

A person wearing a dark coat and light-colored pants is walking away from the camera on a narrow, paved street. The street is flanked by tall, multi-story brick buildings with many windows. The scene is captured in a high-angle, slightly tilted perspective, emphasizing the density and height of the urban environment. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, reddish-orange tones, with a teal overlay on the right side.

No room to move?

homeless
LINK

Frontline agencies in partnership

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Ask homeless people what would make the most difference in their lives. Ask anyone working with homeless people the same question. The answer you're most likely to hear is, 'a home to move on to'. Significant progress has been made in helping rough sleepers off the streets and into hostels. But if people can't move on from this type of accommodation – which has always been intended to be temporary – then it silts up. The problem has now reached the scale where there are real problems in finding spaces for new rough sleepers on the streets of our capital city.

This report presents evidence of the scale and costs of this problem researched from London's main hostel providers, as part of a wider piece of research that will highlight the issues nationally. There are hundreds of people stuck in London's hostels who are ready and keen to move on. Others are forced to sleep rough for want of a hostel

bed. This is both a personal tragedy for each individual and a significant waste of public money.

There is no single easy solution to the problem. It calls for a coherent and determined effort from Government, the Mayor, Housing Corporation, local authorities and housing associations to commit to an action plan. We have to work together across sectors to find move-on accommodation for the people living in the capital's hostels or risk a damaging reversal of the progress made in tackling rough sleeping.



Jenny Edwards
Chief Executive
Homeless Link

The survey found:

1. 46% of people in hostels are ready to move on.
2. The average waiting time is between a year and 18 months.
3. People needing move-on accommodation with medium support are sometimes waiting over two years.
4. Hostels are actively seeking move-on for homeless people through local authorities, housing associations or private landlords.
5. There is a high cost to the public purse of keeping people in hostels when they no longer need to be there; for one group alone this cost is estimated to be over £8 million a year.

1. Introduction

The survey covers direct access and longer term hostels in central and outer London, representing about a quarter of the bed spaces available in the capital.

Hostels are a vital link between the street and a settled home for people moving out of homelessness. They provide a wide diversity of services that help homeless people get back on their feet again - including advice, support, training and education, life skills

and basic skills as well as access to drug and alcohol treatment services.

The survey¹ draws on the experience of Homeless Link's member agencies in London that provide temporary accommodation for homeless people.

'Move-on' describes the homes to which people in hostels move and includes moves to non-hostel supported housing as well as moves to other settled accommodation.

There are around 500 hostels in London; many provide long-term accommodation for people with high support needs. This report focuses on hostels providing temporary accommodation for people moving away from homelessness. Such hostels vary considerably in size, the types of people they provide services for and the level of support they can provide. Some offer direct or quick access to people who are street homeless: others are hostels to which people might move after a direct access hostel. There are specialist hostels that cater for groups such as women, young people, and people with mental health problems or substance abuse issues.

The 76 hostels that completed the survey have a total of 3,639 bed spaces and represent about a quarter of all hostel bed spaces in London. It is possible that some of the hostels not surveyed are also experiencing similar problems.

The research covers hostels in 18 London boroughs, including Westminster and Lambeth. It also includes 12 hostels in outer London boroughs.

