples'. Nationally, 70% have mental health problems and a large proportion have alcohol or substance misuse problems or a combination.

Homeless people die on average 30 years earlier than the general population. The average age at death of someone who has been street homeless is 47 for men and 43 for women (source; Crisis). The range of causes of death is very different from the general population with high rates of suicide (8.5% compared with 0.9%) and deaths due to alcohol and drugs. Few homeless people are in employment. See Appendix for comparative causes of death.

Homeless households

The most recent figures for homeless households (see definition above) show that there are 968 households accepted as legally homeless in this borough.

Figures for the last quarter of 2011

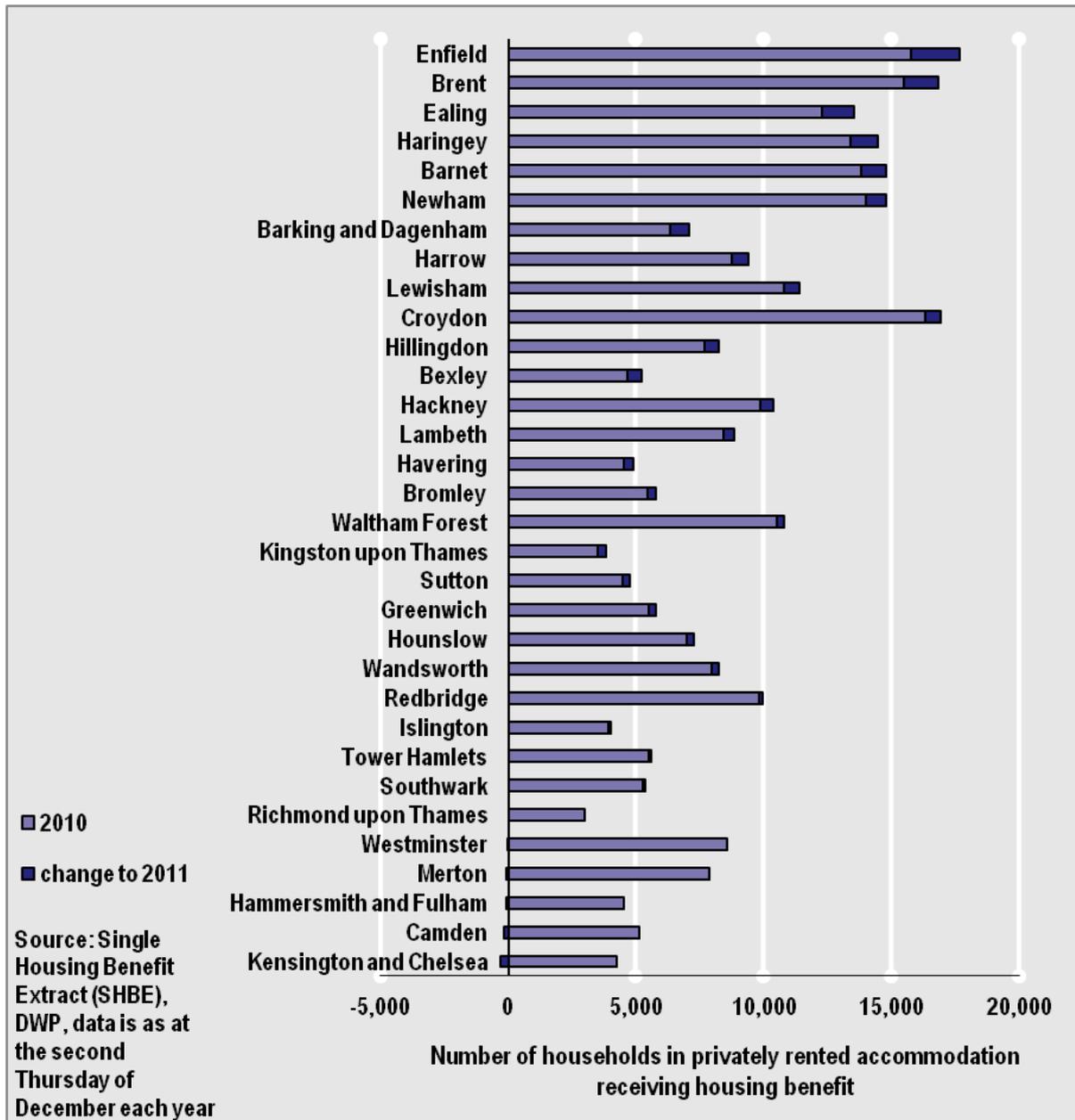
	Total applications accepted as homeless in Q	Per 1000 households	Total number decisions	In b and b	Total homeless	Per 1000 households
H and F	43	0.57	76	71	968	12.74

