

Teignbridge has embraced the DCLG/St Basil's youth homelessness positive pathway and have no young people under 18 in B&Bs.

#### 4. Joint working and co-location

Teignbridge's housing needs service is jointly managed with Exeter, which among other things allows pooling of resources, such as temporary accommodation, when needed. A number of different services are co-located with the service, including the PATH PRS access scheme, and Jobcentre Plus in the near future.

- a support worker from Sanctuary Supported Living provides a resettlement service to people housed in temporary accommodation
- the council is developing a new offer for landlords and have shared their thinking to date, and have expanded their PSL scheme
- Teignbridge is also setting up its own housing company to hold property.

Contact: Nicola Forsdyke  
Teignbridge District Council  
nicola.forsdyke@teignbridge.gov.uk

**Supporting information available at**  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/housing-our-homeless-household-case-study-resources-teignbridge>

## LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has seen one of the steepest falls in use of B&B with an approximately 90 per cent drop in the number of families in B&B between June 2015 and September 2016; from 238 to 21. Over the same period, families in B&Bs for over six weeks reduced from 174 to zero.

This has happened through a sustained effort backed by both officers and elected members of the council, and has been achieved without an extensive move into placing households outside of London, which averages 3 per cent of cases, all of which are within easy travelling distance.

Like other councils, Tower Hamlets was affected severely by welfare reforms from 2011, which in their case was added to by the effect of the 2012 Olympics in pushing up demand for accommodation.

The bulk of Tower Hamlets temporary accommodation was private licensed accommodation (PLA) which is used by a number of local authorities as an alternative to private sector leasing (PSL) accommodation, as it gives more flexibility for both parties to the agreement, as the PLAs were on 28 day rolling licence agreements rather than fixed term leases. Tower Hamlets lost 30 to 40 per cent of their PLA accommodation over an 18 month period, as their supplier agents and landlords could get a better deal elsewhere, and had to move heavily into more expensive nightly paid accommodation and B&B at greatly increased cost.

The borough has been a staunch supporter of the London Inter Borough Accommodation



Agreement (IBAA) in which the London boroughs have agreed maximum prices they will pay for nightly paid accommodation and agreed not to outbid host boroughs when placing in accommodation outside their own area. However at the outset, this also forced the borough to use more B&Bs as they could not readily access nightly paid accommodation at the agreed rates, nor replace the lost PLA stock, especially from one large supplier who they had previously relied on heavily.

The borough's subsequent success has seen the rapid broadening of the supplier base, which has more than doubled in two years, and a more active and responsive engagement with landlords and agents. Even so, the council's losses on temporary accommodation still run to several million pounds per year, because of the disparity between temporary accommodation housing benefit subsidy levels and market rents.

The council faced a particular challenge with the introduction of the overall benefit cap (OBC) in 2012, and literally door knocked 900 households in temporary accommodation estimated to be at risk of being capped. It also undertook extensive prevention work with households identified as at risk of being capped in the private rented sector. The council has a Welfare Reform Taskforce with housing, children's and adult social services, the council's arms length management organisation (ALMO) and registered providers (RPs). Four hundred and seventy-five households in temporary accommodation were helped into work, or to claim disability benefits which exempted them from the OBC, through close working with Jobcentre Plus, Skills Match and other agencies.

The council has made effective use of discretionary housing payments (DHP), which have been helpful, but are now being reduced with the expectation that DHP awards will reduce over the next 12 months as new households are affected by the reduction in the OBC.

An important element in achieving such a dramatic reduction of families in B&Bs over the past 18 months has been a reorganisation of the council's bookings team, with more effective leadership, a more intense focus on avoiding B&B use, and a closer relationship with the temporary accommodation procurement team to match properties with demand from households.

The council has proactively and successfully sought new temporary accommodation suppliers, increasing the total number of managing agents (including for singles) from 19 to about 60. Interestingly, the council has eschewed formal procurement agreements, which it believes to be legally unnecessary, preferring instead to operate a manual dynamic purchasing system within a pricing and standards framework.

It was assisted by a pragmatic decision to raise PLA landlord payments from what had been an unrealistic level. Nightly paid rates have largely stabilised as a result of the IBAA agreement, but market pressures on PLA/PSL rents continue with all London boroughs keeping the rates paid under regular review. There have been at least five amendments to the pan-London temporary accommodation rates since April 2017 with different boroughs applying increases throughout the year.

Like some other councils, Tower Hamlets has taken the step of employing some

procurement officers with a commercial background, having previously worked for, for example, private sector estate agents.

They have modelled the service to landlords to have a central point of contact, to be as responsive as possible, to follow through consistently on what they say they will do, and to pay suppliers promptly. The council will also pay for dilapidations to PLA properties using the national schedule of rates as their main benchmark.

They have also cut delays to landlords by accepting properties prior to inspection, for established providers.

The borough now has plans to purchase more temporary accommodation using Right To Buy (RTB) receipts, converting council buildings, and use of 'meanwhile' sites for demountable modular accommodation.

The borough offers a generic housing management approach for temporary accommodation – providing temporary accommodation residents with a single point of contact on all aspects of their accommodation.

When households are placed in temporary accommodation out of borough, the council assists with resettlement by providing local information including details of the nearest schools etc.

The council provides a tenancy sustainment service for any temporary accommodation tenants deemed to have a vulnerability. These officers provide assistance to housing officers on housing benefit and income maximisation, as well as other areas around health and wellbeing. They have developed a preventing

intentional homelessness protocol, currently being piloted with a RP and the ALMO, with a view to rolling this out to all RPs and offering it to private landlords.

Despite the reductions in families in B&Bs, the number of singles in B&B went up to around 120 people. Unlike most boroughs the council regularly exercises its discretion to accommodate non-priority rough sleepers and people identified as at risk of rough sleeping. The council has developed a hostels pathway designed to improve the throughput of single homeless households, thereby facilitating a reduction in B&B placements and by encouraging the accommodation of single people in the PRS when appropriate. There is a good and improving relationship between the council and hostel providers, with the transparency introduced by the pathway being welcomed by providers and support services.

Contact: Lorraine Douglas  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
lorraine.douglas@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**Supporting information available at**  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/housing-our-homeless-household-case-study-resources-tower-hamlets>