2. Waiting

Numbers waiting to move on

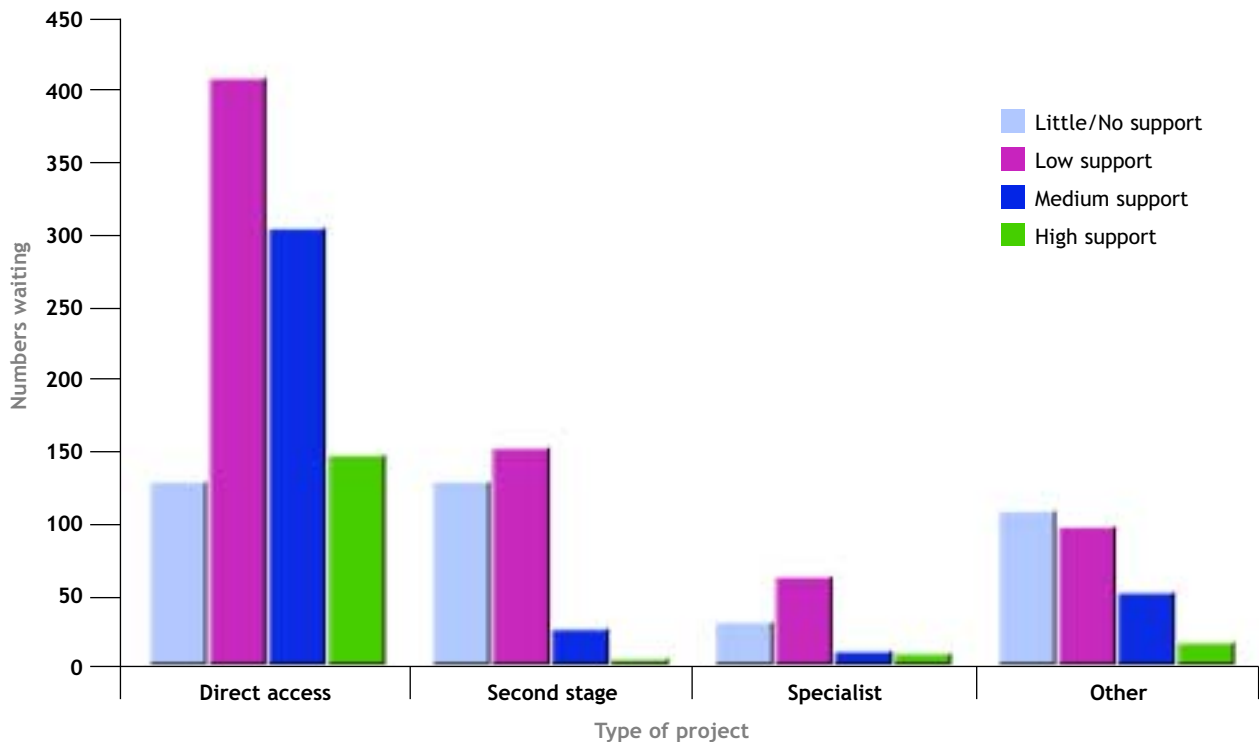
Hostels were asked how many of their residents were currently waiting for different types of move-on accommodation.

- The total number of people waiting for move-on accommodation was 1689.

