



*Young Persons'*

# ***Housing Strategy 2009-2012***

***Addressing the housing needs of young people aged 16-25 in Dartford***

**DARTFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Foreword & contents

## FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR PAT COLEMAN, SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR HOUSING

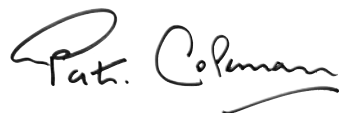
I take great pleasure in presenting this Young Persons' Housing Strategy for Dartford. This Strategy provides an oversight of the housing issues facing young people today and a vision for tackling them.



This Strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with stakeholders including Dartford Borough Council staff, Kent County Council, health services, housing associations, external agencies, The Dartford Youth Council, the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group and Dartford Residents' Forum. Their valuable input has made this Strategy possible.

I am encouraged by the way that all agencies involved in the consultation and young people have come together to draw up this Strategy and for their enthusiasm and commitment to support its objectives.

I hope that you can take time to read this Strategy and we welcome any comments you may have.



Councillor Pat Coleman  
Special Advisor for Housing

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# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 THE CHALLENGE

Today young people face many barriers in accessing suitable housing due to the lack of appropriate affordable housing and the rising costs of renting and buying, coupled with the burden of student debt; consequently more young people are choosing to remain at home, with one third of women, and one half of men aged 20-24 years living with their parents.<sup>1</sup>

When families are not willing or able to assist their children in accessing housing, young people may be at risk of becoming homeless, and between 2006/07 it was reported that 74,075 16-24 year olds were homeless in the UK.

### Homelessness in Dartford

There are approximately 11,600 young people aged between 15-24 who live in Dartford and according to the Council's homelessness statistics (2007-2009), approximately one in every 100 were affected by homelessness each year (excluding family homelessness, where a young person is a child in a parent-child relationship).

The Council's homelessness statistics show that most young people aged 16-24 who were owed a main homelessness duty (that is, they were eligible to be re-housed by the Council) were white British, there was also a high proportion of young people with dependents, particularly lone female parent families.

The main cause of homelessness amongst 16-24 year olds was because parents were no longer willing to accommodate them; however the reasons for this may be diverse and complicated, from a breakdown in a relationship, to issues such as drug abuse, mental health problems, pregnancy or overcrowding.



### Housing accessibility in Dartford

Linked to the problem of youth homelessness, is that of housing accessibility. In 2006, Dartford Borough Council's Housing Needs Survey reported that 77% of newly forming (concealed) households consisting mainly of younger people, could not afford to buy a property in Dartford. This figure may be slightly lower as of 2009, as house prices have decreased by approximately 15% since 2006.

Accessing private rented accommodation can also be difficult for young people, particularly those on housing benefit, for instance from June 2009 entry levels for private sector rented accommodation ranged from approximately £450 per month for a one bedroom apartment rising to nearly £850 per month for a 3-4 bedroom house (*Independent survey of estate agents 2009*).

The only housing option for some young people is social housing, however due to a large demand against a relatively low supply, access to social housing is limited for the majority of young people.

## 1.2 PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS OF THIS STRATEGY

In recognition of the issues faced by young people, this Strategy sets out an action plan which was formed following extensive consultation with service users, organisations in Dartford, and council staff. The action plan is focused around the following three central objectives:

1. To improve housing information and advice
2. To prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
3. To improve access to suitable accommodation

The Action Plan will be monitored and implemented through the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group which consists of a number of different agencies, including Connexions, the Youth Service and the YMCA.



# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 WHY WRITE A YOUNG PERSONS' HOUSING STRATEGY?

Housing is a necessity for everyone, providing stability and security, without it, it is almost impossible to open a bank account, apply for a job or receive benefits. To have limited access to housing or to be homeless would be a crisis for anyone, but for those making the transition from youth to adulthood, experiences faced during this time can shape personal characteristics, attitudes and aspirations into later life.

Of course not all young people will be affected by 'housing crises', but they may still face difficulties in accessing affordable and suitable accommodation, worsened by the current economic climate.

In view of these challenges this Strategy has been written to identify and help to address the housing needs of young people in Dartford.

The Strategy recognises that for many disadvantaged young people, housing issues are often symptoms of deeper, more underlying problems, such as lack of education, life skills or substance misuse. In addition, if a person is homeless it is also likely to lead to other disadvantages, which cannot simply be tackled by bricks and mortar alone. It is therefore hoped that this Strategy will encourage agencies to work together to tackle disadvantages, thereby enabling young people to access suitable housing and sustain their tenancies.

For the purpose of this Strategy young people are defined as those aged between 16-25 yrs, because specific legislation and social benefits available define this age category, for example:

- Under 16's cannot claim Housing Benefit or Job Seekers Allowance.
- Young people aged 16-24 who receive Housing Benefit are only entitled to receive 'Single Room Rate' (the amount it would cost to rent one room).

## 2.2 VISION OF THE STRATEGY

The vision for this Strategy seeks to reinforce Dartford Borough Council's vision, which is to: **'Make Dartford the place of quality and choice, a place where people choose to live, work and enjoy their leisure time.'**

In this context, the vision for this Strategy is: **'To prevent homelessness wherever possible and to enable all young people regardless of background, ethnicity or gender to have both knowledge of and access to good quality accommodation and the support which they need to maintain and sustain that accommodation.'**

## 2.3 PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGY

In order to achieve this vision our three priorities for this Strategy, which were developed following extensive consultation are to:

1. Improve housing information and advice
2. Prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
3. Improve access to suitable accommodation

The priority areas and associated action points are set out in detail in Section 8.



# 3. How the Strategy was developed

## 3.1 CONSULTATION PROCESS

In order for this Strategy to truly reflect the housing needs of young people in the borough, a series of consultation events were carried out with various agencies and service users in Dartford. The stages and those involved in the consultations are detailed in Appendix A.

## 3.2 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This Council believes that no strategy should occur in a vacuum. Principally this Young Persons' Housing Strategy is a sub-strategy of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies. Ultimately however this Strategy aims to fit into the wider strategic context, both nationwide and more locally within Kent, in order that young people's housing issues can be tackled in a coordinated way. Diagram A below demonstrates these links (Appendix B explains the links in more detail).

Details of the nationwide context and in particular the Government's stance towards young people and their housing issues can also be found in Appendix B.

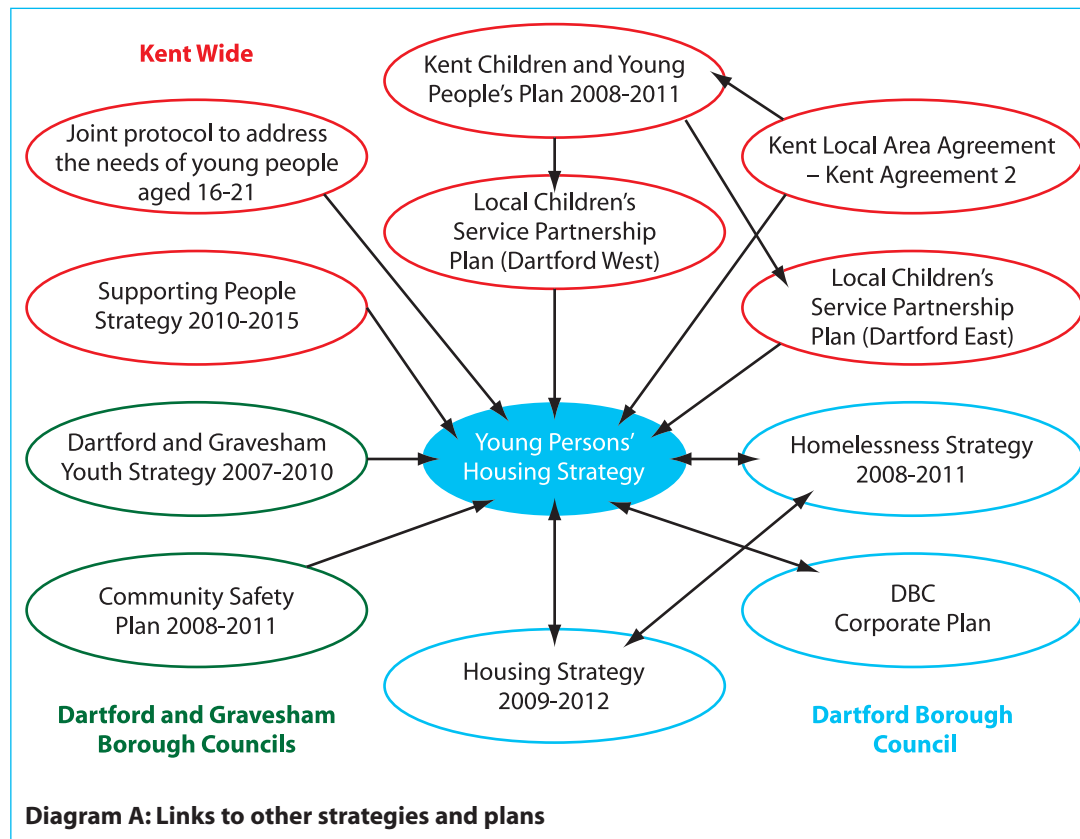


Diagram A: Links to other strategies and plans



# 4. Dartford profile



Dartford is the smallest borough in Kent, covering 7,632 hectares.

