



Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton

www.merton.gov.uk

2004-2006



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FOREWORD

By Councillor Steve Austin, Cabinet Member for Housing and Councillor Edith Macauley, Chair of Joint Consultative Council for Ethnic Minority Organisations

It is with great pleasure that we introduce Merton's first ever Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy. We want to celebrate the fact that this strategy has come to fruition following many months of work by the **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team**, represented by an increasingly large number of community organisations, registered social landlords and other stakeholders. Having set out to involve the community and other stakeholders in developing a strategy for Merton, this document is testimony to successful community engagement and partnership working.

As Cabinet Member of the Council for the Housing Service and as Chair of the Joint Consultative Council for Ethnic Minority Organisations, we are committed to making Merton a great place to live, work and learn for all sections of our community. We strive towards equalities in Merton through promoting full and equal access to learning, employment, services and cultural life and the celebration of diversity. One of the key targets contained in Merton's Community Plan is to **"create greater harmony between people of different races, ages and backgrounds"**. The implementation of this strategy will help us achieve that goal.

The production of this strategy represents a big step forward for Merton's Housing Service. We have devoted significant resources in developing actions to improve housing services for ethnic minorities. Merton's Housing Strategy 2004-2007, was recently awarded 'fit-for-purpose' status, and is underpinned by the objectives and actions identified in this strategy. The strategy also supports other key documents and plans for

Merton, including our first Homelessness Strategy (launched in September 2003), the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for Council Housing, the Housing Service Plan, Merton's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy which is being developed at present.

Our **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy** will also feed into the South-West London Sub-Regional Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy, currently being developed to meet housing needs across borough boundaries. Merton is leading on the development of the sub-regional strategy. We are extremely pleased that the work with our 6 neighbouring boroughs (Croydon, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Sutton, Kingston, Richmond) is now well under way.

The **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy** sets out our main aims and key objectives over the coming years. The main priorities will be to:

- further strengthen partnership working;
- to enhance our understanding of needs;
- to further engage tenants and residents in order to improve provisions and services;
- to promote racial harmony and build sustainable communities; and
- to invest in a workforce that reflects our diverse community.

This strategy contains a three-year action plan, which sets out tasks to be carried out by the Housing Service as well as our partners to improve services. There is also a detailed analysis of Census 2001 information looking at housing and social exclusion issues and how they affect the main ethnic groups in Merton.

We have already made significant progress as a Council in driving forward our race equality work through Merton's Race Equality Scheme. This strategy builds on that work by further developing housing commitments into actions and measurable targets. As well as fulfilling the statutory duty in promoting race equality through our Race Equality Scheme, we also respond to the Government's challenging agenda for housing and sustainable development policies, which highlighted a number of issues relating to ethnic minorities and housing. We have addressed this in this strategy.

For example, the links between high proportions of ethnic minorities and deprived areas in many parts of the UK have been highlighted by the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (2001) and the Communities Plan (2003), which show that ethnic minorities are more likely to be affected by poor housing, unemployment, low educational attainment, ill health and crime. The Communities Plan also emphasised the positive contributions that lettings policies could make to help create mixed and sustainable communities. The Community Cohesion agenda highlighted the need for housing authorities to assess whether housing preferences and lettings policy have any impact upon community well being. We will ensure that these issues are addressed locally through this strategy and action plan.

Having access to suitable and good quality housing as well as adequate support are key to people's well being. We have already set out in Merton's Housing Strategy our priorities, which are to provide more homes, increase housing choice, improve housing conditions in all types of housing, develop communities, and work in harmony with our partner organisations to achieve success. Through the **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy**, we will ensure that all sections of our diverse community will benefit equally from the improvement in housing services.

We want to thank the **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team** and all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy, and

express our appreciation for the support given by members of the Joint Consultative Council for Ethnic Minority Organisations. We have made good progress in addressing the housing needs of ethnic minorities in Merton, but we recognise that this is only the start and we have a lot more work to do.

We will continue to place this work high on our agenda. With the shared commitment of our partners to combine effort and pool resources to make things happen, we are confident that we will achieve our goal.

Finally, we welcome feedback and comments on the strategy and how we can take things forward. Details of contact officers are listed at the end of the documents. The strategy will also be available on the council's website at: www.merton.gov.uk/housingpolicy



Councillor Steve Austin
Cabinet Member for Housing



Councillor Edith Macauley
Chair of the Joint Consultative Council for Ethnic Minority Organisations

1 Background

Introduction

The London Borough of Merton is a racially diverse and multi-faith community, with an increasing proportion of the population being from ethnic minority communities. Each ethnic minority community has its own characteristics, culture, faith and different needs. These have to be understood in order to serve all communities in the borough.

Addressing the needs of ethnic minority communities is key to Merton's Housing Strategy. However, there is limited scope within the main Housing Strategy document to address the needs of these communities in detail. We have therefore developed an Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for the first time. This will ensure that appropriate action is put in place to respond to the need of ethnic minority communities in Merton, and to develop a robust framework for ethnic minority housing issues.

The main purpose of this strategy is - **to improve the responsiveness and sensitivity of housing provisions for ethnic minority communities in Merton.** In this strategy, we aim to achieve the following:

- To identify the housing needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities in Merton through research and improvement of our information base;
- To develop an ethnic minority housing policy which recognises and responds to diverse needs of different ethnic minority groups;
- To develop and implement an action plan to improve Housing provision and services for ethnic minority groups.

The main issues and key priorities identified in this strategy have been incorporated into Merton's Housing Strategy 2004-2007, which has recently achieved 'Fit-for-Purpose' status. The Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy will also feed into other strategic documents, including Merton's Homelessness

Strategy 2003-2008, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (currently in draft form), and a 5-year Supporting People Strategy when it is developed.

This strategy sets out six key objectives to help us achieve our goals and contains a three-year Action Plan to take us to 2006. Implementation of the Action Plan is now well under way with some tasks having already been completed.

Context

When developing a strategy to address needs of ethnic minorities in Merton, we need to ensure that we fulfil our statutory duties in promoting race equality, and to consider the likely impact that recent national housing and social policies may have on ethnic minority communities.

In May 2002, Merton Council published their Race Equality Scheme, which sets out a programme of service reviews to help improve services and to fulfill our duty to promote racial equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. In 2001-2002. We have recently achieved Level 3 of the CRE's Race Equality Standard, and we have achieved Level 2 of the Audit Commission's Equalities Standard. This strategy sets out how Merton's Housing Service will be working in partnership with other agencies to promote race equality and implement housing commitments contained in our Race Equality Scheme.

In the development of new affordable housing, local authorities are now required to work with neighbouring authorities to meet housing needs across borough boundaries, and the Housing Corporation has started allocating funding on a sub-regional basis. The Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy outlines that we will work with our six neighbouring boroughs of the South-West London sub-region (Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth) and with Registered Social Landlords operating in the area, to meet the housing needs of ethnic-minority communities in south-west London.

The Government's Community Cohesion agenda highlighted the need for housing authorities to assess whether housing preferences and lettings policies had any impact upon community well being. The Communities Plan also emphasized the positive contribution that lettings policies could make to help create mixed and sustainable communities. All local authorities are required to develop 'choice-based' lettings schemes by 2010 and our strategy will put in place actions to make sure that ethnic-minority communities will benefit from changes made.

The Social Exclusion Unit has found that ethnic-minority communities are at disproportionate risk of social exclusion, as there are high concentrations of ethnic minorities in the most deprived areas. They are more likely to be affected by poor housing, unemployment, low educational attainment, ill health and crime. This has been highlighted in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2001) and reiterated in the recently published Communities Plan and our Housing Service will be required to plan housing improvement as part of a wider strategy for neighbourhood renewal and sustainable communities. This will therefore form an important element of strategy.

Issues affecting Ethnic Minorities

National Issues

Nationally, while there is much variation within and between different ethnic groups, overall, people from ethnic-minority communities are disproportionately affected by deprivation. They are:

- More likely than others to live in deprived areas;
- More likely to live in unpopular and overcrowded housing;
- More likely to be poor and to be unemployed, regardless of their age, sex, qualifications and place of residence;

- Unemployment rates amongst Bangladeshi and Pakistani men are more than twice as high as their White counterparts; and
- Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean people are more likely to report ill-health than white people.

In many areas, Asian communities are concentrated in poor quality private rented housing, whilst black Caribbean households are significantly over-represented in social housing. People from ethnic minority communities also suffer from racial discrimination, racial harassment and racist crime, services that fail to reach them or meet their needs; and language and cultural barriers in preventing access to information and services.

Local Issues

There has been, until recently, a general lack of information about the needs of ethnic minority groups and little is known about the impact of national policies and programmes on these groups. Analysis of Census 2001 data shows that issues affecting ethnic minorities nationally also affect ethnic minority residents in Merton.

The next section highlights some of the key housing and social exclusion issues faced by different ethnic groups in Merton. More detailed analysis can be found in the report 'Ethnic Minority Communities in Merton Research Report'.



