



Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

# **Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy**

2008-2011

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KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Housing Strategy' ਨੂੰ 01642 526527 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو ڈائریکٹ ٹیم، کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 526527 (Housing Strategy)

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## Section 1.

### Introduction

Everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home in a sustainable community, at a price they can afford. It is the role of local authorities and their partners to identify local needs and priorities and enable the development of new quality social and affordable housing to meet these needs.

It is the aim of both Stockton on Tees Borough Council and Tristar Homes Limited (THL) to deliver fair and equitable access to housing services. However it is sometimes necessary and appropriate to undertake additional actions for specific client groups. This Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing strategy supports the Council's Housing Strategy and Tristar Homes Limited's Business Plan and details the housing objectives, priorities and the actions that will be undertaken to ensure that BME households receive appropriate housing and related services.

Tristar Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) controlled by Stockton Borough Council. It was established in 2002 to take over the day to day management and maintenance of most of the Council's housing stock.

Our shared vision is: -

*'Stockton on Tees Borough Council and Tristar Homes Limited aim to deliver a high standard of accessible, quality housing and related services to people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities'.*

Underpinning our vision are 5 objectives: -

- **Objective 1**  
Understand the diverse needs of all residents to ensure equality of opportunity and access to housing services
- **Objective 2**  
Increase choice and help achieve housing needs and aspirations
- **Objective 3**  
Improve the condition of existing housing in both the public and private sector
- **Objective 4**  
Address identified community and social needs
- **Objective 5**  
Assist in the provision of safe and sustainable neighbourhoods

These objectives are drawn directly from the findings of the recent research into BME housing issues both across the North East and the Tees Valley. This research is discussed in detail in Section 4. To ensure these objectives are appropriate to Stockton, consultation on the five objectives has taken place at the Council's BME Have Your Say event and at THL's Single Equality Scheme consultation event which both took place in September 2007. All respondents were supportive of the objectives and additional feedback received from customers at the consultation events has been incorporated into the strategy.

## Section 2.

### Context

As previously stated the BME strategy has been developed and is underpinned by local and sub regional research and consultation and supports the Council's Housing Strategy and THL Business Plan. In addition it has also been shaped by legislation, good practice guidance and policy at the national, regional and local level.

### National Context

#### Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 amended the 1976 Race Relations Act which was introduced to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin in the fields of employment, the provision of goods and services, education and public functions. It also set up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). The 2000 amendment to the Act introduced onto public authorities the general duties to promote racial equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposed a general duty to publish a race equality scheme and carry out equality impact assessments. In addition, public authorities must actively aim to: -

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity; and
- Promote good relations between different racial groups.

### Codes of practice

#### The CRE Code of Practice (Housing)

This statutory code replaced the statutory Code of Practice in Rented Accommodation 1991, and covers all areas of housing in England. The aims of the code are to:

- a Set standards for achieving racial equality;
- b Provide practical guidance that will help organisations and individuals involved in all areas of housing to avoid unlawful racial discrimination and harassment, promote equal opportunities for all, and encourage good race relations; and
- c Make sure that anyone who is considering taking a legal case, or who has concerns about the way decisions on housing matters have been made, understands the legislation, their rights, and what constitutes good practice in the field of housing.

#### The Equality Standard for Local Government

This sets out a framework for integrating equalities in service and workforce planning. It requires that services across the Council take ownership of the equalities agenda and engage in dialogue with target groups, thereby developing and achieving clear equalities objectives.

The Council and THL are working towards achieving level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This will mean they are continuously assessing all policies, practices and procedures to determine if they have an adverse impact on the community. The Council and THL are focused on reaching level 3 of the Equality Standard by April 2009.

## Good Practice Guidance

### The ODPM (CLG) BME Action Plan

This suggests actions on BME issues to ensure local authority strategies take fully into account the needs and aspirations of BME groups.

### Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry

These provide consistent criteria for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services and are designed to provide a framework through which to review and assess services. The purpose of the KLOE dedicated to diversity issues is to ensure that services address the different needs that customers have. Customers needs differ for a variety of reasons, and can include age, ethnic background, their ability to access services or their ability to participate in the life of their community.

## Corporate Documents

### Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 - 2021

The Sustainable Community Strategy sets a framework for how public agencies within the Borough will deliver their services as well as highlight how they will work together with the private and voluntary sectors in improving Stockton. For example, plans to improve our schools, our local health services and town centres will all be developed and reviewed to fit in with the Sustainable Community Strategy. It also shows central Government that we have a clear vision and set of priorities for our Borough, and encourages new businesses to invest in regenerating Stockton. There are 5 Core Improvement Themes within the Strategy: -

- Economic Regeneration and transport,
- Environment and Housing,
- Community Safety,
- Children and Young People,
- Healthier Communities and Adults.

### Single Equality Scheme

The Council has consulted the BME community on its Single Equality Scheme, which brings together action plans for Race, Gender and Disability, meeting all the Council's statutory responsibilities in these areas. The scheme shows how the Council has worked with and listened to its residents. Consultation findings and feedback are fed into the development of the action plans.

Tristar Homes supports and contributes to the Council's Single Equality Scheme. It is also developing its own Scheme, which will focus on the needs and priorities of its existing and potential customers.

