

# HRSSC

## Emerging priorities for an updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

**Karen Swift, Director of Housing**

**Una Bedford, Senior Strategy & Policy Officer**



# Why the review and new strategy?



- The council has a duty as a local housing authority (Homelessness Act (2002)), **to carry out a periodic review of homelessness in its District (borough) and to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy based on the results at least every five years**
- The strategy must set out:
  - how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness; **and**
  - the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Current version of strategy was published in December 2018



# The review



- The Homelessness Code of Guidance (2018) provides clear guidance on what a review of homelessness in the borough must concentrate on:
  - current and likely future levels of homelessness within the local area.
  - the activities carried out for preventing homelessness.
  - securing accommodation for those who are, may become or have become homeless.
  - providing support for those who are, may become or have been homeless; **and**
  - resources allocated to carry out these activities.
- The review was a desk top exercise using a sizable evidence base - drawn from data published by DLUHC, collated from the council's Housing Options Services, the Census 2021 data and a variety of other sources and is a snapshot of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough over the last 5 years up to March 2023.



# Homelessness & Rough Sleeping – Review Findings (1)



## People

- **Single people (single males and mothers with children)** are largest proportion of all presentations (**relief and prevention**)
- **More approaches for assistance made at relief** than the prevention stage
- More **single people with dependent children** are owed a relief duty
- **Couples with dependent children** more likely to be owed a **prevention duty**
- Q1 22/23 **50% of homelessness applicants were under the age of 35.** (25–34-year-olds the highest numbers of those owed a duty, followed by 18-24 and 35- 4 age groups)
- Ethnicity reflects the overall demographics of LBTH **Asian/British are the largest ethnic group (45%)** owed a housing duty. The Bengali population is owed the highest percentage of duties (37%)

## Reasons

1. **Family/friends no longer willing to accommodate** (37% of all approaches)
2. **End of a PRS tenancy** (28%)
3. **End of a social rented tenancy** (15%)
4. **Domestic Abuse** (more common at relief stage) (5%)
5. **Non-violent relationship breakdown** (3%)



# Homelessness & Rough Sleeping - Review Findings (2)



## Support needs

1. History of mental health
2. Physical ill health and disability
3. Offending history
4. Drug dependency
5. History of rough sleeping

## Rough Sleeping (Q2 2022/23)

- **72%** under 45 years of age,
- **36-45 age range being the most represented age group (38.5%)**. Least common age group are those aged between 18–25-year-olds.
- **87% male 11% female & 1.6% non-binary** (remainder unknown).
- **White British 28% largest group**, White other (25%), Black /Black British African (10%), Asian British Bangladeshi 6%.
- **58%** have more than one support need (alcohol, drugs, mental health).
- Only **12%** without any support needs.
- **56%** of rough sleepers have experienced prison.



# Landscape



- **Homelessness Reduction Act** (effective April 2018) brought additional assistance for those at risk of homelessness increasing the number of applicants qualifying for assistance.
- **Rising rents and resurgence in demand for PRS accommodation** - post pandemic the London PRS recovering but **housing costs have increased along with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, food costs and energy bills.**
- **Small buy to let landlords exiting the market** - factors include **tax and regulation, higher maintenance and borrowing costs** = contraction in the supply of PRS accommodation and rising rent costs .
- **Demand for temporary accommodation is increasing** as a wider range of people are owed interim housing duties.
- **Moving people onto settled sustainable accommodation become increasingly difficult - the gap between LHA rates and rent has widened which presents a significant and rising cost implication for the council.** *Although LHA rates will rise from April 2024 to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of local market rents, this will not alleviate the ongoing and current financial pressure on struggling low-income renters and the council for the remainder of this financial year – and no commitment from Government beyond April 2024 to continue to uprate LHA rates.*



# Operational Challenges



- A Pan-London agreement between boroughs exists preventing boroughs competing with each other. LAs now having to compete with Clearsprings, a Home Office contractor who are finding properties to house asylum seekers. The Home Office has the ability not only to pay higher rents but also higher incentive payments to encourage landlords to co-operate.
- Chronic shortage of move on affordable properties is leading to more households being housed in B&B accommodation for longer periods of time (mainly outside of the borough to the East of London).
- Customer satisfaction harder to achieve - fewer prevention options = more applicants presenting at crisis, longer waits for a scheduled appointment, more reliance on TA, but less available to meet needs and preferences. More legal challenges.



