

# Health Inequalities Working Group

Report on the effect of overcrowding on  
educational attainment and children's  
development



A Working Group established by  
the External Services Scrutiny Committee

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# Report of the Health Inequalities Working Group

## Effect of Overcrowding on Educational Attainment and Children's Development

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# Chairman's Foreword

This Working Group was set up to review and recommend measures to address and/or mitigate the effects that overcrowding has on the educational attainment and the overall child's development. In 2009, the Centre for Public Scrutiny had asked for bids from groups of councils to become one of four Scrutiny Development Areas that would be looking at health inequalities, Hillingdon and six other North West London councils were successful in their joint bid.

The recent report of the Children & Young People Who Abuse Their Parents & Carers Working Group had significant links to overcrowding. The Chairman of the External Services Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Mary O'Connor, asked me to chair this working group to investigate the issues and to report back to that Committee.



The review had three main fields where I have personal experience namely planning; education; and youth offenders. Much work has already been done in relation to establishing the links between overcrowding and the impact it has on a child's education and development and this was taken into account. The focus of this Working Group was to determine the impact it had in Hillingdon and how we might make improvements. In addition, motivation and stimulation mechanisms were also taken into account by reviewing those facilities currently available.

The overall objective therefore of the Working Group was to identify ways that would enable a young person to maximise their educational potential and thereby seek long term and rewarding employment.

We are very grateful to the many witnesses who came to our meetings to provide us with the information needed to make our recommendations and we particularly thank: Christine Robson, Child Family & Adolescent Consultation Service; Peter Lang, Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers; Dr Ellis Friedman, Joint Director of Public Health, NHS Hillingdon/LBH; Brian Doughty, Interim Corporate Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing; Linda Dines, Parent Partnership Manager, Education & Children's Services; Isobel Callaby, Parenting Support Service Co-ordinator at Barra Hall Children's Centre; Satwinder Saraon, PEP/Service Manager, Children's Specialist Services; Sheila Cawthorne, Housing Commissions Manager, LBH; Sally Currie, Under Occupying & Overcrowding Case Worker, Hillingdon Homes; James Gleave, LDF Principle Officer; Tim Lake, Service Manager, Environment and Consumer Services; Khalid Rashid, Emergency Housing Manager; Brian Whiteley, LDF Team Manager; Beatrice Cingtho, Head of Housing; Emma Humphrey, Service Manager, Housing Needs Housing Options; Alison Moore, Senior School Improvement Officer 14-19; Erica Rolle, Domestic Violence Strategic Coordinator.

A very special 'thank you' goes to the young person (still of school age) who gave up his time to meet with me and the Democratic Services Officer to tell us about his personal experiences of growing up in an overcrowded house and how this has impacted on his education and development. Thanks also go to the Youth Offending Team's Parenting Officer for arranging that meeting. A very special 'thank you' also to the mother that attended the consultation event at Barra Hall Children's Centre and spoke about her family's experience living in an

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overcrowded house and her experience of the assistance she received. Thank you also to the Hillingdon Partnership Team and staff at Barra Hall for arranging this event. All these people have clarified the importance of this review and shown the need for the recommendations that we have made.

*Mr John Hensley*

# Summary of Recommendations

This is a composite list of the recommendations made by the Working Group.

## Recommendation 1

That Cabinet endorses the Working Group's view that the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development is an issue of great concern and that failure to tackle this will have a significant impact on many families in the Borough.

## Recommendation 2

That Cabinet recognises the concerns of the Working Group regarding the legislative definition of statutory overcrowding.

## Recommendation 3

That Cabinet supports the proposal that officers identify what provision currently exists within the Borough in terms of primary and secondary school breakfast clubs and after school clubs. Once the current provision has been established, officers will look at the development of similar clubs at schools in other parts of the Borough where the need is greatest and where they would be most effective.

## Recommendation 4

That Cabinet supports the proposal to include policies on issues relating to overcrowding in the Development Management Policies Document.

## Recommendation 5

That Cabinet supports the proposal that regular housing / overcrowding drop-in sessions be held in Children's Centres within the Wards that have the highest levels of overcrowding together with housing / overcrowding information leaflets being made available at all Children's Centres in the Borough.

## Recommendation 6

That, should there be a future change in legislation, Cabinet asks officers to review the phasing out of secure tenancies so that larger under-occupied homes can be freed up for overcrowded families.

# Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the Health Inequalities Working Group which was established by the External Services Scrutiny Committee to review the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development.
2. In 2009, the Centre for Public Scrutiny asked for bids from groups of councils to become one of four Scrutiny Development Areas (SDAs) that would be looking at health inequalities (the number of SDAs was later increased to 10). Seven of the eight North West London Boroughs (Hounslow, Hillingdon, Ealing, Brent, Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea – Harrow decided not to participate) put in a successful joint bid to develop the following four strands of work:
  1. Hounslow and Hammersmith & Fulham would work together on Improving Health Outcomes Through the Built Environment
  2. Ealing and Brent would work together on Fuel Poverty / Energy Efficiency
  3. Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea would work together on Overcrowding
  4. Hillingdon would work alone on the Effect of Overcrowding on Educational Attainment and Children's Development
3. Each of the SDAs had been given a budget of £5,000 by Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA) for innovative work during the reviews. The North West London SDA held a launch event at Hounslow on 9 July 2010 which was attended by those officers and Members that would be involved in the scrutiny reviews. As this event cost approximately £800, roughly £4,200 remained in the budget for the SDA to spend. Although Hillingdon had been allocated £1,250 of this budget to spend on innovative consultation with residents, the limited time available for the review meant that this funding had not been used.
4. Given the cross-cutting nature of the review (planning, housing, education and health), the Working Group comprised Members who also sat on the Domestic Violence Action Forum, Domestic Violence Steering Executive, Central & South and North Planning Committees, Education & Children's Services POC, Social Services, Health & Housing POC and the Chairman of the parent Committee - the External Services Scrutiny Committee.

## Reason for the Review

5. Overcrowding is just one of the many socio-economic factors that can affect children's development and educational attainment. As there had previously been many studies which looked at overcrowding and which established links between this and the effect it has on children's development and educational attainment, it was agreed that the Working Group would look at mitigating these effects and make recommendations accordingly.

## Aim of the Review

6. The review sought to answer a series of questions including:

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*Health Inequalities Working Group: The Effect of Overcrowding on Educational Attainment and Children's Development*

- Are Residents' expectations and concerns about the effects of overcrowding on children's development and educational attainment reflected in the Council's service standards?
- How are the effects of overcrowding on children's development and educational attainment currently identified and dealt with across the Council and how can this be improved?
- How have other councils successfully dealt with the effects of overcrowding on children's development and educational attainment?
- What measures are in place to limit / reduce the effects of overcrowding on children's development and educational attainment?

## Terms of Reference

7. The Working Group's Terms of Reference were agreed as follows:
- To establish the extent that overcrowding affects educational attainment and children's development;
  - To review what processes and procedures currently exist to address the effects of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development;
  - To consider existing Council services and procedures which address the effects of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development and suggest where improvements could be made;
  - To seek out the views on this subject from Residents and partner organisations using a variety of existing and contemporary consultation mechanisms;
  - To examine best practice elsewhere through case studies, policy ideas, witness sessions and visits; and
  - After due consideration of the above, to bring forward strategic, innovative and practical recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to the effects of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development.

## Methodology

8. The main method for collecting evidence for this review was through a series of witness sessions held in August and September 2010. In addition to these sessions, the Chairman of the Working Group met with a young person who had grown up in an overcrowded home and who believed that his development and educational attainment had suffered as a result. This meeting was held on 30 September 2010 and looked at what help had been received and what further help would be useful to young people in this situation. The full notes from this meeting can be found at **Appendix 3**
9. In addition, the Working Group set up a consultation event at Barra Hall Children's Centre which took place on Friday 10 September 2010. A case study identified at this event can be found at **Appendix 2**.
10. This report presents the findings from these meetings and events. It sets out the background to how the review was undertaken and presents the Working Group's findings from the witness sessions. The recommendations contained within this report address the main issues that arose in the discussions.