## 4.1 POPULATION PROFILE AND GROWTH

Dartford has approximately 90,000 residents (2001 census source ONS), of which 12% (11,600) are aged between 15 and 24. Only 7% of residents are from an ethnic minority, the majority group are 'British white' (2001 census source ONS).

Dartford, which is part of the Thames Gateway has been identified by the Government as one of the key strategic growth areas in the south east. It is expected that by 2016 there will be 11,000 more new homes in Dartford. This will impact on population growth and combined with the effects of people living longer estimates for 2016 indicate that Dartford's population will grow by 26.4%. In particular there will be 3,500 more 16-24 year olds (a growth of 41.1% in this age group).<sup>ii</sup>

## 4.2 ECONOMIC PROFILE

Under the 2007 Indices of Deprivation Dartford is ranked 186 out of 354 districts nationally, (1 being the most deprived) and is the sixth most deprived district (out of 12) in Kent. In Dartford the most deprived wards tend to be clustered in the north of the Borough, and include the wards of Joyce Green, Littlebrook, Princes and Swanscombe.

In 2008 the average weekly gross income for all employees (full and part time) who work in Dartford was £538.50, making an average gross annual income of £28,002, which is slightly higher than the South East average of £27,003 (ASHE 2008). The percentage unemployment rate for Dartford (which represents the number of unemployed as a percentage of the labour force)<sup>iii</sup> in February 2009, was 3.1%.<sup>iv</sup> This figure is slightly less than the average for the South East, which is 3.3%.<sup>v</sup>

In 2008, 44% of those aged 19-24 in Dartford were unemployed, this is slightly higher than the average for the South East which is 42.2%.<sup>vi</sup>

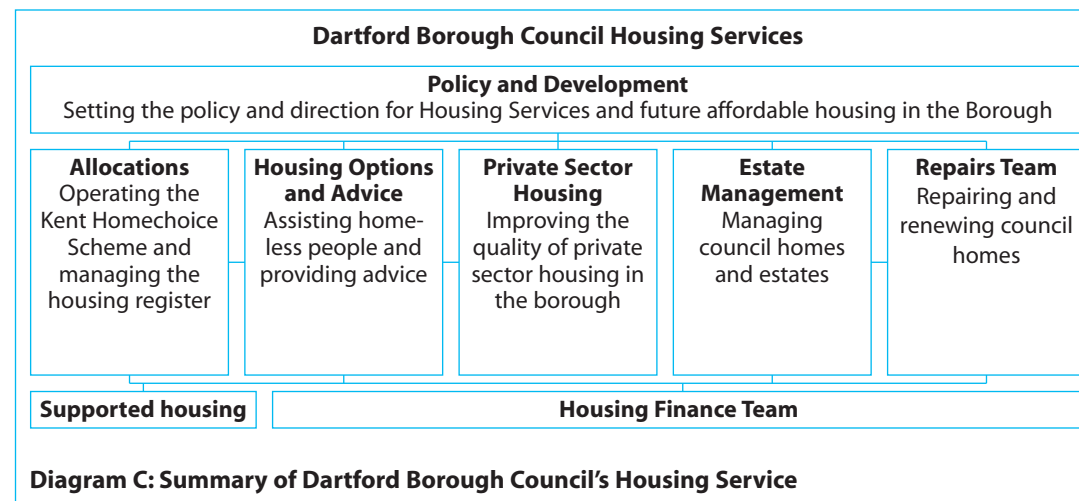
## 4.3 DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL (DBC)

Dartford Borough Council is a two tier authority and therefore services such as highways maintenance, education and social care are provided by Kent County Council.

### 4.3.1 Housing Services

The Council has retained its social housing stock, and as of February 2009 had approximately 4,330 properties (including supported housing units). All these properties are managed by the housing management team, and maintenance to the properties is carried out by the repairs team, using outside maintenance contractors. DBC Housing Services is also a member of Kent Homechoice, which people can join to bid for available social housing in the Borough.

For those who wish to obtain general housing advice on private renting, or for people who are struggling with their mortgages or are about to become homeless, the Housing Options and Advice team provide free advice and information appointments. Diagram C summarises the teams featured within the Council's Housing Service.



# 5. Youth homelessness

Many young people are supported by parents or family as they move out of their home, parents can be there to offer advice, emotional, or even financial support. However the reality for some can be very different and the move from the family home can be unplanned, unassisted and under duress, it is these young people who are most at risk of homelessness.<sup>vii</sup>

## 5.1 WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

The Government defines someone as statutory homeless if:

1. They have no accommodation which they are legally entitled to occupy, by license, interest in, or virtue of the court
2. They have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it or have accommodation but have nowhere to place it
3. They have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy it

*The Housing Act 1996*

This definition means that homelessness is not just limited to those sleeping rough on the street, it includes people being abused in their home, or those living temporarily with friends. It may also include for example, a family with a house boat but with nowhere to place it.

## 5.2 WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF HOMELESSNESS?

Although sleeping rough is perhaps the most extreme form of homelessness, all forms are unacceptable and have been shown to severely limit a persons' life chances, affecting educational and employment possibilities and leading to further vulnerabilities such as drug abuse and/or increased risk of becoming a victim of, or involved in crime.

Ethnicity	Owed a duty		Not owed a duty		Total percentage of ethnicities
	Number	%	Number	%	
White British	206	89.6	79	83.2	88
White Irish	2	0.9	1	1.1	0.9
White Other	1	0.4	3	3.2	1.2
Indian	0	0.0	1	1.1	0.3
Any other Asian	0	0.0	1	1.1	0.3
Any other mixed	2	0.9	0	0.0	0.6
Black African	3	1.3	1	1.1	1.2
Black Caribbean	1	0.4	0	0.0	0.6
Black other	3	1.3	0	0.0	0.9
White and Black Caribbean	3	1.3	0	0.0	0.9
Not stated	9	3.9	8	8.4	5.1
Total	230	100	95	100	100

**Table C: Showing number of 16-25 year olds who approached Dartford Borough Council as homeless between Jan 07-Feb 09 and the breakdown of those who were owed a homelessness duty and those who were not.** The blue highlighted groups indicate the groups that are classified as BME.

## 5.3 WHO HAS A LEGAL DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE HOMELESS PEOPLE?

All housing authorities have a duty to provide accommodation to those who are assessed as 'homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days', 'eligible for assistance', 'not intentionally homeless and 'in priority need' (please see glossary for further definitions). This group is 'owed a main homelessness duty.'

### 5.3.1 16-17 yr olds

Before May 2009 Dartford Borough Council housing services assisted all unintentionally homeless young people aged between 16-17 yrs old, since this group is owed a main homelessness duty under homelessness legislation (16-17 yr olds are 'priority need' by virtue of their age).

However on 20 May 2009 The House of Lords concluded in the case of R v London Borough of Southwark, that Children's Social Services have a duty under section 20 (1) of the Children Act 1989, to provide accommodation for any lone homeless child, unless the child is not (in their judgement and based on an initial screening assessment) a 'child in need'.

Since this judgement has been passed young people have been assisted by children social services, however if a child is not assessed as a 'child in need' the duty to assist falls to the housing authority.

Since the judgement has been passed the number of 16/17 yr olds approaching the Council's housing service has dramatically fallen.

### 5.3.2

#### 18+ yr olds

Housing authorities have a duty to provide housing assistance to those aged over 18 years old who are owed a main homelessness duty (Homelessness Act 2002).

