

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 28 June 2006

Subject: **Current Homelessness Issues**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Housing Board,
South East England Regional Assembly

Recommendation: For information

Housing and Homelessness: Meeting the Challenge through Partnership -
Westminster Briefing on 24 May 2006

1. Adam Sampson, Director of Shelter

- 1.1 The successes have been that rough sleeping has declined dramatically and the use of B and B for families has met the Government's target, but nevertheless the crisis is deepening and temporary accommodation is used for far too long and is of a poor standard. 100,000 families are in emergency / temporary accommodation which is double the number of ten years ago. Children are unable to get into the local schools or families sign on with their local GPs.
- 1.2 There are serious problems of overcrowding and links between overcrowding and ill health have been established. TB is re-emerging in such families in Bristol. The output of social housing is less than under the last Conservative Government. The rising costs of housing means that less is being built for the money and Adam Sampson felt too much is being spent on Housing Aspiration and not enough on Housing Need. Even CPRE are arguing for more Social Housing.
- 1.3 Kate Barker suggested an additional 17,000 - 23,000 units of social housing pa were needed. The Government is targeting smaller homes when there is a huge need for larger homes. An extra £1 billion pa would lift 150,000 children out of poverty.

2. Andy Love MP, Chairman of the All Party Group for Housing and Homelessness

- 2.1 He admitted that the electorate's expectations for housing had not been met by the Government and that the problem was particularly acute in London and SE. But whilst homelessness had decreased slightly overcrowding had

intensified.

- 2.2 He felt that greater use could be made of the private rented sector but with the caveat that there are quality issues. 2004 Act should improve this. There is a real problem of stock management - the under occupation of larger homes. How can we persuade tenants to downsize?
- 2.3 He recognised the health problems associated with poor housing and homelessness and added mental health, alcohol and drug abuse amongst others to be addressed. In addition young people leaving care, ex offenders, ex MoD are all liable to end up streets. But Government has given £90m for hostel accommodation in London to address this issue.
- 2.4 He felt that the issue of supply must be cranked up and the private sector included. Households are expected to increase by 4m in the next 16 years. This is particularly difficult when land and construction costs are rising above inflation.

3. Peter Dixon, Chairman of the Housing Corporation

- 3.1 The challenge for housing associations is to achieve sustainable communities which will last and where people want to live. The Housing Corporation's Report 'In the Mix' gives characteristics of what works. Some tenants need support and a joined up approach is essential.
- 3.2 Although pleased with the almost 65,000 new social rented homes built 2004-6 and target of 84,000 for 2006-8 there has been a net loss of 100,000 homes under the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire over the last 10 years. We simply do not have the capacity to address the problem. The Housing Corporation is working with the LGA seeking information from local authorities on housing associations particularly regarding co-operation over lettings. He shared the concern over the lack of larger homes. In London 34% of the programme will be for 3 bedroom + but this is still not enough.

4. Geeta Nanda, Director Operations Notting Hill Housing Group

- 4.1 There are 62,000 in temporary accommodation in London, the acceptances for family accommodation from homeless families is 65%. There are increasing numbers of vulnerable applicants and the Supporting People cash is restricted. The level of re-lets in London is only 3% giving people a very small chance of being transferred to larger accommodation. There is a huge demand for S/O. BME families are particularly badly affected by overcrowding. There is a huge conflict between overcrowding and need for a transfer versus homelessness, sustainable lettings versus homelessness, high density versus child density, community cohesion versus choice. Again Notting Hill needs 5000 units of 4 bed units out 20,000.

4.2 She saw the solutions:

- Need to encourage more movement in social housing stock – limit succession rights;
- More S/O and greater publicity for this tenure;
- Sell public land to RSLs;
- Increase rents and increase grants for family units;
- Increase RSL intermediate rent provision;
- Make better use of existing stock including loft conversions;
- Tenancy support from temporary to permanent accommodation;
- Flexible interiors for stock.

4.3 Geeta gave examples of good schemes which Notting Hill has built including Adastral Village in Barnett. 320 homes - a good mix of size and tenure pepper potted throughout the site. The profit from the open market has helped to subsidize the social rented.

Elizabeth Cartwright
Chairman of the Regional Housing Board

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