11. The Working Group is incredibly grateful to the following people who gave up their time to attend the meetings and advise Members on the key issues:
- Brian Doughty: Interim Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, LBH
  - Dr Ellis Friedman: Joint Director of Public Health
  - Erica Rolle: Domestic Violence Strategic Coordinator, Community Safety Team, LBH
  - Isobel Callaby: Parenting Support Service Co-ordinator at Barra Hall Children's Centre, LBH
  - Satwinder Saraon: PEP/Service Manager, Children's Specialist Services (Educational Psychology Service), LBH
  - Sheila Cawthorne: Housing Commissions Manager, LBH
  - Beatrice Cingtho: Head of Housing, LBH
  - Sally Currie: Under Occupying & Overcrowding Case Worker, Hillingdon Homes
  - James Gleave: Local Development Framework Principle Officer, LBH
  - Emma Humphrey: Service Manager, Housing Needs Housing Options, LBH
  - Tim Lake: Service Manager, Environment and Consumer Services, LBH
  - Peter Lang: Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) and Uxbridge High School Headteacher
  - Alison Moore: Senior School Improvement Officer 14-19, LBH
  - Khalid Rashid: Emergency Housing Manager, LBH
  - Christine Robson: Child Family & Adolescent Consultation Service (CFACS)
  - Erica Rolle: Domestic Violence Strategic Coordinator, LBH
  - Brian Whiteley: Local Development Framework Team Manager, LBH
12. In addition to those people who attended the meetings, the Working Group is also grateful to the Lorraine Penson, Programme Manager at Barra Hall Children's Centre and her team.
13. One of the main aims of this Working Group is to review the Council's arrangements for addressing the effect that overcrowding has on educational attainment and children's development in the Borough. The Working Group also sought to clarify the links between overcrowding and educational attainment. It is hoped that this work will act as a catalyst to the work that must be undertaken to tackle the effects of overcrowding in Hillingdon. This may be a long process and the impact may not be immediately clear, but the Working Group believes that the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development is an issue that must be addressed.



**Recommendation 1**

**That Cabinet endorses the Working Group's view that the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development is an issue of great concern and that failure to tackle this will have a significant impact on many families in the Borough.**

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# Evidence & Findings

## BACKGROUND

14. A research review, *The Impact of Overcrowding on Health and Education: A Review of the Evidence and Literature*, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, found that there is a relationship between overcrowding and children's social and educational development.
15. It is widely believed that overcrowding, frequent house moves, and other housing features including housing quality, neighbourhood, tenure and the impact of housing costs and subsidies can affect children in many ways, including their educational attainment and development. Housing can influence children's education attainment and development through a multitude of pathways including via the effects on their parents and on family relationships. It is therefore difficult to separate the effects of particular housing characteristics from effects which result from family background, neighbourhood or other factors.
16. There have been many studies that prove the link between overcrowding and children's development and educational attainment. These links include:
  - overcrowding can prevent children from studying at home as there is less space;
  - an overcrowded environment can lead to an increase in health issues and infections, which may result in more days off school sick;
  - more noise at home could mean more disruption;
  - if there is little or no personal space at home, children are more likely to go out with friends or to a friend's house rather than staying at home; and
  - overcrowding can lead to bullying and children being involved in gangs if they are spending a lot of time out on the streets. This can also lead to teenage pregnancies, anti-social behaviour, etc.
17. According to data from the Land Registry, the mean house price in Hillingdon in the first quarter of 2009 was £243,908. The average house price in Hillingdon has more than doubled in the past 10 years despite house prices decreasing in the last year in line with the regional and national trend. Hillingdon's *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2009-2014* states that estate and letting agents were interviewed in the Borough and reported a drop in sales activity in terms of both supply and demand. There has been a subsequent increase in the supply of rental properties available.
18. For the *Assessment 2010* refresh, entry-level prices (for home ownership and private renting) were obtained by bedroom size across the Borough via a survey of properties advertised for sale and to let during April 2009. These costs were qualified by qualitative research with estate and lettings agents in the area. Entry-level prices are crucial to the assessment of affordability used in the model to assess housing need in the Borough.
19. The report advises that lone parent households are the least likely to be able to afford market accommodation locally. Households headed by someone employed within the

Borough are less likely to be able to afford market housing in the Borough than households headed by someone employed outside of Hillingdon. Although overcrowded households are most likely to be found in the social rented sector, this is also an issue for the private rented sector.

20. 2009 survey data for the Borough shows that overcrowding across the whole of Hillingdon is 5.6%; the national average is 2.5%; overcrowding in the Hayes and Harlington constituency is 10.4%, i.e., more than 4 times the national average and 85% higher than the Hillingdon Borough average. Analysis of the 2001 census data also shows that, in London, nearly a third of all children are living in overcrowded accommodation; the figure for England as a whole is 12%.
21. Living in overcrowded accommodation can have a negative effect on families. If a home is overcrowded, it can affect health and educational attainment and can impact negatively on life chances. Under-achievement at school can be caused by lack of space for children to do their homework. Absence rates may be higher because of illness associated, at least in part, with poor living conditions. Older children may spend more time outside the home, on the streets or at friends' homes to find privacy and space.
22. Poor housing affects children's ability to learn at school and study at home and they consequently have lower levels of academic achievement. Children living in poor housing are nearly twice as likely as other children to leave school without any GCSEs. Children living in overcrowded homes also miss school more frequently due to medical reasons than other children.
23. Overcrowding can have an even greater impact on those families that have children with disabilities and medical needs. Families in overcrowded homes where there is a disabled child will often suffer from a lack of sleep which can lead to other children in the family being late for school. There is also evidence to suggest that benefits could be gained from re-housing and that parenting programmes could provide parents with better coping skills.
24. It is widely believed that there is a link between poor housing and poor health, which then leads to poor educational attainment and may result in reduced life chances. The problem of overcrowding is more prevalent in specific Wards where some growing families remain in small two bedroom flats. These homes can sometimes have up to five children living in a two bedroom property.
25. Statutory Overcrowding legislation means that two parents with five children in a two bedroom flat might not be classed as overcrowded. This situation was replicated for many families across Wards in Hillingdon (information relating to the number of overcrowded families waiting to be re-housed in each Ward can be found at **Appendix 5**). The Working Group is keen to ensure that pressure be placed on the Government to change this legislation.

## **Recommendation 2**

**That Cabinet recognises the concerns of the Working Group regarding the legislative definition of statutory overcrowding.**

26. During the course of the review, it became clear that there is a need to get things right really early on in a child's life, hence the Working Group agreed that its recommendations will primarily focus on overcrowded households with children up to 5 year olds. There is also a need to change parental attitudes and their skills in managing the different needs of different children.
27. There is a strong link between deprivation and under-attainment. It is clear that overcrowding affects attainment but there is no way of knowing the level of this impact. Overcrowding is thought to be a factor in itself but is only one of the relevant factors and is particularly significant at an earlier age.
28. It has been established that the effect of overcrowding is most significant on children aged 0-5. By the time these children whose learning has been stifled reach secondary school, they could be up to two years behind. This then makes it difficult for them to catch up.
29. The levels of overcrowding in Hillingdon are broadly consistent when benchmarked against neighbouring boroughs in the sub region:

<b>Severely Overcrowded</b>	<b>Start position reported 01/04/09</b>	<b>Reported 01/04/10</b>	<b>Year on Year change</b>
Brent	354	158	-196
Ealing	301	303	2
LBHF	93	98	5
Harrow	37	29	-8
<b>Hillingdon</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>-32</b>
Hounslow	81	55	-26
RBKC	209	130	-79
<b>Total</b>	<b>1209</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>-334</b>

<b>Average</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>-47</b>
<b>LBH - Average</b>	<b>-39</b>	<b>-23</b>	<b>15</b>

30. The Mayor of London has recently published the London Overcrowding Action Plan to implement his target for London to halve severe overcrowding in social housing by 2016. Severe overcrowding is defined within the Action Plan as being two or more bedrooms below the number required. The Mayor's overcrowding reduction target is London wide, and boroughs' own housing strategies must reflect this target.