### 5.4

#### EXTENT OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS NATIONALLY

It is estimated that in 2006-2007, 74,075 young people (aged 16-24) were homeless in the UK (according to the government's definition in para 5.1). The main trigger for youth homelessness was relationship breakdown, usually between parents or step parents due to long term conflict or violence.<sup>viii</sup> Around 58% (43,075) of those who were homeless had a main homeless duty owing by the local authority, the remaining 42% (31,000) did not.<sup>ix</sup>

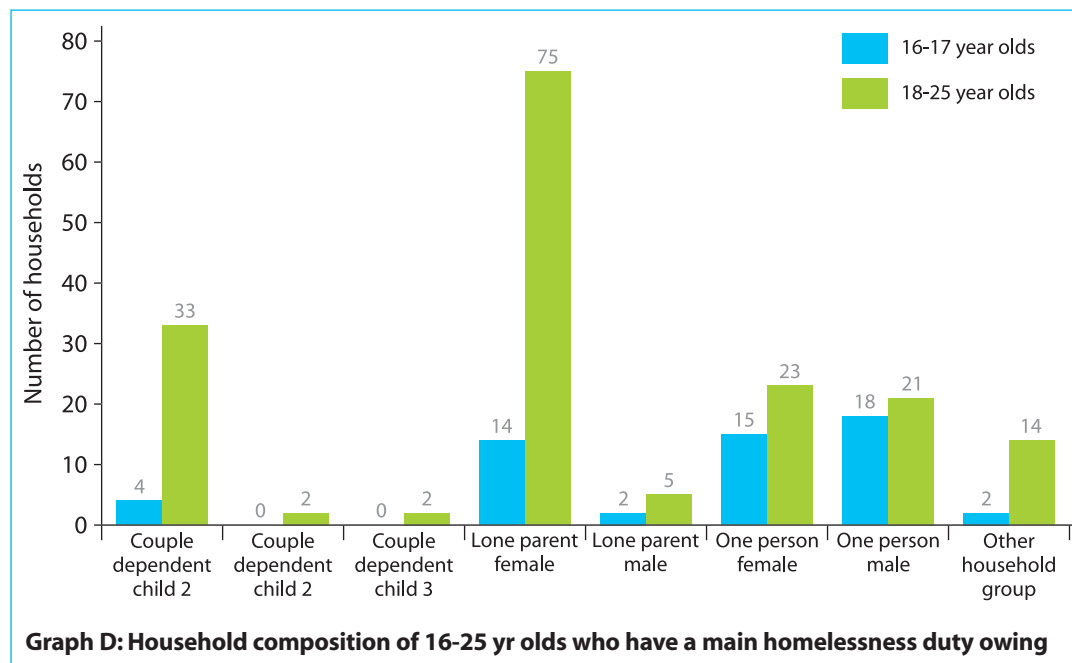
Because the number of people who do not have a 'main duty owing' is not recorded by local authorities and is largely based on numbers assessing support services (which not all young people do), the true extent of homelessness among this group is not known and this group are often referred to as the 'hidden homeless'.

### 5.5

#### EXTENT OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN DARTFORD

It should be noted that the statistics provided below were collected before the House of Lords Judgement (para 5.3.1) and therefore may not represent the current number of young people approaching Dartford Borough Council (DBC) as homeless.

From January 2007 to February 2009, 715 people presented themselves to DBC as homeless and nearly half of these applicants (320) were aged between 16-25 yrs. Most of the 16-25 yr olds were female (69% compared to 31% male) and 6% were from a BME (Black and Minority Ethnic)



community. The homeless figure for people from a BME community is encouragingly under representative of the number of BME young people in the borough,<sup>3</sup> however this situation will continue to be monitored.

If the overall homelessness statistics (from January 2007 to February 2009) are compared to Dartford's youth population, it translates that each year in Dartford approximately one out of every 100 16-25yr old will face homelessness at some point (excluding family homelessness, where a young person is a child in parent/child relationship).

#### 5.5.1

##### Extent of homelessness among those who were owed a main homelessness duty

Of the young people who sought help from the Council (Jan 07-Feb 09) due to homelessness, 230 (70%) were owed a main homelessness duty, from this number:

- 24% (55) were aged 16-17yrs
- 76% (175) were aged 18-25 old

The statistics also show that a high number of them had dependents:

- 38% of 16-17 yr olds had dependents, and the majority were lone parent females.
- 74% had dependents, the highest group also being lone parent females.

#### 5.5.2

##### Extent of homelessness among those not owed a main homelessness duty

Unfortunately there is no reliable information to provide a truly accurate picture of youth homelessness in Dartford, as the number of those who are not suspected to be 'owed a main homelessness duty' when they approach for assistance are currently not recorded by the Council. However charities who are able to help a broader client group, and who are not governed by statutory duty, do record numbers

from this group. Graph E shows the number of people from Dartford who approached Porchlight, a Kent-wide homeless charity, for housing assistance.

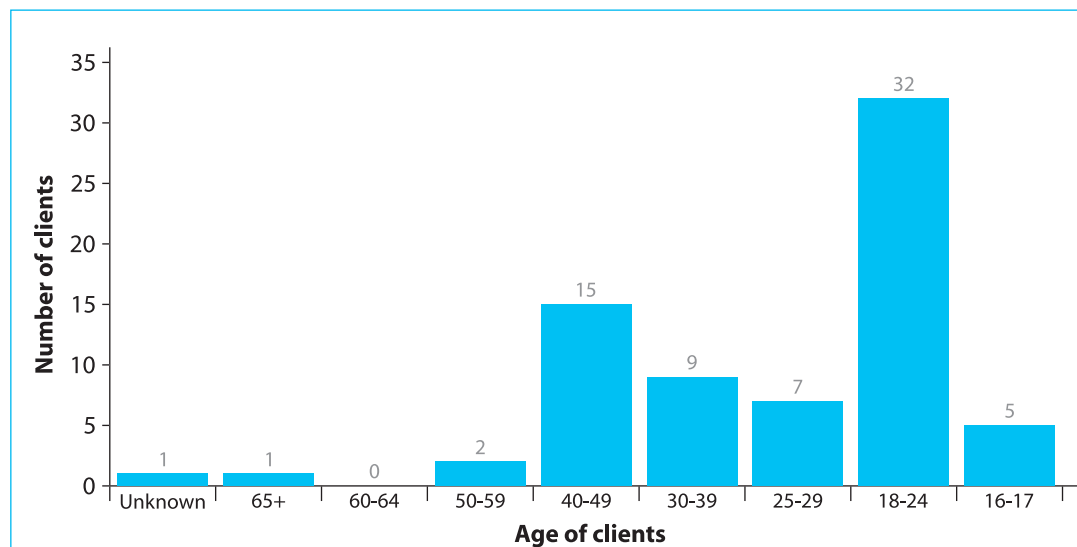
Graph E shows that 72 people approached Porchlight as homeless between April 08 -Jan 09. The largest client group were those aged between 18-24yrs, only two persons in this group were from a BME group (Indian and Black/British African). The main issues faced by these 18-24yr olds were mental health problems (21%), rough sleeping (21%) and drug (18%) and alcohol (15%) problems.

The numbers of 16-17 yr olds approaching Porchlight is low in comparison, this is because 16/17 yr olds who are unintentionally homeless and eligible for assistance are 'owed a main homelessness duty' because of their age, whereas 18-24yr olds are not.

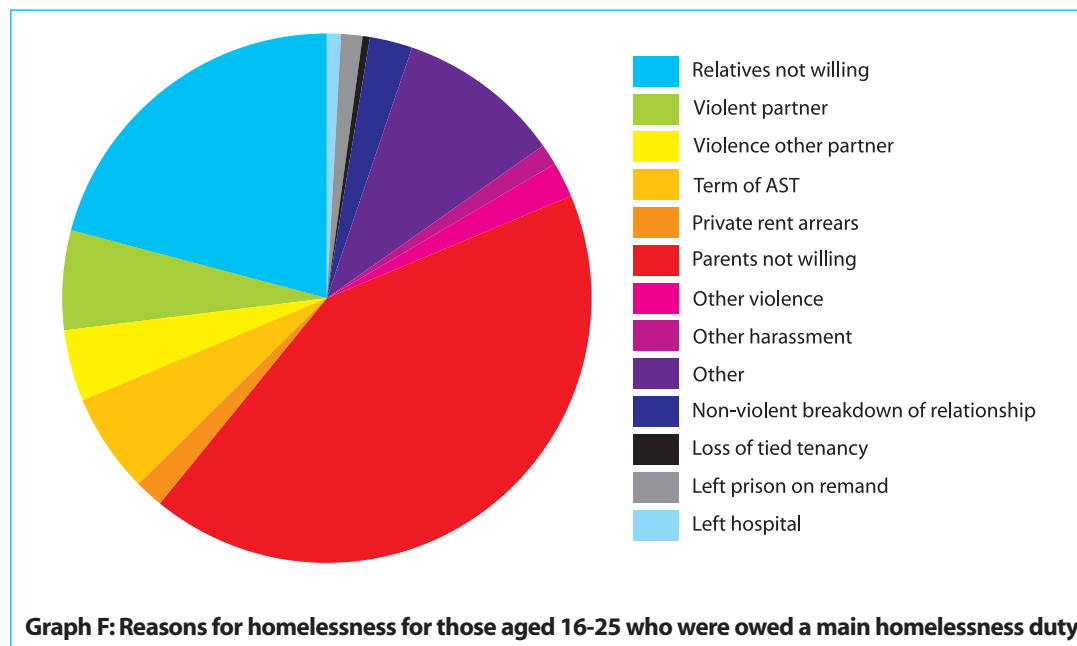
### 5.6 CAUSES OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN DARTFORD

The graph below shows that the main reason for homelessness among young people who were 'owed a main homelessness duty' was that parents or relatives were no longer willing to accommodate them (see graph F for a breakdown).