# On the horizon...



- **Renters Reform Bill (2023)**

- End of s.21 'no fault' evictions however abolition of s.21 is likely to be delayed due to reform of court system (no date given by the government to complete this project).
- There will however be increased Grounds for eviction under s8 for ASB, the landlord wanting to sell the property or move their family in, may be manipulated by landlords to evict tenants
- **Renters Reform Bill Preparation Group** has been established to assess impacts for council (Environmental Health, Housing advice, and other services) and financial impact.

- **Government's National Dispersal Policies on Asylum Seekers**

- The withdrawal of government support and the closure of Afghan Bridging Hotels at short notice is leading to increased demand on homelessness services with hotel occupants forced to leave at short notice without suitable affordable accommodation to move on to.
- Fast tracking of asylum applications.
- The anticipated surge in approaches will place additional pressure on an overstretched system





# Emerging Priorities for Draft Strategy



As a result of these findings our suggested priorities are:

- 1. Preventing Homelessness through early identification and intervention to minimise the use of Temporary Accommodation**
- 2. Procure good quality stable accommodation options for people who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless**
- 3. Improving the customer journey**
- 4. Provision of support services**
- 5. To ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented where possible and that where they do occur, that they are rare, brief and non-recurrent**
- 6. Enhance staff resilience and well-being**



# Consultation



## Length

- 4 weeks- 6 weeks

## With

- Public and neighbouring local authorities, voluntary organisations, service users, registered providers and any specialist agencies supporting homeless

## How

- Launch event (Mayor)
- Focus Groups (residents and other bodies)
- Webinars
- ‘Let’s Talk’ survey and dedicated email address for comments
- Paper questionnaires posted to residents in TA
- Paper surveys to drop-in centres supporting residents
- Case workers at Mayor’s Surgeries (ipads/laptops)
- Survey of Residents’ Hub visits



# Timelines



Action	Date
Round table discussions with organisations/Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Steering Group members.	December 2023 – February 2024
Mayor and Lead Member agree priorities to consult via MAB	December 2023
Findings of review, priorities agreed with administration and approach to consultation presented to HRSSC	December 2024
Consultation Period	February 2024
Feedback and comments from residents collated by Assistant Housing Officers	March 2024
SPI Team prepare report detailing feedback from residents, prepare EqIA, Cabinet report and supporting documents	April 2024
Legal, Finance and Corporate Finance sign off (each service respectively requires 10 days minimum to review and sign off)	April 2024
DLT	May 2024 (TBC)
CLT	May 2023 (TBC)
MAB	June 2024
CPAP	June 2024
Cabinet	June 2024