## Community Cohesion Strategy

The Council's Community Cohesion strategy is currently under development. Once it has been adopted, this strategy will be reviewed to ensure consistency. Tristar Homes is also developing a Community Cohesion Strategy to compliment and support the Council's Strategy. Both documents will consider guidance from the Government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion report 'Our Shared Future'. The report's definition of an integrated and cohesive community is one where: -

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city region or country;
- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them and what they can expect in return;
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment;
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny;
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common; and
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

## Section 3.

### Needs Analysis

#### Borough Profile

##### Population

Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts; a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. In 2007 the Borough had a population of 187,300. Around 78,000 households currently live in the Borough. The population within Stockton-on-Tees has risen by 1.9% since the 1991 Census, compared with the North East average of a 2.8% fall.

2.8% of the Borough's population is from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities; the largest minority ethnic groups are Pakistani (1,980) and Indian (785) residents. The BME community, while only 4,924 of the total population, has increased since the 1991 Census; at this time the local BME population was only 2,803 residents. This increase to some extent can be attributed to the number of asylum seekers who, once given a positive determination to remain in the country, choose to remain in the Borough. Residency is concentrated in the 2 main town centre wards of Stockton Town Centre with an 11.5% BME population and Parkfield and Oxbridge with 11.7% (Census 2001).

In addition to the established BME community, at March 2007 there were 345 asylum seekers in accommodation managed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). The trend for the previous 5 years suggests that the number of asylum seekers supported in NASS accommodation in the UK reached a peak at the end of 2002/03 and has declined each quarter since then. This trend has been replicated in the Borough with the number of asylum seekers supported in NASS accommodation decreasing by 60% from quarter 3 in 2002/03 to quarter 3 in 2004/05. These figures do not, however, take into account destitute asylum seekers; those people seeking asylum who have reached the end of their appeal process and support from NASS has ceased. The number of destitute asylum seekers in the Borough is unknown.

Unresolved asylum cases are those where an asylum claim has been made and as yet the application has not been concluded. These cases are now being dealt with by Home Office case resolution teams. The Home Office aims to have concluded all of these incomplete cases, many of which are over 3 years old, by the summer of 2011. Between January and March 2008 decisions were expected to be made on 24 cases in Stockton. Housing Services are responsible for assisting successful applicants to secure accommodation and in the prevention of homelessness.

The age profile for the Borough shows that on average Stockton's BME population is younger than the Borough as a whole, with 34% of BME residents being aged 16 or under compared with a whole Borough figure of 21%. In contrast to this, the older population shows a different picture, with only 4.8% of the BME population in the "retired" group compared with a whole Borough figure of 21%. This leads to the take up of different services within the BME population.

In a recent survey of Council tenants, 1.4% stated that they were from BME communities, the largest minority ethnic groups being White Irish (0.3%) and Black African (0.25%).

## Projections

Much work has been carried out in recent years to look at future demographic changes in the population of the Borough, and how Council and partner services will need to adapt to changing needs.

It is forecast that although the number of people will not differ significantly for the next 15 years, the profile of the population will change. Projected figures from Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit show that by 2021:

- There will be a rise of 11% in the number of households in the Borough between 2007 and 2021;
- The average household size is expected to decrease from 2.4 in 2006 to 2.2 in 2021;
- The number of children will fall by 21% to 30,400;
- The number of people of working age (16-retirement age) will decrease by 4%;
- There will be an increase of 46% of older people (retirement age and over);
- The proportion of residents from the BME community is expected to continue to rise; and
- The number of residents with disabilities is expected to continue increasing, in part due to the ageing population.

## Social and Economic Factors

The Borough has a unique social and economic mix, with areas of alarming disadvantage situated alongside areas of affluence. For example, measuring disadvantage against the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, over a third of the population (60,780) of the Borough live in areas that are within the worst 20% deprived areas nationally and 17% (31,000) actually live in the worst 10%. In stark contrast, 11% (20,000) fall within the top 20% of most affluent areas nationally.

Unemployment in the Borough is 2.9%, compared to a national average of 2.4% and the North East average of 3.1%. In one ward (Stockton Town Centre) unemployment is as high as 8.6%, whilst in another (Ingleby Barwick West) it is 0.7%. The mean average annual gross income per person in the Borough is £20,491, and while higher than the Tees Valley average of £18,198, it is lower than the national average of £22,248.

Within Stockton the employment rate of BME communities is measured and reported via the Annual Local Area Local Labour Force Survey. Since 2002/2003 there has been a marked increase in the employment rate for BME groups. The BME employment rate in Stockton is now 3.6% above the North East average and in line with national figures.

## The Local Housing Market

The structure of the housing market in the North East has distinctive characteristics; for example in comparison to the rest of the country it has a relatively small private rented sector and relatively high levels of social housing. These characteristics are also true of the housing market in this Borough.