The reasons why parents are unwilling to house their children may be diverse and complicated, from a breakdown in relationship to issues such as drug abuse, mental health problems, pregnancy or overcrowding. Interviews carried out with young people in the borough showed that some parents simply expect their children to move out when they reach 16 years of age.



**Graph E: Graph showing the number of people who approached Porchlight for housing assistance from the Dartford area**



**Graph F: Reasons for homelessness for those aged 16-25 who were owed a main homelessness duty**

# 6. Young people's housing options

## 6.1 WHERE DO MOST YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE? THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Until recently there has been a large rise in house prices across the UK, the average house price in 2008 was approximately 8 times the average salary.<sup>x</sup> These high prices made it very difficult for first time buyers (many of which are aged below 30) to own their own home and in 2008, 40% were relying on assistance from family and friends.

However in 2009 the economy entered into a recession, which has led to a slight decrease in house prices (-7.60% decrease between Feb 08 and Feb 09).<sup>xi</sup> Unfortunately many first time buyers have not been able to take advantage of this decrease, as banks have reduced the number of loans and credit for mortgages. Mortgages are usually now only available for between 60-75% of the value of the property, rather than 90-100%.

This economic situation has placed increasing pressure on private rented and affordable housing. Private renting has now become the most common tenure by far among 16-24yr olds whether they are single, married or cohabitating.<sup>xii</sup> Many young people are also opting to remain in their family home, for example research carried out by the Office of National Statistics showed that in April 2009, around 33% of women and 50% of men aged between 20-24 years were living with their parents due to the lack of appropriate affordable housing and the rising costs of renting and buying, coupled with the burden of student debt.<sup>xiii</sup>

## 6.2 WHAT ARE THE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN DARTFORD?

This section summarises the different housing options open to young people in Dartford and any barriers that are associated with accessing them.

### 6.2.1 Home ownership

The inaccessibility of homeownership for young people nationally is also reflected locally in Dartford. The Council's 2006 Housing Needs Survey identified that in order to purchase a one bedroom flat in the least expensive area in Dartford, a household would need an income of £28,500, as a result 77% of newly forming (concealed) households consisting mainly of younger people could not afford to buy in the borough.

The Graduate Recruitment Bureau estimated that in 2007 the average starter salary for a graduate was £20,812,<sup>xiv</sup> therefore even young graduates would not be able to buy a property unassisted in Dartford.

In June 2009, the average house prices in Dartford were:

- Detached: £298,085
- Semi-detached: £207,064
- Terraced: £174,436
- Flat or maisonette: £131,354

*(Land registry data April-June 2009)*

#### 6.2.1.1 Homebuy

For those who wish to get a foot onto the housing ladder but cannot purchase a property at full market value, the Government's Homebuy initiative operates in Kent. Homebuy is an umbrella term for a range of intermediate housing options to enable people to access affordable housing, such as shared ownership, shared equity housing ownership or discounted sale (see glossary for definitions). The scheme is open to households who earn below £60,000 and over £18,000 (some products are available to those earning as low as £12,000) and who are able to obtain a mortgage and have at least £3,500 in savings. Moat Housing Group is the Homebuy agent for Kent and applications are made directly to them.

Band	Percentage distribution
A1	0%
A2	12%
A3	5%
B	45%
C	29%
D	10%

**Table G: Showing distribution of single young people aged 16-25 yrs old on the waiting list (February 2009)**

### 6.2.2 Social Housing

In Dartford there are approximately 5,495 units of social housing (included supported accommodation for the elderly), most of which is owned by the Council (4,330 units) and housing associations (1,136 rented units). 347 of Dartford Borough Council's sole tenants are under 25, this represents 8% of total tenancies (4,330).

The Council operates a Kent-wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme (Kent Homechoice), where applicants can bid for any suitably sized property in an area of their choice. In February 09 there were 3,139<sup>xv</sup> registered on the scheme, of which 25% (788) were aged 25 or under. Most of these young applicants were either families with children (50%) or single applicants (46%).

Under the Kent Homechoice Scheme applicants placed in Band A (A1, A2 and A3) have a higher priority than those applicants in lower bands (B, C, D). Table G (above) shows the percentage of young people (16-25yrs) in each band.

Unfortunately, for many young people not placed in higher bands, there is little chance that they will be housed in permanent tenancies in the foreseeable future, especially those waiting in Band C and below; the Council

has a limited number of rented properties available each week and a high number of applicants in priority Bands A and B.

### 6.2.3

#### Private rented accommodation

The Council's Housing Needs Survey 2006 estimated that 9.3% of properties in Dartford are privately rented.

In June 2009 entry levels for private sector rented accommodation ranged from approximately £500 per month for a one bedroom apartment, rising to nearly £900 per month for a 3-4 bedroom house (*Independent survey of estate agents 2009*).

For many households this level of rent is unaffordable; in 2006, 69.3% of concealed households (adults who were living in someone else's property, not as partner of the owner/renter) were priced out of the private rented market.<sup>xvi</sup>

#### 6.2.3.1

##### Barriers facing young people on housing benefit

Accessing private rented accommodation can be even more problematic for young people on housing benefit; for example a single young person under 25 yrs is only eligible to receive housing benefit shared room rate (SRR), as it is expected that they will share a home with others (in Dartford SRR was £247.08 per month at Sep 09). As a result national research has shown that this group is more likely than any other to have a shortfall between benefit rates and actual housing rates. In addition the prospect of sharing a home with strangers can cause incredible anxiety for many.<sup>xvii</sup>

A young couple or a young person with a dependent are eligible to receive an allowance for a one bedroom property, but the amount available in Dartford was only £484.60 in Sep 09: with rental entry levels starting at £500 (para 6.2.3) and most properties requiring a deposit

and rent in advance, accessing affordable housing can be very difficult.

Even if a young person does find an affordable property it may still be inaccessible for them, since the Council's Housing Needs Survey (2006) found evidence to suggest that most landlords would not accommodate people receiving housing benefit.

#### 6.2.4

##### Specialist accommodation for people with disabilities, difficulties or mental health issues

If a young person requires supported or adapted accommodation because they have a learning difficulty/disability, a physical disability or mental health issue, then they can be referred either by Kent Adult or Children's Social Services or West Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT) to a Joint Assessment and Referral Panel.

The panel, consisting of a representative from Dartford Borough Council and the above agencies, consider each applicant and their housing needs and work together to find the most appropriate accommodation for the person. The Council has an agreement in place to house 20 applicants a year through this process, in either council accommodation (where floating support would be provided if needed) or in purpose built accommodation which is owned and managed by a housing association (see Appendix D for a list of schemes).

During the consultation process for this Strategy, Adult Social Services identified a need for specialist accommodation to be well designed and well situated, where young people will not be vulnerable and where they would be able to access good transport links to local services.

## 6.3

### WHAT ARE THE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DARTFORD?

**Please note: some housing options may only be available to those who are owed a main homelessness duty by the Council.**

#### 6.3.1

##### Homeless prevention

If it is appropriate the Council will always seek to prevent a young person from leaving their family or friend's home, and may do this through using its Homeless Prevention Fund. Between May 2007 and May 2008, 20 people were assisted through the fund to enable them to remain in their current home, which resulted in the delay or prevention of their homelessness.

#### 6.3.2

##### Independent living

If someone is owed a main homelessness duty and is capable of living independently (as assessed by the Housing Options and Advice Team) and is 18 or over, or has a guarantor, then they may be housed by the Housing Options & Advice team in either social or privately rented accommodation.

#### 6.3.3

##### Schemes to help people access independent accommodation

The Council has two schemes which can help homeless people access private rented accommodation, they are:

##### Deposit guarantee scheme

This scheme offers a written guarantee between the landlord and the Council.

In return for the Council's guarantee, the landlord must agree not to ask the tenant for a deposit. Between April 08 and Jan 09, 31 deposit guarantees had been made and since the scheme started in 2003, 159 people have been assisted into private tenancies.

In order to qualify for the scheme, applicants must:

- Be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Be on a low income (gross income of £276 a week or less)
- Be over of the age of 18
- Have a local connection
- Have no known history of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or damage to property
- Have no alternative means of finding a deposit

#### Private Sector Leasing Schemes

There are two schemes in Dartford which enable people who are owed a main homelessness duty access private sector accommodation. Once rehoused, applicants are then eligible to bid for a property using Kent Homechoice and are placed in priority Band A3.

#### Dartford Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Through this scheme the Council directly leases a property on behalf of its owner for two years. During this time the Council is responsible for tenancy management and general maintenance. At the end of the two years the property is returned to the owner in the same condition as at the beginning of the lease, after fair wear and tear. The scheme has been highly successful since its launch in 2007 and in January 2010, 50 properties were being let under the scheme. Following its success the Council has given Porchlight, a homelessness charity, rights to refer a proportion of their clients onto the scheme.

