

# Overcrowding and under-occupation

Self-assessment for social landlords

**TSA**

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# Introduction

Good housing has a key role to play in influencing the overall living standards of a family. Children's development and well-being is dependent on tackling all relevant dimensions of poor housing. If a home is overcrowded it can affect health and educational attainment and can impact negatively on life chances.

Living in overcrowded accommodation can, both directly and indirectly, have a devastating effect on families. Under-achievement at school can be caused by lack of space for children to do their homework. Older children may spend more time outside the home, on the streets, simply to find privacy and space.

Poor housing conditions can cause a range of physical and mental illnesses and children growing up in difficult housing conditions are 25% more likely to suffer severe ill-health and disability during childhood/early adulthood. Overcrowding is a key component of poor housing.

## The Pathfinder programme

In response to the known impacts on the well being of families the Government has allocated £15 million over three years towards tackling overcrowding.

In December 2007 Communities and Local Government awarded Pathfinder status to 38 local authorities covering Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and the 33 London boroughs. These areas were asked to build on the good practice work of five overcrowding pilots in London, build on their experience and develop a range of solutions. In April 2009 this programme was extended to include a further 16 authorities adding Bristol, Dudley, Kirklees, Knowsley, Leeds, Luton, Medway, Nottingham, Oldham, Rochdale, Sandwell, Sheffield, Slough, Southampton, Walsall and Wigan to the Pathfinders group.

The Pathfinder local authorities are concentrating on:

- reducing the numbers of households that are severely overcrowded in the social housing stock including a locally set target

- taking part in CLG's data collection exercise (assessed against the bedroom standard), including collecting and reporting on housing association data so we can get a clearer baseline and inform policy direction
- partnership working with housing associations to support severely overcrowded households across all social landlords
- developing schemes that accord with good practice and support under-occupiers who are looking to downsize
- better use of the private rented sector through bond guarantees increasing access for overcrowded households
- Housing Options services which give practical, realistic advice to overcrowded households
- developing a case working approach to severely overcrowded households
- potentially developing an approach that offers in-situ solutions to relieve some of the effects of overcrowding

If your organisation works in one of these Pathfinder areas you will need to engage with the local authority to find out what they are doing, if you haven't already, and how you can get involved. However, all landlords in and outside of the Pathfinder areas are being

encouraged to review their current practice around overcrowding and under-occupation to ensure that they are linked to both local and national government initiatives and are making impacts on tackling the numbers of residents living in overcrowded homes.

## How many households are affected?

Under the existing statutory standards CLG estimate that some 20,000 households are overcrowded. Under the Survey of English Housing's Bedroom Standard it is estimated that 565,000 households are overcrowded, of which 234,000 are in the social sector. There are particular concentrations of overcrowding in London, where some 37% of all overcrowded households live, and around 60% of all overcrowded households in the social rented sector live in the Pathfinder areas.

The Government want to see a substantial reduction in the number of households who are living in overcrowded accommodation. The London Mayor has included a target to reduce the level of severe overcrowding by half in his draft Housing Strategy. Reducing overcrowding is also closely tied to the Government's ambition to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and the TSA want to see landlords measure and work effectively towards eradicating overcrowding using all tools and good practice

available. Expectations around overcrowding will be made within the standards framework under development.

## This guide

To support this work the Homelessness Action Team have produced this self-assessment toolkit for you, based on the Communities and Local Government's Tackling Overcrowding: Self-Assessment for Local Authorities, to benchmark your current approach and build your services for the future, working with your local authority partners. Have a go at answering the questions and use the results to discuss and agree next steps. The guide is comprehensive, covering all the different issues you may wish to consider. There may be some sections that are more applicable to your organisation so concentrate on those first.

If you would like any further help or support we are available on e-mail or by phone or will meet with individual associations or attend events to help landlords develop their practice. If you have any examples of positive practice in this area then please send these to us so we can disseminate through our monthly bulletin updates found on the TSA website.