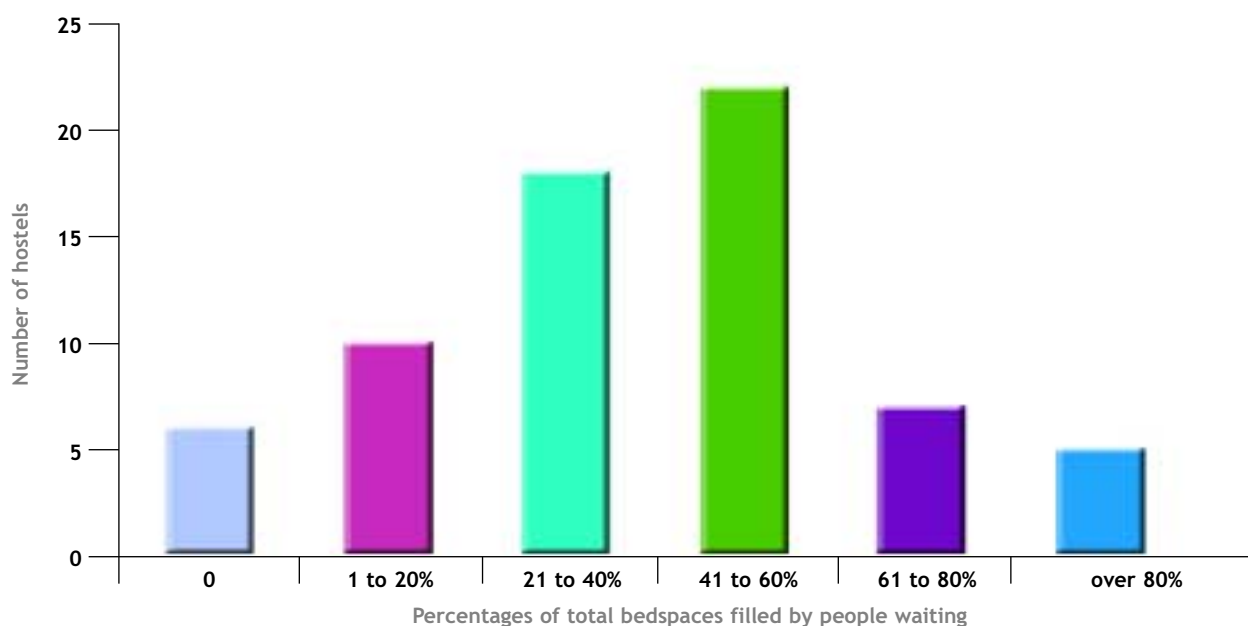
Key points

- Over 1600 people are waiting to move on.
 - In almost half of the hostels over 40% of accommodation is occupied by people who are ready to move on.
-
- Most of those waiting were in direct access (992) and second stage (314) accommodation.
 - Most residents were waiting for accommodation with low support (727) or little or no support (389).

Total numbers waiting to move on by project and support need type



The percentage of total bed spaces filled by people waiting to move on



- In almost half of the hostels over 40% of accommodation is occupied by people who are ready to move on.

Length of time waiting for move-on

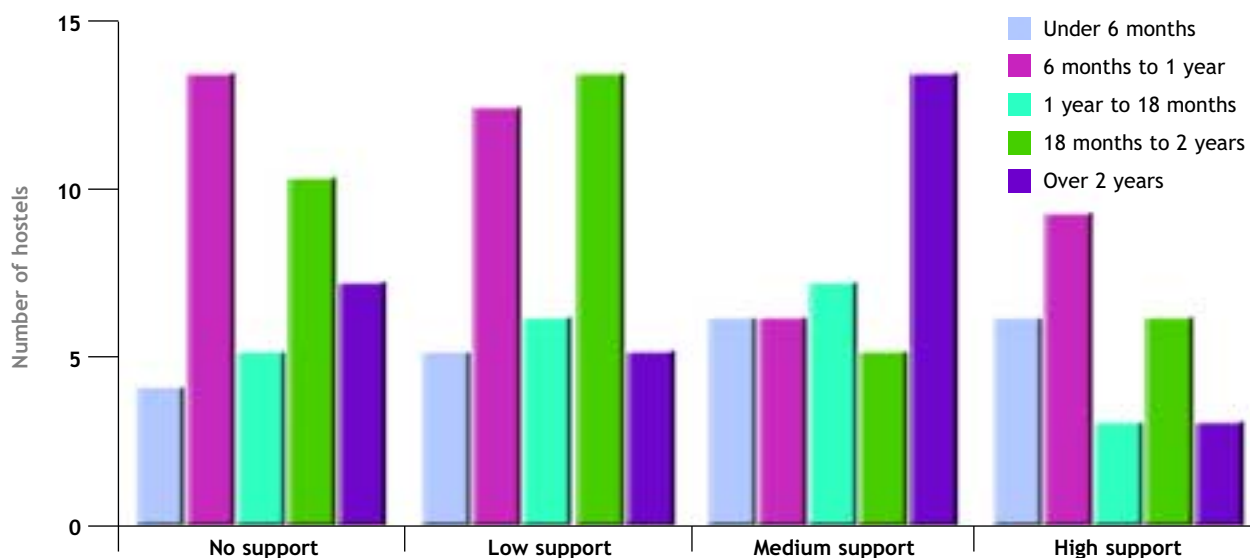
Key points

- The average length of waiting time for move-on accommodation across all hostels is between one year and 18 months.
- 13 hostels report service users waiting on average for over two years for move-on housing with medium support.

People with different support needs tend to wait for move-on for different periods of time.

- The average length of waiting time for move-on accommodation across all hostels is between one year and 18 months.
- People waiting to move to high support accommodation wait for an average of between six months and one year.
- However people waiting with little or no, low or medium support needs have to wait on average between one year and 18 months.
- 13 hostels reported service users waiting on average for over two years for move-on housing with medium support.

