



LIVING ON THE EDGE

Housing London's Blue Light Emergency Services

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
OVERVIEW	4
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY FOR LONDON'S EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKERS	5
THE IMPACT ON LONDON'S EMERGENCY SERVICES	7
ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF LONDON'S EMERGENCY SERVICES	10

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In May 2014, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) published the report, *Getting our house in order*, that explored the impact of housing undersupply on London businesses. That report found the capital had become increasingly unaffordable for many workers, resulting in multiple impacts on London businesses such as challenges around employee productivity and staff retention. We noted that greater numbers of London's workforce – including those in the 'blue light' emergency services – were being priced out of London and were often having to endure lengthy commutes into the capital.

At that time, we presented our findings to the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, noting that consideration was needed on how housing undersupply could potentially affect future London resilience.

Fast forward to May 2016. London has a new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, who during his mayoral campaign raised questions about London's preparedness for a major incident. The Mayor takes office as London is forecast to reach a population of nine million by 2020 and achieve 'megacity' status by 2030 with over ten million residents. The four-year period of the new mayoralty must see important decisions taken to prepare London to meet the challenges of 2020 and beyond.

Major incidents do not happen often and each is different; however, every major incident requires an immediate response by the main 'blue light' emergency services: the Fire Brigade to manage rescue efforts and damage control, Ambulance Paramedics to treat casualties and the Police to coordinate operations.

As Londoners know, the men and women in our main emergency services have served our capital with a professionalism that is an example to the world of optimal multi-agency incident management.

When an incident happens everyone in London, whether businesses, residents or visitors, will expect a highly efficient response. For that response to be effective, sufficient levels of operational staff have to be available, ready to be deployed in a timely manner; within a specific area.

It is not the task of LCCI to prescribe how any incident response should be – there are established official structures and processes in place for that. Rather, as the capital's most representative business organisation, our role is to explore and highlight issues that could, potentially, hinder the continued economic growth, success and prosperity of our great city.

This latest LCCI report has focused on housing affordability, whether to rent or to buy, for London's emergency services workers. The findings, and in particular some of the comments from members of the emergency services, do give one cause for concern.

The report has found that a majority of London's main 'blue light' emergency services workers live outside London. As London moves towards becoming a 'megacity', the preparedness of 'blue light' emergency services is a matter that the new Mayor – and the new Assembly – will want to comprehensively examine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Stanbridge'.

Colin Stanbridge, Chief Executive, LCCI

OVERVIEW

For a leading global city like London, housing is critical infrastructure. While the transport and energy infrastructure that serves the capital is regularly risk-assessed, housing-related risks to London's resilience do not appear to figure prominently in the emergency preparedness strategies and crisis response exercises undertaken by governmental agencies.¹ Since the transfer of central Government responsibility to the Greater London Authority in 2010, the Mayor is accountable – through the Chair of the London Resilience Forum (LRF) – for ensuring that London is resilient in relation to major incidents.² Operating within the framework of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), the LRF provides a discussion and decision platform for representatives of the Sector Panels of the many organisations of the London Resilience Partnership (LRP).³ LCCI has a seat on the Business Sector Panel of the London Resilience Forum.

This report highlights the potential impact of housing undersupply on London resilience by exploring the issue of housing affordability for the three 'blue light' emergency services that would respond to a "major incident", as defined by the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LES�P).⁴

The Metropolitan Police Service, London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service are designated as 'Category One' Responders under the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act and their frontline staff will be first at the scene during major incidents to provide an operational response.⁵ As such, they perform a vital role in controlling an incident and their collective actions will be fundamental to ensuring business continuity.