31. The overcrowding work in Hillingdon is in-keeping with the agenda set by the Mayor of London in his Action Plan. The Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) overcrowding project and the Mayor's Action Plan are both pan-London initiatives. It should be noted that most boroughs are dealing with overcrowding locally. Whilst the majority of boroughs share best practice and initiatives on a sub-regional and pan-London level, they also typically prioritise the allocation of accommodation to their own residents.

## Consultation

32. The Working Group staged a consultation event at a Children's Centre which was situated in an area with a high overcrowding rate. The event, which was attended by officers, Members and a representative from Room2Move, took place on Friday 10 September 2010 at Barra Hall Children's Centre. The notes from this event are attached to this report at **Appendix 2**.
33. The event gave Members the opportunity to speak to a parent that was currently living with her family in an overcrowded home (the 3 bedroom house was occupied by 3 families, each comprising 2 adults and 2 children).

## Resources available

34. The Working Group believes that it is important to remember that the Council's resources are limited and that any action taken to address the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development should not raise residents' expectations too high.
35. There are currently no additional resources available within the Council to devote to mitigating the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development. As such, any work undertaken as a result of this review will have to be fulfilled within the current budgetary constraints and subsumed within the workloads of existing officers.
36. In the future, consideration could be given to how additional resources can be identified to deal with the potential increase in the number of children living overcrowded accommodation.

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## CURRENT WORK

### Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH)

37. Uxbridge High School (UHS) is an example of good practice with regard to engagement with students which is a first step in helping those who are experiencing difficulties as a result of overcrowding. Whilst there is a plethora of data on schools and attainment, there is nothing recorded that links this data with overcrowding. Although it is currently impossible to quantify overcrowding across the board, UHS uses a significant amount of data analysis and performance tracking. Consideration will also be given to how the identification of students from overcrowded homes can be incorporated into this.
38. Overcrowding is just one of the socio-economic factors that affects educational attainment and children's development. As well as those that come to their attention for other reasons, UHS staff pay special attention to students that receive free school meals as they are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have a poorer performance than those who are not in receipt of free school meals. Effort is being made to narrow this gap.
39. Achievement at UHS has significantly improved and effort is being made to improve attendance which will then have a positive impact on achievement. Although the school only deals with students for about six hours a day, 190 days a year, it is believed that UHS' success is due, in the most part, to an appropriate curriculum and a range of schemes and programmes that the school runs which includes:
- breakfast clubs: it should be noted that those schools in the United States that provide breakfast for all of their students every day from 7am have significant improvements in their attainment. As well as providing a breakfast club, significant effort has also been made to promote healthy eating amongst students at UHS. Although homework clubs are present in all schools, the utilisation of these clubs tends to be by the 5-11 age group. The younger and older children (under five and over 12) are harder to reach groups and children from the most chaotic families are the most likely to need homework clubs and the least likely to attend them. Whilst the Parenting Support Service is working to remedy this, progress is slow. Consideration could be given to setting up homework clubs in venues other than schools and that children's centres and libraries could possibly assist with this as there are often young parents visiting these places.
  - range of courses: as well as academic subjects such as Mandarin and Latin, UHS offers vocational courses that take students out of the school environment.
  - extended curriculum: by providing a variety of clubs after school (chess, self defence, etc), young people are deterred from walking the streets when they finish their mandatory lessons at 3.15pm. These clubs are very well attended and mean that the students are encouraged to stay at school and get involved. It is thought that students from overcrowded homes that complete their homework at school before they go home will suffer fewer effects from overcrowding with regard to their educational attainment.
  - pastoral care: at UHS, pastoral support is provided by dedicated staff and all staff are expected to identify where students' are being affected by issues such as overcrowding and then liaise with appropriate agencies to get help.

- building improvements: £6m of improvement work has been undertaken at UHS which has created space including large corridor areas that are similar to office spaces and are used by students to do their homework. These areas give students more of an idea about adult work environments. The £35k library refurbishment undertaken at the school has resulted in the number of books being taken out increasing by approximately 17%. Students are encouraged to visit the library before and after school.
- family learning: UHS piloted a family learning programme which, in 2009, targeted grandparents. This programme encouraged students and their grandparents to attend the school at the weekend and work together on projects such as IT or fencing. This is a useful tool for engaging with families. UHS hopes to replicate the phenomenally successful family learning undertaken in Brazil where the schools are busier at the weekends than they are during the week.
- summer school: free summer school places are provided at UHS for all Year 6 and Year 7 students. Approximately half of the parents took advantage of this offer this year.
- mentoring programme: the mentoring programme run at UHS involves all staff, including the caretakers and receptionists. The mentors are expected to report on issues of concern which include lateness which may be caused by living in overcrowded conditions. Whilst lateness is deemed unacceptable in all circumstances, this type of situation might be seen in a more sympathetic light and would prompt action by the mentor. Mentoring plays an important role in the Teach First Programme but the Programme suggests that the biggest factor to success are the actions of the parents.

40. HASH is encouraging the uptake of some of these initiatives in other schools. However, funding is an issue for schools and there is concern about whether funding will be made available for future social deprivation work.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That Cabinet supports the proposal that officers identify what provision currently exists within the Borough in terms of primary and secondary school breakfast clubs and after school clubs. Once the current provision has been established, officers will look at the development of similar clubs at schools in other parts of the Borough where the need is greatest and where they would be most effective.**



## **Education & Children's Services**

### **Performance & Analytical Services**

41. A significant amount of work is undertaken with schools, particularly from deprived areas on performance and data. However, it is difficult to get a strong data match on overcrowding as there is no specific data on performance against overcrowded homes. This is something that could be explored by officers, and which could then be used to inform and to monitor.

### **Parenting Support Service**

42. The Parenting Support Service manages behavioural issues (particularly in chaotic households) and works with other organisations and partner agencies to encourage parents and children to use libraries, attend parenting courses and visit after school clubs. Parent Support Advisors have also been placed in Hillingdon schools.
43. As it is not possible to make overcrowded homes larger, the Parenting Support Service tries to ensure that parents make the most of their situation. Although a child's inability to concentrate and do homework is only one of the issues related to overcrowding, parents are encouraged to clear some space at home for the children, even if it is a small space and for a limited period each day. Other simple measures, such as turning the television off for an hour in the evening, are also encouraged.

### **Educational Psychology Service (EPS)**

44. Officers within the Council's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) work alongside other educational psychologists on identifications made by the health department. The impact of overcrowding is most evident in children under five (and more so with boys), particularly with regard to levels of reading attainment, play and stress. Girls tend to respond differently to levels of overcrowding than boys.
45. The EPS department look at how schools can support these children, and how homework and play can be improved with the involvement of parents. The problems experienced vary and are dependent on the child, their development and age. EPS work with the whole family and across all age ranges.

### **School Improvement Service**

46. It should be noted that school results were improving year on year but that, by the time children complete Key Stage 2, it is often too late to prevent the impact of overcrowding on children's development and educational attainment. At this stage, effort needs to be made to mitigate the effects.
47. The Aimhigher programme targets students by using ACORN data (A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods) which is a geodemographic information system that categorises all UK postcodes into various types based upon census data and other information such as lifestyles. This programme is aimed at helping people into higher education and the Council works with Brunel University and Uxbridge College.

Bursaries are also offered. Although this programme (and others) provide help, there is no formal link to overcrowding.

### **Hillingdon Home Carers**

48. Hillingdon Home Carers has volunteers that go to households where parents need a few hours away from their children. The parents find this service very beneficial as it helps to alleviate their stress. 'Young Carers' in Hillingdon also provides relief for parents and children.

