Focus on...
Homelessness
May 2013

Homelessness describes a wide range of circumstances where people have no secure accommodation. Homeless people include those without dependants and rough sleepers for whom no statutory duty may be owed. A statutory duty is owed to people who are defined in law (governed by the Housing Act 1996 as amended 2002 Part VII) as being in priority need and entitled to housing support from local authorities. Many people assume that if they become homeless they will be housed in a council flat in Islington. However, this is not the case, as Islington only has a duty to house people for an interim period who fall within certain categories (these categories are explained in more detail on page three).

The numbers of statutory homeless households in Islington have increased significantly in the past two years from 200 to 413 in 2011/12. The number of households placed into temporary accommodation has also risen.

Key facts and figures

3,337

households contacted Islington's Housing Advice Service in 2011/12

413

households accepted as statutory homelessness in Islington [2011/12]

165

rough sleepers contacted by outreach services on Islington streets [2011/12]

947

households in temporary accommodation in Islington [March 2012]

Key issues for Islington

- Acceptances of statutory homelessness duty are increasing.
- Private sector evictions are increasing as an overall proportion of acceptances.
- Welfare reforms instigated by the Coalition Government are having an impact upon peoples abilities to afford and sustain housing in the borough.

Key measures for reducing inequality

- Redesigning services around the needs of our customers and working better with partners.
- The provision of housing advice surgeries in children's centers and for black and minority ethnic communities across the borough to ensure all residents access our services.
- Steps to mitigate the impact of welfare and housing reforms.
- Providing floating support for tenants who require additional support.
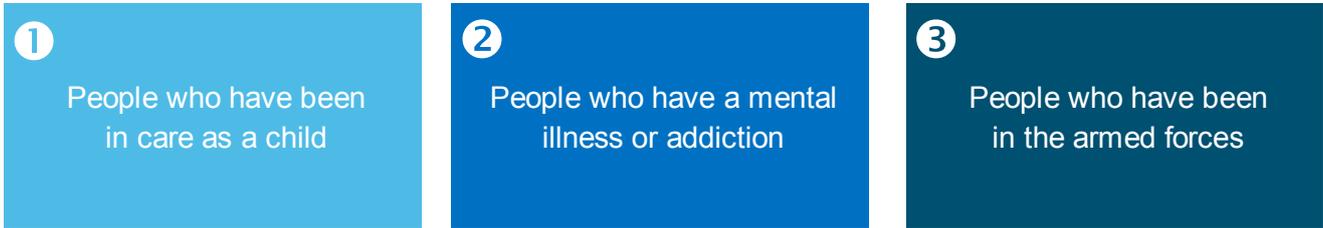
Key programmes and services

- Effective outreach and partnership working to continuing moving people away from street and rough sleeping.
- Increasing prevention work, offering advice on alternative options and providing support for tenancy sustainment.
- Maximizing the supply of affordable homes through new builds and reducing the number of empty properties.

Key population groups

Homelessness can affect anyone, however some groups of people are more likely to become homeless due to their support needs. Some people may face barriers getting accommodation from the lack of suitable and affordable housing.

At risk groups include:

| ① People who have been in care as a child | ② People who have a mental illness or addiction | ③ People who have been in the armed forces |

What influences homelessness?

Personal and structural factors can increase the risk of homelessness.

Structural Factors

- Debt
- Trends in residential and community care
- The welfare benefit system
- Shortage of affordable accommodation
- Migration
- Unemployment
- Low income

