

# Homelessness Reduction Act

## The Southwark perspective

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# Homesearch Centre

## Primary services at the Homesearch Centre

- Customer Services – Initial contact
- Part VII applications – Assessments
- Homelessness Reviews – Refused homelessness decisions
- Private Sector Tenancy Team – s21 notices
- Financial Inclusion Team – Discretionary Housing Payments
- Supported housing (Reablement) – Singles requiring supported housing
- No First Night – Singles and Rough Sleeping
- Housing First – High and complex needs customers
- Temporary Accommodation
- Procurement

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## Context, culture change, recruitment and training

- Strong Leadership
- Corporate support with “homelessness being everyone’s responsibility and priority”
- Elected Members support, training and reports
- Cabinet Member and Cabinet buy-in to the new culture
- Listening to customers
- Empowerment, agile working and thinking
- Training/ILM
- Investing in the team
- Creating an action plan and regular monitoring

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## Context, culture change, recruitment and training

- Co-production of services with staff and partners
- Shelter and Solace Women’s Aid work from the Housing Solutions office 5 days a week (independent advocacy)
- Engaging with all officers in the design of the new service
- Customer satisfaction now 92% increased from 15% six years ago
- Recruitment of officers with lived homeless experience
- Growing our own through the recruitment of 15 apprentice officers
- Officer satisfaction the highest its ever been following the annual staff opinion survey
- Loads more prevention tools – we are now prevention focussed

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## Context, culture change, recruitment and training

- New dynamic environment we encourage risk taking and there is no such thing as failure or mistakes
- London Training Academy and the national Rough Sleeping Academy
- Innovators and pioneers
- The change start with you
- Redesigned the service and the focus No more what we can't do, but more of what we can – innovation, innovation and innovation
- Southwark historically had the 3rd highest number of homeless applications in England
- Central London location. Local Housing Allowance £95.18 for a 1 bedroom flat per week. Average market rent for a 1 Bedroom flat is £480.00 per week
- Universal Credit been in operation for over 2 years

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## Context, culture change, recruitment and training

- The Homelessness Reduction Act has been live since October 2016 for 100% of homeless cases
- 100% of the DHP budget has been spent on homeless prevention
- We have been visited by over 280 council's
- We have eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation and now working to eliminate the use of Nightly Paid accommodation.
- Accommodation Finding service (PRS)

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# Who are they?

- Living somewhere and need support to stay (Prevention)
- Living somewhere and need support to find somewhere else (Prevention or Relief)
- Not living somewhere and need support to find somewhere to live (Relief)

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# Who are they ?

70% were families



30% Singles

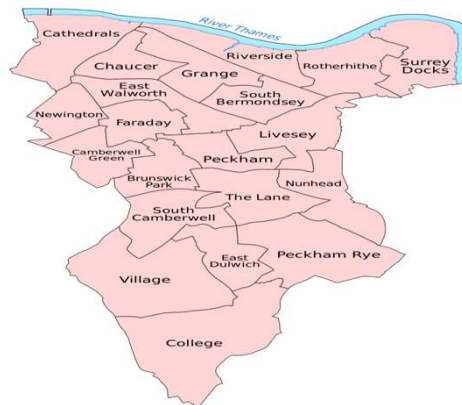


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# Where are they or likely to come from?

- Map of the borough (local intelligence)
- Data analysis of approaches and reasons for approaches (Duty to refer categories)
- 26,000 through the Home search per annum
- 4,000+ applications per year
- 34% Friends and family
- 27% End of AST
- Culture of the pockets or wards within the borough

London Borough of Southwark  
Ward Map, 2002-present



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# Who are the stakeholders?

- Local community
- Staff
- Third sector
- Local politicians
- MHCLG

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## What is the perspective of the above on services delivered and accessibility?

- Homelessness Forum
- Potential, prospective and current partners (landlords, referring agencies, mental health )
- Focus groups ( Homelessness Link)
- Mystery shops ( Shelter, DAHA, Solace)
- External accreditation ( CSE, Gold standard, DAHA)

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## What we found out?

