

# Using Behavioural Insights to increase access to private rented housing

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# Plan for the workshop

- Introductions
- Aim of the project and progress so far
- Issues we've encountered
- Group discussion: Where can Behavioural Insights best be applied in public services?  
Possible new projects
- Question and answer session

## Kent Project: increasing take up of private rentals

- Aim of the project
- May 17 Deciding what to focus on (3 ideas)
- July 17 Fieldwork
- Oct 17 Decision on intervention
- Mar 18 – Start of trial
- Apr 18 – Final report

## Some of the issues we've had

- Renting privately not easy to obtain; genuine advantages to social housing
- Important not to deter people in need
- Deciding where the intervention should go – housing options appointment, phone call, online, written information?
- Obtaining the right data and measurement
- Project should have impact on thousands of people rather than hundreds

# Intervention

## 1. Control version of the letter.

**This is your Personal Housing Plan explaining the things that you and the Council need to do to help you from becoming homeless**

Dear [*Name of applicant*]

We recently saw you or spoke to you because you have a housing problem and wanted our help because you are at risk of losing your accommodation. We have carried out an assessment to see how we can best help you. We want to do all we can to help you to solve your housing problem and I am pleased to provide you with your Personal Housing Plan (PHP).

This plan sets out the actions the Council have taken, and will consider taking, to help you. Importantly the Plan also lists the actions we think you should take to try and resolve your housing problem. The plan has been put together following our assessment of your housing needs and circumstances and taking into account any support needs identified.

We think it is important to tell you the facts about just how difficult it is to find somewhere to live in the [*Name of Council*] district for anyone who may have to rely on benefits to pay all or some of their rent. We therefore need to work together to try and help you keep your accommodation or, if that is not possible, to help you find somewhere affordable for you to live.

I know how much you and many other families and individuals facing homelessness would like to receive an offer of a Social Housing home. This is always the best solution and would allow you to settle and plan your future from the security of long-term social housing.

However, we are only able to help a small number of the families and individuals who become homeless with a social housing home because so few become empty. A small number of households, mainly families, are able to receive an offer of a social housing home after spending some time in temporary accommodation. However, we are predicting that the number of these successful families will drop considerably due to the number of new families presenting, and the numbers already waiting for a home, compared to the number of homes that become available.

## 1. Treatment version of the letter.

### Your Personal Housing Action Plan

Dear [Name of applicant]

We are sending you this Personal Housing Action Plan to help with your housing need. It tells you what you need to do, and how the council will help you.

The plan is geared towards helping you:

1. Stay in your current home (if you can), or
2. Find a new place to rent in the private market.

These are realistic ways to meet your housing need. We can help you by providing advice, speaking to your landlord, or by helping you find a new place on websites such as [www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk) and [www.zoopla.co.uk](http://www.zoopla.co.uk). Finding a new place to rent means you can quickly move into a new home, and you can choose the area you want to live in.

**Do not assume that your housing need can be met by applying for social housing.** Even if you meet the qualification criteria to join the housing register, you are unlikely to be offered social housing quickly. Last year, those people who did get an offer of social housing had to **wait at least 14 months** before they were offered a home and some as long as 4 years.

The best way to quickly solve your housing issue is to **follow the actions in your Personal Housing Action Plan**. You will need to show that you have completed these actions to be eligible for support from the council.

You can contact [email] if there is anything in the plan you don't understand.

Yours sincerely

[Name]  
Housing Options Officer

# Vignettes

## 1. Full text of the vignettes used in the experiment.

	Vignette text	Objective need
1	<p>John is a 36 year old single man with no dependents. He is in good health, and earns £23,000 a year in Kent. He currently pays £700 rent per month for his 1-bed flat.</p> <p>John has fallen behind with his rent payments, and his landlord wants to evict him. One of John's friends pays £440 rent per month for a 1-bed social house. John would like to live in a social house, so he can save more money each month. He decides to go to his local council and apply for social housing.</p>	Low

## Group discussion

- Where can Behavioural Insights best be applied in public services?
- Talking through ideas for future BI projects

# Question and answer session

# Contact details

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