## Comparison of Household Tenure

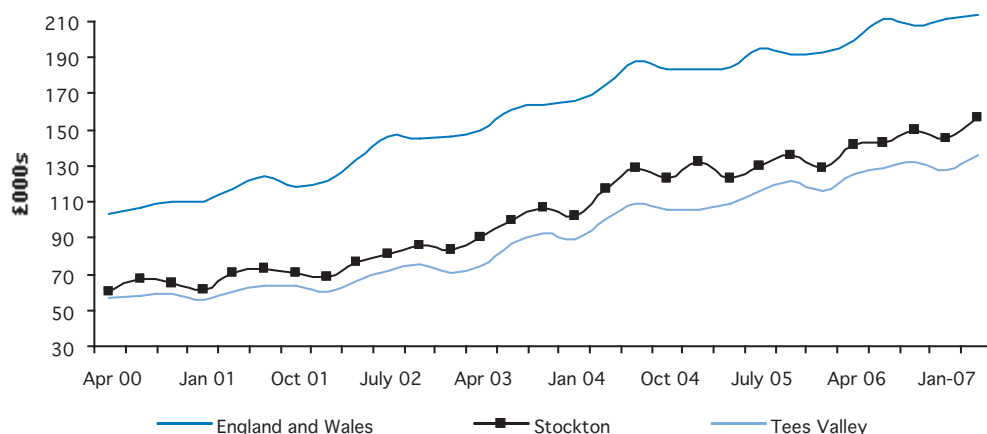
Household tenure (% of households)	Stockton-on-Tees (%)	Tees Valley (%)	North East (%)	England & Wales (%)
Owner- occupied	71.6	67.9	63.6	68.9
Council rented	17.2	18.4	22.4	13.2
Housing association	4.3	5.0	5.3	6.0
Private rented	5.2	6.5	6.3	8.7
Other	1.7	2.3	2.5	3.2

## House Prices

Average House prices in the Borough have risen substantially over recent years, which has an impact on the ability of households to enter the housing market. The chart below shows the increase in house prices over the last 5 years and compares Borough house prices to Tees Valley and National house prices.

In December 2004, the average house price in Stockton was £123,188. At December 2006 that had increased by 22% to £149,677. The average house price (December 2006) in the two wards with the largest proportion of BME residents was £97,400 in Parkfield and Oxbridge and £79,000 in Stockton Town Centre.

Quarterly Average House Prices



## Housing Demand

Historically, there has been an oversupply of rented accommodation across all tenures in the Borough. However, over recent years there has been an increase in demand in real terms. The increase in demand is indicative of a number of issues including:

- An increase in the number of homeless applications from 1,276 applications in 2002/03 to 1,797 in 2004/05. However, since then, figures decreased to 1,787 in 2005/06 and further in 2006/07 to 1,253;
- The stock rationalisation programme and the decent standard programme;

- The housing-led regeneration schemes within the Borough; and
- The current state of the housing market (high property prices leading to a reduction in the availability of private rented accommodation, affordability etc).

The following tables provide details on the Council's housing waiting list and local authority lettings.

Households on the Housing Register (excluding the transfer register)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total households on the housing register at 1st April	3,892	3,736	3,485	3,559	3,187

Local Authority Stock

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Local authority stock	13,218	12,460	11,913	11,474	11,108

Local Authority dwellings let

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Total Dwellings let	1,843	1,505	1,539	1,154	1,300	1,128
Total BME lets	-	36	47	25	26	14
% of BME lets	-	2.39%	3.05%	2.17%	2.00%	1.24%

Feedback from the annual survey of Council tenants 2007 indicated that over 33% of tenants would consider moving because of their current home; the main reason being due to the number of bedrooms (26.5%). Of the number of respondents 95% were White British and 5% were non White British. The main reasons non White British respondents would consider moving were: the number of bedrooms; gardens and or parking; and home being too small. These reasons mirror those of White British respondents. Respondents were also asked if they would move because of their neighbourhood. Of the White Other and African respondents indicating they would move because of the neighbourhood, anti social behaviour was a key factor. This again mirrored the general response.

## Council Housing Stock

The majority of the Council’s housing stock is traditional houses and bungalows (67%). 27% are flats and the remainder are non-traditional houses and bungalows. The stock is aging in profile, with 16% built pre 1945 and a further 45% built between 1945 and 1964.

The type of property that applicants for Council housing are requiring is shown in the table below. This suggests that the trend has been that the majority of applicants are requesting ‘smaller’ up to 2 bedroom accommodation.

### Demand for Council Housing

At 1st April each yr	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Up to 2 bed required	1,536	2,417	1,965	1,913	2,466	2,788
3 bedrooms required	2,350	1,388	1,717	1,497	1,022	344
3+ bedrooms required	76	87	54	75	71	53
Total on register	3,962	3,892	3,736	3,485	3,559	3,187

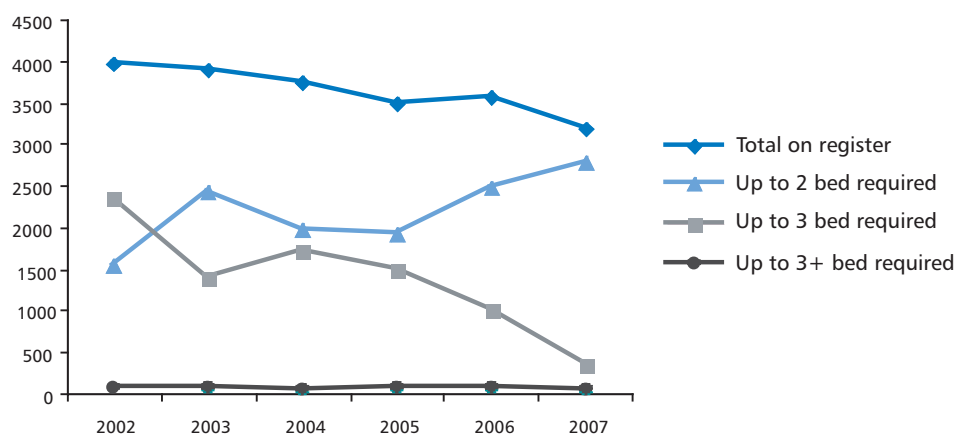
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### Demand for Council Housing

