



HOUSING VISION

Under-occupation in Registered Social Landlord Accommodation in Bromsgrove District

Client: Bromsgrove District Council

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to examine issues of under-occupation in the social housing sector in Bromsgrove District, using Census data, a desk-top review of policies, procedures and initiatives relating to under-occupation, tenant surveys and tenant focus groups.

This comprehensive approach showed a need and a demand for an under-occupation policy which recognises the strategic and policy linkages between under-occupation and other policy areas, and that makes best use of the housing stock.



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The aim of the project was to examine the scale and nature of under-occupation in the social housing sector in Bromsgrove District, including housing rented from Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (a stock transfer from the District Council in 2004) and from other Registered Providers (housing associations).

The project was completed in July 2010.

PROJECT APPROACH

The definition of under-occupation used in the research was that of the DETR (2001):

'The extent to which a dwelling is over or under-occupied can be measured by comparing the number of bedrooms currently rented by an existing tenant with the minimum number you would be prepared to offer if you were to let them another property...'

Managing Under-occupation: a guide to good practice in social housing, DETR, 2001

The approach adopted consisted of

- Analysis of 2001 Census data on under-occupation;
- Desktop review of policies, procedures and initiatives developed to encourage a reduction in under-occupation;
- Survey consultation with individual tenants;
- Consultation with tenants by focus groups.

The approach included an in-depth review of relevant literature on national, regional and local policy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In simple numerical terms, and using a 'narrow' definition of the Occupancy Rating, analysis of Census data for 2001 identified a potential 730 households living in under-occupied social housing, which represented nearly 19 per cent of all social housing in the District. Further analysis showed there were 751 people aged 50 and over living in under-occupied social housing at that time.

These and other findings indicated both a need and a demand for an under-occupation policy in Bromsgrove which, among other things:

- would provide a personal approach including the options of both staying in the existing and moving elsewhere;
- is flexible and aims to meet the individual's needs rather than apply a blanket solution;
- is explicitly based on the principles of dialogue and collaboration; tenant choice and control;
- sets out how landlords will work together locally in meeting household needs;
- is accompanied by clear, comprehensive and tenant endorsed customer information that sets out guiding principles, standards of service and what to expect from the process of engaging with the landlord; and
- makes explicit links to related policies and procedures e.g. environmental health, tenancy management, antisocial behaviour/ nuisance.

The study established strategic and policy linkages between under-occupation and other policy areas, especially overcrowding, which can enable best use to be made of the housing stock.

SO WHAT?

All Housing Vision output has to pass our simple “So what” test – “So what does this mean for the client or householder?” and “So what practical applications can this information be used for?”.

This test means that everybody is able to understand how the research and analysis has been conducted **and** the final results; how conclusions have been reached **and** how they can best be applied.

So, it's as simple as that.

So what for this project ...

A major achievement of this project was to quantify and profile the number of households willing to down size and to identify the requirements which need to be met to enable them to do so.

TESTIMONIAL

“The project has successfully demonstrated the need for proactive work to encourage and support those who are under-occupying, and to look at their housing options.”

WHAT WE OFFER

Introduction

Established in 2001, Housing Vision has completed over 100 projects for local authorities and housing associations; for the private sector and for sub-regional consortia, regional and national bodies including the CRC and HCA. We can offer the following core services:

Dynamic Area Profiles

GIS-based profiles of user-defined areas incorporating demographic, housing, health, education and socio-economic data to provide 20 year projections of change.

Site/Place-Based Housing Market Assessment

We have undertaken over 50 Assessments to determine the market potential of sites proposed for development, including affordable housing requirements.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

We have completed analyses of housing need and housing market dynamics at local authority and sub-regional levels throughout the country.

Neighbourhood Sustainability Appraisals

We construct social, economic and housing profiles to determine the sustainability of local housing areas, then identify the interventions required to secure their future.

Research and Intelligence

We undertake challenging and original research, for example a sheltered housing sustainability toolkit and analysis of the interrelationship between housing and health.

Policy Review, Analysis and Revision

We specialise in reviewing and refining policies, for example, a project to evaluate the effectiveness of delivering affordable housing in the Bristol sub-region.

Strategic Development

We work with officers and stakeholders to develop housing and related policies and strategies at sub-regional, local authority and neighbourhood levels.

Testimonials

We work hard for and with our clients, and here are just a few of their views:

“The report produced by HVC was very, very good. It was clear, could be read and understood by a wide range of people”.

“One of the most successful aspects was the working relationship and communication; the sense of joint working and good engagement”.



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**For further information please contact
Dr Richard Turkington at:**

e: info@housingvision.co.uk

w: www.housingvision.co.uk

m: 07714 106386

t: 01886 833118

f: 01886 830102