These figures put the borough in the middle of inner London boroughs generally but fourth highest in terms of the numbers in bed and breakfast accommodation (source Guardian).

Figures compiled by Trust for London (see Appendix) for the rate of acceptances of applications as homeless by households by borough for 2010-11 show that LBHF's position in the table is not much changed from 2006/7 although the rate has, in common with most other boroughs, declined over the period from 2006.

Housing Costs

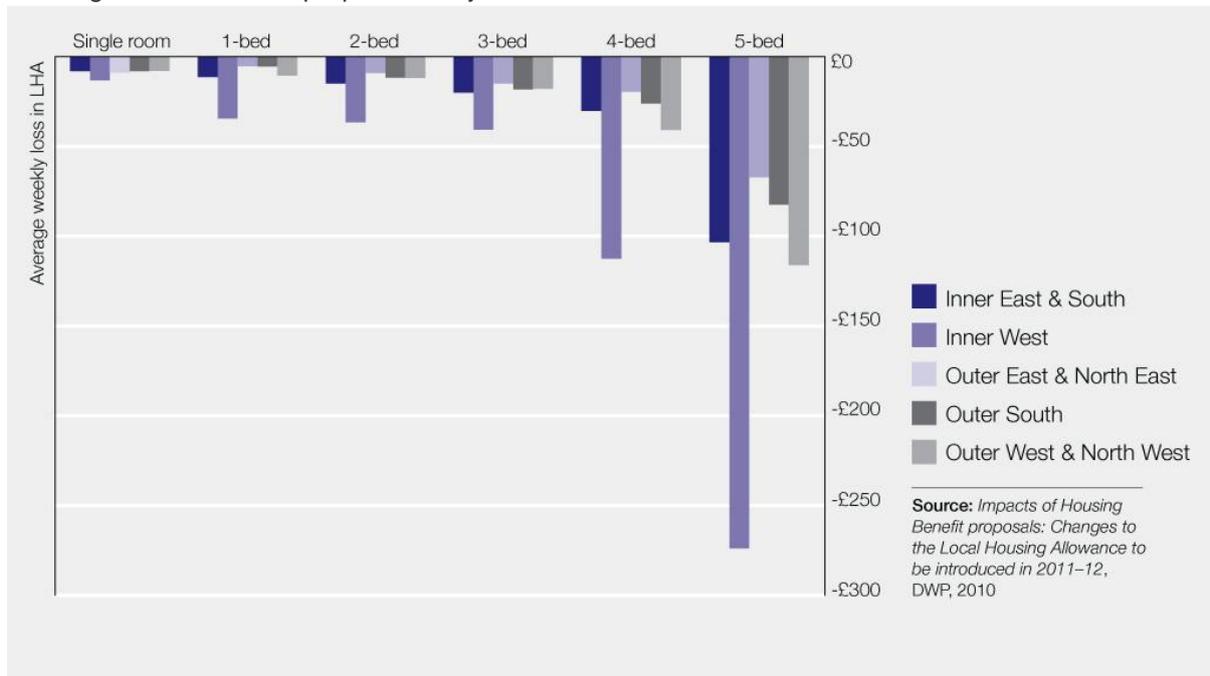
Trust for London has also produced a chart (below) showing the number of households in private rented accommodation receiving housing benefit.