## The HAT

The TSA and Communities and Local Government fund a team of special advisers in the Homelessness

Action Team (HAT). We are a team of practitioners with the role of working with social landlords and local authorities to tackle homelessness and related issues. The HAT will be happy to work with you on these areas of your service and can provide advice on developing action plans linking to the most current positive practice. We can bring in other resources as required as we have strong links with the Communities and Local Government Regional Resource Teams, national housing bodies like the National Housing Federation at national and regional level and Government offices. Good luck.

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# Data

We all understand the importance of collecting and maintaining accurate data. The TSA, in partnership with Communities and Local Government, wants to encourage all landlords to put in place robust data sets to accurately map and monitor the position on overcrowding, formulate action plans and ensure that those households who are experiencing the worst incidences of overcrowding are given the necessary support to enable them to alleviate their circumstances.

All Pathfinder local authorities provide CLG with annual baseline data of overcrowded and under-occupying households on local authority and housing association housing registers (ie transfer and waiting lists) by size of property they occupy and assessed by the Bedroom Standard (see definitions at appendix A). They also require monitoring data on the number of overcrowded and under-occupying households added to the list and the number re-housed each quarter. Detailed guidance and monitoring forms are available from the HAT but we suggest you work through your local authority as the first contact point if you have not as yet been in touch. If you operate in a Pathfinder area please talk to your local authorities as soon as you can if you haven't already – they will support you with the data collection and submit to CLG on your behalf.

Outside of the Pathfinder areas we encourage all landlords to review their data sets to ensure that they provide an accurate picture for you to decide on what actions need to be taken to support your tenants.

The following are a list of questions to help you question and review where you are as a landlord on relevant data and help you to develop a clear picture of how many of your tenants are currently living in overcrowded homes.

- Q Has baseline information been gathered to establish levels of overcrowding/under-occupation across all of your stock, against the bedroom standard?
- Q Are you able to establish:
  - How many households are overcrowded on your transfer list?
  - How many households are overcrowded in all the homes you own and manage?
  - How many under-occupiers are on your transfer list?
  - How many under-occupiers are housed in all the homes you own and manage?
  - How many households require one bedroom more, two bedrooms etc?

- How many households could release one bedroom, two bedrooms etc?
- How many 'adult children' able to manage their own tenancy are living in overcrowded homes?

**Q** Are you working with your local authority partners on collecting and reporting on overcrowded households?

**Q** Can you measure and report on overcrowding by the bedroom standard? (See appendix A.)

**Q** How is overcrowding/under-occupation data captured by front line staff?

**Q** Is household composition included on your tenant profiling information?

**Q** Have you got a clear and complete picture of your current position from existing data?

**Q** Do you understand the causes of overcrowding, eg adult children?

**Q** Do you use your data to monitor the impact of work programmes or new initiatives focused on tackling overcrowding and under-occupation?

**Q** Have you considered when and where you will report on this data?

**Q** Do you compare your performance with other landlords in your locality or nationally?

#### **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

- contacting your local authority and housing association partners especially in the Pathfinder areas and find out what they are doing and their expectations
- contacting the HAT so we can put you in touch with organisations that have positive practice in this area and could support you in your work
- reviewing your data collection process. Measure where you are as an organisation on overcrowding and under-occupation data. Establish a baseline for your organisation of the levels of overcrowding by bedsize in each local authority as a starting point if this does not exist (There should be challenges around data definitions and sources to guarantee their reliability)

- establishing clear performance information from this data to monitor and report on impacts
- opening up the discussions internally about what actions are needed to improve and develop good quality data sources
- comparing your results in each locality with locally relevant data. How well do you compare?

(Appendix B is an extract from the current guidance from CLG to local authorities on data collection to aid your understanding on the existing requirements. You should talk to your local authority partners or HAT as a first point.)