### **Hillingdon Homes – Room2Move**

49. A significant number of people have signed up for the Room2Move scheme which was set up this year and is funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The scheme looks at those homes that are over or under occupied and has generated a lot of interest since it was set up, especially from families living in overcrowded homes.
50. Dedicated Room2Move officers are in place to help those families that are Hillingdon and Housing Association tenants living in overcrowded conditions. These tenants are offered a 1-to-1 service and assisted with all aspects in conjunction with a move. Home release reward schemes are also available as a financial incentive to those tenants that move out of under-occupied homes.
51. The Room2Move officers work with all RSL's in the Borough as well as the PCT and GP's to distribute information to residents about the scheme. Officers also provide information to those in under occupied homes about what help is available to them as well as the mutual exchange scheme which helps families living in an overcrowded environment that need a property like theirs.
52. The Room2Move project is set annual targets for reducing overcrowding as part of its funding agreement with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Since the project's inception, the number of households reporting overcrowding has increased at the same rate as the number of overcrowded households has been addressed. For example: in the first four months of 2010/2011, the number of overcrowded households that were moved into larger properties was 38; during this same period, 34 new households registered as being overcrowded. This increase in demand is thought to be an outcome of the success of the project team in moving people on.
53. Running alongside the targets for the Room2Move team to reduce overcrowding are targets to reduce the number of under-occupied properties. Properties freed up by under-occupied households that have downsized are ring-fenced so that only overcrowded households can bid on them. The scheme has a system of incentives available to encourage downsizing and offers help with moves to those downsizers that are older people and/or are living on their own.
54. A Room2Move open day was held on Monday 27 September 2010 in Committee Room 6 at the Civic Centre. This session was split so that tenants living in under-occupied

homes attended between 10am and 12pm, those from overcrowded homes attended between 1pm and 3pm. Members were also invited to attend.

55. Because a lot of landlords do not accept tenants in receipt of social benefits, Room2Move officers specifically target these landlords. Officers explain to the landlords that the Council carry out full checks on those tenants that are looking for private rented accommodation. Landlords tend to be more receptive to accepting tenants in receipt of social benefits as a result of these discussions. The process is slow but it is making some progress.
56. Those tenants looking for alternative accommodation generally either want a home with a garden or want somewhere within the catchment area for the school of their choice. Flats and communal areas are not popular as families want to have their own private space and somewhere private for their children to play.
57. Room2Move officers monitor tenants that have been re-housed to see if they are happy and whether they have had any issues. This monitoring is carried out through visits. Plexus is an organisation that is used by Room2Move. Officers liaise with Plexus to organise viewings and meet with residents.

### **Planning, Environment and Community Services - Local Development Framework (LDF)**

58. If the Council continues to built small flats in the Borough, the overcrowding problem will not be addressed from the root. The lack of availability of homes to accommodate larger families affects overcrowding amongst Black & Minority Ethnic households disproportionately.
59. Hidden homelessness (people sleeping in homes of friends or relatives) may compound the problem. A report by campaigning charity, Shelter23, suggests: "Hidden homelessness might be more likely amongst certain BME groups, particularly Asian households. This sometimes arises out of a need to accommodate family and community members coming from abroad, or because strong cultural ties prevent the hosts from asking their guests to leave". The report goes on to add that the presence of concealed nuclear families within extended families can contribute to overcrowding. (source: Shelter - September 2004 - "The Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Crisis" p4).
60. The strategic planning policy for London is set down in the Mayor's London Plan which was adopted in 2004 and consolidated with alterations in 2008. Besides setting overall housing targets for London, the section on "Living in London" contains several policies which are relevant to this review: to make more efficient use of the existing housing stock – i.e., by reducing the number of vacant, unfit or unsatisfactory homes; to seek a range of house types and sizes in new developments, to offer a range of housing choices; to make adequate provision for children's play and informal recreation; and to seek sufficient new affordable housing to meet the full spectrum of housing needs.
61. It should be noted that a public inquiry ("examination in public") is now in progress, reviewing a Draft Replacement London Plan published by the Mayor in October 2009. The policy emphasis on providing a range of housing types remains unchanged. One

proposed policy in particular looks to achieve greater housing choice, e.g., for more affordable family housing provision.

62. The Mayor also issued Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance in April 2010 which highlighted: his concerns regarding gardens being developed for housing; preferred housing densities and design quality; and affordable housing provision.
63. Local planning policies are currently set out in the 2007 Saved Policies from the 1998 Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan. Two policies set out the overall approach: Policy H4 seeks to promote a greater mix of housing sizes (as the emphasis at the time the Plan was drafted was on providing more smaller homes, especially in highly accessible parts of the Borough, to meet the needs of the increasing number of smaller households); and Policy H5 which seeks to encourage family-sized homes in areas where it is particularly required.
64. The Borough also adopted its detailed local guide to housing design – the Hillingdon Design and Access Statement – in July 2006. This guide advises on the criteria the Council uses to assess planning applications for new homes. It covers issues such as the Council's approach on backland development, conversions, density, sizes of homes, privacy and separation distances between homes and garden space provision. Work is now progressing on a Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Local Development Framework which will take forward and review the standards used in the Hillingdon Design and Access Statement.
65. Hillingdon's draft LDF Core Strategy is a strategic planning document that sets out how the Borough will change and grow between 2011 and 2026. It contains strategic policies related to employment and housing growth, the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and to ensure the right infrastructure is provided to support the Borough's communities up to 2026 and beyond. The Core Strategy is one of a set of documents which will comprise Hillingdon's Local Development Framework (LDF). Other more detailed documents will come forward, setting out policies to determine planning applications (the Development Management Policies Document) and to allocate specific sites for development (the Site Allocations DPD).
66. The draft Core Strategy was issued for consultation for a six-week period in June 2010 and the responses received are currently being assessed. A further draft of the document, taking account of consultation responses will be presented to Cabinet on 18 November 2010. The Core Strategy contains a number of strategic policies that are relevant to the issues raised by the Health Inequalities Working Group. Chapter 2 deals with New Homes; the key issue raised in this chapter is how housing needs in Hillingdon can realistically be addressed by the supply of new homes.
67. Policy H1 deals with housing growth and sets a target to provide 5,475 new homes between 2011-2026. This is based on the current London Plan target to provide 365 new homes per annum. The London Plan is currently being reviewed and proposes a new target for Hillingdon to provide 620 new homes per annum (9,300 new homes over the period of the Core Strategy). This target has not been agreed and will be examined at the forthcoming Examination in Public.

68. Policy H2 looks at the provision of affordable housing and sets a target for 50% of all new homes to be provided as affordable housing. Evidence of housing need in Hillingdon is being prepared in the form of a Housing Market Assessment (HMA). It is expected that this document will provide further information on issues such as overcrowding. An economic viability study is also being prepared to assess the amount of affordable housing that can realistically be delivered. Evidence from both of these studies will feed into a new draft of the Core Strategy.
69. Policy BE1 sets out minimum standards for new development. In relation to housing, it states that all new buildings should be designed meet Lifetime Homes Standards and that new development should not result in inappropriate development of gardens that erode the character of suburban areas.
70. Following consideration of the proposed amendments to the Consultation Draft by Cabinet on 18 November 2010, a further draft of the Core Strategy will be issued for consultation. The document will then be subject to independent examination, with a view to adopting the document in December 2011.
71. It is proposed that the Development Management Policies Document will contain policies on issues related to overcrowding. It will include proposals for: the size of garden to be retained where homes are extended, e.g., to retain adequate areas for children's play; recommended minimum internal floorspace standards for new homes and those resulting from conversions or changes of use; and recommended minimum garden or communal garden sizes for new housing developments.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That Cabinet supports the proposal to include policies on issues relating to overcrowding in the Development Management Policies Document.**

72. Hillingdon's draft HMA attempts to model the types of market housing required by the numbers of households expected to be resident in the Borough in twenty years time - in comparison to the current housing size profile. The draft suggests that some 56% of new market homes should be 3-bedroom properties, with 40% containing four or more bedrooms and 4% having two bedrooms.
73. In addition to the Hillingdon HMA, housing policies in the next iteration of the Core Strategy will also need to take account of the West London Sub Regional HMA, which is being prepared on behalf of Hillingdon, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow and Harrow. Studies for the Sub Regional HMA use a different methodology, resulting in a significantly lower assessment of housing need in Hillingdon.
74. If the Council looks to negotiate for more larger family units on planning applications for new developments in future, the issue then arises of whether it would then have success at possible subsequent appeals. Developers can be expected to use viability arguments there to counter any attempt to use planning policies based on need arguments to secure larger numbers of family-sized homes.



