Do you want to know more about housing and health in Richmond upon Thames?

Read on for more information about the impact housing can have on health and how housing contributes to the health and wellbeing of Richmond residents.

Welcome to the eighteenth issue of the JSNA Newsletter - a rolling publication produced by Public Health that describes the health, social care and wellbeing of local residents. In this issue we provide information about housing and homelessness, including the services the Council provides. We highlight how good quality housing can promote independence and improve wellbeing and the risks of poor housing to health. Focusing on the inter-connectivity of housing and health fits in with our commitment to address the ‘wider determinants of public health’.

Housing is a hot topic across London at the moment, with issues ranging from affordability of purchasing a home, to the difficulties in finding a private rented flat (or indeed the disappearance of living room space in many flat-shares), to discussions around supporting older people to live independently in their own home.

Locally, Richmond borough has the highest house prices in outer London and, like most other London boroughs, the affordability of housing is a key concern. Private rents are also the highest in outer London and there is a thriving private rental market, which focuses largely on rentals for young professionals and family homes for affluent households. The borough has a large owner occupied sector but one of the smallest housing association sectors in Greater London through which to meet housing need.

In this newsletter we provide a focus on one of the key housing issues facing London boroughs today, homelessness, when a landlord ends a tenancy in the private rented sector. We also look at the impact that inadequately heated homes can have on health, investigate how specialist extra care supported housing provision can enable older people to maintain independent living and finally review the benefits that ‘supported housing’ can have for a range of Richmond residents, such as our newest scheme for residents with complex needs who access the Council’s Learning Disability Service.

Where possible, we have also outlined the potential cost saving to the NHS of good housing or housing interventions such as supported housing, where there are real financial savings to be made, through better collaboration between sectors.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of this JSNA newsletter please get in touch with us at jsna@richmond.gov.uk. We will gladly receive and consider your feedback, data, information and intelligence for future newsletter publications. The next newsletter will have a focus on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

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Policy and Strategy

The last national housing strategy was published by the Coalition Government and to date there is no new published document on housing strategy. That said, the Government has announced significant changes to national housing policy and welfare reforms in a number of Bills currently going through Parliament. These provide a steer to the Government’s current policy approach. Additionally local authorities in Greater London must have ‘due regard’ to the Greater London Authority’s (GLA) Housing Strategy when developing their own housing plans. Key documents of interest include:

**National & Regional**

- Housing and Planning Bill (2015)
- Summer budget and Autumn Statement 2015
- Homes for London, the London Housing Strategy 2014 – GLA

**Local**

- Richmond upon Thames Housing Strategy 2013 – 2017
- Richmond upon Thames Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016
- Richmond upon Thames Tenancy Strategy

Council Housing Services

Having transferred its housing stock to a housing association, Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP), in 2000, the Council does not have a housing management role. Housing associations are therefore responsible for all housing management issues (rent collection, repairs etc.) within the borough.

The Council provides a number of operational housing services, including:

- **Housing Options** - dealing with statutory assessment of homelessness and providing a range of housing options and housing advice.
- **Housing Allocations Team** - manages the Housing Register for those waiting for a housing association home and the allocation of properties.
- **Resettlement Team** - provides support for young people and vulnerable homeless households whilst in temporary accommodation.
- **Temporary Accommodation team** - sources and manages accommodation for homeless households.
- **Residential Team** - manages the Councils statutory duties around house conditions; assists older and vulnerable people with adaptations and grants to live safely at home and provides grants for energy efficiency work.

The Council also has a *strategic housing function*. This includes undertaking research to understand local housing issues; meeting statutory responsibilities (e.g. developing Homelessness strategy); working with partners (e.g. joint bids for funding); enabling development of affordable housing (working with housing association partners) and assisting the *Tenants’ Champion* to provide support to housing association tenants and leaseholders.
Homelessness from the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

Nationally, more families with children are living in the PRS, as owning a home becomes increasingly challenging to afford. Richmond has the highest priced private rent levels in outer London; the market focusing on young professionals, with some corporate lets.