Possible Triggers

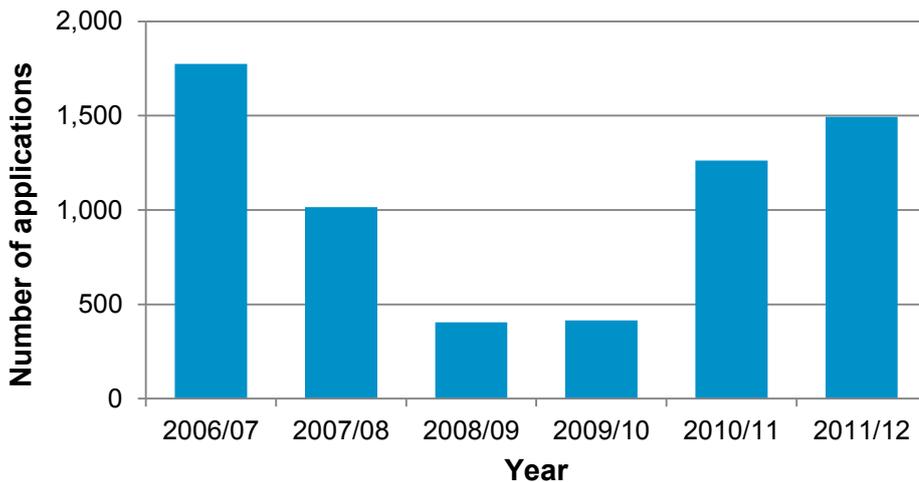| Death of a partner | Domestic violence | Relationship breakdown |
| Leaving home or care | Harrassment | Parental exclusion |
| Leaving institutions (e.g. prison, hospital, or the armed forces) | Lack of knowledge on how to access benefits | Getting into debt, particularly mortgage or rent arrears |

THE ISLINGTON PICTURE

If a person approaches the Housing Aid Centre (HAC) and makes a homeless application the Council will provide emergency accommodation or help to get other accommodation, if the following criteria are satisfied:

| Legally classed as homeless | Eligible for UK support | In priority need | Not intentionally homeless | Have a local connection |

## Number of homeless applications made to the Housing Aid Centre

The decline in the number of homeless applications in 2007 reflects increased emphasis placed on prevention work. However, the economic downturn since 2009 has seen an increase in the numbers of people applying as homeless.

Source: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013

Outcomes of statutory homeless applications

Number of successful and unsuccessful homeless applications in 2011/12

Homeless applications: 1,080 | 413

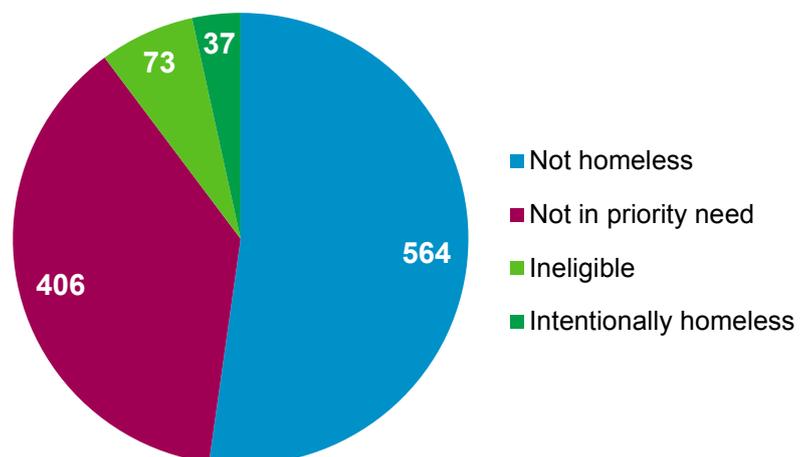■ Unsuccessful applications ■ Successful applications
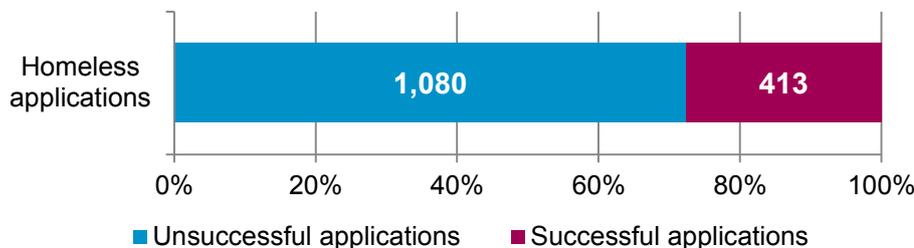
28% of homeless applications accepted as statutory homeless [2011/12]

Source: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013

Reasons that homeless applicants were not accepted as statutory homeless [2011/12]