# Appendix



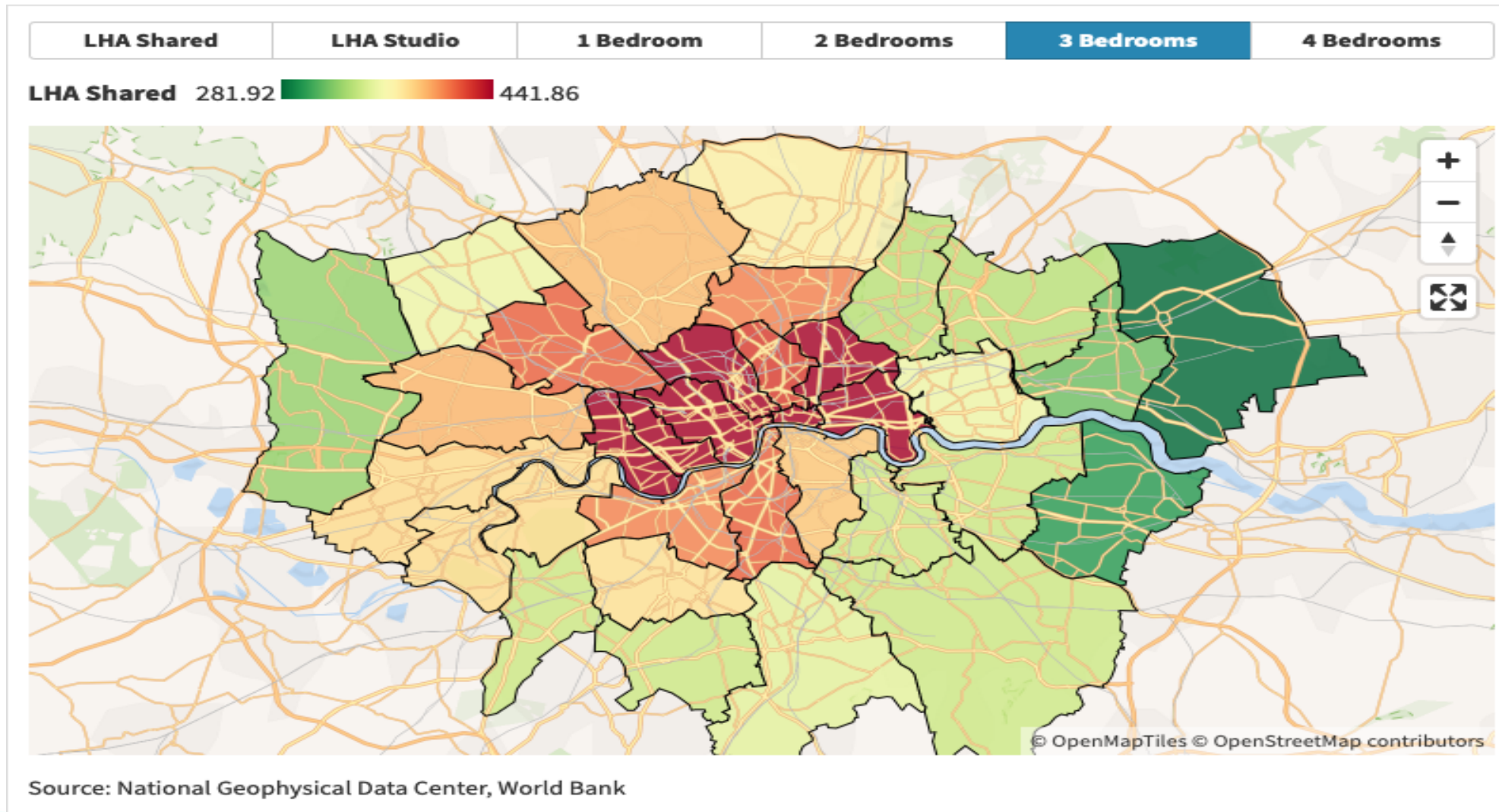
# LHA rates across London



- The heatmap on the following page relates to 3-bedroom properties at the LHA.
- Tower Hamlets has a significantly higher rent than most boroughs, therefore making affordable family sized accommodation in the borough scarce