#### Avenue Lettings Private Sector Leasing Scheme

This is a sub-leasing arrangement in partnership with Avenue Lettings, who are responsible for the management of the units and the Council is responsible for the rent collection. In January 2010 six properties were let under this scheme.

### 6.3.4 Supported housing

Despite the variety of independent housing options available, most young people will struggle to hold a tenancy of their own and will

require housing which has a certain amount of support. The Council works in partnership with a number of agencies to ensure that supported housing is available to young people.

#### 6.3.4.1 YMCA

The YMCA operates a scheme in Dartford which provides accommodation for young people who are aged between 16 & 30 (priority given to 18-25 yr olds) and who have low support needs. Young people are encouraged to achieve independent living and are offered training in IT, numeracy and literacy skills. Demand for accommodation is high, with 20-30 applicants currently on the waiting list. The YMCA has an agreed protocol with Dartford Borough Council, which allows the Council to nominate five 16-30 year olds for a YMCA placement each year. The Council will nominate those who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness, eligible for assistance and locally connected to the borough (the person does not need to be in priority need).

#### 6.3.4.2 'Cubfields' Gateway Housing Trust

Most young people who are owed a main homelessness duty by the Council and who are too young to hold a tenancy of their own (16-17 year olds) are placed in Cubfields accommodation. Cubfields are part of the Gateway Housing Trust and provide shared accommodation and support to young people.

Young people share self-contained accommodation with other young people in similar circumstances and each has a support package which is tailored to their needs. The support they receive helps them to sustain a permanent tenancy once they move out of Cubfields when they are eighteen, thus helping to prevent homelessness occurring in the future.

#### 6.3.4.3

##### Accommodation for young mothers

'Daisies', owned by Moat Housing was partly funded by the Council in 2003 for refurbishment works. It is now managed by Stonham Housing Association and revenue funded by Supporting People. The scheme has five rooms for young mothers aged between 16-24yrs and works in partnership with other organisations such as Sure Start, Social Services and local nurseries in order to teach parenting and life skills, they also aim to encourage young people to engage in education.

'Life' is another provider of supported accommodation (five spaces) for young mothers in Dartford.

During the consultation, a number of agencies felt that there was a need for supported accommodation for both the mother and the father of the child, because providing accommodation just for the mother may break up the family unit and discourage the father from playing a crucial role in the life of his child.

Although specialist supported accommodation is not available specifically for couples, general needs accommodation can be accessed and floating support can be provided which is funded through Supporting People (see section 7). If a couple is younger than 18, they must have a parent or a family member acting as guarantor.

#### 6.3.4.4

##### Accommodation for youth offenders

Many young offenders are not able to live independently and need intensive accommodation based support. At present Dartford does not have supported accommodation for young people with high support needs, however young offenders are able to be housed outside of the borough in a neighbouring authority and the Joint Assessment and Referral Panel allows for one placement per year.

# 7. Young people's housing support options

Living independently requires a certain amount of skill, skills are needed to manage rent accounts and other bills, to cook and to keep a home clean and safe. Without these skills it becomes more likely that a tenancy will fail.

Between 1 January 2007 and February 2009, 916 tenancies in Dartford came to an end, 60 of these tenancies failed due to abandonment or eviction. The graphs below show the percentage of abandoned or evicted tenancies in proportion to the number of ended tenancies, as can be seen, young people under 25 yrs are more than twice as likely as those aged over 25 yrs to abandon or be evicted from their tenancy.

## 7.1 WHAT HOUSING SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

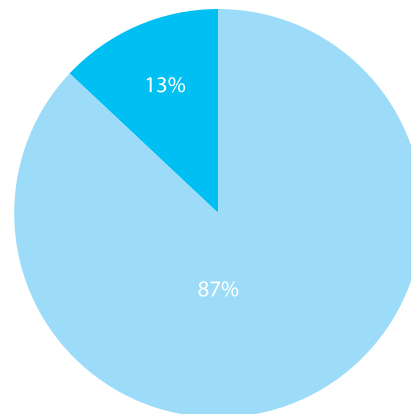
Other than support which is provided as part of supported housing, housing support is available to any young person in the form of floating support which is funded by the Kent Supporting People programme.

Floating support (FS) is designed to meet the persons need, whether that is help with budgeting or to remain independent at home. Support is usually around two hours per week and is short term, often for a maximum of two years. When the support is no longer needed it 'floats on.'

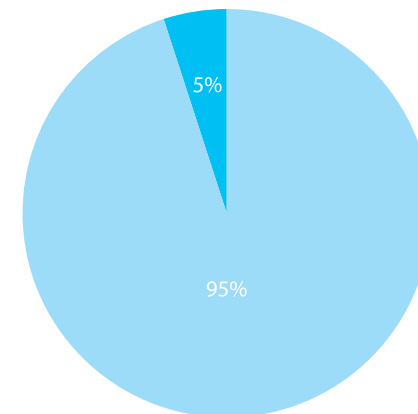
In 2007/08 according to Supporting People figures, 62 people who live in Dartford used FS, 10 of which were under 25. There are currently 16 people on the waiting list (three of which are under 25).

**Graphs H: Showing number of tenancies that came o an end between January 2007 and February 2009 (Over 25 yr olds=total of 782 tenancies, under 25 yr olds=132 tenancies)**

Tenancies held by under 25 yr olds that came to an end



Tenancies held by over 25 yr olds that came to an end



■ Abandonment or eviction    ■ Other reason



# 8. Priorities and action planning

This section outlines the priorities of the Strategy and the actions required to achieve the priorities.

## 8.1 PRIORITY 1: IMPROVING HOUSING INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Actions:

- Provide training for Dartford Borough Council (DBC) staff
- Improve signposting to advocacy services
- Produce a young persons' housing leaflet
- Develop a young persons' housing options web page

### 8.1.1 Training for staff

Satisfaction with customer service among young people who have used the housing service varied, while some found DBC staff very helpful and friendly, others said they felt looked down on because of their youth and the circumstances they were in. It was noted by a representative from Connexions, that friction and misunderstanding can occur from both sides and that young people's frustrations can make them difficult clients to deal with.

DBC will look at ways to improve young people's experience of visiting the Council by providing consistent and regular customer service training for all front line staff.

### 8.1.2 Improve signposting to advocacy services

Agencies who participated in the focus groups found that young people can sometimes feel intimidated by the Council as an authority, especially during homelessness interviews.

In order to resolve this, DBC will aim to improve signposting mechanisms to agencies that provide advocacy services to young people and will do this through developing an agreed procedure with the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group.

### 8.1.3 Housing information leaflets and web page

All of the young people who took part in the consultation identified that there was a need for attractive and easy to read housing information. It was suggested that housing leaflets (which summarise young people's housing rights and choices) should be available in a variety of locations such as schools, youth clubs and voluntary organisations.

In order to meet these recommendations, the Council will aim to work with the Youth Housing Local Implementation Group, and information will be incorporated into a webpage for young people on the Dartford Borough Council website.

## 8.2 PRIORITY 2: PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND REPEAT HOMELESSNESS

Actions:

- Develop a housing options education programme
- Direct parents to parenting classes through tenant newsletters, notice boards and advice booklets
- Engage with Dartford and Gravesham Teenage Pregnancy Local Implementation Group
- Produce a health information leaflet aimed at young people
- Explore ways in which low cost furniture can be made available to young people when they move into a new home
- Attend bi-monthly meetings with the Youth Offending Team
- Give Homelessness Prevention Officers mediation training and carry out home visits when a young person wishes to leave their family home.

### 8.2.1 Housing education programme

Nearly all the consultees identified that there was

a need to educate young people in schools about housing issues and the realities of homelessness. It was believed that if young people were targeted at a young enough age, then they would have an informed view which may later prevent them from leaving home too early.

Although an action point to deliver a schools programme is featured in the Homelessness Strategy, this Strategy will seek to build on this and will investigate whether a similar programme could also be delivered to young people who are not engaged in formal education.

### 8.2.2 Directing parents to parenting classes

Since most youth homelessness is due to breakdowns in family relationships, it follows that if parents and young people are taught to foster positive relationships with each other, then much youth homelessness could be prevented. A report by the YMCA on behalf of Communities and Local Government supports this; for example, the report showed that 72% of parents believed that extra help could prevent the breakdown of family relationships, and therefore prevent young people leaving home. The YMCA report also highlighted that many parents are simply unaware of help that is available.

In order to raise awareness of parenting support in Dartford, the Council will work with other agencies, such as Sure Start, Kent County Council Extended Families Service and the Parent Forums to distribute leaflets and promote support to Dartford's residents.

### 8.2.3 Teenage pregnancies

The Council's homelessness statistics showed that a high proportion of young people who are owed a main homelessness duty are single lone females. It is uncertain whether pregnancy is the cause or consequence of homelessness, however the Council will engage either directly or

indirectly with the Dartford and Gravesham Teenage Pregnancy Local Implementation Group, to assist in preventing teenage pregnancies in the borough. The Council will also use its Young Person Advice Booklet (8.2.5) to raise awareness of sexual health nurses in the borough, who promote contraception and healthy relationships.