The main reasons that homeless applications were not accepted in 2011/12 was that people had been found to be not homeless and not in priority need.
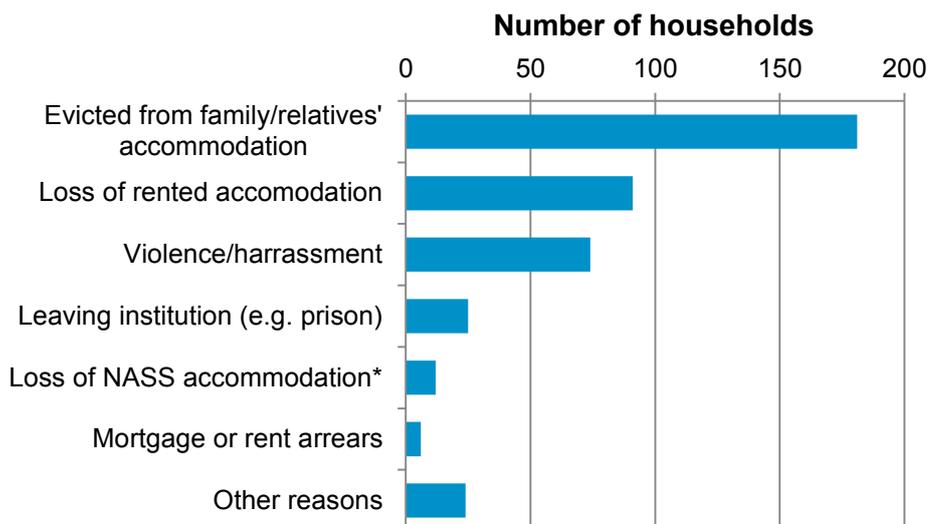
People who are not accepted as homeless are given advice and support on their housing options which can include finding accommodation in the private rented sector.

■ Not homeless 564
■ Not in priority need 406
■ Ineligible 73
■ Intentionally homeless 37

Source: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013

Characteristics of households accepted as statutory homeless, 2011/12

Number of households accepted as statutory homeless, reason for homelessness [2011/12]

Number of households

- Evicted from family/relatives' accommodation
- Loss of rented accomodation
- Violence/harrassment
- Leaving institution (e.g. prison)
- Loss of NASS accommodation*
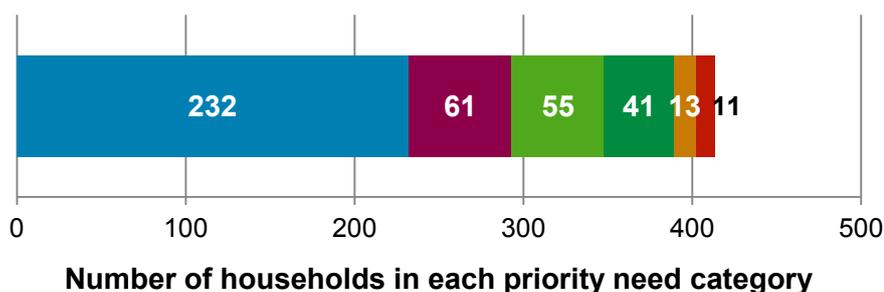- Mortgage or rent arrears
- Other reasons

The main reason for which people in Islington make homeless applications is eviction by family or relatives. This is also the most common reason nationally, accounting for 30% of all homeless applications (Source: Statutory Homelessness England, Statistical Releases, DCLG, March 2011).