Council Waiting List Demand in the borough



Analysis of the housing waiting list shows that where applicants have indicated they are from Asian and Black communities the most popular property choice is for a house or first floor flat with the most popular bedroom choice being 2 bedrooms. The central area of Stockton was their preferred location. Houses and first floor flats are the most popular property choices for applicants who have indicated they are White Irish, and again the most popular bedroom choice is 2 bedrooms. As numbers on the waiting list are low for other ethnic groups it is not possible to undertake any trend analysis.

## Section 4.

### Research

Having up to date information on housing needs and aspirations is vital in carrying out our strategic roles.

There have been a number of recent pieces of local, sub regional and regional research, which have provided robust information which is used to support and inform the development of housing services and provision of housing in the Borough.

### Local Housing Assessment

In 2000 a survey of housing need was carried out and in 2006 a Local Housing Assessment (LHA) was completed which updated the Council's understanding of housing needs and aspirations in the Borough. This assessment will be updated on an annual basis, the findings of which will inform the annual update of both the local and BME Housing Strategies.

The LHA assessed the housing requirements in the Borough across all tenures (owner occupiers, social renters, private renters) and involved a mix of face-to-face interviews, postal surveys and stakeholder focus groups. 1.4% of respondents were from BME groups. The slightly lower response rate from postal surveys implies that the face-to-face methodology is preferable to ensure a good response rate from BME households. The LHA provides an understanding of the local housing market, the key 'drivers' of local housing demand and supply and the level of housing need within the area. It is one of a number of sources of information used to inform housing need in the Borough.

The main findings of the assessment were:

- Low incomes and high levels of unemployment mean that a large proportion of residents cannot afford to buy their homes. This is likely to result in a continuing demand for rented accommodation.
- The entry level property price for Stockton on Tees has been determined as £82,673 (The entry level property price is what a household entering the market can be expected to pay on average. N.B. This is not the same as the average house price).
- 10.3% of households consider themselves to be in unsuitable housing.
- Across the Borough 18.6% of households where one member or more has a disability or limiting long standing illness feel that the member's mobility is impaired by their home.
- A comparison of planned mover demands with the released supply appears to show the following:
  - An overall shortage of social rented accommodation;
  - A specific shortage of two bedroom semi detached houses;
  - A shortage of two and four bedroom detached housing; and
  - A surplus of terraced houses.
- There is a significant oversupply of one bedroom properties and the development of dwellings of this size should not be actively encouraged.

- A target of at least 9% of all new homes to be affordable, which should probably not be allowed to fall below 15% to meet the needs of the Borough.

The assessment concludes that an additional 200 affordable dwellings should be provided over the next five years (40 units per annum).

## Local Research

In 2006 Tees Valley Living (TVL – a partnership set up to address housing market failure in the Tees Valley) undertook a sub regional study into the housing needs and aspirations of the BME communities in the Tees Valley. EMS Consultancy Ltd and the Salford Housing and Urban Studies Unit were commissioned by TVL to undertake a study among the resident BME community. The study objectives included:

- Identification of the nature and distribution of the BME communities throughout the Tees Valley sub-region and the provision of information on their demographic characteristics;
- An assessment of the nature, quality and condition of accommodation occupied by BME households;
- An appreciation of the reasons behind settlement patterns and tenure choices;
- An assessment of community integration and cohesion among BME households and communities generally and their contribution to achieving equality and diversity;
- An assessment of current housing needs and the aspirations of the various BME communities;
- An assessment of the health, social care and housing-related support of specific sub-groups within the BME community (e.g. older people); and
- An assessment of the role and support provided by community groups.

The key findings from the study for the Tees Valley and Stockton specific include: -

- Survey respondents (across the Tees Valley) would consider a range of tenure options but they would prefer to either own their own home (63.5%) or rent from a Council;
- There is a preference for receiving financial assistance to improve and repair their property rather than receiving some form of help to move to another property; and
- BME households are much less likely to be in social rented houses in the Tees Valley than in other regions.

## Moving Intentions

- 29.8% of respondents in Stockton on Tees planned to move within the next two years;
- The main reasons for wanting to move were wide ranging – including 47.3% desire to live in better areas and 18.3% desire to buy their own home. This equates to 13.6% of respondents in Stockton on Tees;
- Of the Stockton on Tees respondents intending to move, 22.7% intended to move within Stockton; and
- Of the Stockton on Tees respondents intending to move within the next two years, 12.1% had applied to the Local Authority.

### Tenure Preferences

- Within the Tees Valley, 63% first choice of tenure is home ownership; this rises to 90.9% in the Pakistani community;
- In Stockton 51.7% of respondents' first choice of tenure is home ownership and 40.7% Local Authority rented; and
- The Pakistani community was the most confident they would realise the tenure of their choice.