However, the rising cost of housing has led to a greater proportion of workers who are essential to the basic functioning of London either struggling to remain in the capital or having moved out and become regional commuters into London. **LCCI has found that, cumulatively, 54% of London's 'blue light' emergency services frontline personnel now live outside London.**⁶

Greater numbers of the capital's 'essential' workers living outside London may pose challenges for future resilience management particularly in relation to incidents that have a prolonged duration. Power failures, industrial action, health pandemics or adverse weather each have potential to quickly disrupt daily life and curtail economic productivity. For example, a prolonged major power supply failure would place the London economy in a crisis situation with significant pressure on police, fire and ambulance paramedics. London's blue light services perform their duties on a shift-based employment pattern and, in a major power failure scenario, renewing and refreshing shift cover may be particularly challenging if large numbers of blue light services workers are living outside the capital, unable to use public transport to travel into London.

As Labour's candidate, Sadiq Khan firmly signalled his intention to review the ability of London to respond to emergency situations.⁷ As London's Mayor, Mr Khan has set about his task with gusto, meeting both the Police Commissioner and Fire Commissioner in his early days in office, and appointing Lord Harris to lead a review into London's preparedness to respond to a major terrorist incident.

Of course there is a formal requirement upon the Mayor, as the elected leader of regional government, to improve the preparedness of the capital.⁸ However, the initial actions by new Mayor Sadiq Khan, along with a new Chair of the London Resilience Forum, as well as an apparent forthcoming examination of resilience arrangements by London local authorities, provide the opportunity to review, renew and refresh the risk assessment and capability appraisal process that determines London's emergency preparedness.

¹ Greater London Authority (GLA): *London Local Resilience Forum minutes*, April 2011 - October 2015

² GLA: *London Local Resilience Forum minutes*, April 2011, p.3

³ Over 170 organisations are members of the London Resilience Partnership. GLA: *London Prepared*, at <https://london.gov.uk/about-us/organisations-we-work/london-prepared>

⁴ London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (2015): *Major Incident Procedure Manual*, version 9.4, p.8

⁵ GLA (2013): *London Resilience Strategy*, Appendix 1

⁶ See table 2 of this report. London is defined as the 33 London local authority areas

⁷ Evening Standard: *Sadiq Khan: I'll put London on a 'War footing' to deal with threat of terror*, 14 April 2016

⁸ Cabinet Office (2012): *Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme*, p.11

London consistently features among the top of global cost of living reports,⁹ with consumer prices considerably higher than elsewhere in the country,¹⁰ and public transport fares ranking among the highest in the world.¹¹

However, it is the cost of housing that has been the primary pressure point on Londoners, pushing many to move out of the capital in recent years.¹² The LCCI report *Getting our house in order* found London's chronic under supply of homes had resulted in house prices – as well as rent levels – greatly outstripping average wage increases so making living in London unaffordable for many. This in turn gives rise to a number of challenges for both employees and employers, in terms of punctuality, productivity, recruitment and retention.¹³

Average house prices in London are more than five times their level in 1970, even adjusting for inflation.¹⁴ In 2015, the average house price in London was £515,000, compared to £292,000 across England.¹⁵ Over 2014/15, the average private sector rent for a one-bedroom dwelling in London was £1,200 per month, around twice the level of surrounding regions, while the average two-bedroom rent was £1,450, compared to less than £600 across England as a whole.¹⁶

Emergency services workers are a group that have struggled to afford London's high cost of living - housing in particular. London's police officers, firefighters and paramedics generally earn between £22,000 and £38,000 in basic pay and between £3,000 and £5,000 in weighting and allowances (see table 1).

"Our average earnings for our workforce have gone up by 3% or 4%. The average cost of travel with a zone 1-4 ticket has gone up by 25%. The cost of housing has gone up by in excess of a third." (Danny Mortimer, Chief Executive, NHS Employers)¹⁷

The capital's emergency services have experienced reduced budgets in recent years. For example, since 2013/14 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has had to make nearly £600 million in savings.¹⁸ As a result, basic staff pay has increased marginally over the past few years with London weighting struggling to compensate for the additional costs of living in London.