Average waiting times for service users by support need



The people in one direct access hostel, with 117 bed spaces, are waiting on average for one year to 18 months for high support move-on,

18 months to two years for low support move-on and more than two years for move-on with no support and medium support.

3. The human costs

Homeless people are being forced to wait for longer and longer before they are offered a chance to move on to a more settled life.

People working to support them report the very real costs in human terms:

- 'Loss of motivation to change'.
- 'Impact on mental and physical well-being'.
- 'Increased disputes between service users through frustration, de-skilling and loss of independent living skills'.

'There aren't enough properties ready for homeless people at this stage because those already housed in these properties (hostels and supported housing) aren't moved through the system fast enough' - views of a Broadway service user. *All packed up with nowhere to go (Broadway, May 2004)*

'The importance of having somewhere to call a home was summed up to me in a simple statement by one of Broadway's clients at our Speak Out on move-on earlier this year. He said: "your credibility improves". That is what homelessness services should be aiming for.' *Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of Broadway*

'Hostels, meant as short-stay provision, are now housing people long-term as a result of a lack of move-on accommodation; resulting in desperation and frustration for hostel residents.' *Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive of Thames Reach Broadway.*

4. The financial costs

There are financial costs as well as human costs. For example, the report estimates the cost for the 727 people needing low support accommodation in the hostels responding.

- The average weekly rent for this group is £107² and the average Supporting People cost for these hostels is £206³. The total cost for these 727 people to live in hostels is over £227,500 per week or £11,800,000 per year. They are waiting on average between a year and 18 months.
- If the same people were living in housing association bedsits with floating support the average rent would be £54.32⁴ and floating support £42.58⁵ a week. The total cost for the same 727 people would be under £70,500 per week or £3,700,000 per year.
- The difference is more than £8.1 million.

| | Hostels | Self-contained |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Rent | £107.00 | £54.32 |
| Support | £206.00 | £42.58 |
| Weekly cost per person | £313.00 | £96.90 |
| Weekly cost for 727 | £227,551.00 | £70,446.00 |
| Cost for 727 per year | £11,832,652.00 | £3,663,207.00 |
| Total difference | £8,169,445.00 | |

5. How did this happen? Supply and demand

This section looks at the annual shortfall between the demand for permanent move-on accommodation. Hostels were asked how

much move-on they needed and how much they had access to during the financial year 2003/4.

Key points

- The hostels in the survey have an annual shortfall of over 600 places of move-on accommodation.
- Some hostels obtain no move-on at all, despite having clients waiting.
- Most receive low numbers of move-on places, from a variety of sources.

Gap between supply and demand

The survey reveals many hostels had a shortfall of appropriate move-on accommodation (totalling 634 places). For example, one direct access hostel with 18 bed spaces, had access to only three move-on places although they required 11 places.