### Property requirements

- Bedroom requirements – 23.2% required 4 bedrooms, 10.2% required 5 bedrooms. This is in contrast to the local authority waiting list where only 1.7% request properties with three or more bedrooms;
- Of the Pakistani community, 30.2% required 4 bedroom properties and 15.9% required 5 bedrooms;
- 50.4% of all respondents require 2 or more living rooms, this rose to 80.7% in the Pakistani community; and
- 51.8% required 2 or more bathrooms, this rose to 62.8% in the Pakistani community.

The research findings for Stockton highlighted the following characteristics for our BME communities: -

- Being less settled than other BME communities in other Tees Valley local authority areas;
- Experiencing high levels of overcrowding and poor quality housing;
- Living in terraced properties which are no longer appropriate for their needs;
- Living in community areas which are seen as declining and exhibiting a range of social problems, including racial harassment;
- Being motivated to move house, the main driver being the lack of housing choice within their community areas and the desire to move to locations with better reputations and facilities; and
- Including a sizeable group of potential movers who are attached to their current property and therefore their areas, but require financial assistance to improve their current housing situation.

### Regional Research

In 2007 the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies was commissioned by the North East Assembly to carry out research into housing issues for BME communities in the Region.

The aim of the research was to gain an insight into the housing needs of the BME communities and how these differ from the majority housing needs in the region. The early findings of the research were used to inform the Regional Housing Strategy.

The research found that there were more similarities between people in the region in terms of housing needs and aspirations than differences. The strong preference is towards homeownership as a mechanism for increasing economic capital and improving life chances.

In stating the similarities the research found that is also important to emphasise differences.

Minority communities wanted to see a wider choice of housing available in historically multi cultural areas. They did not want necessarily to leave these areas and move to areas that were considered less diverse. These groups valued the importance of community infrastructure that enabled people to function on a daily basis.

Racism and the perception of racism, in some neighbourhoods acted to restrict housing choice.

The specific findings of this regional study are:

- Housing aspirations for minority groups were couched strongly in the desire to become homeowners. This provided an opportunity to build economic assets, increased housing choice and also housing mobility;
- Social housing was viewed as being problematic. Housing associations do not provide opportunities to acquire property. Local authority housing was regarded as being stigmatised and located in low demand, residual and challenging neighbourhoods;
- People wanted more investment in neighbourhoods that had a high concentration of minority communities. This was to address related concerns of education, crime and the environment. However they also wanted greater housing choice in these areas as well in terms of a balance between social, private rented and opportunities to become homeowners;
- Community cohesion was regarded as being difficult to implement in practice when it was viewed as creating diverse neighbourhoods. People wanted to live in these types of areas but regarded community infrastructure of shops, places of worship and access to social networks to be very important in deciding where to live;
- Racial harassment, and the perception of harassment was widespread across different groups in different locations. This reduced housing choice but there were also housing management concerns. The response from agencies was slow and made people even more reluctant to report harassment; and
- People had little awareness of intermediate housing products. Those who did, or had used them, were not convinced about their effectiveness. Housing products were viewed as being difficult to access and did not compare well to the traditional forms of homeownership.

The key findings of the research, as detailed below, have been used to develop the objectives within the strategy and will influence the housing service delivery and priorities:

- Housing aspirations for minority groups were couched strongly in homeownership;
- Drivers for moving house included the lack of housing choice within community areas;
- BME Households experienced high levels of overcrowding and poor quality housing;
- Households required financial assistance to improve their current housing situation; and
- Neighbourhoods were seen as declining and exhibiting a range of social problems, including racial harassment.

## Section 5

### Housing Strategic Objective 1 - Understand the diverse needs of all residents to ensure equality of opportunity and access to housing services

The recent research, as previously detailed, highlighted a number of key housing issues for the BME communities of Stockton. In order to ensure equality of opportunity and access to our housing services it is essential that we fully understand the diverse needs of our customers.

The following examples highlight the progress we have made in working towards this objective: -

- Reviewing access to services to ensure access arrangements meet all Customer First level 2 requirements, including consultation to determine customer preferred access times and methods;
- Development of 'Equality Services Promises';
- Operation of a telephone interpretation service and the delivery of comprehensive training to staff to provide practical skills to access interpreters in 150 languages through the National Interpreting Service;
- Availability of translation and interpretation services;
- Customer profiling through the collection of diversity data for customers accessing housing services;
- Undertaking consultation sensitive to the diverse needs of the BME communities which allows full participation i.e, recognition of cultural events and festivals and ensuring those times are avoided, provision of culturally appropriate material;
- Completion of Equality Impact Assessments for all new and reviewed policies and strategies, to prevent and eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and contribute positively to community cohesion objectives; and
- Research and benchmarking of services against the Audit Commission's Key Lines Of Enquiry (KLOE), which set out the standard expected of an organisation delivering excellent services.

We will continue to work towards achieving a greater understanding of the diverse needs of all our residents to further ensure equality of opportunity and access to our services.