#### **8.2.4 Meetings with youth offending team**

A report by the Youth Justice Board found that the presence of stable accommodation can mean a reduction of more than 20% in reoffending rates for offenders; this is because without housing, young people are unlikely to engage in activities that are vital to their rehabilitation such as education, employment or substance misuse services.

In order to reduce the chance of young offenders (16/17 yr olds) becoming homeless upon their release from custody, the Council's Housing Services will set up bimonthly meetings with the Youth Offending team's Personal Advisor to plan their accommodation once they have been released.

#### **8.2.5 Health and advice information leaflet**

Poor health can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness and repeat homelessness. Members of the health focus group (see Appendix A) found that young homeless people are more likely than their non homeless counterparts to suffer from blood born virus' (through sharing needles), STI's (sexually transmitted infections), mental health issues such as self harm and depression, and generally have a lack of regular or proper nutrition, GP and dental care.

In order to help young homeless people access the help that they need, the Council will provide an information leaflet specifically aimed at young people detailing local GP's, health centres, dentists,

and other specialist services in the area. This leaflet will be made available to every young person who contacts the Housing Options and Advice team and who is placed into accommodation, whether permanent or temporary.

#### **8.2.6 Mediation**

If a young person is threatened with homelessness or is homeless due to a relationship breakdown, mediation can be used in order to try and rebuild the relationship.

Mediation provides an impartial third party (the mediator), who helps those involved in a dispute find a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.<sup>\*x</sup> Mediation between a young person and their family helps both parties identify their strengths and difficulties, the family is then supported to explore areas where changes in attitude and response may improve the relationship.

Consultation with representatives from BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities highlighted that the sources of conflict differ between white British & BME families. BME girls in particular may face conflict with their families surrounding issues such as independence, the desire to go on to further education and relationship issues. Consultees felt that mediation services for BME communities do not have to be run by BME representatives, and often service users prefer it when they aren't, but services do require an understanding of the cultural background.

As part of this Strategy the Council will train its Homeless Prevention Officers to become mediators. Young people who wish to leave their family home will also be visited at home. This will give the Homeless Prevention Officers the opportunity to assess the situation and use their mediation skills to prevent the young person leaving home if appropriate.



#### **8.2.7 Furniture**

Both Cubfields and the YMCA identified that one of the main struggles for young people who leave supported accommodation is the limited resources they have to purchase goods and furniture for their new accommodation.

In order to help young people settle into accommodation and therefore help prevent homelessness, the Council will look at ways in which low cost furniture can be made available to people on a low income. This action point is also contained within the Council's Domestic Abuse Housing Strategy, which can be found at [www.dartford.gov.uk/housing/HousingStrategiesandPolicies.htm](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/housing/HousingStrategiesandPolicies.htm)

#### **8.2.8 Supporting People funded floating support**

Floating support is a service which is funded by Supporting People (see section 7). Its aim is to help people sustain their tenancy by offering housing related support such as budgeting, obtaining benefits or equipping with other life skills. In order to improve awareness of floating support the Council aims to advertise floating support services in estate surgeries and at least every year in the tenants' newsletter.

### 8.3 PRIORITY 3: IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

Actions:

- Take part in new opportunities and initiatives which aim to improve young people's access to private rented accommodation
- Work jointly with the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group to investigate ways in which emergency accommodation could be provided.
- Ensure that a proportion of intermediate rental properties are available on new development sites where feasible.
- Develop a web page to advertise shared ownership options and to assist flat sharing in Dartford.

#### 8.3.1 Improve access to private rented accommodation

Young people who are not owed a main homelessness duty, face a number of barriers in accessing appropriate housing; for instance

many may struggle to access privately rented accommodation due to high rental prices or the unwillingness of private landlords to accept those who are claiming housing benefit and/or have a criminal background. In order to overcome these barriers the Council will take part in new opportunities and initiatives which aim to improve access.

#### 8.3.2 Emergency accommodation

A report by the YMCA highlighted the importance of respite or emergency accommodation, in providing a starting point from which long term accommodation solutions can be found.<sup>26</sup>

Currently there is no emergency accommodation in Dartford for young people who are not owed a main homelessness duty. In order to address this problem the Council will work jointly with the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group to look at ways in which emergency accommodation can be provided in the borough.

#### 8.3.3 Intermediate rental properties on new development sites

Because there is a high demand for rented properties in Dartford, the Council will aim to ensure that a proportion of intermediate rental properties are available on new development sites where feasible.

#### 8.3.4 Webpage

The Youth Council highlighted that many young people are not aware of intermediate housing and are generally confused by the different terms use to describe home ownership options. In order to address this the Council will seek to make people more aware of different housing options on its website and will look at ways in which a website can be used by young people to find flat mates and where landlords can advertise rooms or houses to rent.

## 9. Implementation and monitoring

The action plan will be implemented over a period of three years with regular checks to track progress. It will be delivered through the action plan based on the priorities agreed and will be reviewed annually by the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group.

Where the action permits, young people will be involved in the implementation.



# 10. Action plan

Priority Area	Action	Partners & Resources	Timescales/deadline
<b>Improve housing information and advice</b>	Deliver a young persons customer service training course for DBC staff and then annual training for new staff.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	January 2011 and then ongoing
	Improve signposting to advocacy services.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	April 2011
	Develop a young persons' housing web page.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	May 2011
	Produce a young persons' housing leaflet to be made available in schools and public locations.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	May 2011
<b>Prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness</b>	Engage with the Dartford and Gravesham Teenage Pregnancy Local Implementation Group.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	Ongoing
	Meet bi-monthly with the Youth Offending Team to help plan accommodation for young offenders being released from custody.	DBC Youth Offending Team Youth Housing LIG	Ongoing
	Advertise Supporting People floating support services in estate surgeries and annually in the Link.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	June 2009 and then ongoing
	Where it is appropriate carry out home visits when a young person has left their family home.	DBC	June 2010 and then ongoing
	Raise public awareness of parenting classes in the borough that are available for children and teenagers.	DBC KCC Extended Families Service Resources Youth Housing LIG	January 2010
	Develop a leaflet to make young people more aware of health and advice services available to them.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	April 2011
	Explore ways in which low cost furniture can be made available to young people.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	April 2010
	Give Homeless Prevention Officers mediation training and where appropriate carry out home visits when a young person wishes to leave their family's home.	DBC	June 2010

Priority Area	Action	Partners & Resources	Timescales/deadline
<b>Prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness</b>	Develop and deliver a schools programme to educate young people about homelessness and housing options. Investigate whether this programme could also be delivered to young people who are not engaged in formal education.	DBC Youth Housing LIG London & Quadrant Housing Group	April 2012
<b>Improving access to suitable accommodation</b>	Take part in new opportunities and initiatives which aim to improve young people's access to private rented accommodation.	DBC Youth Housing LIG	Ongoing
	Work with the Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing LIG to help address the need for emergency accommodation in the borough.	DBC, Dartford & Gravesham Youth Implementation Group	Ongoing
	Ensure that a proportion of intermediate rental properties are available on new development sites.	DBC RSL Partners	Ongoing
	Develop a webpage to inform young people of their housing options and explore ways in which the website can advertise rooms/houses for rent.	DBC	April 2012

# Glossary

- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

It is important to note that there is a difference between affordable housing and affordability. There are four main types of affordable housing:

1. **Social rented housing**

This is housing where guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. In Kent social rented housing is normally only available to people through Kent Homechoice.

2. **Intermediate rented housing**

Intermediate rented homes are provided at rent levels above those of social rent but below market rent levels.

3. **Shared equity housing**

In this type of housing more than one party has an interest in the value of the home (typically a registered social landlord and the purchaser). Shared ownership is a form of shared equity under which the purchaser buys an initial share in a home from a housing provider, who retains the remainder and may charge a rent. The purchaser may buy additional shares (staircasing), thus reducing the share which rent is payable on. In most cases, a purchaser may buy the final share (staircase out) and own the whole home.

4. **Discounted sale housing**

Discounted sale homes have a simple discount for the purchaser on its market price, so the purchaser buys the whole home at a reduced rate.

- **CHILD IN NEED**

Section 17 [10] of the Children Act 1989, outlined the definition of a child in need. A child in need may be:

- disabled (for a definition of disability see the Children Act 1989)

- unlikely to have, or to have the opportunity to have, a reasonable standard of health or development without services from a local authority; or
- unlikely to progress in terms of health or development; or
- unlikely to progress in terms of health or development, without services from a local authority.

- **DISCOUNTED SALE**

See 'affordable housing' definition

- **ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE**

This is a classification which housing authorities legally have to use in order to determine if someone is owed a main homelessness duty.