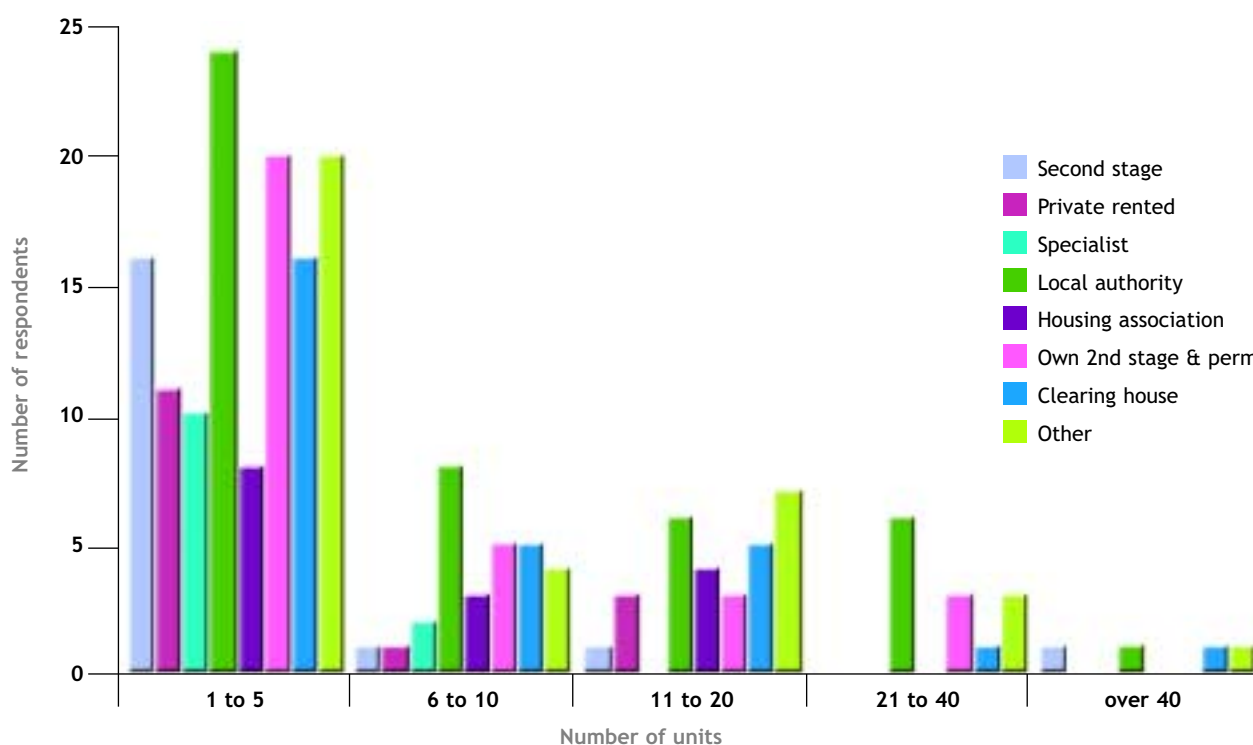
Within the total, the greatest gap was for move-on accommodation with low support, where there was a shortage of 285 units; the gap for move-on accommodation with little or no support was 223 units.

Sources of move-on

Hostels' sources of move-on accommodation are shown on the chart below.

- Most hostels receive some move-on from local authorities.
- Homelessness organisations make good use of their own stock: 34 projects use their own second stage or permanent accommodation.

Amount of move-on by source



Hostels rely on a range of accommodation providers receiving relatively low numbers of move-on places from each. For example, one direct access hostel with over 100 bed spaces received two move-on places from a local

authority, 11 from the Clearing House⁶, five from a housing association, one from the private rented sector and one from other sources. Most receive between one and five move-on places from any single source.

Sources of move-on:

'The local authority has not made a decision about how many nominations they will offer us. Last year nominations were on hold to deal with a backlog. Currently we have 15 residents we are unable to house.' - *A second stage hostel.*

6. What the research tells us

- Hostels in London are experiencing a considerable gap between the need for move-on accommodation for the people they support and demand. This can result in waits of between one and two years.
- This problem has an impact on the well-being and readiness of homeless people to move to more settled accommodation successfully.
- The longest waiting times are most often for accommodation with medium support.
- The greatest gap in supply is for accommodation with low support.

7. A plan for action

As a first step to resolving this problem all organisations with responsibilities to homeless people should acknowledge the move-on problem and commit to contributing to the solution.

Homeless Link, as the national representative body for voluntary sector providers of services to homeless people, is committed to highlighting the issue and to working to encourage and co-ordinate commitments from all relevant sectors and agencies. In addition, we will continue to offer training to staff within the sector to ensure they understand how to use homelessness law to increase their clients' chances of obtaining a settled home.

The ODPM is in a pivotal position to use its influence with local government. It should involve the Housing Corporation and call a move-on summit to ensure potential investors in and providers of move-on accommodation sign up to do so expeditiously. ODPM can also push for the support that must go with accommodation in order to ensure tenancies can be maintained - i.e. tenancy sustainment or floating support, and ensuring this support is also available to those who may be moving into the private rented sector.