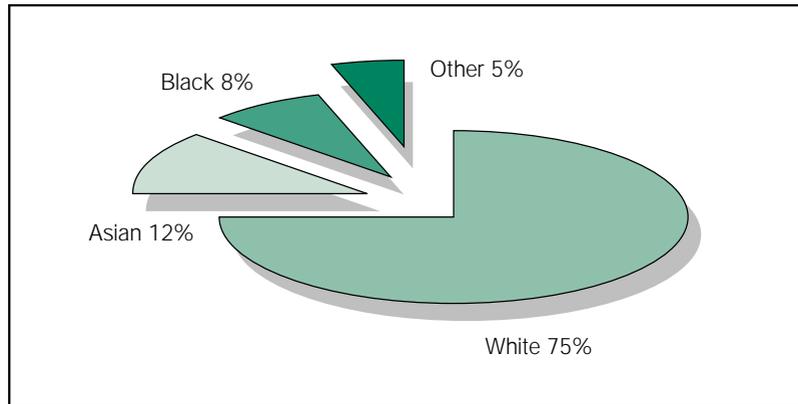
2 Profile of Ethnic Minorities in Merton

Population

The proportion of ethnic minorities living in Merton has increased significantly since 1991 and now makes up one quarter of Merton's population (Census 2001 data) compared to 16.2% of the total population recorded in 1991.

Ethnicity	Census 1991	Census 2001
White	83.8%	75%
Ethnic Minorities	16.2%	25%

Census 2001

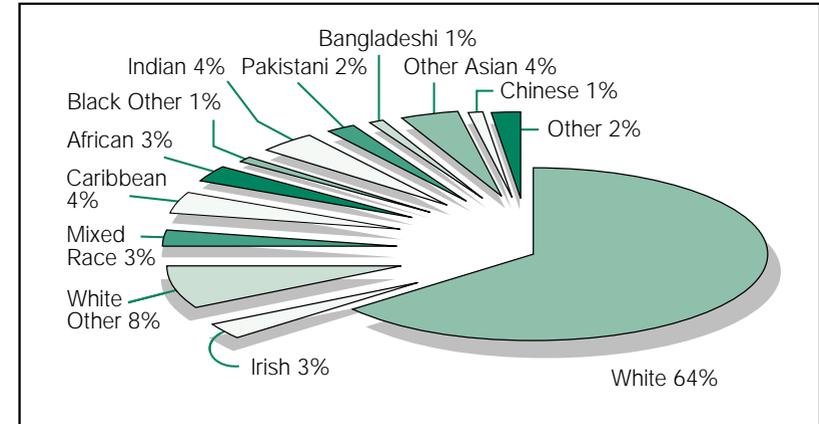


The larger ethnic minority groups in Merton in 2001 are Indian, Black African and Black Caribbean, making up 4.3%, 3.7% and 3.4% of the population respectively.

Census 2001 data identified for the first time, Mixed Race households in Merton, which make up 3% of the total population. 1.3% of the

population are mixed White & Black origin and another 1% are mixed White & Asian.

Merton Population by Ethnic Groups



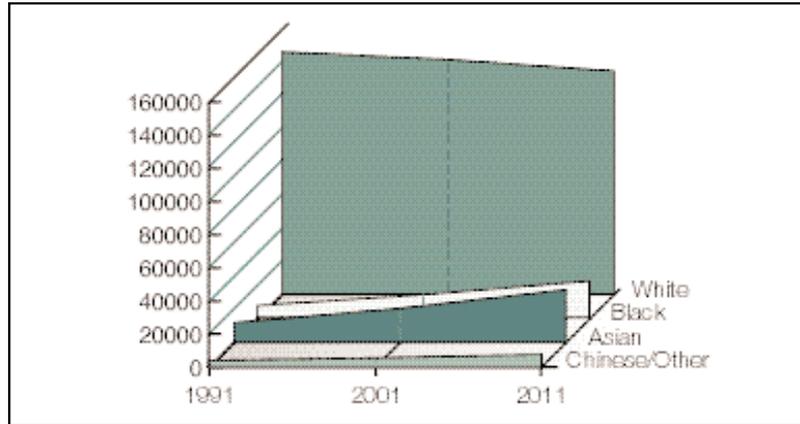
Population Growth

Of the four main ethnic groups in Merton, the Asian community has seen the biggest increase in the last 10 years and now represents 12.4% of Merton's population an increase of 8.7%. Projections show that the Asian community will increase to 17% of Merton's population by 2011.

Other ethnic group populations have also risen since 1991. The Black community has increased from 5.7% to 7.8% and Chinese / Other from 2.5% to 5%, with growth for these communities projected to continue. The proportion of the White community is projected to decrease further.

There is a variation between communities within the four main groups, with the Chinese community projected to increase faster than any of the other groups from 1,220 in 1991 to 5,069 in 2011.

Population Projection 1991 - 2011



Religion

Over two-thirds of Merton’s population are Christians, and almost one in five have no religion. The Muslim community in Merton is the largest religious community after the Christians, making up 6.3% of the population (10,900 persons). There is a sizeable Hindu community, making up 5% of the population (8,750 persons). Other faiths practiced in Merton include the Buddhist, Jewish and the Sikh faiths.

Christian	68.7%
Buddhist	0.8%
Hindu	5.0%
Jewish	0.5%
Muslim	6.3%
Sikh	0.3%
Other	0.4%
No religion	18.0%
Total	187,900

Housing Needs

Ethnic minority applicants are over-represented on the Housing Register and in applicants who approached the Homeless Persons Unit for assistance. As of March 2003 42% of housing register applicants were from ethnic minority communities, compared to 25% of ethnic minorities in the population (Census 2001 Data). Recent analysis of homeless applicants by ethnicity shows that ethnic minorities make up 58% of all applicants.

Ethnic minority communities are also over-represented in people seeking general housing advice, indicating a high level of housing stress and insecurity, which in turn may be a precursor to increased risks of homelessness. There is evidence that housing and exclusion issues affecting ethnic minority communities nationally such as overcrowding, living in poor quality accommodation and unemployment, also affect ethnic minority residents in Merton, with these groups largely concentrated in the more deprived eastern part of the borough.

Black African / Caribbean Communities

Housing Issues

The Housing Needs Survey in 1999 found that Black African households are more likely to be living in unsuitable housing than other groups.

Information from Merton's Housing Register shows a particularly high level of housing needs amongst the Black African & Caribbean households. In 2003, they made up 24.6% of housing register applicants compared to only 7.8% of Merton's population.

	Census 2001	Housing Register Applicants (March 2003)
White	75%	58%
Ethnic Minorities	25%	42%
- Asian	12.4%	11.6%
- Black	7.8%	24.6%
- Other*	4.8%	5.6%

A significantly higher proportion of Black African & Caribbean households were on the Transfer List (March 2003) when compared to their representation in council tenancies (Census 2001 Data). 20.5% of transfer applicants were from Black African & Caribbean communities compared to 10% of council tenants.

	Council Tenants (Census 2001)	Transfer Applicants (March 2003)
White	82%	68.5%
Ethnic Minorities	18%	31.5%
- Asian	5%	7%
- Black	10%	20.5%
- Other	3%	4%

Black households also experience high levels of homelessness. In 2001, 29% of Merton's homeless applicants were Black households, compared to their 8.3% share in the population. Black households are also over-represented in non-priority homeless clients who sought advice from Merton's Housing Advice Team. Housing Advice records show that 31% non-priority homeless clients are Black, compared to their share of 8.3% in the population.

Census 2001 data shows above average levels of overcrowding amongst all Black ethnic groups, with Black African having the highest levels (41.3%) of overcrowding.

Social Exclusion Issues

All Black ethnic groups in Merton have higher than average unemployment levels. Unemployment rates (Census 2001 Data) for the Black Other, Black African and Black Caribbean communities were 9.4%, 8.9% and 7.2% respectively, compared to a borough average of 4.5%.

The Housing Needs Survey 1999 also showed that the average income of Black African & Black Caribbean households was significantly lower than the borough average (at £12,705 & £15,439 respectively compared to the borough average of £22,961). As a result, households from these communities were less likely to be able to afford market housing than white residents.

Asian & “Other” Communities

Housing Issues

Records from Merton’s Housing Register (includes council transfer applicants and waiting list applicants), show that the Asian community is more likely to require larger size 3 or 4 bed accommodation, with 20% of Asian requiring 3-bed units, compared to between 8% to 13% for all other ethnic groups with that requirement.

Housing Register Applicants

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	All Bed Sizes
Asian	54%	20%	20%	5%	604
Black	67%	20%	11%	3%	1,280
Irish	68%	20%	8%	3%	95
White	63%	22%	12%	2%	2,925
Other	57%	24%	13%	5%	293
All	63%	21%	13%	3%	5,197

Census 2001 data shows that 13% of homeless applicants were Asian households and 15% are households from other ethnic groups, compared to 7% and 7.5% in the population respectively. Housing Advice records show that 19% of non-priority homeless clients are from other ethnic groups, compared to 7.5% in the population.

Whilst the Indian and Pakistani communities show above average level of owner occupation, 81% & 74% respectively, the Pakistani community, along with Asian Other residents, also show above average reliance on private

rented accommodation, at 16% & 20% respectively. The shortage of larger homes in the private sector is likely to result in households staying in overcrowded conditions in the private sector.