Hammersmith's position near the bottom of the table reflects the decline in households receiving this benefit. This was widely predicted to happen after the cap was introduced in 2010. All the boroughs in which this has happened bar one (Merton) were in our sub region.

60% of households in the borough do not own their own home compared with a 40% average across London (source LBHF Housing Strategy 2007 – 14). The house price; income ratio has now reached 13 (ie the average house costs 13 times the average salary even in a borough where the average salary is £2000 above the national average). House prices are the fourth highest in the country. 93% of the local population cannot afford a local house. (Source; LBHF Housing Strategy 2007 -14)

The chart below shows the gap between housing benefit and average rents for different sized homes by sub region. Inner West London is particularly affected by the housing benefit changes and within that larger homes are disproportionately affected.



As housing benefit is capped, rents rise (although the cap on benefits will not affect social landlord tenants until 2013). Average incomes of those in social housing is around £19000/year (source LBHF Housing strategy). People living in temporary accommodation tend to experience higher levels of unemployment than the average – around twice as high (current adult male unemployment rate = 5%; source, Guardian).

Housing availability

For every available social housing rental unit which becomes available in the borough, there are 3.8 households in housing need. Close to 50% of the borough’s social housing provision is one bed flats. Waiting times for larger families needing houses with 4 or more bedrooms range from 15.8 months for those in the most pressing need to nearly 90 months (7.5 years) for those in band D.

The London Plan sets LBHF a target of 450 new social homes per year over the next ten years. LBHF aspires to make that 615 and over the same period to build a further 2460 affordable homes.

Hammersmith and Fulham social housing waiting list

	08/9	9/10	10/11
Waiting list	8492	9361	7754
New lettings	1006	786	917
Affordable homes built	270	570	60

Source; Shelter

Who is doing what about homelessness and housing issues?

Appendix B provides a list of the organisations known to be working on homelessness and housing issues including providing advice in the borough. There are a significant number of regional or national homeless organisations working in the borough providing accommodation, day centres and other services. One of two “hubs” serving the Mayor’s “No Second Night Out” initiative is located in the borough. The number of service providers and the range of services available including the services available to specific target groups is distinctly higher than in many other boroughs.

There is, however, no local network or forum to bring together organisations working to address homelessness or housing need.

What works in homelessness?

Research carried out by Crisis, involving an extensive literature review and a series of in depth case studies found that for younger homeless people without an established history of alcohol or drug dependence or serious mental health issues, effective strategies involves the following steps;