# Business planning

This section asks you to consider the framework in which overcrowding will be tackled and reported on within your organisation, appropriate to the level of measured need.

- Q Has your organisation included actions to tackle overcrowding as part of its business/service planning process?
- Q If overcrowding actions are part of your business objectives has this been translated into hard targets for front line staff?
- Q Are you reporting progress against these actions to your board/committees or senior teams?
- Q Are you working on these actions as an individual organisation or is it linked to strategic planning with your key partners?
- Q Have any revenue or capital resources been committed to work to tackle overcrowding or is this being considered?
- Q How do you keep up to date with new initiatives and good practice around overcrowding, including local and national government led initiatives?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- ensuring that organisationally senior teams, boards, committees and customers are aware of the levels of overcrowding and under-occupation in your homes; the national and local context; and how your position compares with other local landlords
- developing an action plan pulling in all current positive practice that is appropriate to the level of need and supply within your homes
- obtaining and allocating appropriate resources to deliver your overcrowding and under-occupation action plans
- using comprehensive and accurate data to set appropriate targets and monitor performance against these targets
- considering reviewing associated policies and procedures – like your allocations policy for example to make sure you prioritise under-occupation as there are twice as many under-occupiers in the social housing sector as there are over crowded households. Lettings policies and practice is key to maximising the use of available stock

- including colleagues from across your organisation including development, temporary housing or supported housing colleagues as solutions can be provided from a wide range of sources outside of management or lettings initiatives
- looking at how you are making best use of existing social stock including fraud audits and minor adaptations to improve the use of existing living space to meet the specific needs of each family
- looking at how you can provide extra support for families who are overcrowded to minimise the impacts - working with the health and education services in the town halls
- considering your approach to new supply to deliver as many larger units as possible
- increasing possible options for families through the use of homes in the private rented sector
- considering how residents access information to help resolve their overcrowding
- talking to your local authority partners on how there can be joined up working on overcrowding initiatives and you can plan a central role in the delivery of their overcrowding strategies

# Driving improvements

It is important within the busy environment of a social landlord to have a champion at senior level who can ensure that this issue is given corporate priority and is driven forward at both a strategic and operational level.

- Q Do you have a senior level officer to champion overcrowding and under-occupation for your organisation?
- Q Have you determined how they will operate to deliver outcomes across your organisation and externally with partners?
- Q Has specific training been provided for all staff that will be involved in work to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- a need for someone to take the policy and strategic lead to 'get things moving'. There will also be the need for someone (or a team) to carry out the practical actions and to develop initiatives and to keep all front line staff up to date. You will also need a lead to link with your key local authority partners
- tapping into mainstream neighbourhood housing officers as 'foot soldiers' / 'doorknockers' equipped with the most up to date and relevant information on the 'best options' to meet a variety of need - looking beyond re-housing options to include areas like helping tenants make better use of space in their existing home. There is a lot of best practice coming through the Pathfinders, which can be tapped into

# Accessing and using financial resources

Actions to tackle overcrowding are unlikely to be fully effective without sufficient capital and revenue resources. This section sets out a number of options for funding work in this area including drawing in resources from other partners, especially local authorities.

- Q Have capital and revenue resources been identified to help tackle overcrowding?
- Q Can some under-occupation incentive costs be met from capital (eg capital costs to improve a property for occupation)?
- Q Has an assessment been carried out of all potential financial sources of funding across all partners, including non-financial contributions such as staff time from other key stakeholders including local authorities, other registered providers or voluntary sector agencies?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

Review all possible sources of funding including:

- Decent Homes funding
- grants including Homes and Communities Agency funding, recycled HA grant
- local authority support from CLG Pathfinder grant in some areas small grants from Private Sector Renewal Strategy funding
- existing resources
- other

# Joint working and relationships

These questions promote the delivery of actions to tackle overcrowding within a partnership framework. Organisations may struggle to achieve their long-term aims without developing effective relationships between all partners, including local authorities, other landlords and the voluntary sector.