This is confirmed by Census 2001 data which shows that overcrowding is particularly high amongst Asian residents, in particular Bangladeshi, Asian Other and Pakistani residents. The Bangladeshi community also has the highest proportion of households lacking central heating.

There is a significant Tamil community living in Merton. The Housing Needs Survey conducted in 1999 identified that 1.5% of Merton’s population is Tamil. Although the Tamil community cannot easily be identified through the latest Census data, the information on religion does help to indicate a large number of Tamils living in Merton, as many Tamils practice the Hindu faith.

Research undertaken in 1998 on the needs of the Tamil community showed a heavy reliance on the private rented sector with 66% of respondents living in private rented accommodation. The research report also identified overcrowding as an issue with 57% of respondents saying their current accommodation was overcrowded and 21.5% stating that they had to share a bedroom with someone who was not a household member. Other housing problems in the private sector cited by respondents included dampness, inadequate heating and poor levels of maintenance and repairs.

Social Exclusion Issues

Most Asian communities are more likely to be affected by unemployment, in particular the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. Bangladeshi and Pakistani residents are also more likely to suffer from ill health.

The Irish Community

Housing Issues

The Irish community has the highest proportion of households amongst all ethnic minority groups that lack central heating, although this is slightly below the borough average.

The needs of travellers in Merton has been identified by the Irish community as needing further investigation. Further work will be carried out in this area.

Social Exclusion Issues

Of all ethnic groups in Merton, the Irish community is most likely to be affected by ill health with 10.2% of residents reporting they suffered ill health. Irish residents are also more likely to lack the use of a car, with 35.4% of households lacking car use compared to the borough average of 30%.

Irish residents have one of the lowest proportions (40%) of young people (aged 16-24) in full time study. The proportion of Irish residents in higher paid employment (professionals & management) is also slightly below the borough average.

The Somali Community

Housing Issues

Country of Birth data from Census 2001 shows that Somalis in Merton mostly reside in the more deprived Mitcham wards of Cricket Green, Figges Marsh and Lavender Fields, and in the Ravensbury ward in Morden.

There is a lack of information on the housing needs of Somalis residing in Merton. A closer working relationship with the Somali community in Merton as well as research work is required in order to understand the needs of this community. We are however aware of housing issues affecting the Somali community in England, highlighted by the report - 'Somali Housing

Experiences in England' (2003), by Ian Cole and David Robinson. These include problems communicating with landlords because of language difficulties; overcrowding; and many living in unsuitable temporary accommodation in poor conditions.

Social Exclusion Issues

The 'Somali Housing Experiences in England' report highlighted that there is a high level of unemployment amongst Somalis. They also have difficulties accessing education and training, and have experienced racial harassment. The report also identified high levels of ill health amongst Somalis because of their refugee experience.

For more detailed analysis of housing needs of different ethnic minority communities and how these communities are affected by social exclusion, please see 'Ethnic Minority Communities in Merton Research Report'.



1 Promoting race equality through partnership working

One of the Council's six key objectives - **Equalities Merton** - is to provide full and equal access to learning, employment, services and cultural life and the celebration of diversity. Merton Council also has a duty to promote racial equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Promoting Race Equality

The Council has just achieved Level 3 of the CRE's Race Equality Standard, which was developed in 1996 to help local authorities implement race equality systematically. We have also recently achieved Level 2 of the Audit Commission Equalities Standard introduced in 2002-03, which incorporates an assessment of race equality with that of gender and disability.

In May 2002, Merton Council published their Race Equality Scheme, which sets out a programme of service reviews and improvements over a three-year period to promote race equality. Housing commitments contained in the scheme have been incorporated into the Housing Service Plan for 2003-2006 to ensure that they are implemented.

Key Priorities

- 1 *Promote race equality by fulfilling housing commitments as set out in the Council's Race Equality Scheme. This includes impact assessment of housing policies and functions, and ethnic monitoring of housing services.*
 - 2 *Achieve Level Three of the Audit Commission's Equalities Standard for the Housing Service by March 2006.*
-

Partnership Working

Merton's Housing Service recognizes the need to work in partnership with other agencies to adequately identify and respond to needs. With the introduction of regional and sub-regional allocation of housing resources, it will be necessary to work across borough boundaries with agencies to meet the needs of ethnic minority communities.

In 2002-2003, a forum was launched to discuss ethnic minority housing issues and a multi-agency strategy team was set up to develop a Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton. The team has regular meetings, with workshop and sub-group meetings held to identify action needed.

The team has representatives from registered social landlords and ethnic minority community organisations in Merton. We will however need to widen involvement by increasing participation of the African community and through engaging faith groups in Merton and from surrounding areas.

Black & Minority Ethnic Registered Social Landlords (BME RSLs)

Two out of five of our preferred development RSL partners are black & ethnic minority registered social landlords (BME RSLs) - Croydon People's Housing Association & Presentation Housing Association .

BME RSLs are well represented on the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team and we work closely with Millat Asian Housing Association, and the Tamil Community Housing Association (TCHA), which has recently achieved registered social landlord status with the Housing Corporation.

BME RSLs have in-depth knowledge of the specific needs of the ethnic minority communities that they target, and are often able to respond to the cultural needs of these communities. At present, only a small proportion (2.3%) of registered social landlords' housing stock in Merton is either owned or managed by BME RSLs. Of the 4,000 units owned by RSLs in Merton, just under 100 units are owned or managed by BME RSLs.

In the arrangements for preferred partnership with selected RSLs in Merton, 20% of development resources are diverted towards BME RSLs in the current year, and 15% in subsequent years.

We will also need to work on a sub-regional basis with neighbouring boroughs to identify the needs of ethnic minority communities in the south-west London area, so that a strategy can be developed to meet housing needs across borough boundaries. This includes needs of communities who are small in number and hard to reach, such as Korean and Japanese communities. Merton is now leading on the development of a sub-regional BME (Black & Minority Ethnic) Housing Strategy, in order to use sub-regional Housing Corporation funding to meet needs.

Key Priorities

- 3 *Build on the strength of the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team and widen involvement in the development and implementation of the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy.*
 - 4 *Strengthen support to Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) registered social landlords to meet the housing needs of ethnic minority communities.*
 - 5 *Work with housing providers in neighbouring boroughs to identify and respond to the needs of ethnic minority communities in south-west London.*
-



2 Identifying and responding to housing needs

Promoting equal access to housing services and meeting the diverse housing needs of ethnic minority communities is key to the “Equalities Merton” objective.

Needs of Ethnic Minority Communities

As outlined elsewhere in this strategy, overall, ethnic minority residents in Merton are more likely to be in housing need and more likely to suffer from social exclusion. Issues faced by these communities include:

- Ethnic minority households, in particular Black African households, are more likely to be living in unsuitable housing than White households (Merton Housing Needs Survey 1999 & Housing Service records);
- Ethnic minority applicants are over-represented on the Housing Register, homeless applications, and in clients seeking general housing advice from Merton’s Housing Advice Service;
- Asian residents are more likely to experience overcrowding (Census 2001 data) and other housing problems such as inadequate heating and poor repairs and maintenance (Housing Needs Survey 1999);
- Asian and ‘Other’ households are more likely to require larger homes, which are in short supply. This has been identified by the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team as a priority to be addressed;

Further information will also be required to ensure a better understanding of the specific needs of ethnic minority communities, including:

- Specific cultural living arrangements e.g. extended families or close relatives living as separate households nearby;
- Overcrowding amongst ethnic minority households and how this affects ethnic minority young people (aged 18+) who are unable to move out;

- The extent to which older children of different genders are forced to share a room because of overcrowding, which is culturally unacceptable particularly to Muslim people;
- Reasons for low take-up of social housing by the Asian communities;
- Perception of the council’s Lettings Policy and community safety on estates;
- The needs of specific ethnic minority communities e.g. Korean.

Key Priorities

- 6 *Update needs information on ethnic minority communities through statistical analysis and research projects, and use results to inform policy development.*
 - 7 *Address the higher level of needs amongst Asian and ‘Other’ households for bigger-sized accommodation.*
-

Homeless Households

Ethnic minority households are over-represented in those persons who approach Merton’s Homeless Persons Unit for assistance, and in non-priority homeless applicants who seek advice from Merton’s Housing Advice Service.

As well as responding to the needs of those experiencing homelessness, we will need to identify reasons behind the high level of housing needs and homelessness amongst ethnic minority households, in order to contribute to policy development.

Key Priorities

- 8 *Research the reasons behind the high level of homelessness amongst ethnic minority households, to help contribute to the development of a prevention strategy.*
 - 9 *Improve the quality of advice to ethnic minority communities reduce homelessness and to provide advice and assistance on housing options.*
-

Housing Needs of Ethnic Minority Elders

Addressing the needs of ethnic elders has been identified as a priority by the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team. In developing our Supporting People Strategy, Merton has identified evidence of demand for special needs type of accommodation for certain groups of ethnic elders.

A research report on the housing needs of the Tamil community (1998) identified that more than half of the elders interviewed said they would consider living in sheltered accommodation. Many want to live independently of their families. Housing problems reported by Tamil elders included overcrowding and too many stairs.