75. There is also the issue of economics. Increasing the supply of larger homes in the private sector through planning negotiations does not mean that local people will be able to afford them. They are competing with people buying here who come from a wider sub-regional housing market, e.g., with house buyers who are moving from inner to outer London, particularly from Ealing, Hounslow, Harrow and Brent; and from immediately outside London: Slough, South Buckinghamshire and Three Rivers.
76. The current London Plan and its emerging replacement offer a strategic lead for planning policies across London and aim to provide a range of housing choices in future. This includes the need for adequate housing to meet the needs of families with children. Work on the Borough's Local Development Framework will support and build on this, in particular bringing forward a set of detailed local planning policies in the Development Management Development Plan Document which will emphasise the need for more larger, affordable homes for families.
77. The majority of the information currently available in Hillingdon is for affordable housing, but more information is being made available for market housing. There is a small need for 1 bedroom accommodation, but a much higher demand for 2/3 and 4 bedroom homes.
78. The Working Group is keen to stress the importance of having a separate living and kitchen space. Many new developments combine a kitchen/diner with living rooms in one open-plan room. This consequently increases the overcrowding effect and, as such, should be discouraged.
79. Officers took suggestions made by this Working Group to the Development Management DPD Working Party meeting on 14 September 2010 which resulted in the addition of the following amendments to four specific sections of the Development Management DPD text:
1. Insertion reference Cle 164: in the preamble to Policy DM28 on Internal Floorspace & Facilities for New Self-Contained Residential Development a section of text has been added to stress that overcrowding is an issue in the Borough and that this has consequences for the health and educational prospects of people affected by it. The section reads: "There is considerable evidence of overcrowding within homes in some parts of Hillingdon. This has adverse implications for the health & well-being of those residents concerned. It may also hamper the educational and career attainment of resident children and adults who are deprived of any adequate space for quiet study. (Hillingdon's resident working age population has below average qualifications of NVQ1-4 or above and 27% of working age residents are qualified below NVQ Level 2). While this phenomenon may be a reflection of current cultural, social and economic factors, it is most important that all future homes in Hillingdon include arrangements to mitigate the adverse effects of overcrowding in the decades to come."
  2. Insertion reference Cle 165: a further section has been added elsewhere in the preamble to Policy DM28 to emphasise the need for adequate kitchen and dining areas in new homes: "For the purposes of satisfying the third paragraph of Policy DM28, 'living room' is defined as a separate living room or living space,

indicated on plan, adequate for receiving visitors and for seated socialising by all members of the household. Combined or open plan living / dining rooms and kitchens will not be considered to satisfy the requirements of that paragraph. A kitchen / diner would only satisfy this criterion if it were large enough to duplicate the above living room requirements, plus accommodating a full range of kitchen appliances and storage cupboards (including the internal sorting & storage of refuse and recyclables) and in addition, providing a further seated dining function for all members of the resident household."

3. Insertion reference Cle 169: the Borough is seeking to implement the home size standards introduced in the latest London Plan. These propose a minimum size of 70 square metres gross internal floor area for homes with four people. Once homes of this size are proposed, the DPD proposes that they should contain at least two separate living rooms: "To provide for internal privacy, the health and well-being of members of the resident household and to alleviate future potential for overcrowding, any new home above 70 GIA should include at least two discrete and separate living rooms (only one of which might be a kitchen / dining room) in addition to the requisite number of bedrooms and other facilities."
4. Insertion reference Cle 179: in the preamble to Policy DM31 on Size of Private and Communal Gardens to Serve New Dwellings in Hillingdon, a further sentence is being added at the end of a paragraph which states the importance the Council will give to the provision of adequate sized gardens for new homes and states: "An unacceptably small garden area might also serve to hamper occupation by many future households, or impair the quality of life which they might enjoy, and so conflict with the policy aims of high quality and inclusive design." It is primarily aimed at helping maintain the character, quality and functioning of an area and its stock of homes, addressing the need for adequate informal leisure space around homes.

### **Child Family and Adolescent Consultation Service (CFACS)**

80. The Child, Family and Adolescent Consultation Service (CFACS) offers services for infants, children and adolescents from the ages of 0 to 18 with emotional, behavioural and other mental health problems. The service caters for families in Hillingdon and offers family therapy, individual therapy, group therapy and parent/infant therapy. Referrals can be made to the service from health, education or social service professionals who have contact with children, young people and families. Referrals can also be discussed first over the telephone. The number of referrals that CFACS receive has increased by around 100 year-on-year. CFACS has a relatively small team, which works in a very large Borough and last year they received 1,200 referrals.
81. Families living in overcrowded homes often contact CFACS for assistance. At a family's request, CFACS will write to the Council's housing department, or make a referral to social care.
82. CFACS is a clinical service and not a support service so looks at practical issues. Issues going on inside a person or family will affect the family's / young person's emotional development, thoughts and feelings. External factors that are considered include effects upon society, at school or on the streets. Behaviour needs to be dealt



with appropriately and in a timely fashion whilst also giving consideration to mental health issues.

83. The service tries to assess the needs and mental health of children / youths and their parents. CFACS works closely with social workers as well as the Council's Education and Children's Services section. A significant amount of joint work is already undertaken with partner agencies.
84. Overcrowding increases stress and mental health issues (if these already exist) and can result in a person being less likely to cope with issues that they could usually cope better with. A lot of families that go to CFACS are parents that don't know where else to go. Parents with severe learning disabilities are able to get assistance but those with mild/moderate disabilities do not get much support, if any.

## **Adult Social Care, Health and Housing**

### Housing Options

85. Re-House UK is an internet-based letting agency which encourages tenants to register their own interests on an online system. Council officers encourage tenants to search this system for a home and to be proactive. Re-House UK is a pilot scheme that, if successful, will be rolled out to other local authorities in due course. Officers have looked at things from a landlord's perspective as well as from a tenant's perspective.
86. It should be noted that those families living in a 2 bedroom home but needing a 4 bedroom home cannot bid for a 3 bedroom home as the Council can't move them into another overcrowded home. Residents that visit the Council's housing needs reception for information are able to talk about options available to them in an effort to meet their immediate needs. They can also look at private rented homes but tend to be cautious as it reduces their banding if they take up this option. Financial assistance is also available, for example, in the form of deposits being paid.

### Housing

87. Hillingdon, like other areas in London, has a shortage of larger family sized homes. The Council is attempting to address the need by building more family sized homes and has implemented additional initiatives to reduce overcrowding. For example, the Tenants Grant to Move scheme encourages under-occupied households to move into smaller properties, thus releasing larger sized homes for rent. Hillingdon has also accessed £350K of Government funding, provided through the West London Housing Partnership, to convert Council homes to provide additional bedrooms.
88. The number of overcrowded households in the Borough is growing and, as housing supply does not match the demand, this trend will continue. Overcrowding is higher in the private rented sector (PRS) than in other tenures – in July 2010, approximately 18.7% of families living in privately rented accommodation were overcrowded versus 12.6% of the same demographic group in other tenures.

89. As at 31 July 2010, the levels of overcrowding in Hillingdon in social housing stock were:

	<b>Type of Overcrowding</b>	<b>No of Households</b>
1	<b>Statutorily Overcrowded</b> ( <i>defined by legislation as 2 persons aged 10+ years of opposite gender who are not co-habiting and have to share a room</i> )	11
2	<b>Severely Overcrowded</b> ( <i>not statutorily overcrowded but requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms</i> ) – this classification of overcrowding was created by the Council to fill the void between categories 1 and 3	164
3	<b>Overcrowded</b> ( <i>requiring 1 additional bedroom</i> )	721

90. In the PRS, many households remain in overcrowded accommodation as a result of the increased costs associated with renting a larger property. PRS households living in overcrowded accommodation are more likely to be on lower incomes than households in satisfactorily sized accommodation or owner-occupiers.
91. Information on households that are overcrowded is captured at the point that the tenant contacts the Council in respect of any housing need or enquiry. Any household that applies to join Hillingdon's housing register is asked for details of their current housing circumstances. This information is then fed into the assessment of their need and to the priority band that they are allocated.
92. Overcrowding levels are reported quarterly to central Government through the overcrowding work stream and the outcomes are benchmarked against other London Boroughs and funding targets.
93. Hillingdon's housing development team is focussing on addressing overcrowding through new build and acquisitions. Of the 246 rental properties currently in development or being built in Hillingdon that are scheduled for release over the next three years, 92 of them (37%) are of three bedroom size or greater.
94. Hillingdon's housing service is bound by the Council's own allocation policy as well as by statute. The Council works with other departments to take action on any policy issues and individual cases they raise and has locally prioritised the reduction of overcrowding since 2007. There is an awareness that overcrowding has an adverse effect of families and also on children's development and educational attainment. The various strands and activities undertaken by the Council are targeted at reducing this impact. However, the supply of accommodation remains an issue as it cannot meet the demand of all the competing housing priorities. Housing officers will continue to work with Education & Children's Services officers to alleviate this effect wherever possible.