"In recent years, help with the cost of living police officers used to get has been cut to the bone. There has been a huge review and budget cuts implemented. There is no more subsidised section housing and allowances, the pensions system has changed, travel concessions have been reduced, so officers are really feeling the pinch. Officers are also unable to top up their pay with overtime and additional duties, as there is no money in the pot to do that anymore." (London Police Officer)

Average starting salaries for London emergency services workers appear not to be sufficient to rent a home within London. Using the generally accepted definition for affordable rent of no more than 35% of take-home pay, an emergency services worker who earns £24,000 after taxes and benefits, should not pay more than £700 per month in rent. That is £500 below the average one-bedroom rent in London. Even assuming a total household income of £48,000 after taxes and benefits, renting the average two-bedroom home would still appear to be unaffordable for a double-income household (see table 1).

Home ownership appears equally unaffordable. Using a 10% deposit figure and a loan to income ratio of 4.5,¹⁹ the annual household income required for the average first-time-buyer home in London was £80,700 in 2015, which would be out of reach for 'blue light' emergency services workers on starting salaries. In contrast, in London's neighbouring regions of the Southeast and the East of England, combined incomes of £49,300 and £43,500 respectively would be enough for a couple to get on the housing ladder.²⁰

⁹ Economist Intelligence Unit (2016): *Worldwide Cost of Living Report 2016*

¹⁰ States of Jersey (2014): *Jersey-UK Relative Consumer Price Levels for Goods and Services 2013*

¹¹ Statista (2016): *Average cost for public transport in selected cities around the world in 2015*, at <http://www.statista.com/statistics/275438/public-transport-cost-cities/>

¹² The Guardian: *Young Londoners flee capital for the regions: House prices drive thirtysomethings out to smaller cities*, 29 November 2014; Centre for London (2015): *Fair to Middling: Report of the commission on intermediate housing*

¹³ LCCI (2014): *Getting our house in order: The impact of housing undersupply on London businesses*, at www.londonchamber.co.uk/research/housingreport

¹⁴ GLA (2015): *Housing in London 2015: The evidence base for the Mayor's Housing Strategy*

¹⁵ Average mix-adjusted house prices: £515,000 in London, £292,000 in England, £350,000 in the Southeast and £301,000 in the East of England. ONS (2015): *House Price Index: Annual Tables 20-39*, Table 25

¹⁶ Median monthly one/two bedroom rents: £1,200/£1,450 in London, £540/£595 in England, £650/£800 in the Southeast and £550/£650 in the East of England. Valuation Office Agency (2015): *Private Rental Market Summary Statistics, England, 2014-15*, Tables 2.3 and 2.4

¹⁷ Oral evidence at London Assembly Health Scrutiny Committee meeting, 3 February 2016

¹⁸ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (2016): *MOPAC 2016 Report*

¹⁹ The upper threshold at which 85% of mortgages are given; methodology based on KPMG press release: *Affordable housing further out of reach*, 4 May 2015

²⁰ LCCI calculation based on average first-time buyer prices, ONS (2015), op. cit.

Table 1: Comparing emergency services workers pay to housing affordability in London and England

Emergency services role	Basic annual pay	London weighting and allowances	Take-home pay required to affordably rent the average 1 or 2 bedroom home ²¹		Income required for the average first time buyer home ²²	
			London	England	London	England
Police constable	£22,668 - £37,626 ²³	A total of £6,687 London weighting and allowance ²⁴	£41,143 (1 bedroom)	£ 18,514 (1 bedroom)	£ 80,722	£44,608
Firefighter	£22,017 - £29,345 ²⁵	£3,483 at start, goes up to £5,160 after three years ²⁶				
Ambulance paramedic	£21,692 - £28,180 ²⁷	An additional 20% in Inner London, 15% in Outer London and 5% in the London Fringe ²⁸				

London businesses are concerned about the shortage of affordable housing affecting their ability to recruit and retain skilled employees.²⁹ There is also recognition of the potential impact on resilience as reflected upon by a senior business figure, who formerly served within London's police:

"As an ex-police officer and the Head of Counterterrorism, I have been aware of the issue of housing for the emergency services for many years. If you do not have people living in London and transport hubs are targeted in an attack, it is going to be a problem. I would support housing for emergency respondents in London, not only so they are geographically near, but they would also better identify with the struggles of the citizens." (Brett Lovegrove, Valentis Bridge Limited)

²¹ LCCI calculation based on median rent prices, Valuation Office Agency (2015), op. cit.