Other issues identified include diminishing support provided by the extended families; the cultural needs of ethnic elders living in institutions; need for specific advice that is culturally sensitive and the need for better provision and dissemination of information to improve awareness of existing provision.

At present, the only specialist provision for ethnic minority elders in Merton is a sheltered scheme for Asian elders managed by the Millat Asian Housing Association (16 units). In order to adequately address the needs of ethnic elders, we work on a cross-borough basis with neighbouring boroughs. An opportunity has arisen for Merton Council to support a scheme for African /

Caribbean elders jointly with Wandsworth and Croydon Councils that is being developed by partner Registered Social Landlord.

A review of sheltered housing is being undertaken to look at the suitability of existing homes for older people, and to assess gaps in the type of housing for ethnic minority elders.

Key Priorities

- 10 *Undertake further research on the housing needs of ethnic minority elders. The research project will be linked to Merton's Review of Sheltered Accommodation.*
 - 11 *Increase awareness of ethnic minority elders of housing options and eligibility criteria.*
 - 12 *Work with neighbouring boroughs and RSLs to increase appropriate provision for ethnic minority elders in Merton and surrounding areas.*
-

Housing Needs of Asylum Seekers

Since July 2000, destitute asylum seekers have been referred directly to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for support, and they are dispersed and accommodated outside London whilst their applications are being processed. Local authorities however continue to provide a 'backlog' of temporary accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 and under the interim scheme for destitute asylum seekers who sought help before July 2000.

According to figures provided by NASS to the London Asylum Seekers Consortium (GLA Homelessness Bulletin), a total of 962 asylum seekers were living in temporary accommodation in Merton in March 2003.

This represents 0.5% of Merton's population, and is the second highest amongst the seven boroughs in the south-west London sub-region along with Croydon. Lambeth has the highest proportion of asylum seekers (1.4% of population) of the seven boroughs.

Of the 962 asylum seekers in Merton, over two-thirds were asylum seekers who opted not to be dispersed out of London or opted to return to Merton to be close to families and friends or to established support networks for asylum seekers. These asylum seekers receive 'subsistence only' support from NASS, and are staying with relatives or friends, often in insecure and substandard accommodation. This is likely to further increase levels of overcrowding amongst ethnic minority households in Merton.

Asylum seekers also experience displacement when they receive a decision on their asylum applications, as they cease to receive subsistence from NASS and are given 28 days notice to leave their NASS accommodation.

Following decisions by NASS, asylum seekers in priority housing need can be assisted by local authorities, either through the Housing Register or the Homeless Person Unit. The need for tenancy support for this client group has been identified by Merton's Supporting People Strategy.

Asylum seekers not in priority need, have to rely on existing accommodation for the single homeless or private sector accommodation, which are often inappropriate for their cultural needs. Lack of support could also lead to deterioration in their mental health state, which is often delicate as a result of the trauma they have experienced.

In addition, legislation introduced in January 2003 denying single asylum seekers any support if they applied 'in-country' leaves a large number homeless and destitute.

New measures announced in October 2003 will result in approximately 10,000 long standing asylum-seeking families in London being eligible for assistance under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. It is however not known how many asylum-seeking households residing in Merton are eligible under these measures.

Key Priority

- 13** *Network with other agencies at a local, sub-regional or pan-London level to influence Government policies on asylum seekers and to ensure that asylum seekers receive appropriate support and assistance.*
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Housing Needs of Ethnic Minority Young People

Recent analysis of Census 2001 data shows that the proportion of Muslim children living in overcrowded accommodation is more than three times the national average, and that they are twice as likely to live in a house with no central heating.

This has already been highlighted as an issue affecting Muslim children locally. In particular, it has been highlighted that many Asian teenage children of different genders are forced to share a room because of overcrowding, which is culturally unacceptable to the Muslim religion.

Census 2001 data also shows that children from Pakistani and Bangladeshi families suffer twice as much ill-health as their white counterparts. It will be necessary to establish the impact of poor housing on health, as households from these communities are more likely to experience unemployment and to be living in private sector housing in poor condition.

Key Priority

- 14 *To increase awareness and understanding of housing issues affecting young ethnic minority people in Merton.*

Supporting People

Since April 2003, revenues for supported housing schemes and housing support services are funded by Supporting People Grant. Funding can be used to support people who are vulnerable for a number of reasons.

Ethnic minority communities are vulnerable to racial harassment, and are over-represented in many of these groups including the single homeless and homeless families, and those with HIV/AIDs.

Black African communities are disproportionately affected by HIV infections, making up 78% of heterosexuals using HIV-related services in Merton (SOPHID - Survey of Prevalent HIV Infections Diagnosed Data 1999). 89% of HIV positive children are Black African.

Plans for meeting the needs of people infected with HIV are limited by asylum legislation as many of those who have accommodation needs compounded by ill health are not eligible for assistance through the Housing Register.

In developing our Supporting People Strategy, Merton has identified evidence of demand for special needs accommodation for certain groups of ethnic elders. There is at present little information broken down by ethnic origin on people with physical or learning disabilities, or mental health needs.

Key Priorities

- 15 *To ensure that the housing related support needs of ethnic minorities are being addressed through the Supporting People Strategy Team.*
- 16 *To improve information about the supported housing needs of ethnic minorities with physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems.*



3 Ensuring Community Cohesion & Fair Access to Social Housing

Ensuring fair access to social housing through lettings policies is central to delivering the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. Lettings policies also contribute to the creation of mixed and sustainable communities. This has been emphasised by the Government in their Communities Plan published in February 2003.

The Government's Community Cohesion Guidance highlighted that having preferences on types of housing and lettings policies may contribute to a concentration of people from one ethnic group in certain areas of housing and localities.

Segregation of ethnic groups has in some parts of the UK contributed significantly to inter-community tensions and conflict, and impacted upon the level of racial incidents in certain areas.

In Merton, the Housing Needs Survey 1999 showed that Asian households were more likely to rely on private rented accommodation with 13.3% renting privately compared to 8.3% of the population. They are under-represented in social housing, making up only 4.6% of social tenants.

By contrast, Black households were significantly over-represented in social housing making up 13.5% of social tenants compared to 7.5% of the population. This reflects the position in many parts of the rest of the UK.

Recent analysis shows polarisation between ethnic groups, with ethnic minorities more likely to reside in the most deprived areas of Merton, whilst the White population are more likely to reside in more affluent parts of the borough. For more information, see separate report - Analysis of Housing and Social Exclusion Issues.

Lessons can be learnt from a study undertaken in Bradford (1999-2000) to address low take-up of social housing by South Asian households in the area. The study identified various reasons for the low take-up as outlined below. Following the study, Bradford Council introduced 'choice' in lettings which has resulted in an increased take-up by the Asian community. Prior to that:

- Council estates were seen by most Asians as having a 'bad reputation'; demonstrating 'lack of pride in the area'; 'rough' and crime ridden and also unsuitable because of abuse and racial harassment. However, much of the 'evidence' stems from hearsay;
- There was a lack of knowledge of what was available and a perception that properties were not large enough for their needs; and
- There were suspicions that Asian people were being 'dumped' in particular areas and that Council policies and practices reinforced spatial segregation between White and minority tenants.

To help build sustainable and cohesive communities, all local authorities are required to develop 'choice-based' lettings schemes by 2010, which will introduce more choice and flexibility through points-based schemes. The Government's Community Cohesion Guidance also highlighted the need for housing authorities to assess whether housing preferences and lettings policies have any impact upon community cohesion.

Key Priorities

- 17 *Ensure fair access to social housing for all ethnic groups through ethnic monitoring of lettings.*
 - 18 *Contribute towards community cohesion through the development of a more sensitive lettings policy, by improving our information base on housing preferences, any segregation issues and the impact on race relations in local areas.*
 - 19 *Ensure that Merton's Housing Service takes into account the needs of ethnic minority households when developing its 'choice-based' lettings policy.*
-

4 Delivering Quality & Inclusive Housing Services

Merton's Housing Service is committed to delivering quality services to all tenants whilst striving to ensure they are responsive and sensitive to the needs of ethnic minority tenants.

The Housing Service also strives to ensure that ethnic minority tenants have quiet enjoyment of their homes and can enjoy living in an environment that is free from racial harassment.

Tackling Racial Harassment

In 2001-2002, a total of 23 cases of racial harassment were reported to Merton's Housing Service. In the same period the Police received 514 reports of racial incidents in Merton.

Housing providers have only limited powers as landlords to tackle racial harassment, particularly if incidents occur some distance away from the victims' home and the perpetrators cannot be identified. However, there are measures that housing providers can take to tackle racial harassment to assist victims. However, many social tenants are not aware of this, resulting in under-reporting of incidents to housing providers.

The Housing Service assists council tenants who are victims of racial harassment by taking action against perpetrators, improving security, as well as transferring them to other areas. The Service adheres to the DETR/ODPM Code of Guidance for Social Landlords on Tackling Racial Harassment (2002).

As well as responding to reports of racist incidents, the Housing Service also piloted a risk assessment scheme to ensure that the risk of racist incidents is minimized. The scheme assessed ethnic minority tenants about to be placed in areas with a history of racial incidents, and was cited as an example of good practice.