- Q Have you considered how your organisation will work with your key local authority partners to shape and deliver locality based overcrowding plans?
- Q Have you considered how your organisation will work at a sub-regional level with key partners to shape and deliver overcrowding plans?
- Q Do you access positive practice from other social landlords?
- Q Are you aware of what other landlords in your locality are doing around overcrowding and under-occupation?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- identifying existing local authority or sub regional working around overcrowding and utilise existing structures. If no existing structures exist develop your plan individually and then arrange to meet and talk to other key partners about the possibility of joint working. The HAT can support you in this work

# Reviewing allocations policies to aid tackling overcrowding

These questions ask you to think about the contribution that your allocation scheme can make to effectively tackle overcrowding and under-occupation.

**Q** Have you reviewed your allocation scheme to consider:

- the current priority given to overcrowded households?
- any additional priority for severely overcrowded tenants?
- how successful is the current allocation scheme in re-housing both severely and overcrowded households?
- could changes be made to your allocation scheme to provide greater priority for overcrowded households? What would the effect of any change have on other needs groups?
- do you consider wider housing options for individual overcrowded tenants including the use of the private rented sector?
- do you use chains of transfers to maximise the impact on overcrowded and under-occupying families?
- when did you last review your definition of overcrowding? Are there any substantial differences with borough partners?

- have you set targets for the number and percentage of overcrowded cases you plan to house and do you monitor progress against any targets set?
- are your tenants clear on the likelihood of securing a move when they are overcrowded and alternative options available to them?

**Q** Have you considered how you will manage overcrowding and under-occupation through your CBL schemes, possibly targeting specific properties?

## **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

- looking at how your allocation policy is working to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation. It is most effective when there is a shared definition across all local landlords and shared plans and actions to achieve positive outcomes for all overcrowded households within each locality
- setting targets for the number and percentage of overcrowded cases you wish to house and monitor against these targets. Every organisation should have a lettings plan covering anticipated lettings to each high

need group. Monitoring continuously against this plan will allow you to make amendments to your allocation scheme where lettings to high need groups such as the most severely overcrowded is below the anticipated level.

- considering and review current priority given to overcrowded cases. What is the current priority for overcrowded households? How many overcrowded households are currently housed?
- examining and talking to your local authority partners how the use of new build can be the most effectively used for under-occupying and/or over crowded households
- where you have specific allocation policies relating to 'hard to let' accommodation how can this be applied to help tackle overcrowding?
- are there opportunities provided through CBL schemes to maximise moves for your overcrowded households?

# Allocation schemes and under-occupation

- Q Have you considered how to give priority under your allocation scheme for under-occupying tenants who are willing to move to smaller social housing properties?

## **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

- considering current priority given for under-occupied tenants under your allocation scheme. Are they top priority group or band to be housed? What are the alternative ways in which their chances of being re-housed could be improved?
- considering how under-occupiers might have their property aspirations met to free up a larger unit of accommodation by being imaginative in delivering the end result we all desire
- adopting an under-occupation scheme that combines quality properties, with hand-holding/support and some cash incentives. Does this follow agreed good practice principles?

# Identifying and tackling overcrowding

Where overcrowding is a relevant issue, are tackling overcrowding initiatives promoted in 'routine' housing management interviews across all tenures?