# LHA rates across London

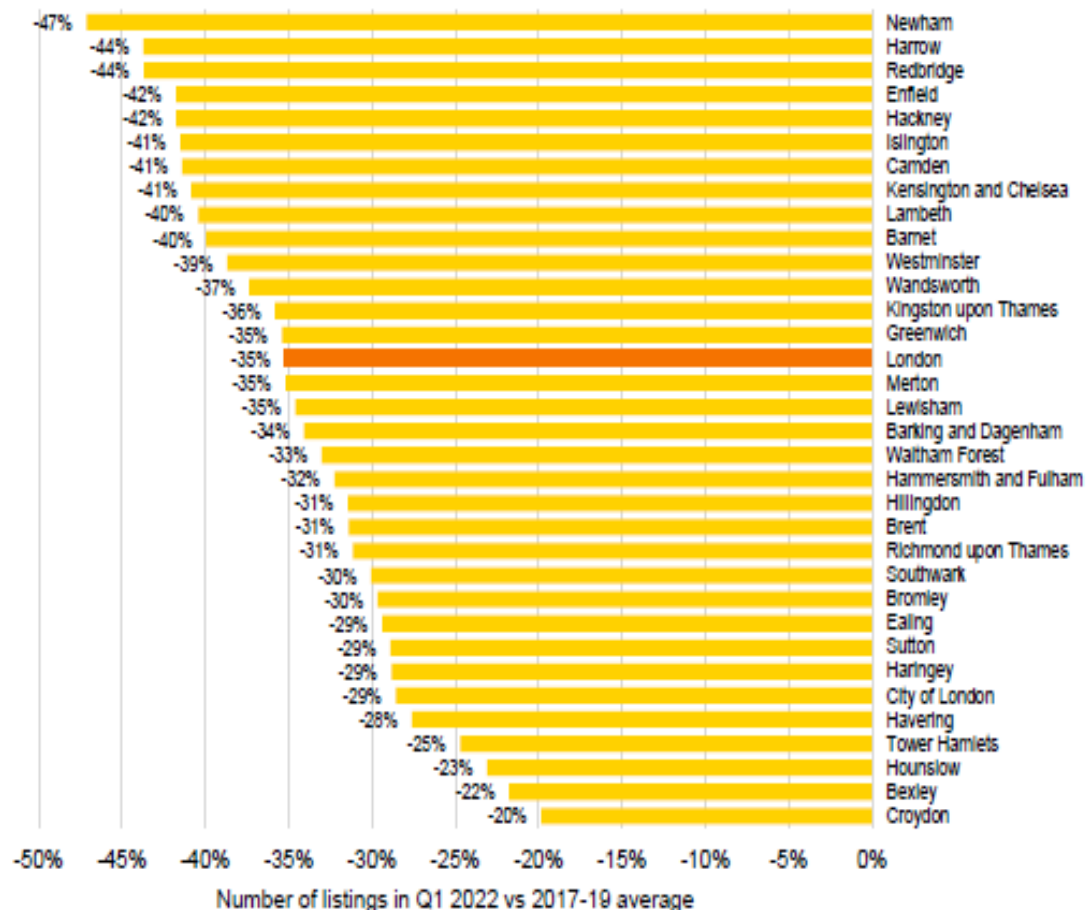


# Contracting PRS supply in London

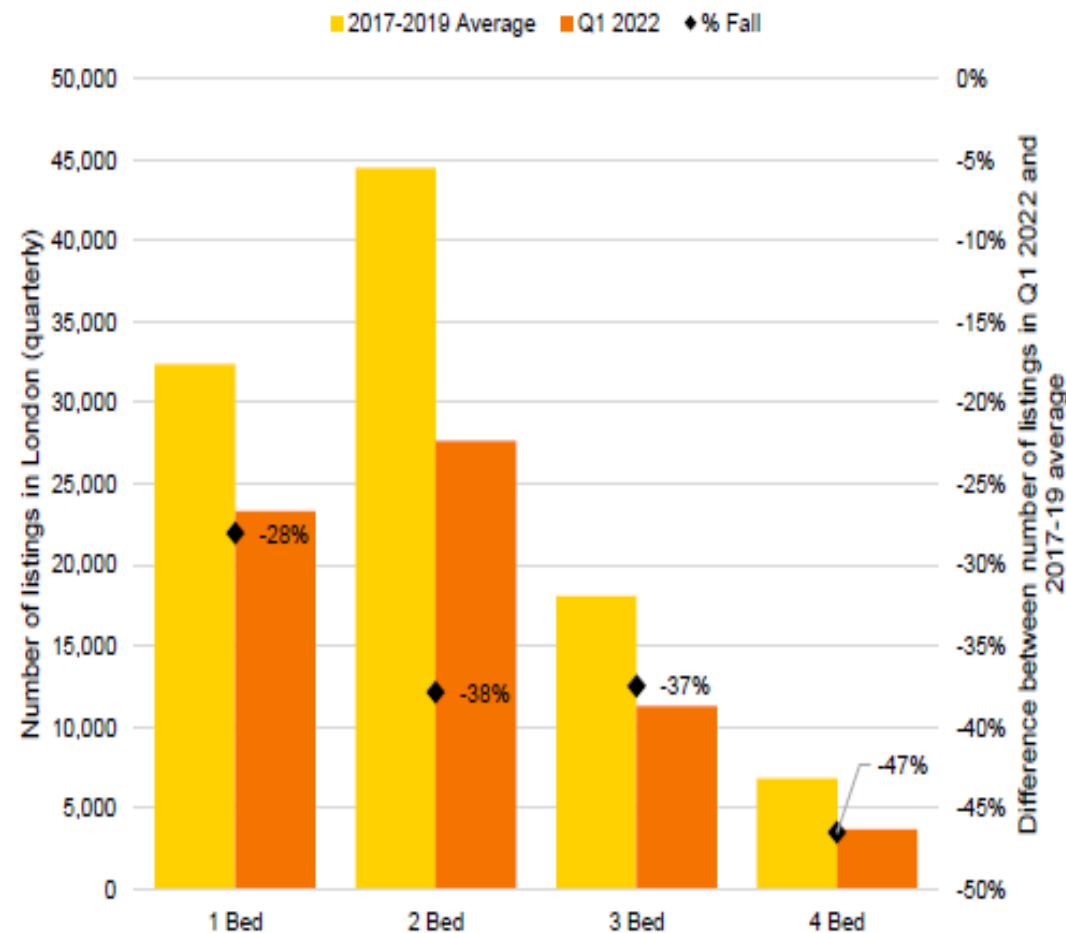


HAMLETS

Fall in total listings across London, Q1 2022 vs 2017-19 quarterly average