Merton's MASCOT Community Alarm Service continues to work with Merton's Community Safety Unit to provide an alarm service to 62

households who have experienced racial harassment, as Home Office funding for a pilot project had ended in 2002. MASCOT also runs a 24-hour telephone hotline for hate crime, which includes racial harassment, although the service is currently under used and needs additional publicity.

The Housing Service also works with other agencies to monitor racial incidents and take action against perpetrators, and to improve social landlords' responses to racial harassment incidents perpetrated by residents of different tenure.

Housing is represented on the umbrella group Merton Partnership Against Crime (MPAC), which develops and implements Merton's Crime and Disorder Strategy. The Housing Service also contributes towards the work of the Racial Incidents Panel, which feeds into the work of MPAC.

A joint protocol exists on sharing information between the Police and Housing. Discussion has also taken place with Merton Housing Association Group (MERHAG), a liaison group for all registered social landlords (RSLs) operating locally, about information sharing on racial harassment cases.

The Housing Service works closely with the Merton Racial Equality Partnership (MREP). Following consultation with MREP, it was identified that there is a need for further work to improve reporting procedures, and to improve responses to racial incidents.

Key Priorities

- 20 *Address under-reporting of racial harassment incidents to the Housing Service through publicity to increase confidence.*
 - 21 *Further improve responses to racist incidents, and increase support for racial harassment victims.*
-

Residents Involvement

We aim to increase the participation of ethnic minority tenants and residents so that they can influence the way services are delivered, and in turn increase level of satisfaction with housing services.

There have been a number of new initiatives in the last two years, including the first Ethnic Minority Open Day. We have also worked to increase ethnic minority participation in established Tenants and Residents Associations.

Ethnic minority residents are represented in a number of newly formed associations. One association in Mitcham (Laburnum) is chaired by an ethnic minority resident, and more than half its committee are from ethnic minority groups.

Tenants Satisfaction

Merton's Housing Service undertakes a survey of council tenants and leaseholders every 3 years. The most recent survey was in January 2003, in which a total of 571 tenants and 146 leaseholders took part in face-to-face interviews.

Overall, 60% of tenants and leaseholders were either very or fairly satisfied with the overall housing service, and with opportunities for their participation. Analysis by ethnicity shows a higher rate of satisfaction with housing services amongst ethnic minority tenants. 64% of ethnic minority tenants* were either very or fairly satisfied with the overall housing service, compared to 59% of White tenants. White and ethnic minority tenants were equally satisfied with opportunities for their participation.

Key Priorities

- 22 *Further increase participation from ethnic minority tenants through innovative means and increase their satisfaction with housing services.*
 - 23 *Examine how different ethnic groups perceive the quality of housing management services through detailed analysis of tenants satisfaction survey results.*
-



5 Tackling Exclusion

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit found high concentrations of ethnic minorities in the most deprived areas, and these communities are at disproportionate risk of social exclusion. They are more likely to be affected by poor housing, unemployment, low educational attainment, ill health and crime. This has been highlighted in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2001) and reiterated in the recently published Communities Plan.

This will therefore form an important element of our Housing Strategy. Under the Government's new Communities Plan, the Housing Service will be required to plan housing improvement as part of a wider strategy for neighbourhood renewal and sustainable communities.

Reflecting the position nationally, ethnic minorities in Merton, in particular Black residents, are more likely to be unemployed. The Annual Labour Force Survey for 2001 showed that 83% of White and Asian persons of working age were in employment, compared to 67% of working age people from Black communities. Census 2001 data also shows considerably higher than average unemployment rates for Black residents as well as Bangladeshi and Pakistani residents.

Ethnic minorities in Merton are also more likely to be on a low income. The Housing Needs Survey 1999 showed that average earnings of ethnic minority households are below the Merton average of £22,961. Black African and Black Caribbean households in particular, have average incomes significantly below the borough average, at £12,705 and £15,439 respectively.

For more details on how social exclusion issues affect different ethnic groups, please see a separate report – 'Analysis of Housing & Social Exclusion Data'.

Ethnic Minorities & Deprived Neighbourhoods

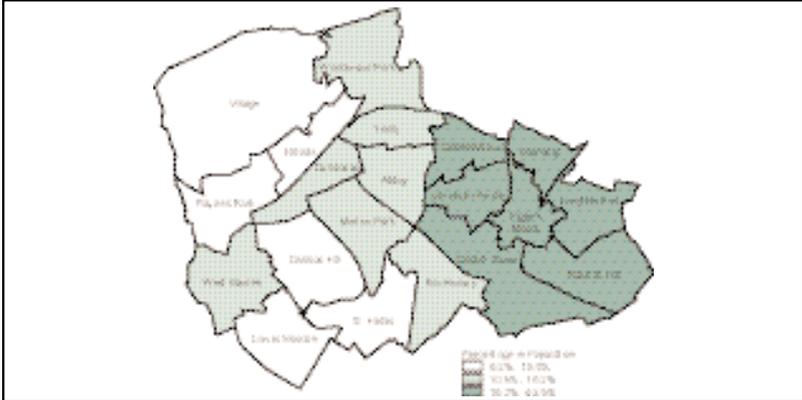
The Census 2001 local area statistics were released in July 2003. Mapping the Indices of Deprivation (IND) 2000 against Census ward data gives a clear indication that ethnic minority communities in Merton are more likely to be affected by poor housing. The Housing Domain scores show high levels of 'housing' deprivation. Seven wards out of 20 wards in Merton are amongst the top 10% for housing deprivation in England, and a total of 14 wards are amongst the top 20%.

The Graveney ward, which is the most 'housing' deprived ward in Merton (top 4% most deprived in England), has the highest proportion of ethnic minorities of all Merton wards at nearly 45%. Of the 8 wards in Merton with an above average proportion of ethnic minorities, all are amongst the top 10% most 'housing deprived', with the exception of Longthornton (amongst the top 20% most deprived).

Maps 1 and 2 below compare the distribution of ethnic minorities with the concentration of 'housing deprivation' in Merton. The comparison shows polarisation between ethnic groups, with ethnic minorities more likely to reside in the most deprived areas, and the White population more likely to reside in the more affluent parts of the borough.

As the IND 2000 ward-level data is based on the 1991 ward boundaries, they are mapped against Census 1991 data here. Distribution of ethnic minorities in Merton has remained largely unchanged between 1991 and 2001.

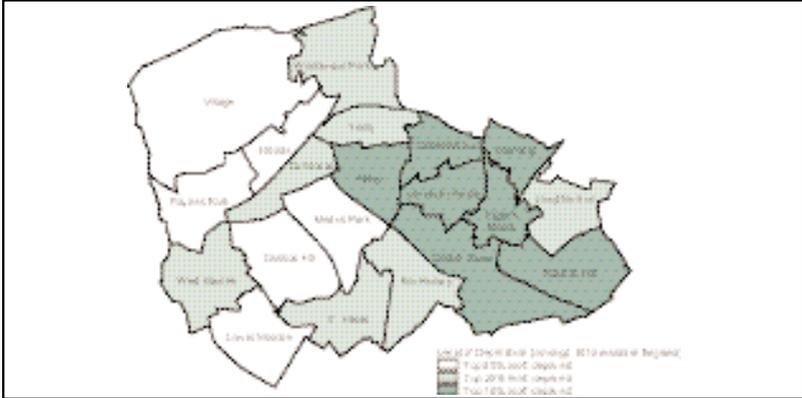
Map 1 - Distribution of Ethnic Minority Communities in Merton 1991



There is a need to analyse the most up-to-date ethnicity and deprivation data at a neighbourhood level. In particular there is a need to identify exclusion issues that affect areas where social housing is located, so that social landlords can develop appropriate responses and harness resources to tackle exclusion.

Housing providers can play a part in tackling exclusion issues at a neighbourhood level through engaging local communities in innovative projects. Merton Housing Service and our partner RSLs can contribute towards increasing the economic wealth of deprived communities through encouraging local Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) contractors to bid for contracts on housing work.

Map 2 - Distribution of Housing Deprivation in Merton (IND 2000)



Key Priorities

- 24 *Analyse up-to-date neighbourhood level information on ethnic minority households with regard to housing tenure and deprivation, and improve understanding of how 'housing deprivation' and other exclusion issues impact on each other.*
- 25 *Develop innovative approaches to address exclusion issues in areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities and high levels of deprivation, through community engagement.*
- 26 *Work with Registered Social Landlords operating in Merton to increase the number of contracts on housing work to be awarded to local Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) contractors.*

6 Investing in a Diverse Workforce

In responding to the range of housing needs of Merton's diverse community, it is recognised that a workforce which reflects the make-up of the community will be able to provide better responses to their differing needs.

Local authorities also have a specific duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to monitor existing staff, job applicants, promotion and training by ethnicity.

Merton's Housing & Social Services Department

Overall, the ethnic make-up of 720 members of staff in Merton's Housing and Social Services Department reflects that of Merton's population, with 26% of staff from ethnic minority communities, compared to 25% of ethnic minorities in the population.