## PARENT / CHILD EXPERIENCE

### Situation 1 – Beejal<sup>1</sup>

95. On Friday 10 September 2010, Members and officers met with Beejal and her case worker about her overcrowded home. Beejal lives with her self-employed husband and two children in a three bedroom house that they share with two other families that each comprise two adults and two children. She stated that she had contacted the Council but had been advised that her family was not a priority as they were not in receipt of state benefits and that there was a shortage of larger affordable homes. She had found it difficult to get any information on the options that were available to her.
96. Beejal's situation is made worse as other adults in the household work night shifts so there is a need for her to keep her children quiet during the day time. As such, Beejal spends a lot of time outside of the home with the children and is suffering from depression.

### Recommendation 5

**That Cabinet supports the proposal that regular housing / overcrowding drop-in sessions be held in Children's Centres within the Wards that have the highest levels of overcrowding together with housing / overcrowding information leaflets being made available at all Children's Centres in the Borough.**

### Situation 2 – Kallim<sup>1</sup>

97. Kallim lives in a house that has two bedrooms and a box room. He shares the house with his mum, step-dad and five siblings aged 16, 11, 6 and 18 month old twins. Although his belongings are stored in the box room his brother sleeps in that room and he sleeps on the sofa.
98. Kallim was expelled from school a year ago and is now being home schooled: the local authority has provided him with a computer which he is expected to use for his studies for 25 hours each week; he has also been provided with an online mentor. Kallim admits that he studies for about half an hour a day and gets little help from his mum as she is often busy with the twins.
99. The computer, which has Internet access included, is situated in the lounge and other family members regularly use it. This reduces the amount of time that Kallim spends on the computer studying.
100. Because there are so many people in such a small space at Kallim's house, it is quite noisy and there is a lack of privacy so he finds it difficult to concentrate. He therefore

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<sup>1</sup> These names are not the real names of the parents and children

spends more time at his friend's house during the day as it has a more sedate and comfortable atmosphere.

101. Kallim is dyslexic and has difficulties reading. The education funding allocated to Kallim this year has been exhausted which means that he is neither allowed to return to school in the Borough nor permitted to receive any Council funded one-to-one tuition. The local education officer is looking at securing free education sessions provided outside of the local authority to help Kallim with his basic maths, English and science skills. She is also helping Kallim to get some work experience. It worries Kallim that he might not get the grades he needs to get into college so that he can train to be a mechanic.
102. Without one-to-one tuition available, Kallim is heading towards becoming a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and putting more financial pressure on other forms of assistance because of lack of educational support at a time when it will have the most impact on his ability to move forward and seek long term employment.

### **Situation 3 – Emily<sup>1</sup>**

103. Emily lives with her partner and her 5 children (aged 11, 8, 5, 3 and 11 months). She is pregnant with her sixth child which she has told will need to be delivered by Caesarean Section. Because she has previously had a number of Caesarean deliveries, she has been advised to avoid any undue strain on her abdomen so that it does not affect her previous scars, which will be under a lot of pressure as the pregnancy progresses.
104. Emily and her family live in a first floor two bedroom flat and she has made a request to move to alternative accommodation on the ground floor (and has stated that she would not mind moving to another two bedroom flat as long as it is on the ground floor). Her Health Visitor and Doctor have written to the Council to support her request to move.
105. As Emily is currently in Band D, she and her family stand little chance of being re-housed any time in the foreseeable future.

## **Situation 4 – Fiona<sup>1</sup>**

106. Fiona and her family live in a two bedroom flat but are not classed as statutorily overcrowded. One of her children is asthmatic and his noisy sleeping disturbs the other children at night which then impedes their educational development. Whilst the family is happy to move to a three bedroom property so that the child with asthma does not have to share a room with his siblings, Fiona has been told that she should bid on four bedroom properties.
107. Fiona's case had been referred to the Severe Social Hardship Panel due to the overcrowding at the property. The Panel referred the family to the Room2Move team. Whilst it was understood that the children were experiencing disturbed sleep which impacted on their educational development, it was believed that overcrowding remained the root of the problem and it was not a standalone medical issue.
108. The flat that Fiona and her family live in is on a secure tenancy so she should seek professional advice if she wants to consider an alternative option. She has been advised that the alternative housing options currently available to her are:
- To continue to place bids through the Locata Scheme;
  - Renting a larger property within the private sector; and
  - Homeswapper Scheme.
109. Fiona has now expressed an interest in the private renting option and a referral has been made to Plexus to help her find a property in the private sector to fit the bed-size need of her family

### **Recommendation 6**

**That, should there be a future change in legislation, Cabinet asks officers to review the phasing out of secure tenancies so that larger under-occupied homes can be freed up for overcrowded families.**

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## FUTURE WORK

110. There are some solutions to overcrowding that have worked in other places, such as re-housing due to medical reasons, which have also been effective in Hillingdon. Although re-housing due to medical reasons is just one of the practical solutions that can be considered, overcrowding is an issue in the private sector as well as the public sector. Alternative approaches might need to be considered for the private sector.
111. Further work needs to be undertaken to look at how under occupied properties can be freed up and how more flexibility can be built into the system. One possible way forward would be for the Members of this Working Group to have an input into the production of the Council's Housing Strategy.
112. The Hillingdon Housing Strategy is due to be revised. The evidence and recommendations of the Working Group will be noted when consideration is given to the new strategy. The current Housing Strategy identifies overcrowding as a reason for households living in unsuitable housing and has an overall emphasis on overcrowding and health, but not specifically the effect on children. The Council's Housing Allocation Policy is also currently under review and thought will be given to attributing different levels of priority to the different categories of overcrowding.
113. Planning policy could be reviewed to ensure that, in the long term, more affordable family homes are built rather than small flats. It is believed that there are tangible benefits that can be gained from Planning Committees being able to stipulate or influence whether developers are permitted to build houses or flats in certain areas.
114. There is no doubt that more family sized homes need to be built in Hillingdon, but there are social factors that also need to be addressed else the issue of chaotic families will just cause the problem to move and not be solved. Work needs to be undertaken with children from a young age to help them develop as they get older. Support also needs to be put in place to help families to help themselves. This support would need to be coordinated with partners in an holistic way which would also need to consider older children.
115. With regard to how the Council's systems look at convictions and domestic violence incidents when looking at housing people, it is noted that Plexus and Re-House UK look at court orders and ASBO's, but not convictions and domestic violence reports. These are considered by Hillingdon Homes. This is something that officers need to look into and consider when re-housing using Room2Move.
116. There are a number of processes in place to help families bid for homes. As there is a lack of large houses, there needs to be somewhere for families to go for advice whilst living in overcrowded accommodation. Families also need practical advice to make their current property better for their child, for example, improvements with regard to safety, warmth, noise reduction and space planning.
117. Consideration needs to be given to granting housing tenants five year leases so that, if their children move out, their situation could be reviewed and more under-occupied

properties could be freed up. Consideration is being given by the current Government to a revision to the amount of Housing Benefit given to working age families when children left the home. If implemented, this would mean that these families might need to downsize accordingly.