## **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

Look to develop or build upon existing interview scripts to cover the key challenges of overcrowding and under-occupation. (Future developments in the standard interview process should be taken forward to deliver a more holistic service for your tenants including employment, recession impacts etc. The HAT can work with you on this). Script the areas that must be addressed in the interview to ensure nothing is missed and information on options available is provided. Provide standard documentation for officers to complete to ensure consistency and comparison and also enable the effective download and analysis of the information. A typical overcrowding interview could cover:

- alleviating any severe overcrowding by helping adult family members to move out into private rented sector or where possible an allocation (in accordance with the allocation scheme) of an alternative social sector tenancy
- moving out' options including accessing the private rented sector and mobility moves out

of the area into private rented sector for the whole family

- financial assessment of what the household may qualify for under the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) size criteria. LHA rates are more transparent than local reference rents – households are aware of their entitlement before they find a property. This gives them more control over finding an appropriately sized property, which minimises or eliminates any shortfall between their rent and housing benefit payable
- support to households to register on landlords' allocation schemes in areas where someone may wish to move to
- a financial assessment to initially determine if a household's circumstances may allow access to local or sub regional HomeBuy schemes
- discussing options to help them remain in their current property including:
  - assistance and financial support for space saving actions
  - assessment of property for possible extension, dormer or partitioning

# Making best use of existing occupied property

- Q Are financial support grants available for small space saving work including purchasing bunk beds or sofa beds; installing fold-down beds; installing built-in storage; removing unwanted bulky furniture, etc?  
If you do not provide such grants do your local authority partners?
- Q Are capital grants available to cover small adaptations including partitioning, or alleviating the practical impacts of overcrowding, eg by installing an additional washbasin?
- Q Are schemes in place or planned to undertake capital works for extensions, dormers or knocking through two adjoining properties into one?
- Q Will you and your local authority partner consider allocating larger families to smaller properties where a technical assessment has been made that the property could be extended and capital funds are available?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- opportunity for space saving: bunks, fold down beds, built-in storage space; removing unwanted furniture; creating home working

area under stairs where there may be wasted space; anti hoarding approach. Consider funding opportunities for this work

- small property adaptations using Capital Grant funding. Adaptations could include an extra washbasin; partitioning rooms for extra space (need to deal with building regulations issues here and may need exemptions to create two bedrooms from one with stud partitioning as long as any fire regulation requirements are met)
- grants available for small works and adaptations
- larger capital works including:
  - assessing property potential for extension and dormers
  - ability to knock through adjoining properties to produce a larger unit
  - extending using any external staircase or roof terrace space
  - consider undertaking a procurement exercise for small and large capital works and consider procuring larger works through a partnering approach to reduce costs to achieve a greater number of completions for the money available

# Private rented sector options

- Q Do your local authority partners offer a private rented sector (PRS) landlord incentive scheme for non-statutory homeless?
- Q Has access to the scheme been extended to overcrowded tenants where there is a risk that these households may become homeless?
- Q Do you offer the option or make payments to tenants who are prepared to move into the PRS and release their secure/assured tenancy?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- moving into the private rented sector (PRS) with a landlord incentive. This could be for both the household as whole or adult family members to resolve or alleviate the overcrowding. Links should be made with the local authority partners to see what is currently offered. If nothing is offered be proactive and talk to them about the benefits
- the local authority may have a Private Sector Leasing scheme (PSL) to lease larger size properties. (Under Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] rules an authority is able to lease accommodation outside of

homelessness duties and claim the higher rate 'non Housing Revenue Account [HRA] housing benefit cap rate' applicable for that authority. This is likely to be sufficient to cover the cost of the lease rent and management costs.) Some RSLs also provide leased accommodation, which could be used for overcrowded families. If properties could be leased within LHA levels this maybe an option that tenants would want to consider

- issues here to consider for any existing tenant looking to move into the PRS include:
  - assessing whether they can pay for accommodation at a higher rent, including access to in-work housing benefit if appropriate
  - the Local Housing Allowance provides more generous rates for larger households especially in London. The LHA size rules do not reduce the bedroom requirement for households headed by a single parent
  - the change in legal position would need to be fully explained to the tenant so they can exercise their choice to move in full knowledge of the facts

# Dealing with under-occupation

- Q Do you currently operate an under-occupation scheme?
- Q Are similar schemes in operation with your key local authority partners, sub regionally and/or other social landlords in the area?
- Q If so, are there plans in place to operate one common scheme with standard incentives and marketing across all social housing providers in the area or sub region?
- Q Have targets been set for under-occupation moves within your organisation?
- Q Do you have an up to date and accurate record of all under-occupiers in your own social housing stock?