Ethnicity	% Housing & Social Services Staff March '04	Census 2001
White	73%	75%
Ethnic Minorities	27%	25%
- Asian	4%	12.4%
- Black	20%	7.8%
- Other	3%	4.8%

A more detailed breakdown shows that Asian and 'Other' ethnic staff are under-represented in the department. Asian staff make up 4% of the department's workforce, compared to 12.4% of the population. The representation of Black staff at 20%, on the other hand, is much higher than the 7.8% of Black residents in Merton's population.

The proportion of Black staff at 20% is much higher than the 11% average of Black workers in the public sector. There is evidence that across London, Black people are more likely to take up social work, and the proportion of Black staff in Merton's Housing and Social Services Department is similar to the 21% London average of Black staff working in social services.¹

With regard to the under-representation of Asian and 'Other' staff in the department, the higher proportion amongst ethnic groups who are economically inactive is likely to have an impact on their representation in the workforce. In Merton, 35% of Asian and 37% of 'Other' residents aged 16-74 were economically inactive (Census 2001 data), compared to 27% and 28% of White and Black residents respectively.

Merton's Housing Service

Merton's Housing Service is small in size compared to many London housing authorities, and currently employs 164 staff, of which 17% are from ethnic minority communities. This shows an under-representation of ethnic minorities when compared to their proportion in Merton's population of 25%.

Ethnicity	% Merton Housing Staff March '04	Census 2001
White	83%	75%
Ethnic Minorities	17%	25%
- Asian	1.4%	12.4%
- Black	12.2%	7.8%
- Other	3.4%	4.8%

* When interpreting figures presented above, it is important to bear in mind that the number of housing staff involved is small.

¹ Source: Black People Pushing Back the Boundaries

Again, the proportion of Black staff is higher than their representation in the population. Asian and 'Other' staff are again under-represented and there are no Tamil, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Asian Other workers in the Housing service at present.

The table below shows that ethnic minorities are under-represented at all levels of housing staff. There is at present no ethnic minority representation at senior management or chief officer level.

Merton's Housing Service	% of Ethnic Minority Staff
Manual Staff	17%
Officers (Scales 3-S02)	21%
Senior Officers (PO1-PO6)	12%
Senior Managers	0%
All staff	16%

There has however been limited scope within Merton's Housing Service to increase the representation of ethnic minority staff. The Housing Service has a very low turnover of staff, with many members of staff staying with the organisation for many years.

Existing Initiatives

To ensure that the recruitment process does not contain any discriminatory practices, Merton's Housing & Social Services Department analyses a sample of job applications and outcomes, particularly in areas where black and ethnic minorities are currently under-represented.

The Housing Service participates in the Positive Training in Housing (PATH) programme. The PATH scheme brings ethnic minorities into housing by

providing special training arrangements that are encouraged under Section 37 of the Race Relations Act 1976, providing trainees with experience in a range of housing functions.

The Housing & Social Services Department has piloted an innovative training course on Equalities and Diversity for staff. The training aims to increase awareness of race and other equalities issues in the workplace, and to promote cultural sensitivity amongst staff.

Key Priorities

- 27 *Develop and implement positive action programme to provide ethnic minority trainees with work experience in housing.*
 - 28 *Capacity building for staff to improve understanding of race equality issues, increase managerial and peer support for staff in line with the ODPM/LGA capacity building programme.*
 - 29 *Work with Registered Social Landlords to promote housing as a career option for people from ethnic minority communities, particularly young people.*
-



Action Plan 2003 - 2006

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
Race Equality through Partnership Working						
1	Promote race equality by fulfilling housing commitments as set out in the Council's Race Equality Scheme.	<p>Continue to follow the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice for Rented Housing.</p> <p>Carry out impact assessments of housing functions & policies defined as a medium priority under the Race Equality Scheme, by March 2004 covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents participation and community development • Responding to racist incidents on housing estates. 	<p>Merton Housing</p> <p>Merton Housing/ Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>Resource neutral</p> <p>Resource neutral</p>	<p>Head of Housing Policy</p> <p>Head of Housing Policy</p>
		<p>Carry out impact assessments of housing functions and policies defined as low priority under the Race Equality Scheme, by November 2004:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Management • Housing Needs • Affordable Housing 	Merton Housing/ Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Policy
		Translate Race Equality Scheme commitments into the Housing Service Plan into action and targets in individual team plans by March 2003.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
2	Achieve level three of the Audit Commission's Equalities Standard for the Housing Service	Incorporate requirements for achieving the Equalities Standard into the Housing Service Plan by October 2003.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Achieve Level Two of Equalities Standard for Housing by March 2004	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral Policy	Head of Housing
		Achieve Level Three of Equalities Standard for Housing by March 2006	Merton Housing	Year 3	Resource neutral Policy	Head of Housing
3	Build on the strength of the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team and widen involvement in the development and implementation of the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy.	Increase involvement of ethnic minority and faith organisations in the development and implementation of the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy and Action Plan.	Merton Housing	Year 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Strengthen formal and informal mechanisms for consultation with ethnic minority community groups.	Merton Housing/ Merton Community Engagement/ Merton Partnerships	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
4	Strengthen support to Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Registered Social Landlords to meet the housing needs of ethnic minority communities.	Allocate 20% of resources for all new affordable homes to BME RSLs in 2003-04, and 15% in subsequent years.	Merton Housing/ Black and Minority Ethnic RSLs	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Development Officer
		Develop a protocol with BME RSLs to develop and manage new affordable housing.	Merton Housing/ Black and Minority Ethnic RSLs	Year 2	Resource neutral	Principal Development Officer
		Implement development protocol with BME RSLs.	Merton Housing/ Black and Minority Ethnic RSLs	Year 3	Resource neutral Officer	Principal Development Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
5	Work with housing providers in neighbouring boroughs to identify and respond to needs of ethnic minority communities in South-West London	Lead on the development of a sub-regional Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy by March 2004.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team/South-West London sub-regional Housing Partnership.	Year 2	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Policy
Identifying & Responding to Housing Needs						
6	Update needs information on ethnic minority communities through statistical analysis and research projects, and results used to inform policy development.	Analyse Census 2001 data on ethnic minority communities.	Merton Housing/ Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Develop a research project to gather detailed information on the needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities and obtain funding for project.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Growth desirable	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Undertake research project agreed in Year 1 if funding is secured for the project.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Growth desirable	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Undertake a programme of ethnic monitoring of housing services, producing annual reports. Areas to be monitored include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lettings • Homeless applicants • Housing advice service • Shared ownership applicants 	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Put in place a system to extend ethnic monitoring of the Housing Advice service to include reasons for seeking advice.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
7	Address the higher level of needs amongst Asian and "Other" households for bigger-sized accommodation.	Work with RSLs and planners to increase supply of larger accommodation.	Merton Housing/ MERHAG	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Development Officer
		Target 40% of new development resources to provide units with 3 or more bedrooms.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Development Officer
		Produce annual monitoring report of lettings to include monitoring by ethnicity and bed-sizes.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
8	Research into the reasons behind the high level of homelessness amongst ethnic minority households, to help develop a prevention strategy.	Develop a research project on reasons why ethnic minority households are over-represented in homeless applicants.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team/ Homelessness Forum	Year 2	Bids for funding	Homelessness Strategy Manager/ Principal Housing Policy Officer
9	Improve the quality of advice to ethnic minority communities with the aim of reducing homelessness and provide advice and assistance on housing options.	Undertake as part of a Housing Needs Open Day, multi-agency housing advice training for housing advisors working for statutory and voluntary agencies.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Growth desirable	Housing Needs Manager
		Improve advice and assistance to ethnic minority people facing homelessness, through links with Merton's Homelessness Strategy.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Homelessness Strategy Manager/ Housing Needs
10	Undertake further research on the housing needs of ethnic minority elders, and incorporate findings into Merton's Review of Sheltered Accommodation in 2004.	Undertake a programme of qualitative research through focus groups with elders from different ethnic minority communities by December 2003.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-2	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
		Undertake quantitative research on the housing needs of ethnic elders through joint work with Merton College by June 2004.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Provide training for young people to undertake research on social research skills by December 2003.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Growth desirable	Principal Housing Policy Officer
11	Increase awareness of ethnic minority elders on housing options and eligibility criteria.	Organise tour of sheltered and extra care supported housing schemes for ethnic minority elders.	Merton Housing and Social Services/ Community organisations	Year 1	Growth desirable	Housing Needs Manager/ Service Manager Older People Home Care
		Develop brief for a project involving young people to produce videos on housing options and eligibility criteria in community languages, and access funding resources for the project.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Bids for funding	Housing Needs Manager/ Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Presentation of Allocations Policy to at least 2 community and faith groups per year.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager
12	Work with neighbouring boroughs and RSLs to increase appropriate provision for ethnic minority elders in Merton and surrounding areas.	Support development of a housing scheme for African-Caribbean elders in Merton.	Merton/ Wandsworth/ Croydon Councils Pathway Housing Association	Year 1	Growth desirable	Principal Development Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
13	Network with other agencies at a local, sub-regional or pan-London level to influence Government policies on asylum seekers and to ensure asylum seekers receive appropriate support and assistance.	Contribute towards the work of the London Refugee Housing Network on asylum seekers housing issues.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager
		Address the needs of asylum seekers as part of developing the sub-regional Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy by March 2004.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team/ SW London sub-regional Housing Partnership	Year 2	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Policy
		Work with community groups to ensure that asylum seekers receive appropriate support and assistance.	Merton Housing/ Asylum Welcome/ Christian Care/ South London Tamil Welfare Group	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager
		Obtain best practice information on supporting asylum seekers and produce option analysis for Merton.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Reduce homelessness through liaison with private landlords and housing benefits.	Merton Housing/ Asylum Welcome/ Christian Care	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager/ Homelessness Strategy Manager
14	To increase awareness and understanding of housing issues affecting young ethnic minority people in Merton.	Work with Groundwork Merton and other organisations working with young people, to develop a project to identify the housing needs of ethnic minority young people, and to access potential funding stream.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1	Bids for funding	Principal Housing Policy Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
		Undertake agreed project to identify needs of ethnic minority young people if and when funding is secured.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
15	To ensure that the housing related support needs of ethnic minorities are being addressed through the Supporting People Strategy Team.	Monitor the take up of Supporting People grant by ethnicity.	Merton Housing & Social Services	Year 2	Resource neutral	Supporting People Manager
16	To improve information about the supported housing need of ethnic minorities with physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems.	Obtain information through service providers, including statutory and voluntary agencies, to ascertain the level of need for these client groups.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Supporting People Manager
Ensuring Community Cohesion & Fair Access to Social Housing						
17	Ensure fair access to social housing for all ethnic groups through ethnic monitoring of lettings.	Put in place a system to extend ethnic monitoring of lettings to include analysis of quality of offers, types of property and areas, and use results to develop lettings practices and policies.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Needs Manager
18	Contribute towards community cohesion by the development of a more sensitive lettings policy, by improving our information base on housing preferences, and any segregation issues and the impact on race relations in local areas.	Mapping and analysis of tenure by ethnicity and area, and develop action plan (Census 2001 data).	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		Analyse preferences for housing through data in housing register and information obtained through further research.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 2	Resource neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
19	Ensure that Merton's Housing Service take into account the needs of ethnic minority households when developing its 'choice-based' lettings policy.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team to form a sub-group to contribute to the Council's development of 'choice-based' lettings, to consider impact of 'choice-based' lettings proposals on ethnic minorities and make recommendations to inform policy development.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Policy
Delivering Quality & Inclusive Housing Services						
20	Address under-reporting of racial harassment incidents to the Housing Service through publicity to increase confidence.	Review leaflet in Tenants' Handbook and produce posters for display in housing offices and estate notice boards.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services
		Increase number of racial incidents reported to the Housing Service to 18.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services
		Formalize existing informal arrangements of a network of third party reporting centres.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services
		Increase awareness and use of MASCOT's 24-hour telephone hotline for reporting hate crime by renewing publicity.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1	Resource neutral	MASCOT Manager
21	Further improve responses to racist incidents, and increase support for racial harassment victims.	Continue to implement the Government's Code of Guidance for Social Landlords on Tackling Racial Harassment	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services
		Review Merton's racial harassment policy and procedures as part of a wider review of Housing Management procedures covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency and effectiveness of existing reporting procedures • Actions taken, including legal action • Make recommendation for change 	Merton Housing	Year 2	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services

