



£10m B&B bill for housing homeless

Newham's shock costs are highest in capital

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Nearly £9.8million was spent putting people up in bed and breakfasts last year due to a shortage of good quality housing in the borough, according to the council.

Figures released by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ) reveal that Newham Council has spent approximately £30.2m on B&Bs since 2009 – the largest amount in London.

The cost of housing people in B&Bs has risen sharply in the past three years from £4.9m to £9.7m with a predicted outlay of £10.4m for 2013/14.

Residents are put into the accommodation as an emergency when they are deemed homeless.

A Newham Council spokesman said: "Newham – along with other London councils – is under signifi-

cant pressure.

"We are doing everything we can to ensure we have good quality, affordable housing which is fairly distributed."

By contrast, the amount spent on temporary accommodation has fallen from £60.2m to £38.7m since 2009 with a slightly projected increase to £39.2m for 2013/14.

Crisis

In Newham, around 24,000 people are waiting for a council house, the private rented sector – the largest in London at 35,000 properties – has doubled in the past decade and home ownership is rapidly declining.

Between January 1 and March 31, 168 people from other parts of London have been housed in Newham – a consequence of changes to housing benefit and reduced temporary accommodation, a council spokesman states.

Keith Fernett, director of Anchor House, a retraining centre for homeless people in Canning Town, told the BIJ: "What we've been seeing is a transfer of the inner-London homeless problem into this borough. Poor Newham gets hit."

Newham Council hope a number of new policies to create local options will tackle the growing housing crisis.

These include a bond scheme to replace traditional cash deposits to private landlords leasing to tenants for a minimum of 12 months and agreeing not to charge above certain rent levels; an altered housing allocation policy to prioritise low-paid workers, carers, and the armed forces; the country's first private landlord licensing scheme and Local Space, a not-for-profit landlord to provide temporary accommodation.