



Tackling homelessness: the challenges for London

As the build up to the general election in June continues, CIH London board looks at what we need to tackle a key priority; the growing numbers of homeless households.

Homelessness has been increasing since 2010, reflecting the worst impact of the failure to build enough homes to meet our growing population over the past 30-40 years.

For London, with its high house prices and rent levels, the problem is particularly acute:

- 31% of the number of households accepted as homeless in the last quarter of 2016 were in London – that's 4,540 of the total 14,420 homeless households
- 72% of the total 75,740 households in temporary accommodation were from London
- In that period, the number of rough sleepers in London increased by 3% to 964 – accounting for 23% of the national total
- Between January and March 2017, the number of people sleeping rough for the first time jumped by 15% from the previous year as [reported](#) by the Combined Homeless and Information Network (CHAIN).

London boroughs are increasingly struggling to access affordable accommodation locally, in spite of spending an estimated £633million on temporary accommodation in 2014-15. As a result, 21,070 London households are housed out of area, 91% of the national total. The disruption for children having to move schools, and the loss of the support network of family and friends compounds the already stressful experience of being homeless.

Homelessness also hits some ethnic groups disproportionately; 33% of black households and nearly 15% of Asian households were homeless, although their proportion in London's population is 26 and 7 percent respectively.

How can we tackle this problem? Over 26% of London's homes are in the private rented sector, so it has to play a part in the solutions for homelessness. But the end of an assured shorthold tenancy is now the single biggest cause of homelessness, and accounted for 40 per cent of homeless acceptances in the capital last year. Access to social tenancies is also

becoming 'very difficult' according to three-quarters of the respondents to the latest Homelessness Monitor.

Given these pressures, it is critical that there is a renewed focus on prevention and relief measures, which will be driven by the new duties for councils under the Homelessness Reduction Act. But there are huge challenges, which is why [CIH is calling](#) for the next government to make it a priority to give councils the resources and support they need to do this.

Encouragingly councils and their partners are working hard to find innovative ways to meet these housing needs.

Case Study: 2-4 High Street, Croydon

2-4 High Street is a building in central Croydon owned by **Croydon Churches Housing Association (CCHA)**, previously run as a young person's hostel for homeless young people as part of the Short Time Out Project (STOP).

In 2016, residents were moved into other accommodation. This left the 4-story building (containing 13 bedsits, multiple communal rooms, kitchens, bathrooms and offices) empty. With so many people in need of temporary and permanent housing in the borough, this presented a real wasted opportunity.

While they looked at all the options, CCHA brought in **DotDotDot** to occupy the property rather than boarding it up. DotDotDot are a social enterprise which gives people who do great voluntary work (at least 16 hours a week) cheap homes by placing them in properties which would otherwise be empty, on a temporary basis.

CCHA wanted the property to remain in use to house vulnerable people in the borough, so in April they leased the building to **Causeway Irish Housing Association**, a not-for-profit organisation providing temporary and longer term self-contained accommodation primarily for young single homeless people in London.

They provide London wide access to the private rented sector through the Croydon specific **PRASC** service (Private Rented Access Service Croydon). PRASC supports people who use homelessness services in Croydon into sustainable tenancies in the private rented sector and is funded by Croydon to support 80 people per year into their own independent accommodation.



The High Street service will offer low rent accommodation to young employed

people eligible for the PRASC scheme. The service will also offer low rent temporary accommodation to young working or work ready people who are living in Croydon hostels and awaiting a permanent housing offer. This will free up beds in supported accommodation for homeless people with support needs. All referrals come via Croydon's [Gateway](#) services.

Other initiatives include:

- Lewisham council's [pop-up village](#) of pre-fabricated housing developed on vacant council land provides temporary accommodation for up to 24 families in their area. These can be moved to alternative sites if necessary to make use of land awaiting planning permission and development.
- Croydon's [development company](#), Brick by Brick, which is using small sites of council land to develop affordable housing to tackle their homelessness challenges. They have plans to develop 1000 new homes by 2018, including some mixed tenure rented schemes to provide cross subsidy for the affordable homes.

Find out more from CIH's blogs:

- Election 2017: [what we are asking for on homelessness](#)
- [Three things we need to solve the housing crisis](#)

Check out our website if you want to know more about [CIH London board](#), and about becoming a [member](#).

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