Section C - Action Plan 2003 - 2006

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
		Monitor reports of racist incidents and outcomes through case tracking, to be integrated into the Housing Performance Monitoring Framework.	Merton Housing	Year 2	Resource neutral	Head of Housing Services
		Develop a proposal for multi-agency training on procedures for tackling racial harassment.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team/ Merton Equalities	Year 2	Growth desirable	Training & Development Manager
		Improve the response to racial harassment by social landlords operating in Merton through joint work with MERHAG.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Development Officer
22	Further increase participation from ethnic minority tenants to increase their satisfaction with housing services.	Organise further Open Days for ethnic minority tenants and residents.	Merton Housing	Year 2	Resource neutral Manager	Tenants Participation
		Increase the proportion of ethnic minority residents and tenants in the membership and management of local residents and tenants organisations (to 15%).	Merton Housing	Year 2	Resource neutral	Tenants Participation Manager
		Monitor how residents and tenants associations implement their equal opportunity policies.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Tenants Participation Manager
		EMHST to set up sub-group to develop innovative ways of involving ethnic minority residents by examining best practices from elsewhere.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1-3	Bids for funding	Principal Housing Policy Officer

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
23	Examine how different ethnic groups perceive the quality of housing management services through detailed analysis of tenants satisfaction survey results.	Detailed analysis of ethnic minority tenants satisfaction from results obtained from Tenants Survey completed in January 2003.	Merton Housing	Year 1	Growth desirable	Services Development Manager
Tackling Exclusion						
24	Analyse up-to-date neighbourhood information on ethnic minority households on housing tenure and deprivation, and improve understanding of how 'housing deprivation' and other exclusion issues impact on each other.	Analyse Census 2001 data and deprivation data at ward or output area level by ethnicity and tenure.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	Resource	Principal Housing Policy Officer
25	Develop innovative approaches to address exclusion issues in areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities and high levels of deprivation, through community engagement.	Promote community leadership & participation by ethnic minorities in areas with high proportion of ethnic minorities.	Local Strategic Partnership/ Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	neutral	Principal Housing Policy Officer
		EMHST sub-group to consider good practice, and to develop proposals and secure funding for projects.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Years 1-3	Bids for funding	Principal Housing Policy Officer
26	Work with Registered Social Landlords operating in Merton to increase awareness of local Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) contractors on housing contracts available.	Contribute towards the BME Housing Roadshow jointly run by RSLs and London Borough of Merton.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team/MERHAG	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Housing Stock Manager
		Incorporate results of the contracts satisfaction surveys by ethnicity into the performance review system.	Merton Housing/ MERHAG	Year 2	Resource neutral	Housing Stock Manager

	PRIORITIES	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	RESOURCE	LEAD
	Investing in a Diverse Workforce					
27	Develop and implement a positive action programme to provide ethnic minority trainees with work experience in housing.	Continue to run the annual PATH trainee programme to encourage ethnic minorities to take up housing as their chosen career.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Human Resources Manager
		6 PATH trainees provided with placements over 3 years.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Human Resources Manager
		Sign up to Housing Corporation's COFEM (Career Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities) programme to enable ethnic minority housing staff to access mentoring master classes held by senior housing professionals.	Merton Housing	Years 1-3	Resource neutral	Human Resources Manager
28	Capacity building for staff to improve understanding of race equality issues, increase managerial and peer support for staff in line with the ODPM/LGA capacity building programme.	Extend pilot 'Equalities and Diversity' training to all Merton housing managers and staff	Merton Housing	Year 1	Resource neutral	Training & Development Manager
29	Work with Registered Social Landlords to promote housing as a career option for people from ethnic minority communities, particularly young people.	Work with Merton Corporate Recruitment and with Registered Social Landlords, linking up to an existing programme of road shows at ethnic minority community centres, to promote job opportunities in Housing.	Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team	Year 1-3	Resource neutral	Principal Resources Manager

10 - Glossary of Terms

Term	Initials	Meaning
Affordable Housing		Housing which is below market prices e.g. rental and low cost home ownership.
Anti Social Behaviour	ASB	Behaviour by people that affects others within the community. ASB is wide ranging and can include graffiti, playing music loudly and harassment.
Bed and Breakfast	B&B	Temporary accommodation, with shared facilities, provided for homeless people while their applications are assessed or they are waiting for permanent housing.
Cabinet		The body which makes key decisions in the Council. It is chaired by the Leader of the Council and includes 9 other Council members who each have a responsibility for a key area e.g. education or housing.
Capital		Money spent on producing an asset, to maintain it or extend its life.
Commission For Racial Equality	CRE	A publicly funded non governmental organisation set up under the Race Relations Act 1976 to tackle racial discrimination and promote racial equality.
Census		An official count carried out by the Office for National Statistics to find out the number of people living in the country and further information about them.
Community Plan		Long term plan identifying resident priorities for action in their communities. Also aims to promote economic, social and environmental well being of the community.
Community Safety Unit		Police unit responsible for the investigation of hate crimes including racist crime.
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	CPA	An assessment that helps the Council improve their local services for their community. It looks at how good services are and how well the Council is run and rates authorities as excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. After the review the Council agrees an action plan to improve or maintain performance.
Decent Homes		A Government standard for all social housing to ensure that it is structurally sound, has modern facilities and is energy efficient.
Ethnic Minority		A national or racial group living in a country or area which contains a larger group of people of a different race or nationality.

