

Draft BME Housing Strategy
Executive Summary
&
Draft Action Plan

Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee

March 2008

1) Executive Summary

1. This is Luton Borough Council's first Strategy designed specifically to address the housing needs of Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in Luton. The Strategy outlines the initiatives being undertaken by the Councils Housing Services in conjunction with our Housing Partners and users.

Scope of the Strategy and Main Objectives

2. The term Black & Minority Ethnic in this document is used to refer to people from ethnic and/or racial backgrounds, who may also have a disability. This includes people from Irish, Gypsies and Traveller communities.
3. The BME Strategy will be an integral part of the Councils overall strategic vision and will support the overarching housing strategy as well as the Councils wider vision contained in the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Corporate Strategy, which have 4 main themes.
 - Stronger and Safer Communities
 - Health and Well being
 - Environment and economic development
 - Children and Young People
4. Addressing housing need is key to achieving improvements in the these areas and the development of this strategy has been informed by them.
5. Luton's overarching Housing Strategy has 5 local strategic priorities;
 - Enabling Growth
 - Increasing Delivery of Affordable Housing
 - Reduce levels of homelessness throughout the town
 - Tackle poor conditions in the Private Rented stock
 - Ensuring Council Owned Stock is maintained to a high standard.
6. The BME Strategy has three objectives;
 - Ensure that the specific housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people living in Luton are identified;
 - Ensure that the Housing and Homelessness Strategies meet the needs of BME communities;

- Work towards an environment where people from diverse communities can live together in harmony.

Context

National BME Housing Issues

7. In many areas housing issues and social exclusion are particularly evident in BME Communities. Homelessness has long been held to be a measure of social exclusion and BME households are consistently overrepresented in homelessness figure on a national level.
8. Latest DCLG figures show that BME households account for 25% of national homelessness acceptances; this is more than twice the total BME population recorded at the last Census and is a significant overrepresentation.
9. Nationally speaking housing, overcrowding and the number living in unsuitable housing is greater, and resident satisfaction lower amongst BME communities although with significant variations amongst communities.

Local BME Housing Issues

10. Luton has a large and diverse BME population, which according to the 2001 census comprises some 35% of the towns population, against a national average of just 13.5%.
11. BME communities have historically faced housing problems in Luton, over 40% of the total number of households accepted by the Council as homeless in 2007/8 were from BME communities.
12. Access to suitable housing is much lower amongst BME communities; a recent study conducted by Opinion Research Services on behalf on the Council found that 40% of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Communities lived in unsuitable housing against an average of only 24%.
13. In 2005 the Council commissioned ORS to undertake a survey of the Housing Needs of BME communities. The survey suggests that Luton has a higher BME population than the 2001 census suggests.
14. The key findings of the survey include;
 - BME communities, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities were under-represented in the last census.

- There has been a net out-migration of the White British population
 - BME households are more likely to contain children
 - Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are far more likely to be in unsuitable housing.
15. There is increasing demand being placed on the homelessness service in Luton and hostel accommodation is at capacity.
16. BME communities are still overrepresented amongst homeless households.
17. Tenant satisfaction amongst BME communities is rising but is still below the satisfaction for White British tenants.

Action Plan

18. A preliminary draft action plan is attached to this strategy that outlines the planned actions that have already been identified to address each of the themes identified above. The Forum is invited to comment and add additional tasks.

BME Strategy Draft Action Plan 2009-2011

Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead	Sustainable Communities Theme	Completion Date	Resources
Research					
Undertake research into the Housing Related Support Needs of BME Communities	The targeting of newly commissioned services to meet the identified need	Commissioning Manager – Community Living and Well Being	<i>'Health and Wellbeing'</i>	2009/10 – 1st phase	From existing resources – the Council and the University of Bedfordshire have agreed a 3 year researchship to assess the housing needs of local communities
Undertake research into the composition and housing needs of newly arrived BME groups	Better understand current needs	Policy and Strategy manager	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	2010/11	Resources to be identified.
Monitoring and Performance					
Continue to regularly monitor BME tenants' Satisfaction	Increase in BME tenant satisfaction levels	Business Development Manager (Landlord Services)	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	On going – next formal tenants' status survey due 2010	Tenants Consultative Committee, Sounding Board
Improve the BME monitoring and reporting	Identify specific overrepresentations amongst BME	All Housing Service Managers	<i>'Health and well being'</i> <i>'Stronger & Safer'</i>	For 2009/10	Existing

Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead	Sustainable Communities Theme	Completion Date	Resources
framework for all housing services to meet best practice and the CRE Code of Guidance	groups		<i>Communities'</i>		
Engaging with users					
Develop a Strategy and Private Sector Sounding Board and use it to consult with BME groups and users	Develop a range of new policies and services in consultation with service users	Housing Needs Manager	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	12/2009	Existing
Develop a Tenant Service Area Panel for BME Groups	To improve the consultation and engagement with BME groups	Business Development Manager (Landlord Services)	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	12/2009	Existing
Service Delivery / Improvements					
Maximise the spend against the Homes and Communities Agency BME Investment Theme – by the delivery of new	New social / affordable housing scheme(s) attract BME funding	Policy and Strategy Manager – in partnership with local Housing Association(s)	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	Annually	Funding from the Homes and Communities Agency

APPENDIX A

Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead	Sustainable Communities Theme	Completion Date	Resources
affordable housing targetted to meet the housing needs of BME communities					
Undertake more rigorous monitoring of the Housing Assistance Policy in relation to BME Communities	Ensure the policy is reaching BME communities	Environmental Health Manager	<i>'Health and Wellbeing'</i>	12/2009	Existing
Extend the promotion of the sanctuary scheme 'homesafe' to BME clients	Reduce homelessness due to domestic violence	Housing Needs Manager	<i>'Health and Wellbeing'</i>	2009/10	Existing
Monitor allocations under the new Choice Based Lettings scheme and ensure the Council meets the regional representation targets	Ensure mixed communities and fair representation for BME groups in Social Housing	Allocations Manager	<i>'Health & Wellbeing'</i> <i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	Implementation of CBL due late 2009	Existing
Work with sub-	Ensure and strong	Policy and	<i>'Environment &</i>	2009/10	Existing

APPENDIX A

Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead	Sustainable Communities Theme	Completion Date	Resources
regional partners in developing the Housing Equality and Diversity Group	representative working group	Strategy Manager	<i>Economic Development</i> <i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>		
Work with Voluntary sector partners to ensure the need for culturally relevant floating support is met	Reduce homelessness amongst BME groups	Commissioning Manager – Community Living and Well Being /Housing Needs Manager	<i>'Health & Wellbeing'</i> <i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	2009/10	Existing
Re-evaluate the use and availability of translation services at community centres and other access points for housing advice	Greater access to services and subsequent reduction in homelessness	TBA	<i>'Stronger & Safer Communities'</i>	2009/10	Existing