

Appendix B: Under Occupation Review Action Plan

Recommendation 1: Deliver targeted communication and events: Housing and Regeneration Division should further develop information and engagement with local people looking to downsize by:

- delivering targeted communication;
- develop clear and concise information;
- delivering events aimed at both registered and unregistered under occupiers.

The council's traditional media channels (e.g. community languages) along with electronic and social media should be utilised.

Comments from Service:

The Council will work with its Common Housing Register partners to enhance existing leaflets and literature to promote the current policy and incentives available to social tenants wishing to downsize. A more targeted approach will be taken to publicise and encourage more moves from existing and new tenants registered on the Housing Register.

	Responsible Officer	Deadline
1. Revise current leaflets and produce details of new build schemes and other Housing Options and communicate on a regular basis through all channels including newsletters, social media and quarterly rent statements.	Rafiqul Hoque	31 August 2017
2. Promote new build schemes with opportunities for under occupiers through direct mailshots/text messages/social media.	Rafiqul Hoque	On-going
3. Hold a series of Under Occupation surgeries in more localised areas in addition to the annual Lettings Open day.	Rafiqul Hoque	31 March 2018
4. Obtain regular update list of under occupying tenants on Discretionary Housing Payments from the Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Team. Engage with those tenants to discuss housing options and help with the bidding and rehousing process.	Rafiqul Hoque	On-going

Recommendation 2: That the Housing and Regeneration Division proactively identify under occupiers and staff working across frontline service. And develop an information toolkit for frontline staff which will enable them to encourage and support tenants, wishing to downsize.

Comments from Service:

The Housing Options Lettings service will work in partnership with Registered Providers to devise information toolkit to help front line staff across the council, RP partnership and third party organisations such as GP surgeries providing them with relevant and adequate information on current policy, incentives and housing options available to social tenants wishing to downsize to maximise registration and rehousing opportunities for tenants.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
1. Hold lunchtime briefing session with staff and partners on the toolkit in order to help maximise interest in downsizing	Rafiqul Hoque/Sandra Fawcett	December 2017
2. Maximise distribution of leaflets including a policy summary and information on 'sons & daughters' scheme.	Rafiqul Hoque/Sandra Fawcett	December 2017
3. Devise a referral form for other colleagues and agencies to use for making referrals e.g. Social Services to refer new cases.	Rafiqul Hoque/Sandra Fawcett	December 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, toolkit should including the following information: • Provide up to date list of landlords and appropriate contact person/s • Information on other Housing Options e.g. Housing Moves/Seaside and Country Homes Scheme • Post move help/settling in visit(s) • Advice for tenants in Rent Arrears (rent pro-forma) 		

Recommendation 3: That the Housing Regeneration Division should consider creating a single integrated Housing Mobility Team.

Comments from Service:

The Housing Options Service improve the CHR partnership working and maximising housing opportunities for under occupying tenants including their sons and daughters who are eligible for enhanced priority under the Allocations policy.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
1. In discussion with CHR partners explore the feasibility of setting up a cross Partnership Team to work specifically and actively with under occupiers and their sons and daughters to maximise rehousing.	Rafiqul Hoque/Sandra Fawcett	31 December 2017
2. Explore additional resources to help set this cross partnership team and publicise the work of the team, if it is possible to set up.	Rafiqul Hoque/Sandra Fawcett	31 December 2017
3. Survey/interview tenants to get a better idea of where they want to move and those existing tenants registered on the housing list who are keen to downsize and are flexible in their preferences and actively work with them to help them downsize.	Rafiqul Hoque/Christine Foley	On-going
4. Maximise reciprocal moves within the partnership with RPs who have stock in other boroughs - especially in Essex.	Rafiqul Hoque	On-going

Recommendation 4: That the Place Directorate consider the possibility of building bespoke downsizer homes, on council owned land or estates which are specifically aimed at under occupiers.

Comments from Service:

As part of the new build Housing Revenue Account programme to build new Council homes, enhanced opportunities for both developing smaller properties aimed at downsizers and Local Lettings policies to give local residents access will be considered. The programme will be built out over a number of years with the aim to provide 1000 new Council homes with a range of bedroom sizes.

The Council is also considering the development of a bespoke community housing scheme on HRA land aimed at under occupiers which will benefit from government funding through the DCLG Community Housing Fund.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Implement clause 78 of the Allocations policy and make direct offers to under occupiers	Rafiqul Hoque	Ongoing
Explore the potential to develop community housing scheme with funding through the DCLG Community Housing Fund	Martin Ling	December 2017

Recommendation 5: That the Housing and Regeneration Division should review the current Tenancy Strategy to agree under what circumstances fixed term tenancies would not be renewed.

Comments from Service:

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 will require all Local Authorities to introduce Fixed Term Tenancies. However the Secretary of State has yet to set out the detail through Regulations. The DCLG is working with a number of Local Authorities to draw up a workable scheme and the Regulations are expected this Autumn.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Respond to DCLG Regulations and draw up new Tenancy Strategy in consultation with partners	Martin Ling	April 2018

Recommendation 6: That the Housing and Regeneration Division further enhance 'post move' service - to ensure tenants who are downsizing are supported through any difficulties e.g. settling in, providing information on local area and sign posting to local services etc.

Comments from Service:

Most landlords provide a post move service to ensure that tenants have settled in, receive advice on local amenities and benefits entitlements etc.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Review current offer from landlords through the CHR group and place an emphasis on ensuring downsizing tenants have received the necessary support, particularly older or more vulnerable tenants	Rafiqul Hoque/CHR	December 2017

Recommendation 7: That the Housing and Regeneration Division builds on the existing strategic partnership with its key partners and stakeholders. And, continue to develop the role of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum – especially the Common Housing Register Group as the main area for innovation and delivery of under occupation initiatives.

Comments from Service:

The Council with its partners through Tower Hamlets Housing Forum Common Housing Register Group will continue to maximise the opportunities for downsizing and continue to work in innovative ways to encourage best use of social housing.

Actions	Responsible Officer	Deadline
The CHR will monitor the Under Occupation Review Plan to ensure it is effective and to consider other ways to facilitate and encourage downsizing.	Rafiqul Hoque/CHR	Ongoing