General Certificate in Secondary Education	GCSE	A national school examination studied by students aged 14 – 16.
Greater London Authority	GLA	The GLA was created in 1999 to form a strategic government for London. It consists of an elected mayor, a separate elected assembly and support staff
Housing Act 1996		An Act of Parliament covering housing issues in the public and private sector.
House in Multiple Occupation	HMO	Properties occupied by a number of people who are not part of the same household. They can include bedsits, shared houses and flats, boarding houses and hostels.
Housing Corporation	HC	The body that funds and regulates Housing Associations. This includes funding for building new properties.
Housing Needs Index	HNI	A national index which identifies housing need in different areas.
Housing Register		The list for applicants wanting council or Registered Social Landlord property.
Indices of Deprivation or Indices of Multiple Deprivation	IND	This is a toolkit, supported by central government and developed by the Social Disadvantage Research Centre to measure deprivation at a local ward level. It contains indicators measuring levels of deprivation, such as child poverty and housing. Results are given for individual indicators as well as assessing all indicators together to measure multiple deprivation. The Index has been used for research and policy alongside resource allocation to deprived areas by central government.
Keyworker		Any worker, defined by the authority as being essential to the delivery of services in the borough.
Lettings Policy		Local Authority policy on allocating council housing.
Local Authority Social Housing Grant	LASHG	Money channelled through Local Authorities to fund Housing Association development. It was abolished in March 2003.
Local Strategic Partnership	LSP	Consists of representatives from the public, and the private and voluntary sectors. It is designed to develop and pursue a vision for neighbourhood renewal and improve the delivery of local services through better planning.

London Asylum Seekers Consortium	LASC	Organisation providing support for London's local authorities on asylum issues including accommodation and support services, data and information distribution and central government lobbying.
London Housing Board		A board consisting of representatives from the Government Office for London, Greater London Authority, Housing Corporation, Association of Local Government, London Development Agency and English Partnerships and is responsible for developing a London Housing Strategy.
MASCOT	MASCOT	A community care line providing a 24 hour monitoring and response service for elderly and vulnerable residents in Merton.
Merton Housing Association Group	MERHAG	A group of social landlords who meet with the local authority to discuss issues of common interest and concern.
Merton Partnership Against Crime	MPAC	Multi agency body including Police, local authority, probation, health and voluntary organisations aimed at reducing crime and fear of crime in Merton.
Merton Racial Equalities Partnership	MREP	Voluntary organisation involved with casework on racial discrimination and racial harassment.
Merton Tenant and Residents Federation	MTRF	An umbrella group for all the Tenant & Resident associations in council housing in Merton.
National Asylum Support Service	NASS	Provides support, accommodation and financial help for asylum seekers whilst their claim for asylum is assessed by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate.
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy		A strategy to tackle problems of deprivation in the borough. It is based on a partnership approach and addresses a wide range of issues.
Office for National Statistics	ONS	Organisation responsible for official United Kingdom statistics reflecting British economy, population and society. Responsible for Census 1991 and 2001 data.
Office for the Deputy Prime Minister	ODPM	Government department which deals with housing, neighbourhood renewal and planning.
Positive Action for Training in Housing	PATH	Initiative aimed at providing work experience in housing related fields for ethnic minorities, in order to address under-representation of ethnic minorities employees in housing organisations.

Private Sector Leasing Scheme	PSL	The Council or Housing Association leases property from private landlords to house those in housing need.
Registered Social Landlord	RSL	Housing providers who are registered with the Housing Corporation. The organisations are non profit making and often known as Housing Associations.
Racial Incidents Panel		Panel carrying out casework regarding racial incidents in Merton including representatives from the local authority, police, community groups and MPAC.
Social Exclusion		Term used to describe what can happen to people or areas suffering from linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, crime, health and family breakdown.
Sheltered Housing		Housing specifically designed and allocated to elderly people which also includes various forms of support.
Social Housing		Affordable housing provided by Housing Associations, the Council and other housing providers for rent.
South West London Housing Strategy		A strategy developed by the 7 South West London authorities in response to the London Housing Strategy.
Supporting People	SP	The Supporting People programme is designed to fund housing-related support services which help improve vulnerable people's lives and maintain independence in their own homes.
Supporting People Grant		Money given by central government for the Supporting People Programme.
Stakeholders		Those who will be affected or have an interest in a particular issue or policy.
Tenant and Resident Association	TRA	An association of Tenants and Residents who meet in an area to address issues of common concern seek to influence the services they receive and the communities in which they live.
Transfer List		List of council and RSL tenants wanting to move to alternative properties in Merton.

11 - Key Documents

<p>Merton's Community Plan</p>	<p>This includes two priority issues within which housing has a key role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of programmes to reduce fuel poverty for those in public housing from 35% to 10%; and • To promote the development of communities and a sense of neighbourhood. <p>The housing service is actively involved in the development of the corporate neighbourhood renewal strategy. We are also committed to eliminating fuel poverty in council homes by 2010.</p>
<p>Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2002/05</p>	<p>This has clear implications for housing in the area of community safety.</p>
<p>Merton's Supporting People Strategy</p>	<p>The housing service has a central role in the provision of appropriate accommodation with support. Our housing strategy sets targets to maximise housing and support options and choice for homeless households.</p>
<p>Homelessness Strategy 2003</p>	<p>A multi-agency plan for addressing homelessness in the borough, completed and published in July 2003. Its focus is on early intervention and prevention of homelessness and seeks to meet the housing and support needs of the homeless. Our housing strategy incorporates the priorities and targets of the Homelessness Strategy.</p>
<p>Merton's Housing Strategy</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy sets out our statement for the overall vision and direction of our housing services and investment over the next three years. It is concerned with all types of housing in the borough and paints a picture of local housing conditions, housing needs and the investment that we can bring into housing in Merton. A clear plan of action to improve housing and housing services in the borough has been set out in the strategy.</p>

<p>Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000</p>	<p>The Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000 strengthened the Race Relations Act 1976. It outlawed discrimination (direct and indirect) and victimisation in all public authority functions not covered by the Race Relations Act 1976, with only limited exceptions. It also placed a general duty on specified public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups in carrying out their functions. The general duty is supported by specific duties, which are enforceable by the Commission for Racial Equality.</p>
<p>CRE Race Equality Standard (REMQ)</p>	<p>The CRE Standard for local government, Racial Equality Means Quality, first published in 1995, was designed to help local authorities meet their duties under the Race Relations Act to eliminate racial discrimination and encourage racial harmony in their areas. The Standard provides an invaluable tool for taking stock of policies and practices, assessing the quality and extent of action taken, and planning a systematic way forward.</p>
<p>Merton Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005</p>	<p>Under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, public authorities have a specific duty to publish a Race Equality Scheme to set out their approach to race equality. Merton's Race Equality Scheme is a three-year strategy and action plan, with links to the Council's Vision to make Merton a great place to live, work and learn. The Race Equality Scheme the Council's Strategic Objective 5 Equalities Merton – "Full and equal access to learning, employment, services and cultural life and the celebration of diversity". Merton's Race Equality Scheme sets out the Council's arrangements for assessing its functions, consulting, monitoring and training staff to provide fair access to services and employment, and has a three-year action plan.</p>
<p>Equalities Standard for Local Government</p>	<p>The Equality Standard for Local Government widens the scope of the CRE's Racial Equality Means Quality standard. It is planned that the standard will replace the CRE's Racial Equality Means Quality standard. The Equality standard is a detailed assessment of local authorities' performance on equality, using a single new standard for race, gender and disability. There are five levels of achievement for each of the following four activities : leadership and corporate commitment; consultation and community development and scrutiny; service delivery and customer care; and employment and training.</p>

Communities Plan	Published by the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on 5th February 2003. The Plan outlines the Government's plans for a step change in policies to build sustainable communities, which links housing with regeneration, and other elements such as economic growth, transport and public services, which are essential to building communities.
National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	The Government published 'A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal – National Strategy Action Plan' in 2001. The aim of the strategy is to reverse the decline of poor neighbourhoods, and the Government has set out an ambitious vision for narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country so that, within 10 to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. The aim is to deliver economic prosperity, safe communities, high quality education, decent housing and better health to the poorest parts of the country. Equality for black and minority ethnic groups is a cross-cutting theme, underpinning all of these objectives.
Housing Needs Survey 1999	The Government requires local authorities to measure housing need systematically and to keep the information up-to-date. The last Housing Needs Survey was conducted for Merton in 1999 by Fordham Research Ltd. Personal interviews were successfully conducted with 1,250 households in the borough and a statistically valid sample of the Borough's population was obtained to cover a range of issues including local housing market, overcrowding and unsuitable housing, affordability etc.
Merton's Equal Opportunity Valuing Diversity Policy	A document which outlines the Council's commitment to promote equality of opportunity and social inclusion, eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting good relations between employees and between communities of all backgrounds.
Annual Labour Force Survey 2001	The Labour Force Survey has been carried out in the UK since 1973. Originally conducted biennially, it has been conducted annually since 1991. In 1992, the quarterly LFS was introduced. The Survey collects data on : unemployment; economic activity; employment, occupation; industrial sector; educational status; qualification social class; ethnicity etc..
ODPM Code of Guidance for Social Landlords on Tackling Racial Harassment	This Code of Practice sets out action that all social landlords should take to prevent racial harassment, to ensure that racist incidents are reported, to support tenants and their families when such harassment does occur and to take action against perpetrators to enforce the landlord's civil powers and deter further harassment.

12 - Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team

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Catherine Nolan	Asylum Welcome
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Monica Wambu Robert Bowler	LB Merton - Equalities
Kathy Bucknill Angela Chu Daniel Butler	LB Merton – Housing Policy
Sajda Munshi Michael Pitt	LB Merton - Supporting People
Glen Burnell	LB Merton - Tenants Participation
Jackie Ashenden	London & Quadrant Housing Group
Yvonne Langlais	Merton Oasis

Name	Organisation
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