* NASS: National Asylum Support Service
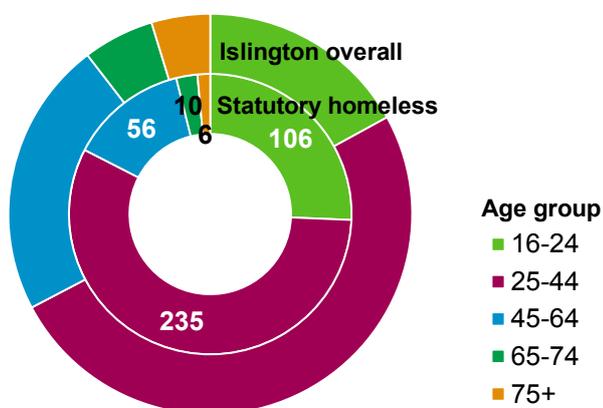**Source**: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013

Number of households accepted as statutory homeless, by priority need category [2011/12]

Number of households in each priority need category

- ■ Pregnant or with dependent children
- ■ Young person (under 21 years of age)
- ■ Vulnerable - Old age
- ■ Vulnerable - Mental Health
- ■ Vulnerable - Physical Disability
- ■ Other reasons

In 2011/12, 56% of households accepted as homeless had children or were expecting children. There has been a significant increase in the number of applications from young people, and from people with mental health issues, the causes of which require further investigation in order to develop a successful prevention strategy.

Source: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013

Breakdown of households accepted as statutory homeless, by age group and ethnicity [2011/12]

Age group
- ■ 16-24
- ■ 25-44
- ■ 45-64
- ■ 65-74
- ■ 75+

Ethnic group
- ■ White
- ■ Black
- ■ Asian
- ■ Mixed & Other
- ■ Not stated

235 (57%) of the households accepted as statutory homeless were headed by someone aged 25-44 [2011/12]
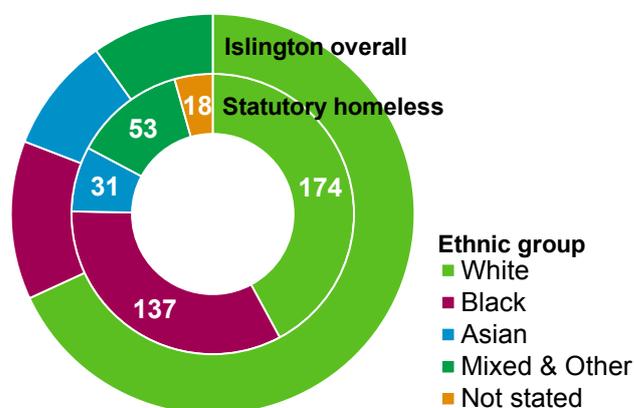
33% of households accepted as statutory homeless were Black, compared to **13%** of the total Islington population [2011/12]

Source: Islington's Homelessness Database, 2013 and ONS, 2011.

WHAT DO LOCAL PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE ISSUE?

Consultation with local stakeholders and the voluntary sector for the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2012-14 focused largely on the need for suitable services. These can be delivered by:

- Providing better training for council and voluntary staff
- Greater partnership working
- More information and awareness around legislation and financial changes
- Integrated commissioning between employment, housing and health services

WHAT WORKS?

Evidence shows that steps taken to prevent homelessness and supply affordable housing can have a direct effect on homelessness figures.

Prevention work	Housing options interviews cover a discussion of ways in which a person's immediate housing need can be met. Sometimes this means that no homeless application is made. Prevention can cover offering mediation to young people who have been asked to leave their homes, sanctuary schemes for people fleeing violence or referring households to the rent deposit scheme.
Early advice	Rather than waiting until people are made homeless, early advice via voluntary sector agencies or the council provides households with information that may enable them to stay in their homes. On-going support is available for people who need it.
Improve housing supply	Supplying suitable affordable accommodation helps prevent homelessness and overcrowding. The council has a target (1,800) for increasing the number of new affordable homes built in the borough over three years in order to help meet housing need in the borough.

FUTURE NEED

Current economic conditions are likely to result in an increased demand for affordable housing. The overall number of households on the Islington waiting list has grown in the last year and supply still remains a key problem for the borough. Government policy in relation to housing may create additional pressures.

It is difficult to predict the cost of homelessness in Islington, however, we anticipate an increase in Islington in the number of households accepted as homeless (in line with the rest of London). The changes in welfare reform are likely to impact the ability of households to sustain their tenancies, especially in the private rented sector. 800 Islington households would be affected by the cap in local housing allowance (housing benefit for the private rented sector).