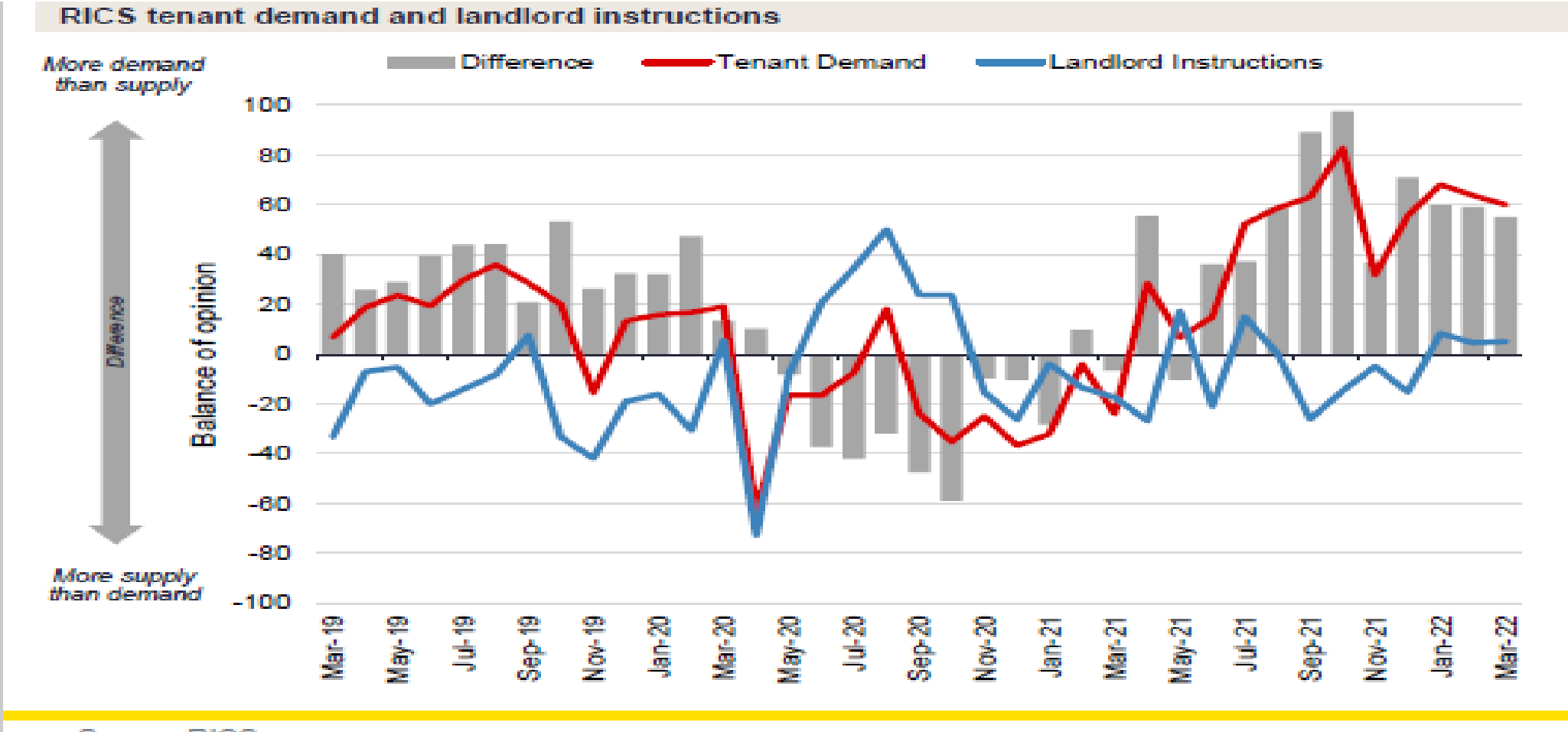
The fall in supply in London has been most acute for larger properties



(Source: Savills)



# PRS Demand v. supply in London (1)



(Source: Savills)