Short term measures to relieve the immediate pressure

- The GLA should co-ordinate boroughs and the ALG should establish, as a matter of urgency, a London-wide rent deposit and approved landlord scheme, building on existing good practice. This would enable almost 400 people in hostels who have little or no support needs to move into the private rented sector. This should be linked to short-term resettlement support.
- London Boroughs should each make available 20 units of self-contained permanent accommodation towards a pan-London pool of move-on accommodation for hostel residents. This would resolve the immediate problem of the gap between needs and allocation of almost 650 units and unblock hostel spaces across London allowing rough sleepers access to appropriate support. The allocation of these units should be co-ordinated by the Clearing House.
- Boroughs should use the full range of their powers to ensure that properties that can be available for move-on accommodation are made available from public and private sources.

- Boroughs should offer move-on accommodation with floating support or the support of tenancy sustainment teams as appropriate.
- Boroughs should address problems with payment of Housing Benefit that discourage or prevent the private sector offering move-on housing.
- Identify investment for the re-modelling of existing services that are not appropriately used at present.
- Set an ambitious target in the London Housing Strategy for the reduction of the number of people in hostels who are waiting to move on.

Long term measures to solve the problem

London Boroughs should:

- Ensure their homelessness and Supporting People strategies identify challenging but achievable targets for move-on from homeless services within their borough.
- Allocate move-on accommodation to those living in hostels in the borough.
- Work constructively with hostel providers to ensure that they identify those people in hostels who are homeless and in priority need.
- Co-ordinate sub-regional allocation with neighbouring authorities and apportion towards a pan-London pool of move-on provision.
- Ensure floating support and tenancy sustainment services are available for as long as is required to sustain a tenancy successfully.

London Housing Board and the Housing Corporation should:

- Identify investment to develop new supported accommodation for those people who are not ready to live independently.

London Planning Board and planning authorities should:

- Ensure that London and district plans acknowledge that move-on accommodation is required to address social inclusion, and to use planning powers to ensure that more is provided, including through planning gain.

London Housing Federation should:

- Promote to housing associations the need to allocate units to hostel residents and to promote the practice needed to support former rough sleepers in settled accommodation.
- Promote to specialist supported housing providers the need to plan for, allocate units and train staff to meet the specific needs of formerly homeless people.

Voluntary sector providers of services to homeless people should:

- Explore and promote innovative approaches to identifying move-on through public and private sector partnerships, including those that enable greater access to the private rented sector.
- Make best possible use of the opportunities offered by the Homelessness Act to ensure that homeless people receive their rights.

Endnotes

- ¹ The questionnaire included a definition of move-on and of the different levels of support needed. Little or no support - rent collection, housing management, Low support - staff visit as required, offer advice and onward referrals, Medium support - key-work system, staff on site, High support - 24 hour staff cover.
- ² The London Hostels Directory, published by RIS, gives weekly rent figures net of ineligible costs. We calculated a weighted average, based on the number of residents waiting in each hostel.
- ³ Supporting People costs came from the London Benchmarking Group - a group that includes many of the main hostel providers. The figures given were for three different types of service: 24hour/seven day cover with staff sleeping overnight; 24hour/seven day cover with staff awake at night and staff on site or visiting regularly. The costs were allocated against the hostels depending on what service they provided (this information came from the London Hostels Directory) and a weighted average was again calculated.
- ⁴ ODPM Rents and tenancies for 2003 http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_604135.xls
- ⁵ SPKweb - London Unit Cost comparison table - from Platinum Cut November 2003.
- ⁶ The Clearing House co-ordinates the lettings service for accommodation provided by housing associations for former rough sleepers who meet certain criteria.

Homeless Link is the national body representing the homelessness sector in England and Wales.

Its 500 members offer advice services; temporary and permanent housing; move-on accommodation; hostel provision; day centres; mental health and drug services; local authority services; a wide variety of support for people in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation; as well as offering direct support for rough sleepers, many with multiple needs.

Homeless Link and the sector it represents work in close collaboration with the Housing and Homelessness Support Directorate at ODPM and with local, regional and national government to:

- combat the causes of homelessness
- provide high quality and innovative services to help people move on to permanent accommodation and
- work to reduce the risk of people falling into homelessness.

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