Someone may not be eligible for assistance if they are from abroad or subject to immigration control, or have only temporarily lived in the UK, despite being a British citizen. See the Government's 'Homelessness Code of Guidance' for further details:

[www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/152056.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/152056.pdf)

- **INTENTIONALLY HOMELESS**

This is a classification which housing authorities legally have to use in order to determine if someone is owed a main homelessness duty.

A person would be homeless intentionally where homelessness was the consequence of a deliberate action or omission by that person (unless this was made in good faith in ignorance of a relevant fact). A deliberate act might be a decision to leave the previous accommodation even though it would have been reasonable for the person (and everyone in the person's household) to continue to live there. A deliberate omission might be non-payment of rent that led to rent arrears and eviction.

- **INTERMEDIATE RENTED HOUSING**

See 'affordable housing' definition.

- **LOCAL CONNECTION**

This is a classification which some housing authorities may choose to use to determine if they or another local authority are responsible for housing an applicant that is owed a main homelessness duty.

Someone would have a local connection to an area because of residence, employment, family associations in the district, or because of special circumstances. There are exceptions, for example residence in a district while serving a prison sentence does not establish a local connection.

If a local connection is not identified then the applicant could be referred to another district where they do have a connection. An applicant cannot be referred if they, or any member of their household would be at risk of violence in the district of the other authority.

- **MAIN HOMELESSNESS DUTY**

This term describes the duty housing authorities have under the Housing Act (1996) S.193(2) to ensure that someone who is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need has accommodation available to them.

- **PRIORITY NEED**

This is a classification which housing authorities legally have to use in order to determine if someone is owed a main homelessness duty.

A person is considered priority need if they meet the following criteria:

- Has dependent children living with them who are aged 16 or under or aged 17-18 and still in full time education.
- Is pregnant

- Aged 60 years old (or over) and vulnerable
- Are vulnerable because they or someone they live with is physically or mentally ill or disabled.
- Are vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces, coming out of prison or having been in care, or fostered, or are fleeing violence.
- Are homeless because of flood or any similar disaster
- Are aged 16 or 17 and not a 'relevant child' or 'child in need'
- A person under 21 who is (but no longer)

accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16-18, except a person who is no longer a relevant student.

- **SOCIAL RENTED HOUSING**  
See 'affordable housing' definition.
- **SHARED EQUITY HOUSING**  
See 'affordable housing' definition.
- **SHARED OWNERSHIP HOUSING**  
See 'affordable housing' definition.

- **THAMES GATEWAY**

This is a government designated regeneration area across East London, North Kent and South Essex. The Thames Gateway Delivery Plan was published in November 2007 and sets out a clear way forward for the region in order to achieve a strong economy, improvements in the quality of life for local communities and the development of the Gateway as an eco-region.

## Further information

If you would like further information or have any comments on how we could improve this Strategy please contact:

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# Appendix A: Consultation details

This section highlights the stages of the consultation process which was carried out to develop the Strategy.

## Stage 1 – Establish priorities and action points

The purpose of this stage was to establish the direction of the Strategy, its priorities and possible action points. Individual interviews were held with service users, representatives from various agencies/organisations in Dartford and council's staff (details are listed below):

- **Young people and service users**
  - YMCA residents
  - 16/17 yr olds who live in Cubfields accommodation
  - Dartford Borough Youth Council (12-18 yr olds)
  - Young homeless people who approached the Council for assistance
- **Youth housing providers**
  - YMCA
  - Cubfields
  - Daisies (accommodation for young mothers – Stonham Housing Association)
  - Porchlight (homeless charity)
- **Dartford Borough Council's staff**
  - Housing Management Team
  - Community Safety Officer
  - Housing Options and Advice Team

## Stage 2 – Agree priorities and establish additional action points

A second round of consultation events were held to agree the priorities and to develop action points. This was achieved through 'service related' focus groups as below:

- **Focus group: health**
  - West Kent Primary Care Trust
  - Turning Point
  - Porchlight
  - Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley MIND

- **Focus group: voluntary agencies and Kent County Council**

- Adolescent Resource Centre
- MINK (Mediation in North Kent)
- Step Ahead
- Catch 22
- Youth Offending Service
- Connexions

- **Focus group: housing providers**

- Stonham Housing Association
- Hyde Intouch
- Hyde Housing Association
- London and Quadrant Housing Trust

## Stage 3 – Consultation on final action points and priorities

The following groups were consulted on the final priorities and action points:

- **Dartford and Gravesham Youth Housing Local Implementation Group (LIG)**

This group reports to the Youth Subgroup of the Local Children's Services Partnership and is formed of representatives from the YMCA, Connexions, Supporting People, Youth Service and both Dartford and Gravesham Councils. The aim of the group is to promote a more co-coordinated housing service delivery for vulnerable young people (16-25yrs) in Dartford and Gravesend.
- **Dartford Borough Council (DBC) Residents' Forum**

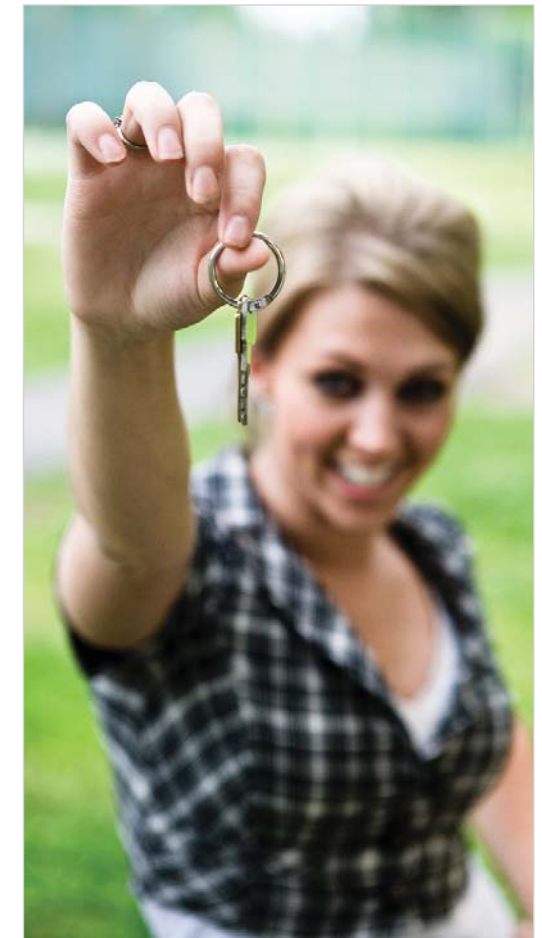
The forum is a group of DBC's tenants and leaseholders who aim to ensure that the Council's Housing Services are delivered according to the terms and conditions of the contract and are accessible to all residents.
- **Community Health and Information Sharing Group**

This group consists of representatives from communities, statutory and voluntary agencies. The group was set up under a

'choosing health' remit and works to gather and share information from organisations that work with BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) clients. Information is used to identify gaps in the service and recommendations are made to the NHS or local authorities

## Stage 4 – Agreement by Cabinet for wider consultation purposes

Once the Strategy had been agreed by Cabinet it was publically released for further consultation, comments were collected and final amendments were made to the Strategy.



# Appendix B: Local and national strategic context

## LOCAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### Dartford Borough Council Corporate plan (Council wide)

The Corporate Plan 2008-2011 sets out six service area themes which support the vision of the Council; the theme particularly relevant to this Young Persons' Housing Strategy is 'Housing & Stronger Communities', which aims to meet the housing needs of the borough and to achieve self reliant communities.

### Housing Strategy 2009-2012

The Housing Strategy addresses the housing needs of all Dartford residents, in particular it aims to increase the supply of affordable homes, prevent homelessness, improve homes, services and neighbourhoods, improve housing conditions in the private sector, reduce the numbers of empty homes and ensure that all residents have fair and equal access to housing. The Housing Strategy supports the actions proposed in this Young Persons' Housing Strategy.

### Homelessness Strategy 2008-2011

The Homelessness Strategy outlines how the Council is currently tackling youth homelessness and how it intends to do so in the future. The Strategy's action plan aims to tackle youth homelessness by:

#### Action 1: Prevent or delay homelessness

1. Continue to provide a family mediation scheme
2. Engage in the Kent Schools Project
3. Enable housing advice to be available in schools in partnership with the local Connexions service
4. Continue to provide a good-will payment scheme
5. Improve the use of the young persons homeless protocol by participating in joint training.

#### Action 2: Make better use of temporary accommodation

1. Continue to work in partnership with Cubfield Properties to provide support based accommodation to young people
2. Investigate if a referral process with the YMCA for young people requiring accommodation can be put into place.

### Dartford and Gravesham Councils

Dartford and its neighbouring borough of Gravesham undertake joint working where possible. Below are some examples of joint strategies which aim to shape outcomes for young peoples in Dartford and Gravesham.