²² Based on 85% mortgages. LCCI calculation based on average first-time buyer prices, ONS (2015), op. cit.

²³ MetFriendly: Police pay, at <http://www.mps.org.uk/standalone/policepay>

²⁴ Metropolitan -Police Service (MPS): New constable – salary and benefits, at <http://www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/newconstable/being-a-pc.php>

²⁵ Fire Brigades Union (2015): Pay settlement 2015, at www.fbu.org.uk/pay-rates/pay-settlement-2015

²⁶ Information provided to LCCI by the London Fire Brigades Union

²⁷ NHS (2015): Pay arrangements for 2015/16, Pay and Conditions Circular (AforC) 1/2015 (12 March 2015)

²⁸ NHS (2016): Pay in high cost areas, at <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/pay-and-reward/pay/pay-in-high-cost-areas>

²⁹ LCCI (2014), op. cit.

THE IMPACT ON LONDON'S EMERGENCY SERVICES

The research undertaken for this report found that a majority (54%) of the 'blue light' emergency services workers serving the city are no longer living within London (see table 2).

"Historically, ambulance staff have worked within half an hour of where they lived so, if there is a major incident, they can get to work quickly. But as housing becomes less affordable in the centre, the further out it pushes people." (Alan Lofthouse, UNISON - Ambulance Services)

Table 2: Percentage of London's emergency services workers living outside the capital

Emergency service	Staff numbers	Number living outside London	Proportion living outside London
POLICE Metropolitan police officers ³⁰	27,776	15,663	56%
FIRE Firefighters ³¹	4,843	2,589	53%
PARAMEDICS Ambulance Service paramedics ³²	2,036	614	30%
Total	34,655	18,866	54%

A majority of London emergency services workers living outside London gives rise to a host of impacts, most immediately of course on the workers, but also on the capital's overall resilience preparedness.

Most emergency services workers now appear to be spending more of their time and an increasing amount of their money on commuting into London to serve their shifts.

"A significant and increasing number of firefighters live outside of London, purely because of the cost of living. Those living in London are spending a big percentage of their salary on the rental market, but those commuting in also find it expensive – especially given the increases in rail fares in recent years. Many of the managers that live out of London have a requirement to be on standby for a period of time when not on duty, so some are using hotels, B&Bs and rental accommodation to fulfil that, which also puts a strain on both their finance and work life balance." (Ian Leahair, FBU)

Case study: cost of living pressures on London firefighters

The cost of renting in London can put pressure on experienced frontline personnel, to the extent that they may move out of the capital and, potentially, to other fire brigades. David Waterman, 49, said:

"I have been with the LFB for 25 years, having been in the army for five years prior to that. When I first joined the Fire Brigade, I lived in Brixton and then I moved to Surrey, in rented accommodation provided by the housing association for ex-servicemen. I am single dad and lived there with my daughter. As the years went by, I found it increasingly unaffordable, even with subsidised rent.

"Since 2003, salaries have only increased by 1-2% annually, while at the same time pensions and national insurance contributions have increased. I look at my pay slips and my take-home pay now is similar to what I was earning in 2008, while the cost of living has been rising very fast.

"I have been with my partner for eight years. She is based in Scotland and six months ago we decided it would be better, from a financial point of view, for me to move in with her and commute to London. So I fly from Glasgow to London at the beginning of my four-shift tour of duty, stay with friends of family in between shifts, then fly back for my days off.

"I have to manage my travelling so that I get to work hours before I am due on duty, in case of any delays, and it does make you exhausted at work. It is not ideal at all. I considered transferring to the Scottish Fire Emergency Service, but if I did, my benefits package would change and I am a few years short of retiring."

