

## Guardian Public Service Award

The **Pan-London Accommodation Rates Project 2016-17** has been shortlisted for the Guardian Public Service Award 2017 in the finance category. The aim of the project is to control the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless and potentially homeless households in London. It was led by the London housing directors Group and delivered by the West London Alliance, working closely with the sub regional housing leads and all the London Boroughs.

From February 2016 the London Boroughs shared information on market rates for temporary accommodation in their local area, and agreed that where possible, they would not pay more than the local market rate. This was in line with the existing Inter-Borough Accommodation Agreement (IBAA) . The West London Alliance developed the CarePlace-IBAA system to support the monitoring and reporting of the Max Rates Project. The resulting transparency was key to the success of the project.

The CarePlace-IBAA system went live in April 2016, supplying quarterly reports to the London Housing Directors Group, as well on-going reports to each of the London boroughs.

As a result of the Project, the average rate paid by London boroughs for self-contained temporary accommodation in the private rented sector has fallen in all bed sizes. This is at a time when, according to the ONS Index of private housing rental prices, London private rental prices grew by 1.4% in the 12 months to April 2017.

==ENDS==

Notes for editors:

**Name of nominated project or team:** London Borough Accommodation Rates Project 2016-17

**How many people worked on the project or in the team?**

Large numbers of staff in 33 boroughs across the whole of London

**Minimising costs to the public purse**

The temporary accommodation market is a distinctive sector in the private rented market, historically dependant on smaller landlords, who shop around to find the borough that will pay the most for properties. This project involved boroughs cooperating at a pan-London level, in some cases to the detriment of their short term local interests, in order to achieve savings to the wider public purse in the longer term.

For many years, boroughs have had an agreement (the Inter Borough Accommodation Agreement or IBAA) not to pay more for temporary accommodation than the host borough pays. However, in practice this has been difficult to measure, and there was a shared concern amongst the London boroughs that prices were being driven up beyond a level that was sustainable for the public purse.

In February 2016 all the boroughs in London agreed to share information on market rates for temporary accommodation in their local area. At the same time they jointly commissioned the West London Alliance to develop their CarePlace data hub tool to support the monitoring and reporting of the IBA Agreement. **The CarePlace-IBAA** system went live in April 2016.

### **Transforming processes to provide a significant benefit to the public purse**

The combination of pan-London data sharing, excellent borough participation driven by sub regional partnerships, and a transparent and flexible reporting tool that allows boroughs to see the results of the data collection in a new and relevant way, has meant that the price paid largely by the public purse for self-contained temporary and alternative accommodation has come down, at a time when overall rents continue to rise in London<sup>1</sup>. The project aims to use monitoring and more sensitive market management to encourage boroughs to lease private rented accommodation on a long term basis, rather than use the more flexible, but more expensive, nightly paid lets.

The project gives boroughs clear market information that enables them to plan their temporary accommodation strategies more effectively and efficiently.

### **Sustainable innovation**

The most remarkable and lasting achievement of this project is that boroughs have worked together from an initial position of misinformation and distrust. The transparency offered by the monitoring and reporting facility has meant that boroughs are now able to move forward to a position of actively managing the market to minimise the cost of using the private rented sector for TA.

The benefit of this project is that it has limited rent inflation in temporary accommodation in the capital, through a combination of front line officer buy-in and involvement in data collection, concerted London-wide leadership at housing director level and joint working at sub regional level. The Care-Place-IBAA data hub and reporting system that underpins this cooperation has been developed in close consultation with the boroughs and sub regional leads. Hundreds of borough officers have been involved in making this project work at a pan-London level.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/apr2017>

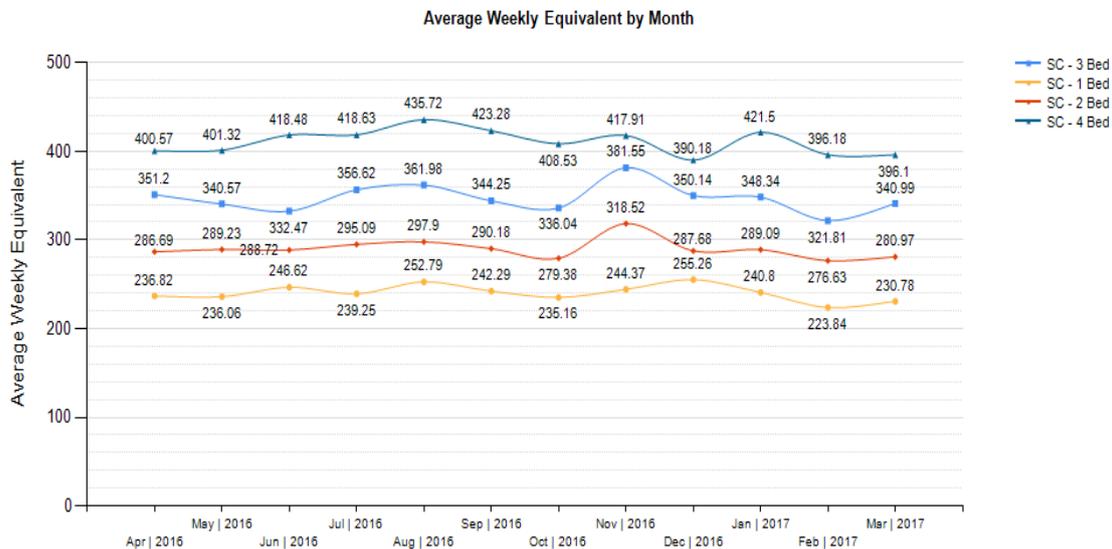
**What level of funding did this specific project or team receive?\***

The funding for the project is provided by boroughs who shared the cost of the IT and project management – circa £4k pa per borough, plus the cost of officer time.

**What is the impact of this project? Use measurable results to show its success.\***

As **fig 1** below shows, the average weekly rent, paid largely by the public purse, for self contained private rented accommodation for homeless and potentially homeless households in London has fallen in all bed sizes when, according to the ONS Index of private housing rental prices, London private rental prices grew by 1.4% in the 12 months to April 2017:

**Fig 1: Self-contained rents (£pw) 2016-2017**



Accommodation Size	Av Rate March 2016	Av Rate March 2017	Difference
1-Bed	236.82	230.78	-2.55%
2-Bed	286.69	280.97	-2.00%
3-Bed	351.2	340.99	-2.91%
4-Bed	400.57	396.1	-1.12%