Relationships with landlords,

Incentivising landlords,

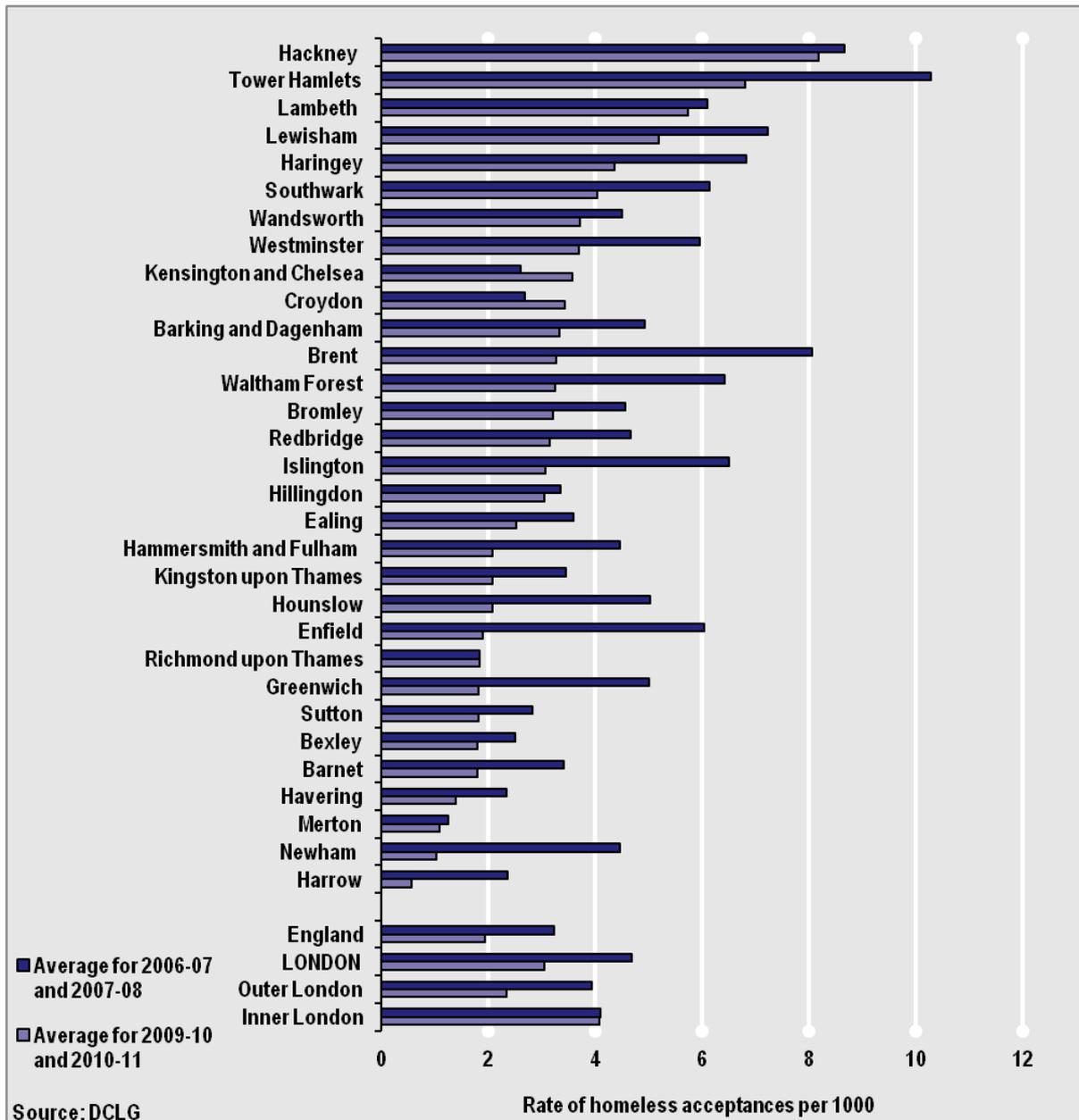
Pre-tenancy work

Post-tenancy support

Further details are at Appendix C.