## Possible actions and next steps may include:

- establish who to target and how through:
  - mail shots
  - HB/council tax records
  - voluntary agencies
  - General Practitioners (GPs), libraries

- support from a Handy Person scheme or Home Improvement Agency
  - working closely with the local authority Housing Advisers/Homeless Caseworkers who are dealing with parental evictions/ hostel placements which may result in under-occupation
- adverts in local press
- review effectiveness of mutual exchange lists and look to match overcrowded tenants to suitable under-occupying tenants looking to trade down
- develop an incentive package and consider which incentives to adopt. This could include:
  - cash incentives (£x per room given up, with possibly additional cash for larger properties and ground floor units)
  - extra support given to elderly tenants including packing and removals service; consider also an extra bedroom for visitors
  - considering offering priority under the authority's allocation scheme for new one and two bedroom units as an incentive for under-occupying households to move

- offer bespoke choices, developing a package to encourage moves. This could include decorating to specific taste and requirements: new fitted kitchen, etc
- split tenancies (i.e. separate studio accommodation for under-occupier's adult child)
- identifying (top slice) new units on new schemes for under-occupiers at the earliest stages
- making links with requests for adaptations. A move to a well designed home may be more appropriate for some people who request an adaptation to their home

# Mobility options, including moving out of the area and help to find private rented property

- Q Are overcrowded and under-occupying tenants routinely asked where else they may wish to live?
  
- Q Are you or your local authority partners able to provide an accommodation finding service for tenants including:
  - finding private rented sector (PRS) accommodation in selected areas through contacts with lettings agents and offering financial incentives (receiving authorities should be contacted where moves are planned in this way)
  - offering to pay for removals and the opportunity for families to visit areas where they may wish to live
  - establishing links to local Job Centre Plus services so that families can assess employment opportunities
  - linking elderly tenants into the Seaside and Country Homes scheme
  - for elderly tenants that may wish to move away from an area, making links with local authorities and RSLs who may have under-utilised sheltered housing

# Cash incentive schemes to assist home chase through low-cost market housing

- Q How are you targeting under-occupying and overcrowded families for shared ownership opportunities within your area?

## **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

- that housing associations target both under-occupied and overcrowded households for shared ownership opportunities. This could be through:
  - cash payment for a deposit to buy (only if the property to be purchased would not replicate the level of overcrowding)
  - priority for adult family members in overcrowded households where there are smaller units
- establishing links and developing a protocol with the appointed home ownership agent for HomeBuy. It is also important to agree how staff can undertake any initial financial assessment as part of an options interview. Agree how overcrowded cases may be fast tracked for referral and prioritised if appropriate

# Overcrowding and chain lettings

**Q** Have you used a 'chain' lettings approach to help tackle overcrowding or analysed and modelled the potential to develop chains and their impact?

## **Possible actions and next steps may include:**

- planning 'chain lettings'. Allocating a property that could be used for overcrowded household to another needs group such as homeless may not necessarily make best use of that stock
- developing partnership arrangements to maximise the number of moves from this initiative
- identifying how the chains will be managed and households advised of the opportunities presented through the chain. This is quite specialised and needs excellent communication skills and a proactive approach
- considering whether, where relevant, direct lettings may need to be made to complete the chain. This needs to be reflected in the partners' Choice Based Lettings (CBL) policy. Alternatively, properties can be flagged and bids made on behalf of tenants who have expressed an interest in certain types of property in a specific area, if this will complete the chain

# Related overcrowding publications

Work in tackling overcrowding is relatively new but the following publications may be useful to refer to when developing any action plans following completion of the self-assessment.