This will be achieved by: -

- The implementation of a new diversity monitoring record to capture ethnicity data for all service areas and analysing the data recorded;
- Monitoring of service use and satisfaction levels to ensure all customers have equality of access to services and information;
- Implementation of a planned programme of consultation across all service areas, ensuring consultation is carried out at appropriate times and venues;
- Consultation with a broader range of minority groups, including Gypsies and Travellers and Migrant Workers, to ensure services meet their needs;

- Monitoring our complaints by ethnicity;
- Continuing to undertake equality impact assessments on all new and reviewed policies and strategies; and
- Participating in the annual review of the Council's Single Equality Scheme and Race Action Plan.

## Section 6

### Housing Strategic Objective 2 - Increase choice and help achieve housing needs and aspirations

#### Background

A large proportion of the older housing stock in the Borough is classified as obsolete and no longer fit to meet 21st century needs and aspirations. This includes terraced housing in Town Centre locations. It is clear that the mismatch between demand and supply is not only having an impact on housing but also on wider community issues. This is supported by the findings of the Tees Valley BME housing needs study, previously referenced, which highlighted a large proportion of BME households were living in terraced properties which are no longer appropriate for their needs and being motivated to move house with the main driver for this being the lack of choice and/or improved facilities. The challenge for the Council is to replace obsolete housing with high quality housing that would meet the needs and aspirations of current and future residents, contributing to wider regeneration and the creation of sustainable communities.

The following examples highlight the progress we have made in working towards increasing housing choice and helping achieve housing needs and aspirations of homeownership for the BME communities in the Borough: -

- Successfully progressed regeneration in Stockton Town Centre. The scheme at Parkfield, will see investment into the area in excess of £10 million;
- Designed an equity loan scheme, available to homeowners affected by the regeneration scheme, to be Sharia compliant so that all Muslim members of the community can take advantage of the loans;
- Listened to the views of BME residents in Parkfield and amended the regeneration plans accordingly and held workshops with them to enable them to get involved in the design of their areas; and
- Developed an Affordable Home Ownership Register to assist households seeking to become homeowners, which, as previously detailed, has been highlighted as the preferred choice of tenure for the BME community. The register will ensure affordable homes for sale are offered to local people currently unable to buy on the open market.

We will continue to work towards addressing the research findings and increasing housing choice for BME residents through: -

- Exploring the need for bespoke accommodation for the Asian community in Parkfield, as research has highlighted that there is a lack of new homes being provided that meet needs in areas of high BME concentrations. Properties will cater for family size, age and cultural requirements and would be positioned towards Mecca for daily prayer;
- Continue to hold regeneration consultation in venues which do not exclude any particular religions and at times which do not conflict with prayer times or religious festivals;

- Promote the Affordable Home Ownership Register in venues popular with the BME community, and review the register on a six monthly cycle to consider scheme take up, paying particular attention to BME issues; and
- Implement a Choice Based Lettings System, which will increase choice and accessibility of affordable housing stock, ensuring it is promoted in appropriate venues, and monitor the impact of the CBL policy to ensure it promotes equality of opportunity to individuals and minority groups.

## Section 7

### Housing Strategic Objective 3 - Improve the condition of existing housing in both the public and private sector

Decent homes are important for the health and wellbeing of our local communities and are a key element of any thriving and sustainable community.

The local BME housing research indicated that one of the characteristics of the BME communities in Stockton is that they live in poor quality housing, with many requiring assistance to improve their housing situation. It also highlighted that there was a general lack of awareness among BME communities of housing and the services provided by social landlords.

The Council and THL are committed to improving housing conditions within the Borough and details of current and future actions to be undertaken to achieve this are detailed within the Council's Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and THL's Business Plan and Service Improvement Plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, the provision of assistance (not necessarily financial) to those who require help; targeting of resources to areas with the worst housing conditions; upgrading the private rented sector and bringing all Council owned stock up to the Government's Decent Standard.

The following examples highlight the progress we have made in working towards this objective: -

- Continued the successful Facelift Scheme in the Parkfield/Mill Lane area, rejuvenating the community and local environment. The works include external improvements to the front elevations of the properties and to boundary walls. Working in partnership with Accent Regeneration, the Council has improved 355 private sector properties at a cost of £1,483,000 (2004-2007);
- Continued to target Private Sector Housing renewal funding into 4 Priority Action Areas (Parkfield/Mill Lane; Norton South; Newtown and Old Thornaby)) which contain our largest BME communities. Over the last 2 years approximately £1,413,800 has been invested in these areas to improve living conditions with approximately 18% of this funding provided to BME households; and
- Offering Council tenants information on the Decent Homes works in community languages to ensure all available improvement works and choices are fully understood.

We will continue to work towards improving the housing stock of the Borough by: -

- Raising awareness of our services by promoting them in venues frequently used by the BME community;
- Monitoring take up of services by different groups on a regular basis and addressing any imbalances highlighted;
- Monitor all partners and contractors to ensure they comply with our Equality and Diversity principles; and
- Consulting with Council tenants from BME communities in appropriate formats to ensure their views and future aspirations for their neighbourhoods are taken into consideration in the development of Neighbourhood plans.

## Section 8

### Housing Strategic Objective 4 - Address identified community and social needs

The Council delivers services to enable some of the most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged people in the Borough to live in settled housing appropriate to their needs and provide accommodation to meet local needs.

There are a number of key issues that are particularly important to the Borough, which shape the delivery of services. They include: -

- Homelessness, and the emphasis on prevention services;
- Growing needs and demands of local residents i.e. the increasing elderly population and their changing needs and aspirations; and
- Available resources to deliver increased service demands and growing expectations.