#### Community Safety Plan 2008-2011

This plan has been developed by the Dartford and Gravesham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. One of its priority areas specifically relates to young people by aiming to ensure the safety of young people, reduce the risk of young people becoming victimised, or becoming involved in criminal behaviour, and to encourage a positive profile of young people in the community. Although the Plan does not deal directly with housing provision for young people, it does seek to encourage a 'joining up' of support services for young people, by running initiatives such as the ARC (Adolescent Resource Centre).

#### Dartford and Gravesham Youth Strategy 2007-2011

This Strategy was developed by the Youth Subgroup of the Dartford and Gravesham Children's Consortia. Members of the group include:

- Dartford Borough Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Kent County Council Youth Service
- Youth Offending Service
- Connexions
- YMCA
- Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC)
- Dartford School Cluster
- Gravesham School Cluster

The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that young people in Dartford and Gravesham achieve the five 'Every Child Matters outcomes,' it does this through the action plan. Two of the targets within the action plan are related to housing:

1. Highlight housing issues that could put young people at risk
2. Provide floating support for young people in local authority housing

### Kent

#### The Kent Local Area Agreement – Kent Agreement 2

This is the next three-year local area agreement between the Kent Partnership, Kent County Council and Kent's second tier authorities (including 12 district, borough and city councils) and Government. It will run from 2008-2011.

Nationally there are 198 different sets of indicators, of which Kent has chosen to measure and prioritise 35. These 35 indicators were agreed by The Kent Partnership (a partnership of private, public, voluntary and community sectors across Kent).

Out of the 35 indicators, those specific to housing are:

1. NI 155: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
2. NI 156: Number of households living in temporary accommodation (N1 156)
3. NI 158: Non-decent council homes
4. NI 160: Local authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services

#### Kent Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 'Positive about our Future'

This plan has been developed by Kent Children's Trust and outlines Kent's approach to improving the quality of life and life chances of disadvantaged Children and Young People in Kent (following the 5 Every Child Matters principles). The plan acts as the single, strategic, overarching plan for all services affecting

children and young people across Kent. Priority 4 of the plan targets the housing needs of young people by seeking to *'improve the quality and stability of housing for vulnerable children and young people through to early adulthood.'*

The outcomes to achieve this objective include:

- Making sure that care leavers and young offenders have access to decent housing
- Improving supply, standards and accessibility of affordable accommodation for young people
- Providing support mechanisms to enable successful transition into independent living
- Reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation and, where this type of accommodation is used, to ensure that it is safe and appropriate.
- Work together to prevent young people from becoming homeless and find ways to identify hidden homelessness
- Improve awareness of housing adaptations and improve the time taken to secure adaptations for families with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Develop a multi-agency response under the prevention agenda around mediation and tenancy sustainment

#### Local Children's Services Partnership Plans

In order to deliver Kent Children's Trust 'Positive about our Future' locally – the Kent Children's Trust established 23 Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSP) in September 2008. The LCSP's were developed to deliver the Kent's Plan in line with locally identified needs, expressed through their own Local Children and Young Persons Plan's (LCYPP).

Each local partnership is managed by a LCSP manager who works with a local partnership board to lead LCSP development and ensure outcomes for local children and young people in the area are improving.

## NATIONAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Nationally there have been a number of strategies and guidance documents which have sought to shape the policy approach towards services for young people. It should be noted that some of these documents are specifically aimed at young people, whereas others address a broad age range.

A summary of these key documents are listed below (*Please note Office of Deputy Prime Minister is now 'Communities and Local Government'*):

### Meeting the housing need

*Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable (2007) Communities and Local Government*

This paper puts forward the Government's proposals for housing, these include:

- More homes to meet growing demand;
- Well-designed and greener homes, linked to good schools, transport and healthcare;
- More affordable homes to buy or rent.

In particular the paper sets out a number of aims to assist first time buyers, which include providing 25,000 low cost homes each year, though encouraging shared ownership and by expanding Open Market Homebuy products. The proposals also include increasing opportunities for social tenants to purchase a share in their own home and by launching a Government equity loan to help first time buyers and key workers.

### Homelessness

*'More than a roof: A report into tackling homelessness' March 2003 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*

This report highlights the importance of preventing homelessness by tackling its underlying causes; the report urges services and policy makers to adopt its priorities which include:

- Taking a multi-agency approach, by pooling together expertise and providing a One Stop Shop for homeless people.
- Helping people to sustain their tenancies
- Encouraging meaningful occupation
- Identifying causes of homelessness and tackling them
- Tackling problems such as addictions and mental health problems.
- Increasing supply of affordable housing and access to private rented sector.

*'Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives a strategy for tackling homelessness' (2005) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*

The aims of this Strategy are to:

- Prevent homelessness;
- Provide support for vulnerable people;
- Tackle the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness;
- Help more people move away from rough sleeping; and
- Provide more settled homes.

This Strategy also sets out the Government's commitment to halve the number of people in temporary accommodation by 2010.

### Tackling Youth Homelessness – Policy Briefing 18, (2007) Communities and Local Government

This document highlights the Government's strategy to tackle youth homelessness for 16 & 17 yr olds, this includes:

- Making mediation more readily available
- Ensuring that by 2010 no 16 or 17 year olds are placed in temporary accommodation, except in an emergency.
- Establishing supported lodgings schemes across the country, providing accommodation, advice and mediation services for young people who can no longer stay in the family home.

The document also aims to share best practice which can be used by local authorities to tackle homelessness, this includes:

- Mediation and home visiting
- School-based work
- Various approaches to local authorities' assessment and advice responsibilities
- Supported lodgings and Nightstop schemes
- Floating support
- Emergency and short-term hostels
- Forms of 'move-on' from hostels
- Responding to complex needs and high vulnerability
- Health issues including physical and mental health, contraception and sexual health, and substance and alcohol misuse
- Promoting engagement in learning and employment
- Responding to the particular needs of young people in specific groups, including regarding gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and faith.
- Offenders and offending, and tackling anti-social behaviour

### Young people, general issues

#### 'Every Child Matters' 2003 HM Government

This paper was written as a response to the Victoria Climbié enquiry, it proposes a range of measures and reform to improve children's care (5-17yr olds) – the five main Every Child Matters outcomes/priorities are:

- **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
- **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- **Making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- **Economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

#### Transitions – Young Adults with Complex Needs – A Social Exclusion Unit Final Report (2005) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

This report sets out the Government's strategy for helping young adults (17-25yrs) with complex needs make the transition to adulthood. In particular it suggests a number of ways in which this can be achieved, they include:

- Development of holistic services – which meet all the needs of young people (e.g. one stop shops)
- Improving access to services
- Providing a trusted adult for young people – this may be a mentor, personal advisor, councillor or lead professional
- Develop a joined up service for young people, particularly integrating youth to adolescent services:
  - Through the use of information sharing between agencies

- Through the development of plans, such as 'Move on Plans'

#### 'Youth Matters' (2005) HM Government

The vision of this Strategy is to see services for 13-19yr olds integrated around the 'Every Child Matters Outcomes'. It aims to address four key challenges:

- Engage more young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive;
- Encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities;
- Provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives; and
- Provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble.



# Appendix C: Statutory entitlements

This section details the statutory entitlements for young people and how they are administered by Dartford Borough Council.

## Information and Advice

Every person is entitled by the Housing Act 1996 to free housing information and advice, which is appropriate to their individual circumstances. Appointments can be made and are held at Dartford Borough Council's Civic Centre (01322 343114).

## Housing Register

A young person who is aged over 16 may apply for a property under the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme (Kent Homechoice). However if the person is under 18, then someone else aged 18 or over must act as a guarantor on the applicant's behalf until they reach 18 years of age. For more information about the scheme and eligibility criteria, details can be found on the Dartford Borough Council website [www.dartford.gov.uk/choice/thescheme.htm](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/choice/thescheme.htm) or by speaking to a member of the Housing Options and Advice team (01322 343813).

## Homelessness

If someone finds that they are homeless, or thinks that they may become homeless in the near future then they should contact the Housing Options and Advice Team on 01322 343114, for advice or to arrange an appointment.

The housing team is available Monday – Thursday between 8.45am and 5.15pm and Friday between 8.45am and 4.45pm. This is with the exception of Wednesdays when the offices are open between 9.00am and 12.45pm and closed for the afternoon.

# Appendix D: Purpose built schemes for people with support needs

List of purpose built schemes for people with support needs in Dartford.

Name of Housing Association	Client group	Number of properties/rooms
Advance Housing and Support	People with mental health problems	7 rooms 8 rooms
Advance Housing and Support	Move on accommodation for people with mental health problems	Self contained flat – 1 bed Self contained flat – 1 bed
Moat Homes Limited	Low level support for people with support needs	1 bed flat 1 bed flat
Hyde Housing Association/ Intouch support	People with support needs	4 x 2 bedroom flats
Stonham Housing	Low level support for people with mental health problems or learning difficulties	8 x 1 bedroom flats



**DARTFORD**  
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