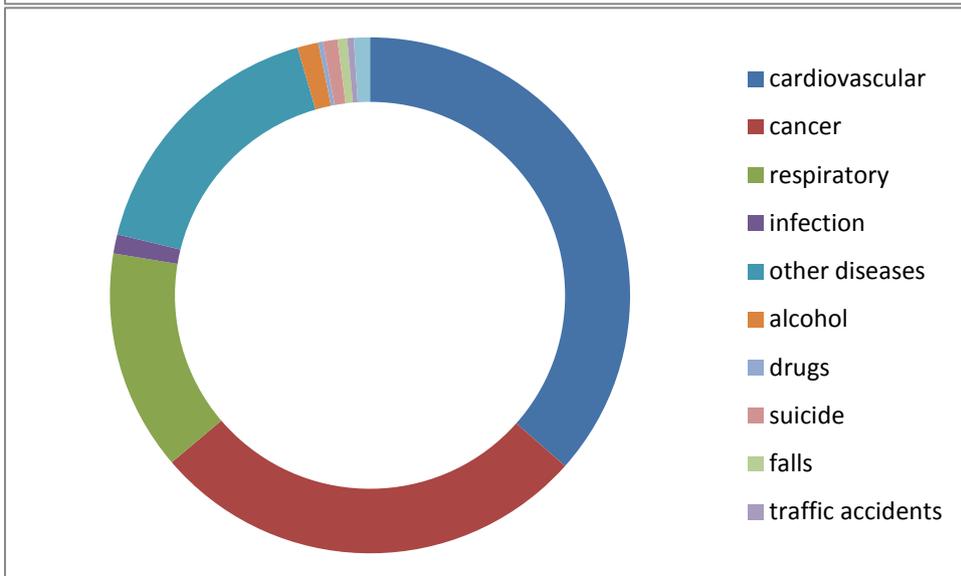
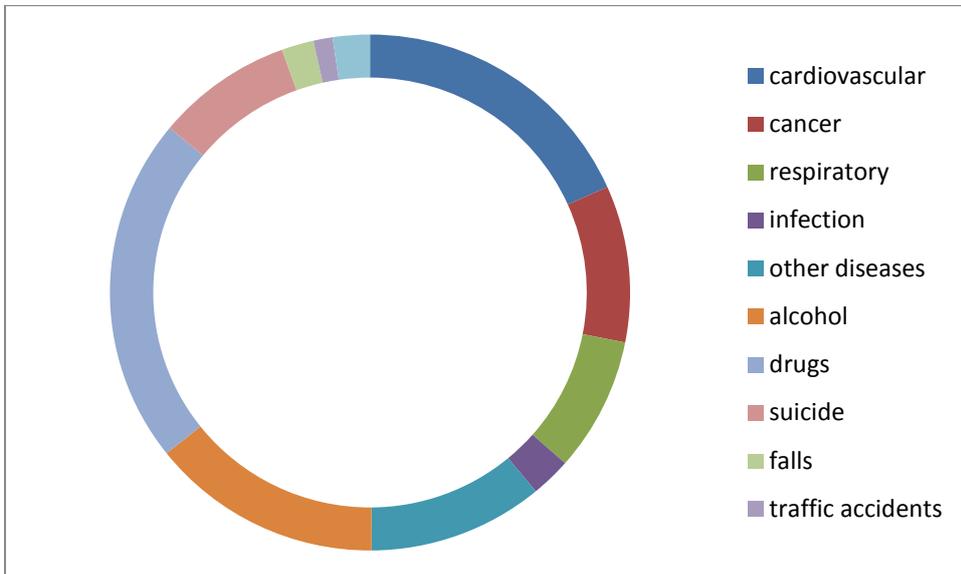
August 2012

Appendix A – Comparative rate of Homeless acceptances per 1000 households



Appendix B – comparative causes of death

Homeless population



General population

(Source; Crisis)

Appendix C – who does what in Hammersmith and Fulham

Broadway London

A London wide charity working with homeless people to help them achieve sustainable housing. The charity runs a day centre in Shepeherds Bush which offers basic services such as showers, access to health services including support with alcohol, drugs and mental health; education including independent living skills and training and employment support. It also runs three hostels in the borough; The Old Theatre which works with people with the most complex needs who have often experienced serial eviction; the Conninghams which is an assessment centre for those entering supported accommodation in the borough and Market Lane for people with alcohol and drug issues.

Causeway Irish Housing Association

Runs a medium support unit for young Irish people.

Centrepoint

Buffy House - A long stay service, up to 2 years, for 16 and 17 year olds based in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

Home Base Community Housing and Therapy – provides housing for people with serious psychosis and homeless issues, primarily with an armed forces background.

Cyrenians

- A supported housing project in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham for 17 vulnerable young people aged 16/17 who have been referred by the Temporary Housing Unit of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.
- 17 one-bedroom units across 2 houses, comprising either shared facilities or own individual bed-sitting room
- **Shepherds House** is a unique facility in West London for men who have been sleeping rough and who have mental health problems and may have additional complex support needs in the area of substance misuse.