TARGETS & OUTCOMES

The Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2012-2014 identifies two key goals based on current work and consultation with partners. These are:

- Preventing homelessness through effective partnership working

- Focused prevention and support for those most at risk of homelessness

For each target there our several expected outcome which include the following:

Targets	Document or strategy target is taken from	Deadline for target
Deliver 1,800 affordable new homes	Towards a Fairer Islington: Corporate Plan 2012-14	March 2014
Identify the underlying factors that lead to homelessness in order to target available resources at appropriate initiatives	Prevention of homelessness strategy	Annual target
Be proactive in minimising statutory homelessness acceptances through prevention work to enable people to either remain or find alternative accommodation	Prevention of homelessness strategy	Annual target
Maximise availability of supported housing by developing approaches to increase move on opportunities for those now able to live independently	Prevention of homelessness strategy	Quarterly meetings of homelessness forum

NATIONAL & LOCAL STRATEGIES

Homelessness is rising due to: increasing demand for a dwindling supply of social housing, rents soaring in the private sector and high rates of unemployment . It is a national and local priority to tackle homelessness and ensure residents have access to housing and support services.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES	LOCAL STRATEGIES
Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England (2011) Acknowledges the challenges posed by tackling homelessness. **Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012)** Considers how services can be managed in a way that prevents households from reaching a crisis point when faced with homelessness	**Prevention of homelessness strategy (2012)** Highlights specific actions required to prevent homelessness through joint working and supporting those most at risk of homelessness. **Towards a fairer Islington: Corporate Plan (2012)** Outlines the aim of ensuring everyone in Islington has a decent, suitable and affordable place to call home. **North London Rough Sleeper Strategy Islington Action Plan (2010)** Provides recommendations for preventing rough sleeping and maintaining a low level of rough sleepers through delivery of the rough sleeping action plan

WHAT IS BEING DONE LOCALLY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE?

The council, in partnership with the community / voluntary sector and other agencies, provides a range of services aimed at preventing homelessness and assisting those who are at risk of homelessness.

Housing Solutions Team

Provides advice on the options available to people facing the potential loss of their home or insecure housing. These services include:

- Our Housing Aid centre, which sees over 3,000 households a year and provides advice and information on their housing circumstances.

- 18 outreach surgeries serving different communities and locations across Islington

- Home visits for 16 and 17 year olds facing homelessness.

- A private sector opportunities scheme in which households can take up accommodation in the private rented sector through a rent deposit scheme.

- A home shelter scheme for victims of domestic violence .

- Advice on accessing discretionary housing payment (DHP), which is an extra payment, made at the council's discretion to top up Housing and Council Tax Benefit entitlement .

- Signposting for further welfare benefit, debt management and employment advice.

Outreach Service

- The council's outreach service is provided by Pillion Trust to engage with rough sleepers and other people engaged in street population activities. Pillion also works with the council to ensure referrals are made for supported accommodation

- Each year, registered charity CARIS Islington, oversees the organisation of Islington Winter Night Shelter services for rough sleepers. This is to provide shelter for homeless people in the coldest months of the year.

Partnership Working

- A Homelessness Forum to brings statutory, voluntary and community agencies together to improve services for homeless people and vulnerably housed people and share best practice.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on this topic can be found at the following locations:

- Islington Council, Homelessness:
  http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/housing/housingadvice/homelessness/Pages/default.aspx

- Islington Council, Islington Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2012-2014:
  http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/housing/policiesandstrategies/Pages/housingpublications.aspx

- Islington Council, Towards a Fairer Islington: Corporate Plan 2012-2015:
  http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Management/Business-planning/Plans/2012-2013/
  (2012-08-31)-Corporate-Plan-2012-13.pdf

- Homeless Link: http://homeless.org.uk/welfare-aware

- Shelter: http://www.shelter.org.uk

About the Evidence Hub

The Evidence Hub is a partnership between the local NHS and Islington Council that brings together information held across different organisations into one accessible place. It provides access to evidence, intelligence and data on the current and anticipated needs of the Islington population and is designed to be used by a broad range of audiences including practitioners, researchers, commissioners, policy makers, Councillors, students and the general public.