Customer satisfaction was low  
Staff moral was low  
Mystery shop outcome results were poor



**H I G H**

Caseloads were high

Waiting times were high

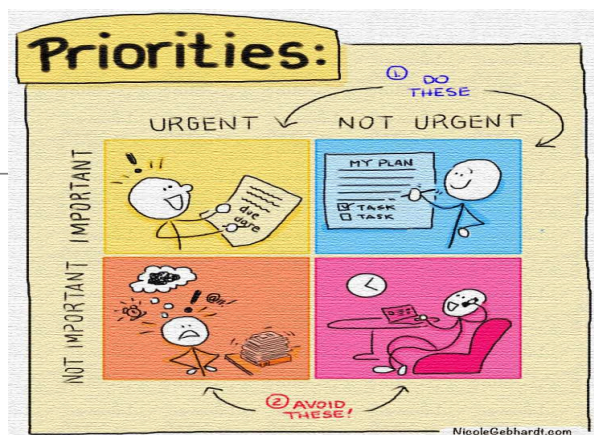
Litigation was high

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# What we did

## CULTURE – Redesign the service and changed the focus

- Aimed for external accreditation – a goal/vision – leadership and learned behaviour. Cost of doing against cost of doing nothing.
- Staff engagement and development – Service wide meetings/ Head of Housing meetings/ILM/Training/ Staff surveys/Apprenticeship programme/London Training Academy



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# What we did

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# What we did?

- Changed the way information was provided and the conversation. From paper to digital and automation where possible (Information on TV in reception, updated the website, staff surveys and monthly indicators)
- Outreach work (Visiting officers, Financial Inclusion Team, IOMs, SPOT,
- Co located with external services (Shelter, Solace, DAHA, Homelessness Link)
- Invitations to all to shadow the service and see how we could improve services
- Looked at our supported housing journey Got all the providers around the table to address inflow and outflow
- Homelessness Strategy



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# Outcomes

- Customer Satisfaction 92% Waiting time under 6 mins
- Acceptance rate 25% YTD
- QTR 1 2nd highest preventions across the country
- Last Mystery Shop - Very good service
- Staff Survey – 98% felt informed and part of the process
- 91% felt that the office environment was open for discussion
- 90% felt they could be flexible and innovative in the way that they work
- 94% happy with the training and professional opportunities provided



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# Outcomes

- 250 singles secured accommodation NFNO/Housing First in last 6 months
- Promotions of staff within the service ( Growth model)
- New staff trained in new culture, longer lengths of service staff supported to be part of the change
- Improved partnership work and better understanding of how we look to others and how we can continue to improve
- Less than 1% of cases in court since trailblazer and then HRA – 76% of reviews were NP or IH now 55% suitability
- 19/20 high need complex customers in sustained tenancies for more than six months.