Tackling Overcrowding in England: An Action Plan (2007)

Tackling Overcrowding in England: Lessons from the London pilot schemes and sub-regional coordination (2008)

# Appendix A – Bedroom Standard definition

The Bedroom Standard is based on the ages and composition of the family. A notional number of bedrooms are allocated to each household in accordance with its composition by age, sex and marital status and relationships of family members. A separate bedroom is allocated to each:

- married or cohabiting couple
- adult aged 21 years or more
- pair of adolescents aged ten to 20 years of the same sex
- pair of children aged under ten years regardless of sex

Any unpaired person aged ten to 20 years is paired, if possible, with a child aged under ten years of the same sex or, if that is not possible, given a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged less than ten years.

## Definition of a bedroom

For the purposes of measuring overcrowding it is important that the following definition of bedroom is used:

- Include any room that, when built, was intended to be a bedroom even it is not used as such at

present and even if it does not have a bed in it. It must have a window

- there must be at least one bedroom. Include bedsitters, box rooms and attic bedrooms
- do not include living rooms or other areas of the house/flat that are used for sleeping. If living rooms used for sleeping were included as 'bedrooms' it would lead to an under-recording of overcrowding
- a simple check is, if the accommodation were put up for sale, how many bedrooms would the owner claim it had?

## Severe overcrowding

Households that are severely overcrowded are two or more bedrooms short of the Bedroom Standard. Eg – a household who would require a three bedroom property if assessed against the Bedroom Standard but who are currently living in a one bedroom property.

## Under-occupation

Households who are under-occupiers are two or more bedrooms above the Bedroom Standard. Eg – a household living in a three bedroom property who would only require one bedroom if assessed against the Bedroom Standard.

# Appendix B – CLG data framework

There is a standard form to be completed by Pathfinder local authorities, which includes housing association data. You should contact your local authority if you have not submitted the data.

## Baseline figures as at 1 April 2009

The total number of overcrowded households on Local Authority (LA) and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) housing registers (ie transfer or waiting lists) as assessed by the Bedroom Standard. This figure will comprise existing social tenants currently awaiting a transfer into larger accommodation due to overcrowding and those households who have come forward and applied for a social let from either the private rented (PRS) or owner-occupier (OO) sectors, due to overcrowding in their existing accommodation.

- How many bedrooms do they currently have? Of those in each property size how many are severely overcrowded?
- How many of these are existing tenants who were seeking a transfer to a suitably sized property due to overcrowding as at 1 April 2009? Of those how many are severely overcrowded?
- How many new applications for access to social housing due to overcrowding pending as at 1 April 2009 from the private rented sector or owner-occupier sector – ie non LA or RSL households?

The total number of under-occupied households (see definition in Annex A) on LA and RSL housing registers (ie transfer or waiting lists) as assessed by the Bedroom Standard. This figure will comprise those households currently awaiting a transfer, requested of their own volition or as a result of targeted activities.

- How many bedrooms does the household currently have?

The number of overcrowded households added to the waiting list and the number re-housed, April 2009 - March 2010

Please record overcrowded households from any tenure who either seek a transfer, or apply for social housing, in each quarter.

- How many existing tenants have made a new application to the transfer list, due to overcrowding, in each quarter? Of those, how many are severely overcrowded?
- Provide separate figures for how many private sector tenants or owner-occupiers have made an application for social housing due to overcrowding, in each quarter?

Please record numbers of overcrowded households from any tenure who have been rehoused in the social rented sector, during each quarter between the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010 only.

- How many existing tenants have been rehoused into suitable sized accommodation in each quarter – i.e. how many transfer requests have been closed? Of those, how many are severely overcrowded?
- How many households from either the PRS or owner-occupiers have been rehoused?

Please record numbers of overcrowded households from any tenure who have been rehoused in the private rented sector, during each quarter between the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010 only.