All residents and Council tenants in the Borough are able to access the services available to address community and identified needs including: - housing advice and information, supported housing services, provision of aids and adaptations to allow people to remain in their own homes; Tenancy Support officer to assist vulnerable tenants maintain their tenancies and the provision of basic debt advice. Further details on these services can be found in the Council's housing strategy, homelessness strategy, private sector housing renewal strategy and the THL business plan.

The following example highlights how the services which address identified social and community needs have assisted the BME community: -

- In 2006/07 the Housing Options service assisted 154 BME households who approached the service for advice and information on finding a home, homelessness and special needs housing. (The total for the Borough is 2237 approaches in 2006/07). Of the BME households approaching the service, 62% were single person households and 21% were lone parent households. 60% of the BME households were aged between 25 – 44 years.
- Of the 1253 decisions being made on homeless applications in 2006/07, 508 of the applications were classed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, 39 of which were from BME households. 343 were classed as homeless but not in priority need, 20 of which were from BME households and 10 applications were classed as ineligible, 7 of which were from BME households.
- Assisted successful applicants with previously unresolved asylum cases to secure accommodation and prevent homelessness.

We will continue to offer the services mentioned above to all residents of the Borough, and specifically in relation to BME communities we will: -

- Monitor the ethnicity of service users and analyse the findings to ensure all residents have the knowledge of and equality of access to services;
- Promote the services in appropriate venues;

- Continue to meet the Home Office requirements to 2011 for the Asylum Seeker Case Resolution Project and assist households with a positive outcome in their asylum cases to secure accommodation in the Borough; and
- Monitor the number of people from BME communities requiring specific supported housing services.

## Section 9

### Housing Strategic Objective 5 - Assist in the provision of safe and sustainable neighbourhoods

Within Stockton crime rates have fallen significantly over the last two years. In 2006/07 total crime fell by 4% to 17,664 crimes (Cleveland Police), giving Stockton the lowest total crime rate in the Tees Valley (lower than Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland). The rate of dwelling burglary is the lowest since the 1970s, with violent crime down 13% in the same year. Robbery is down 29% to a very low level with only 131 crimes. Deliberate dwelling fires are also down 28% following a programme of measures to reduce arson.

Significantly fewer people feel unsafe outside during the day (down 15% from 32%) and after dark (down by 21%) from 2002 to 2006. However tackling crime and anti-social behaviour remains a top priority, in particular for areas experiencing higher crime levels: crime is higher close to town centre areas and in particular Stockton Town Centre.

The Tees Valley BME Housing Needs Research, as previously detailed, highlighted that BME residents were living in areas which they saw as declining and exhibiting a range of social problems, including racial harassment.

As previously detailed, access to the Housing Services relevant to this objective is available to all residents. To assist in the provision of safe and sustainable neighbourhoods and relevant to our BME communities we have: -

- A tenancy agreement that will not tolerate any form of harassment or hate crime from our tenants, their families or visitors to their home;
- Introduced a generic harassment policy;
- Provided Tristar's Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Officers with specialist training in dealing with racial harassment cases;
- Introduced an offensive incident reporting procedure, which makes it easy for customers and employees to report racial harassment, and developed service promises so that customers know what they can expect from us when reporting an incident; and
- Supported 'Choice' the confidential helpline set up by Cleveland Police to assist victims or potential victims of forced marriages and honour based violence.

We will continue to strive for safe and sustainable neighbourhoods by: -

- Contributing to the development of the Council's and THL Community Cohesion Strategies;
- Continuing our support for 'Choice'; and
- Continuing to monitor the take up of anti social behaviour services to ensure equality of access, and addressing any inequalities highlighted.

## Section 10

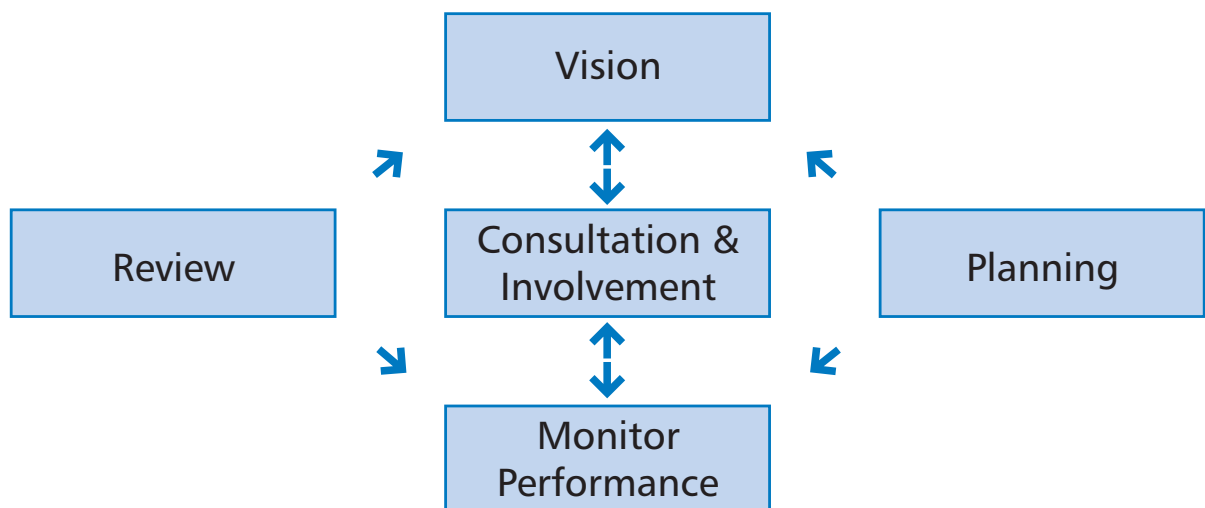
### Delivery, Performance and Progress Monitoring