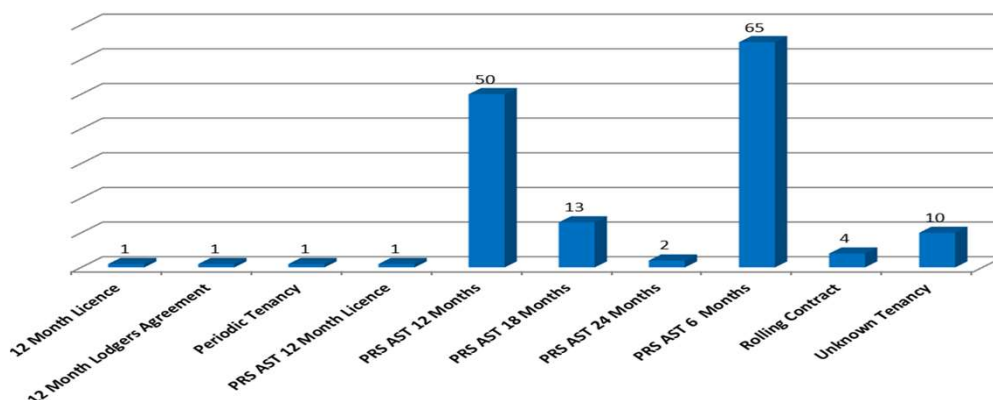


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# Outcomes

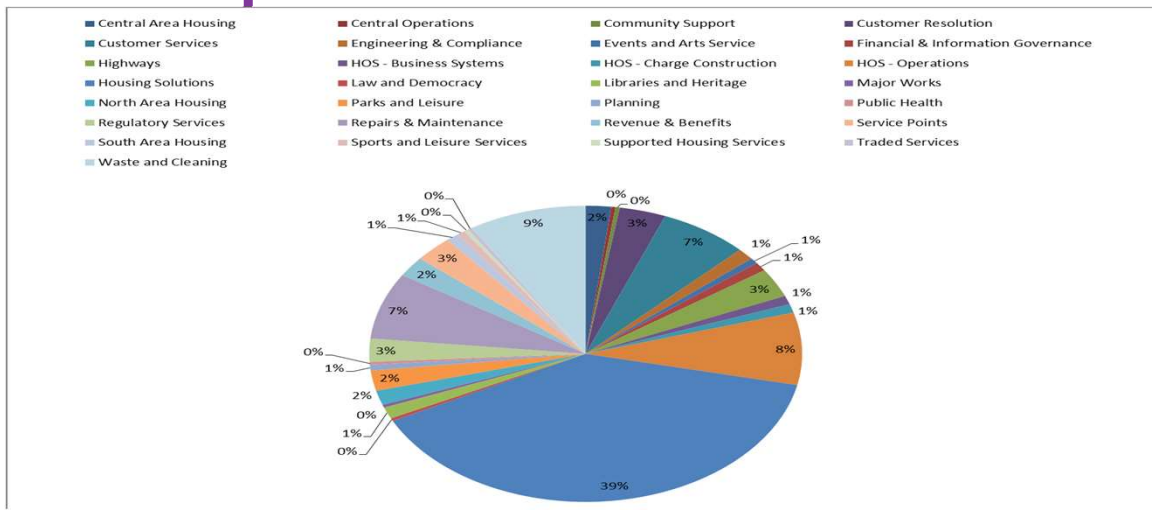
- Significant number of customers rehoused through NFNO

**NFNO Tenancy Types/Lengths**



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# Compliments



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# The challenges

- Government funding is inadequate
- The council is committed to making the Homelessness Reduction Act a success
- To have a successful Housing First model we need the housing
- The welfare reforms are increasing homelessness
- Duty to Cooperate not duty to refer
- Partners must be involved whether through 'Duty To Refer' or because 'homelessness is everybody's business'. Earlier identification and prevention means working better together. Housing departments cannot deliver this alone
- Reducing rough sleeping is an urgent priority the Act will require assessments, support, referrals where needed BUT genuine and sustainable solutions must involve contribution from partners- health and social care, employment and training, criminal justice...
- Changing the culture is essential to improving customer experience. This is a key challenge for partners and advocates, as well as local authorities

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# The challenges

- Resources – Supply and Demand
- ( 26,000 customers per year, 4000 + applications )
- Budget pressure (TA)
- Creating the culture to be business as usual – constant review of staff profile
- Turning the PHP from an assessment to a conversation with agreement.
- Changing the conversation to information of interest – consent rather than compliance
- Co-ordinating different perspectives and needs ( Stakeholders having different perspectives and wanting the same thing (Supply)
- Continuity of programmes and projects (Funding)
- Inflow and outflow from supported housing
- Non engagement or upheaval with complex needs cases
- HCLIC – created a project delivery team and senior manager lead officer

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# New innovations

- Domestic Abuse
- Transitional Insurance – Help2Rent
- Crisis true outreach - prevention work
- Using HCLIC data to continually re-design our service and service offer
- Employment linked with homelessness services
- Building critical thinking and creativity throughout the service
- Re-modelling completely the service provided using the Homelessness Reduction Act as the minimum offer
- Growing our own staff and staff growth
- Homelessness Reduction Boards
- Your leadership shadow will influence others.

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# Summary

HRA is not without challenge, however the bigger challenge is standing still when the world is moving!



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# Facilitation

- What is your local authority / organisation doing in this area of work?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges you need to overcome?
- How do you plan to overcome these challenges?
- How do you think this work will improve service for your customers?
- What support or guidance would help you to do this?

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