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## Closing word

118. Clearly, the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development is a complex issue. The Working Group is pleased to note that the various Council departments that deal with overcrowding or the effects of overcrowding work effectively across the departmental boundaries and do a very good job. However, although there are procedures in place to help families that find themselves in overcrowded accommodation, more information needs to be put into the public domain.
119. UHS has developed some innovative and effective ways of helping children to fulfil their potential and ways to include the parents and extended families in this process. It is hoped that the value of these schemes is recognised and adopted in other educational establishments. Consideration also needs to be given to the provision of private study areas with tuition on hand when required.
120. Parents play a key role in the development of their children and changes are needed in some parental attitudes to their responsibilities and the skills they have in managing the different needs of their children. Whilst work is undertaken by schools to prepare young people for parenthood, there is a further need to highlight the consequences of long term problems due to overcrowding in parenting classes, perhaps including examples of people who cope well and why and people who do not cope so well.
121. Although the Council looks to fulfil a current need with regard to the number of homes required of a certain size, consideration also needs to be given to the fact that the number of overcrowded households is increasing as quickly as they are being dealt with. Furthermore, whilst the Council can look to meet the housing need this should not be at the expense of the social need.
122. It is appreciated that the implementation of the recommendations contained within this report will not be something that can be completed overnight. The approach to implementing change is likely to be slow to ensure that we get it right first time and to manage the expectations of those affected by overcrowding.

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# Comments of the External Services Scrutiny Committee

123. The External Services Scrutiny Committee established this Working Group to examine ways in which the effect of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development could be mitigated in Hillingdon. We, the Committee, have considered the Working Group's findings outlined in this report and are delighted to present these to Cabinet and the Council's partners. The report clearly outlines the seriousness of the situation in Hillingdon and the importance of providing a coordinated response to the needs of families living in overcrowded homes and the effect that this has on the children. We fully endorse the recommendations.

<b><u>Recommendation ??</u></b>
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That the...
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# Appendix 1: glossary, references & further reading

## Glossary

<b>CFACS</b>	Child Family & Adolescent Consultation Service
<b>CfPS</b>	Centre for Public Scrutiny
<b>DCLG</b>	Department of Communities and Local Government
<b>DPD</b>	Development Plan Document
<b>EPS</b>	Educational Psychology Service
<b>HASH</b>	Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers
<b>HMA</b>	Housing Market Assessment
<b>IDeA</b>	Improvement and Development Agency
<b>LDF</b>	Local Development Framework
<b>LGDI</b>	Local Government Improvement and Development
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment or Training
<b>PCT</b>	Primary Care Trust
<b>POC</b>	Policy Overview Committee
<b>PRS</b>	Private Rented Sector
<b>RSL</b>	Registered Social Landlord
<b>SDA</b>	Scrutiny Development Areas
<b>UHS</b>	Uxbridge High School

## References & further reading

- The Impact of Overcrowding on Health and Education: A Review of the Evidence and Literature; the **Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**; 2004
- Hillingdon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2009-2014: 2010 Refresh ; **London Borough of Hillingdon**
- London Overcrowding Action Plan; **Greater London Authority**; 16 July 2010; <https://www.london.gov.uk/publication/london-overcrowding-action-plan>
- The Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Crisis; page 4; **Shelter**; September 2004
- Design and Access Statement; **London Borough of Hillingdon**; July 2006
- How Housing Affects Children's Education and Development Through the Effects of Overcrowding, Frequent Mobility, and Poor Health and Poor Well-Being; **Dr Rebecca Tunstall, Dr Ruth Lupton and Dr Helena Tunstall**
- The London Health Inequalities Strategy: Draft for Public Consultation; **Mayor of London**; August 2009
- Housing Overcrowding – Education and Skills; [www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2006-10-16b.92072.h](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2006-10-16b.92072.h); 16 October 2006
- Overcrowded Housing and the Effects on London's Communities; **London Housing**; October 2004
- The Effects of the Physical Environment on Children's Development; **Cornell University – College of Human Ecology**
- Full House? How Overcrowded Housing Affects Families; **Shelter**; October 2005
- Space to Wind Down: Tackling the Effects of Overcrowding; **London Borough of Islington**; 2006

# Appendix 2: Consultation Event

1.15pm – 3.15pm, Friday 10 September 2010, Barra Hall

## In attendance:

- Councillor Phoday Jarjussey (Working Group Member)
- Councillor Michael White (Working Group Member)
- Councillor June Nelson (non-Working Group Member)
- Sally Currie, Hillingdon Homes
- Nav Johal, Democratic Services
- Natasha Benjamin, Family Support Worker
- 'B', Parent/Mother

## Background:

- 'B' had a husband and 2 children: 18 months old and 2 years old.
- They lived in a private rented 3 bedroom house which had 2 double bedrooms and a single bedroom.
- They shared this house with 2 other families, both of which comprised 2 parents and 2 children which meant that there were 6 adults and 6 children living in a 3 bedroom house.
- Originally there had been 2 families living in the house with the 3<sup>rd</sup> family moving in about a year ago. 'B' and her family had been living in the house for 2 years. The other 2 families were related to each other.
- They had been given an eviction notice to leave the property by the landlord, and were actively looking for a new home.
- 'B' had been allocated a Family Support Worker by the Council.
- In 'B's bedroom, she had a double bed, a wardrobe and 2 cot beds.
- The house had a very small kitchen, which included a fridge where each family had a separate for their food.

## Experiences:

- 'B' and her husband had visited the Housing Needs Reception, and had spoken to Council officers who were not very helpful.
- 'B' had also visited the Citizen's Advice Bureau to get some advice on what her options were.

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- 'B' has registered with Re-house UK but had not yet found alternative accommodation despite also frequently looking online.
- 'B' and her husband (along with their Support Worker) had taken the eviction notice to the Housing Needs Reception. She advised that the staff here continued to be unhelpful – this lack of help was confirmed by the Support Worker.
- They were told that, as her husband was self-employed and earned over a certain amount, the Council could not help them with housing.
- The family was not looking for assistance with finance for housing, but with finding a suitable property for them to live in.
- 'B' was spending as little time as possible in the house and often took her children out to the park, went shopping, or visited the children's centre as much as possible. 'B' was also enrolled on courses herself.
- When in the house, the family was often told to be quiet by the others that lived there. The 2 other families were in the house almost 24/7, and at least one of the occupiers worked a shift pattern which meant that they would need to sleep during the day.
- 'B' felt smothered and strained. She was suffering from depression and she felt that the housing situation had made this worse. She felt very frustrated and stated that the home life had impacted on her illness.
- There was a lack of communication in the house between the families.
- As there were 12 individuals in the house, the bathroom was often busy.
- 'B' had put a small table in the corner of the living room (which they all shared) for her 2 children to use (and the other children in the household if they wished). However, she had been told to move it to her bedroom by other members of the household as it was taking up too much room in the living room which was for all to share. As a result of this, 'B' no longer used the living room and kept everything (including her children's toys) in their bedroom.
- She felt that the overcrowded living conditions had a huge impact on the development of her children and that was why she took them out as much as possible, and spent as little time in the house as she could.
- She stated that mentally this was not good for the children, that development was very important from a young age and that this situation would affect their education.

### **Suggestions for improvements:**

- More support from Housing Reception and the Housing Department for those people that lived in private rented accommodation.
- Including better customer service.
- Improved front line service.
- That she understood that there was a stock shortage but this should not stop her family from receiving adequate advice about housing and their options.

# Appendix 3:

## Interview Notes

Jacque Crowther, from the Council's Youth Offending Team, had made arrangements for Councillor John Hensley (Chairman of the Working Group) and Nav Johal, Democratic Services Officer, to meet with a 15 year old youth that had experience of living in overcrowded conditions and felt this affected his education and development. The youth will be referred to as 'K'. The following are brief notes made from this meeting which took place on Thursday 30 September 2010:

### Background:

- 8 people lived in one house which was council housing: 2 adults and 6 children. K is a 15 year old boy that lives with his mother, step father and 5 siblings (aged 16, 11 and 6 and 18 month old twins).
- The house that K lives in is a 3 bedroom house. It was previously a 2 bedroom house before one of the bedrooms was converted / split into a bedroom and a box room.
- The house has a small back garden (around 12ft squared in size) a very small front garden and no hallway in the house.
- K had taken medication for ADHD for 8 years as he was diagnosed with the illness, but it had recently been discovered that he did not have ADHD.