³⁰ MPS (July 2015): Freedom of Information request response, at http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_2015/may_2015/2014120001310.pdf

³¹ Information provided to LCCI by London Fire Brigades Union in April 2016. The February 2016 figures are based on the total number of operational firefighters.

³² Information provided to LCCI by the London Ambulance Service in May 2016. Figures include Paramedics, Senior Paramedics, Team Leader Paramedics and Advanced Paramedic Practitioners.

These findings raise concerns about the potential impacts on emergency services performance and deployment capability in the event of an emergency, as well as staff punctuality and retention. The effects of commuting on the wellbeing of employees has been well documented.³³ Lengthy commutes into the capital increase potential for multiple detrimental impacts.

“When added to the working day, long commutes and being away from home for a long time certainly raise issues around people’s stress and sickness levels. It is already a hugely stressful job, and having to travel two extra hours to come to work, and then again after a long day, can create even more pressure, both in terms of stress and domestic work life balance.” (Ian Leahair, FBU)

“If you finish at 7pm in the evening, before you get home and get yourself sorted out, it is probably 10 o’clock at night. And then you need to leave home at half past four in the morning again to start work at seven. That cuts down on your sleep time and you get progressively more tired as the week goes on, and it is unsafe to drive any blue light response vehicle when tired.” (Anthony Scantlebury, GMB LAS Branch)

Case study: stress and sickness levels among police officers

Increasing stress and sickness levels and declining job satisfaction have been a real issue for the MPS, with the numbers of police officers on stress-related sick leave rising by 35% between 2010 and 2015, and 23,000 working days lost due to illness caused by stress in 2014.³⁴

While the very nature of policing is stressful, as Ken Marsh, Chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, commented: *“stress levels are the highest they have ever been, partly due to the commute. Core blue light officers do 10.5 hour shifts on average, which can mean 14-hour days if you add another hour or hour and a half each way in travel – every day. That is a huge amount of commitment required, and the stress levels are huge.”* Worries about the cost of living in London also play a role. A survey of police staff found more than 8 in 10 have had to cut back on basic necessities, such as housing, food and travel.³⁵

As noted by the regulator, many thousands of London-bound commuters are vulnerable to transport delays and cancellations. In the last three months of 2015, a third (34%) of Thameslink/Southern rail and a quarter (25%) of Southeastern rail peak-hour services failed to arrive at their destination within five minutes of the scheduled time.³⁶

Punctuality, always a key factor for employees, is essential for shift-based employment. Emergency services workers unable to get to their stations in time, can result in colleagues that have just served a long shift, working overtime to provide adequate cover or, potentially, some emergency response units attending incidents with fewer people than specified under minimum safety requirements.

“Transport delays do occasionally result in firefighters arriving late for work and others having to hang on until they arrive. In extreme situations, replenishing shifts may be a challenge to the extent that there is a real strain on resources and public safety is compromised. Although, frankly, this should not be the case.” (Paul Embery, FBU)

Indeed, although the LFB claimed it had enough resources to cope during the August 2011 London riots, when firefighters battled on average one blaze every nine minutes for five consecutive days, an FBU report found that *“standard operating procedures were routinely ignored, with fewer than the stipulated number of firefighters and engines being sent to incidents”*.³⁷

³³ The Guardian: *How does commuting affect wellbeing?* 12 February 2014

³⁴ MPS (December 2015): *Freedom of Information request response*, at www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_2015/december_2015/2015060001353.pdf; MPS (April 2015): *Freedom of Information request response*, at http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_2015/april_2015/2015030002120.pdf

³⁵ MayorWatch: *Met police staff feel they are second-class citizens in an increasingly “two-tier” workforce*, 3 March 2015

³⁶ Office and Rail Road (2016): *Public performance measure (PPM) by train operating company - Table 3.44*

³⁷ London Fire Brigade (2011): *Civil disturbances in London, August 2011, Brigade response*; Fire Brigades Union: *The Fire Brigades Union criticises London Fire Brigade’s report on recent riots*, 14 September 2011

Living outside London and having to endure public transport commutes raises a pertinent question about the ability to rapidly deploy large numbers of emergency services workers, particularly in a setting where the public transport system was disrupted and/or roads into the capital were obstructed.