- How many existing tenants have been re-housed into suitable sized accommodation in the PRS in each quarter? Of those, how many are severely overcrowded?
- How many households from either the PRS or owner occupiers have been re-housed in
- the PRS?

Under-occupied households applying to downsize and the number re-housed, April 2009 - March 2010.

The total number households that have applied for a transfer due to under-occupation during each quarter between the period of 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010. This will include those identified through targeted activities.

- How many bedrooms do they currently have?

The total number of under-occupied households re-housed into suitable accommodation during each quarter between the period of 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010.

- For these re-housed households what size accommodation did they vacate?

Update figures as at 1 April 2010:

- Overall levels of overcrowded households in Local Authority and RSL stock as assessed by the Bedroom Standard
- Overall levels of under-occupation in Local Authority and RSL stock as assessed by the Bedroom Standard

Please contact Nicki Goddard on 020 7944 0592 or email at [nicki.goddard@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nicki.goddard@communities.gsi.gov.uk) if you have any queries.

## Appendix C – Positive practice examples

**Gallions Housing Association** hosts an under-occupation scheme, called Perfect Fit, for the SE London Housing Partnership. This is being expanded across other London sub regions. The scheme targets under-occupiers and assists them to move, utilising the released property to house a severely overcrowded family from the same landlord, with the resulting property allocated to the host local authority to house a homeless household. The contact person is Nina Morris ([nina.morris@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:nina.morris@southwark.gov.uk)).

**London Borough of Hackney** runs an under-occupation scheme that has been very successful even though they do not give large financial incentives. It awards high priority to under-occupiers within its allocation scheme and like many Pathfinder, have found having a dedicated team of specialist officers that provide households with a flexible and supportive scheme much more effective. The contact person is Remi Osadiya ([remi.osadiya@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:remi.osadiya@hackney.gov.uk)).

**London Borough of Camden** has adopted a package of tailored interventions around space management, health, education, play and parenting which aims to help overcrowded families stay where they are by improving the quality of their life or move elsewhere by providing high quality and realistic

housing advice. The contact person is Gail Beuschel ([gail.beuschel@camden.gov.uk](mailto:gail.beuschel@camden.gov.uk)).

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets** offers enhanced grants to under-occupying tenants in properties with three or more bedrooms. There is also a dedicated support officer for these households and a packing and removal service for more vulnerable tenants.

**Chester & District Housing Trust** successfully operates its Reward and Release scheme that offers a cash incentive for those who are moving but also provides advice and support through the move. The contact is Sharon Morris ([s.morris@cdht.org](mailto:s.morris@cdht.org)).

**London Borough of Hillingdon** held a mutual exchange day for under-occupiers. They visited overcrowded households living in 2 bedroom properties who were willing to participate in the scheme. They took photographs of the property and then produced 'sales particulars' of these properties. They then held an open day where they invited under-occupiers to view the details of the properties available. Under-occupiers identified properties they would be interested in and the mutual exchange process was started. The contact person is Karen Retter ([kretter@hillingdonhomes.ltd.uk](mailto:kretter@hillingdonhomes.ltd.uk)).

**Wrekin Housing Trust** actively works with those requesting adaptations to explore all their housing options, including moving to a smaller home. This has been successful in making savings in the costs of adaptations and freeing up some larger homes. The contact person is Jane Brookes (jane.brookes@wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk).

**London Borough of Enfield** has developed a scheme called Fresh Start that allows social rented tenants and temporary accommodation tenants move into good quality private rented homes of their choice with the help of a deposit guarantee and tenancy support. The borough has strong, positive working relationships with private letting agents and landlords and a track record of success. The contact person is Susan Sharry (susan.sharry@enfield.gov.uk)

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cassette, on request. Other language versions may  
also be available.

# Overcrowding and under-occupation

## Self-assessment for social landlords

This self-assessment toolkit has been designed to help social housing landlords benchmark their current approach to tackling overcrowding and build their services for the future, working with local authority partners.