- Ending a tenancy from the PRS is the number one reason for homelessness in Richmond, responsible for 96 out of 232 acceptsances in 2014/15 (41%).
- Council research highlights key reasons landlords are asking tenants to leave are: wanting to sell the property, the property no longer being affordable for tenants, landlord wanting to inhabit and need for refurbishment.
- For low income households reliant on Housing Benefit, finding money for a deposit or first month rent can be challenging. In high demand markets, landlords can choose tenants who can pay higher rents and who are not reliant on Housing Benefit.
- The Council runs a Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme to assist households threatened with homelessness to secure alternative PRS accommodation.

Extra Care Housing

Extra Care housing allows older people to live in their own home whilst still meeting their care needs.

- Extra Care housing provides self-contained accommodation with care available on site. Crucially, it allows older people to live independently in their own home whilst getting the care they need, avoiding the need to move into a residential care setting.
- Richmond currently has two extra care schemes (one purpose built) with 67 units across the two schemes.
- A longitudinal study found extra care led to a cost saving to the NHS (from a reduction in hospital admissions) of up to £512 per person per year. For a scheme with forty units this could average savings of at least £20,000 per year.
- Richmond Council has carried out research on the need for extra care provision, recommending three schemes and provision is geographically spread across the Borough.

Supported Housing

Supported housing is an umbrella term for a range of housing solutions for vulnerable people. It includes supported living schemes, refuges, ‘extra care’ housing & hostel accommodation. It is characterised by the provision of person centred support services that work to assist a person to live independently.

- As of March 2014, there were 273 units of supported housing in the Borough (excl. extra care).
- Supported housing can provide financial benefits to social care & NHS commissioners, reducing costly out-of-borough residential care placements or inpatient hospital costs. National research estimates these savings for mental health at £6,927 per client per year.
- The Council works with housing associations to develop new supported housing schemes. Most recently four homes were developed for clients with a learning disability with high level and complex support needs.
- Alongside supported housing, the Council works with housing associations to enable the development of affordable housing (rented & shared ownership). Between 2010 and 2015 a total of 490 additional affordable homes were developed.

Inadequately heated Homes and Health

Cold housing can have direct impacts on health, including conditions such as respiratory problems, circulatory diseases and mental ill health. Conversely improving energy efficiency can lead to improvements in circulatory health.

- Latest estimates suggest 9% of household dwellings in Richmond face fuel poverty compared to 11% in England.
- 3,042 homes in the Borough are estimated to have Category One (significant) hazards around ‘excess cold’ under the statutory Housing, Health and Safety Rating System. Over 90% of these are in private sector housing (owner occupied or PRS).
- Research commissioned by the Council estimates ‘excessive cold’ in Richmond’s private housing stock will cost the NHS £463,780 in treatment costs per year.
- The Council can take enforcement action requiring landlords to carry out works where their properties do not meet statutory standards. The Council also offers ‘Cold Buster’ grants for energy efficiency work, as well as operating a ‘winter warmth’ home visiting scheme and fuel grants.
- In Sunderland, as part of an innovative pilot between housing association and the NHS, GPs can prescribe boilers and new central heating to address a patient’s health needs.
What next?

**Future needs assessments**

Throughout the year short topic-based reports are published on the Council website, enabling key messages to be shared with local partners. Topics that are planned for future JSNA reports include:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Substance Misuse

Look out for our newsletters and have a look at some of the resources we have highlighted below. All health needs assessments and quarterly newsletters are available via: www.richmond.gov.uk/jsna.

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**Further resources**

- **The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/annual_public_health_report

- **Research on the private rented sector in Richmond upon Thames**

- **Research on the local housing market including housing need**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/dtz_full_report.pdf

- **Research on the need for extra care provision in Richmond upon Thames**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/extra_care_housing_evidence_base.pdf

- **Homelessness Review (evidence base) and Homelessness Strategy**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/home/services/housing/housing_strategy_and_policy/housing_strategies/homelessness_strategy.htm

- **Housing Strategy**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/housing_strategy_13_17.pdf

- **Housing Grants and Funding**
  www.richmond.gov.uk/home/services/housing/housing_grants.htm

- **Public Health Outcomes Framework**
  www.phoutcomes.info/

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**Contact us**

If you have any topics or issues you think the JSNA team could analyse, or if you would like to get involved in any of the work currently underway, please email us at: jsna@richmond.gov.uk