Gay Men's supported housing – low support unit for gay men escaping domestic or homophobic violence

Woodstock Housing Trust

Woodstock hostel for young single homeless men aged 17-24 with medium support needs, mainly from black and minority ethnic communities.

West London Churches Homeless Concern

Night shelter from November - April at a different church each night, providing shelter for up to 100 people per night. Provide hot evening meal and breakfast. Case working service. Year round access to showers and laundry. Rivercourt Methodist Church is part of this group.

Salvation Army, Dalling Road

Hestia Housing

Housing and support services for people with mental health, people who are victims of domestic violence and people who have been offenders.

Furnish

- Provides good quality re-use furniture and appliances
- Offers low cost new furniture and appliances
- Helps vulnerable low income households
- Reduces the amount of furniture wasted in landfills
- Offers exciting work experience opportunities

Upper Room

Provides meals for up to 110 people per day, five days per week. Also free clothing and bedding and help with onward referrals.

Thames Reach

Hammersmith & Fulham SORT (Street Outreach Response Team) helps rough sleepers and people caught up in a street lifestyle in the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

Shepherds Bush Housing Association -Westside support – provides supported accommodation for young people aged 16 – 21, for older people and people with a learning disability. It provides floating support for young people leaving care, people with physical disabilities and people experiencing domestic violence.

Look ahead – provides services to a range of vulnerable groups

Shepherds Bush Families Project

Range of services including drop in, laundry, meals for families in housing stress.

St Mungo's

Head office in Hammersmith

Advice centre Wormwood Scrubs prison

Semi-independent living project

No Second Night Out

Pan – London initiative funded by the GLA to support the Mayor's commitment to ending street homelessness. Focused on those new to street sleeping. Has two assessment hubs open 24/7, one of which is in Hammersmith. The hubs are intended as a "place of safety" whilst referral arrangements are made.

Advice

Citizens Advice

Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre

St Paul's debt advice

East European Advice centre

Network/forum

There is no local network or forum around homelessness or housing issues.

Council provision of supported accommodation for people with special needs

Many of these user groups are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Units of accommodation available for people with special needs in the borough in 2010

group	Units of accommodation
Frail elderly	27
Offenders or potential offenders	33
Older people with support needs	1445
People with physical or sensory disability	234
People with alcohol problems	12
People with learning disabilities	22
People with mental health problems	201
refugees	31
Rough sleepers	74
Single homeless with special needs	180
Teenage parents	8
Women at risk domestic violence	23
Young people at risk	110
Young people leaving care	52

Appendix D – detailed summary of “what works” with younger homeless people from research by Crisis

Successful(homeless)organisations build relationships with landlords based upon mutual understanding and trust.

- Landlords value named contacts who are reliable in delivering what they say they will, return their calls quickly, and make arrangements for cover in their absence.
- Understanding what motivates and worries individual landlords can help create a relationship they value.
- • The need and desire for specific incentives can vary across landlords, but help to manage income flows for tenants on benefits appears to be a high priority for most.
- An analysis of the local housing market should be used to determine the level and type of incentives required to attract landlords.
- Landlords who perceive young people to be risky tenants will get reassurance from a tenant ‘vetting’ service.
- Leasing/licensing models should be considered for people with high needs and risk averse landlords.
- Young people may need convincing of the limited housing options available to them (so as to encourage realistic choices) and of the financial and social benefits of sharing.
- A need for pre-tenancy skills development should be embedded into service design.
- Services should aim to help people develop their own skills rather than do everything for them.
- Some form of post tenancy monitoring and support should be available
- Landlords particularly value access to support post-rehousing if things go wrong.
- Housing benefit can currently contribute to the costs of more supportive housing management in properties leased from private landlords (NB these

arrangements are under review).

- The scope to use volunteers to extend the range or volume of support provided should be considered.