### Experience:

- Although K's bedroom was the box room which he kept his belongings in, he slept on the sofa in the living room as his brother slept in the bed in the box room.
- The living room had a dining table in it but this was folded away as there was no space to keep it out.
- K was dyslexic and could not read particularly well. He had tried practising reading but tended to forget things that he had learnt the day before.
- K was easily influenced by others around him and was hard to manage in school. He did not go to mainstream school anymore and had been home-schooling for a year. K's schooling was done at home on a computer that had been provided by the local authority ('not-school'). The computer was situated on a desk in the living room.
- K studied for around half an hour a day and had an online mentor if he needed assistance. K was meant to study 25 hours a week. When he did ask his mum for help with his work, she was often busy looking after the twins.
- K found it difficult to study at home and mentioned that his brothers or sisters often used the computer which meant that he could not use it when he wanted to. He said that did not have any privacy to study at home and that he did not have enough space to study.



- The computer was used by the whole family and had Internet access which was paid for by the local authority. As the local authority ('not-school') had provided funding for K's education for the year by giving him a computer and online schooling at home, this meant that he could not receive any further funding for studying outside of the home or in another school.
- K's ambition was to become a motor mechanic and he wanted to go to college when he left school.
- The local education officer from Education & Children's Services was looking into free education to help K with his basic maths, English and science skills. The LA officer was also assisting in getting K some work experience in the field of work he was interested in.
- His 16 year old sister went to college and, in order to get some space and quiet time to study at home, she would lock herself in her bedroom to study. K said she also found it difficult to get peace and space to study.
- K had a supervision order for 18 months as he had been in trouble with the police.
- When K was at mainstream school he did not attend after school clubs as these tended to be sport related and he did not enjoy sports. K had received 1-to-1 support when he was at school.
- K was allowed to invite friends over if his brother and sister were out of the house. K spent a lot of time out of the house, including during the day. He did not feel comfortable in his own home and often went to his friend's house in the day time. He said it was a lot calmer there.
- His mother had been looking for a larger house for around 6/7 months.

### **Suggestions for Improvement:**

- K wanted to live in a bigger house so that he could have his own bedroom with a computer in it. He believed that the house would get more crowded as he and his siblings got older so a bigger house was needed.
- He also wanted to get a job in the future.
- K felt that the schools could have assisted him better to stay in mainstream education by moving him to different classes away from the people that he knew. He felt this would have been a better option than excluding him.
- If K had more space, he believed that he would have more time to study in a peaceful environment which would make him more positive and enable him to achieve the grades that he needed to get into college – this was something that he was very unsure of at the time.

# Appendix 4: Overcrowding Definition

## Housing Act 1985 (Excerpt)

### Part X – Definition of Overcrowding

- 324 A dwelling is overcrowded for the purposes of this Part when the number of persons sleeping in the dwelling is such as to contravene
- (a) the standard specified in section 325 (the room standard), or
  - (b) the standard specified in section 326 (the space standard).
- 325 (1) The room standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling and the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation is such that two persons of opposite sexes who are not living together as husband and wife must sleep in the same room.
- (2) For this purpose –
- (a) children under the age of ten shall be left out of account, and
  - (b) a room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality as a bedroom or as a living room.
- 326 (1) The space standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling is in excess of the permitted number, having regard to the number and floor area of the rooms of the dwelling available as sleeping accommodation.
- (2) For this purpose -
- (a) no account shall be taken of a child under the age of one and a child aged one or over but under ten shall be reckoned as one-half of a unit, and
  - (b) a room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a living room or as a bedroom.
- (3) The permitted number of persons in relation to a dwelling is whichever is the less of -
- (a) the number specified in Table I in relation to the number of rooms in the dwelling available as sleeping accommodation, and
  - (b) the aggregate for all such rooms in the dwelling of the numbers specified in column 2 of Table II in relation to each room of the floor area specified in column 1.

No account shall be taken for the purposes of either Table of a room having a floor area of less than 50 square feet.

<b>TABLE I</b>	
<b>Number of rooms</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>
1	2
2	3
3	5
4	7½
5 or more	2 for each room

<b>TABLE II</b>	
<b>Number of rooms</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>
110 sq. ft. or more	2
90 sq. ft. or more but less than 110 sq ft	1½
70 sq. ft. or more but less than 90 sq ft	1
50 sq. ft. or more but less than 70 sq ft	½

- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe the manner in which the floor area of a room is to be ascertained for the purposes of this section. In addition, the regulations may provide for the exclusion from computation, or the bringing into computation at a reduced figure, of floor space in a part of the room that is of less than a specified height not exceeding eight feet.
- (5) Regulations under subsection (4) shall be made by statutory instrument that shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.
- (6) A certificate of the local housing authority stating the number and floor areas of the rooms in a dwelling, and that the floor areas have been ascertained in the prescribed manner, is prima facie evidence for the purposes of legal proceedings of the facts stated in it.

# Appendix 5: Hillingdon Overcrowding Statistics

<b><u>NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN OVERCROWDED HOUSEHOLDS</u></b>		
Count of Application Reference No		
No of Dependent Children	Total HOUSEHOLDS	Total CHILDREN
0	49	0
1	343	343
2	400	800
3	327	981
4	134	536
5	64	320
6	14	84
7	10	70
8	1	8
10	1	10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1343</b>	<b>3152</b>

The following four tables were produced on 30 September 2010

<b><u>Number of overcrowded applicants by wait to be housed</u></b>	
Count of Application Reference No	
YEARS GROUP	<b>Total</b>
LESS THAN 1 YEAR	31
BETWEEN 1 & 5 YEARS	232
BETWEEN 5 & 10 YEARS	75
GREATER THAN 10 YEARS	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>343</b>

<b><u>Number of overcrowded applicants by wait to be housed by Bed Size Need (BSN)</u></b>									
Count of Application Reference No	BSN VARIABLE								
YEARS GROUP	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>UNKNOWN</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
LESS THAN 1 YEAR			21	5	1	1		3	31
BETWEEN 1 & 5 YEARS	2		172	47	9		1	1	232
BETWEEN 5 & 10 YEARS	2	1	17	36	18	1			75
GREATER THAN 10 YEARS				3	1		1		5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>343</b>

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*Health Inequalities Working Group: The Effect of Overcrowding on Educational Attainment and Children's Development*

<b><u>Average wait of overcrowded applicants by wait to be housed</u></b>	
Average of YEARS BETWEEN APPLICATION RECEIVED DATE AND DATE HOUSED	
YEARS GROUP	<b><u>Average (Years)</u></b>
LESS THAN 1 YEAR	0.51
BETWEEN 1 & 5 YEARS	2.56
BETWEEN 5 & 10 YEARS	6.80
GREATER THAN 10 YEARS	13.55
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.46</b>

<b><u>Number of overcrowded applicants by ward by wait to be housed</u></b>					
Count of Application Reference No	YEARS GROUP				
Ward	<b><u>LESS THAN 1 YEAR</u></b>	<b><u>BETWEEN 1 &amp; 5 YEARS</u></b>	<b><u>BETWEEN 5 &amp; 10 YEARS</u></b>	<b><u>GREATER THAN 10 YEARS</u></b>	<b><u>Grand Total</u></b>
Barnhill	4	15	4		23
Botwell	6	45	4		55
Brunel	1	3	4	1	9
Cavendish	1		1		2
Charville	1	8	3	1	13
Eastcote & East Ruislip		4	1		5
Harefield	1	4	8		13
Heathrow	2	21	2		25
Hillingdon East	1	6	2		9
Ickenham		3		1	4
Manor	1	1			2
Northwood	2	10	3		15
Northwood Hills		1	2		3
Pinkwell		9	6	2	17
South Ruislip	2	5	1		8
Townfield	2	14	3		19
Uxbridge North		13			13
Uxbridge South	3	20	9		32
West Drayton	2	17	7		26
West Ruislip		4	1		5
Yeading		13	9		22
Yiewsley	2	12	4		18
UNKNOWN		4	1		5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>343</b>