#### Delivering our BME Housing Strategy

This Strategy will be effective from April 2008 and will be promoted to stakeholders, customers and staff to ensure its successful delivery. Training on the strategic objectives will be delivered as appropriate.

#### Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of the Housing Strategy

All successful organisations need a clear vision of where they are going, what their goals are and how they will be achieved. Within Stockton Council and Tristar Homes, there is a mature, well-established culture of 'planning, monitoring and review', which will ensure that the BME Housing Strategy remains a living document, along with the documents it supports.



#### Developing our BME Housing Strategy

A review of the BME Housing Strategy will be undertaken annually to ensure that our strategic objectives remain appropriate and to determine progress against our actions.

## Section 11

### Key Contacts

If you would like any further information please use the key contact section below: -

Information area	Stockton BC	Tristar Homes Limited
Access to housing services, including details on consultation and customer profiling.	Jane Edmends Housing Strategy Manager ☎ (01642) 526682 ✉ jane.edmends@stockton.gov.uk	Linda Minns Support Services Associate Director ☎ (01642) 527081 ✉ linda.minns@tristarhomes.co.uk
Regeneration	Sharon Thomas Housing Regeneration Manager ☎ (01642) 526073 ✉ sharon.Thomas@stockton.gov.uk	
Affordable Housing	Jane Edmends Housing Strategy Manager ☎ (01642) 526682 ✉ jane.edmends@stockton.gov.uk	
Private Sector Housing Conditions	Melanie Howard Private Sector Housing Manager ☎ (01642) 526551 ✉ melanie.howard@stockton.gov.uk	
Council Housing Decent Standards		Winston Williams Technical Services Director ☎ (01642) 527082 ✉ winston.williams@tristarhomes.co.uk
Housing advice, allocations, homelessness and Choice Based lettings	Caroline Wood Housing Options Manager ☎ (01642) 526639 ✉ caroline.wood@stockton.gov.uk	Dave Pickard Housing Management Director ☎ (01642) 527083 ✉ david.pickard@tristarhomes.co.uk
Aids and Adaptations	Melanie Howard Private Sector Housing Manager ☎ (01642) 526551 ✉ melanie.howard@stockton.gov.uk	
Debt Advice		Dave Pickard Housing Management Director ☎ (01642) 527083 ✉ david.pickard@tristarhomes.co.uk
Anti Social Behaviour	Anti Social Behaviour Team ☎ (01642) 527615 ✉ ASBTeam@stockton.gov.uk	Dave Pickard Housing Management Director ☎ (01642) 527083 ✉ david.pickard@tristarhomes.co.uk

## Section 12

### Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing		Includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation	A non-profit making company controlled by the local authority that has been set up to manage the Council's stock
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour	Behaviour that falls below society's norms and accepted standards of behaviour. This can include criminal acts and less serious nuisance such as dumping rubbish.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic	Term for describing anyone who would not categorise his or her ethnicity as White British.
CHOICE potential		Confidential helpline run by Cleveland Police to assist victims or victims of forced marriages and honour based violence
CLG	Communities and Local Government	Communities and Local Government is a Government department which sets UK policy on local government, housing, urban regeneration, planning and fire and rescue. They have responsibility for all race equality and community cohesion related issues across Great Britain and for building regulations, fire safety and some housing issues in England and Wales.
DHS	Decent Home Standard	Communities and Local Government standard, which states that a home must be warm, weatherproof and have reasonable modern facilities in order to be classified as 'decent'.
Housing Association		Common term for the 2000 or so independent, not-for-profit organisations registered with, and regulated by the Housing Corporation. Housing Associations are able to bid for funding from the Housing Corporation (see also Registered Social Landlord).
KLOE	Key Lines Of Enquiry	Published by the Audit Commission to provide consistent criteria for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy prime Minister	Now known as the CLG – definition above.
Sustainable community		Sustainable communities are communities planned, built, or modified to promote sustainable living. They tend to focus on environmental sustainability (including development and agriculture) and economic sustainability. Sustainable communities can focus on sustainable urban infrastructure and/or sustainable municipal infrastructure.
Tenure		The nature of the structure by which people own or rent their home. Categories are usually broken down as follows: Owner Occupied, Private Rented, Registered Social Landlord or Council Rented.
TVL	Tees Valley Living	A partnership made up of representatives of the five Tees Valley councils, local registered social landlords and the private sector in the form of the Home Builders federation and Tees Valley Regeneration, to address housing market failure in the Tees Valley and deal with the problem of an excess of obsolete housing.
THL	Tristar Homes Limited	The Council's non-profit Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Tristar Homes, who manage the Council's housing stock.

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