“If we had a major public disorder – on a similar level to the recent Paris attacks – and we had to deploy quickly, efficiently and retain the deployment for a long period of time, I think you could have a problem. Many officers are living huge amounts of distances away; if the transport system breaks down or there are issues outside of London – what do you do then?” (Ken Marsh, Metropolitan Police Federation)

“You do have an established level of firefighters and officers on duty, which is constant, but we could have issues, for example if there is a flu pandemic, which might put a strain on resilience, because it may take a couple of hours to travel from where people live into the centre of London, in order to assist.” (Ian Leahair, FBU)

“If a major incident happens, all your resources are sent to deal with multiple casualties. But you still have people that are having heart attacks, strokes – those don’t stop. So you would just be dealing with the most serious priority calls, with the few resources that are left.” (Alan Lofthouse, UNISON - Ambulance Services)

It would appear that the cost of living and working in London, and the apparent stresses and strains associated with that, might result in London emergency services workers not remaining in their jobs as long as they may have used to and considering leaving for other less expensive regions or other better-paid jobs.

“Many paramedics have left as they cannot afford to live in London, particularly if they have a family. Although you have the London weighting, we have seen a 13% cut in real terms in basic pay over the last five-six years. When you take the cost of living into account, people are better off if they work for other services.” (Anthony Scantlebury, GMB LAS Branch)

Case study: recruitment and retention of paramedics

After it had been performing “poorly” since March 2014, the Care Quality Commission put the LAS under special measures, as a result of slow response times and a high number of unfilled vacancies. The CQC found there were insufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff to ensure patient safety.³⁸

According to the latest statistics, one in eight staff – including front-line paramedics, call handlers and control room operators – left the LAS in 2014/15 compared with one in 15 in 2011/12.³⁹ It has proven very difficult to replace those positions, and the LAS has been forced to recruit paramedics from as far away as Australia and New Zealand to fill urgent skills gaps.⁴⁰

Chief executive Dr Fionna Moore MBE has attributed very low staff retention levels and staff being attracted to branches outside the city partly to London’s high cost of living and shortage of housing.⁴¹ *“Retaining paramedics has been an issue because many of our paramedics live outside London because it is expensive to live in London. They do a stressful job, they work long shifts and they are attracted to other ambulance services if they happen to live on that patch,”* she commented at a GLA Health Committee hearing in February 2016.⁴²

The lack of sufficient Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) paramedics reported by the CQC is particularly concerning, with the report stating that *“there was not a safe system of working where an effective HART response could be utilised”*.⁴³

³⁸ Care Quality Commission (2015): *London Ambulance Service NHS Trust Quality Report*.

³⁹ Health and Social Care Information Centre (2015): *Provisional NHS Hospital and Community Health Service monthly workforce statistics*

⁴⁰ LAS (2014): *London Ambulance Service to recruit paramedics from overseas*, Press Release, 6 February 2014

⁴¹ Dr Fionna Moore (2015): *Video message in response to Care Quality Commission report*, 26 November 2015

⁴² GLA Health Committee: *Transcript of Item 6 – Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention in London*

⁴³ Care Quality Commission (2015): *op. cit*

ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF LONDON'S EMERGENCY SERVICES

This report, like other publications from London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, sets out to explore and highlight an issue that could, potentially, hinder the continued economic growth, success and prosperity of our great city. London's preparedness to deal with, and recover from, major incidents and crisis situations should be an issue of interest to all Londoners, whether in business or not.

LCCI's central finding that a majority of London's main 'blue light' emergency services workers live outside London reveals a situation that is far from an ideal. Indeed, that was publicly acknowledged by Mayor Sadiq Khan in answer to a question from London Assembly Member Navin Shah at the new Mayor's first Question Time, when he said it was "not sustainable" for police officers and other essential workers to live outside London and have to travel into the capital.⁴⁴

Recommendation 1: The Mayor of London should ask the Chair of the London Resilience Forum to consider how London's preparedness to deal with a major incident may be impacted by a majority of the three main 'blue light' emergency services workers living outside London.

Any thorough consideration initiated by the Chair of the London Resilience Forum may require a prolonged period of reflection. However, as this report highlights increasing numbers of emergency services workers are being priced out of London every month and having to endure daily commuter rail journeys where the average cost of London bound rail fares has risen by 25% in cash terms since 2010,⁴⁵ almost twice as fast as inflation over that period.⁴⁶

The Met Police offers subsidised travel on National Rail services for officers who were already in post prior to August 2013, but this was discontinued for new recruits.⁴⁷ **With responsibility for the management of London-bound rail services due to transfer to Transport for London, the Mayor of London could move to alleviate the costs of commuting by exploring the viability of a specific discount on commuter rail fares for all full-time, permanent London emergency services workers.**

The aim, however, must be to ensure that sufficient numbers of emergency services workers live within London. That requires action to help new recruits remain in the capital – and to encourage those that have previously moved out to return. Buying a London property is recognised as challenging, but renting in London is now becoming difficult due to the increasing cost of rental deposits.

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry was one of the first organisations in London to liaise with Shelter and adopt the Rental Deposit Loan Scheme for employees that was officially launched by former Mayor Boris Johnson in February 2015.⁴⁸ The scheme has also been taken up by Whitehall Departments and the Greater London Authority. The Metropolitan Police Service has also recently provided access to interest-free rental deposit loans for officers.

Recommendation 2: To help support all London's emergency services workers, the Mayor of London should explore the feasibility of Rental Deposit Loans for full-time, permanent, operational staff in the London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service.

In the past, London local authorities and the emergency services provided some help with housing for London's essential workers on a larger scale. For example, the Metropolitan Police paid a housing allowance (which was withdrawn in 1994) and offered section housing for officers, although most of that stock has been sold. There is a patchwork of housing provision by some London councils – and private housing associations – for 'key workers' that meet specific eligibility criteria. However, demand for such schemes outstrips supply and prices are often untenable for emergency workers' salaries.⁴⁹ For example, the average minimum income requirement for homes under the previous Mayor's 'First Steps' affordable home ownership scheme was £38,452.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ GLA: Mayor's question time, Question 2016/1411, 25 May 2016, at <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayors-question-time-2016-05-25>

⁴⁵ Calculations based on House of Commons Library (2016): *Public Transport Fares Briefing Paper*, Table A5; National Rail Enquiries (2016): *About your rail fare*, at http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/ticket_types/83871.aspx

⁴⁶ ONS (2016): *Consumer Price Inflation: March 2016*

⁴⁷ MPS: *New constable – salary and benefits*, at <http://www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/newconstable/being-a-pc.php>; *Experienced officers – pay and benefits*, at <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/Pay--benefits/1300003221711/1300003221711>

⁴⁸ Mayor of London: *Mayor and Shelter launch loan scheme for private renters*, Press Release, 03 February 2015

⁴⁹ The Guardian: *The key to affordable housing for essential workers?* 14 April 2014

⁵⁰ Darren Johnson (2014): *Can a nurse get on Boris' property ladder? Problems key workers face buying shared ownership homes in London*

The shared responsibility between London boroughs, the Corporation of London and the Mayor of London for strategic planning is codified within the London Plan that outlines various policy development strategies including Housing, to 2036. The Mayor is obliged to have regard to ensure consistency between strategies and national policies. Furthermore, the Mayor is legally required to keep the London Plan under review and can seek amendment or alteration to provisions within.⁵¹ It is notable that within the existing London Plan, the previous Mayor had identified a 'need' for housing provision in London for older people and for students.⁵²

Recommendation 3: The Mayor of London should consult the London boroughs and the Corporation of London on an alteration to the London Plan to formally identify the need for specialist emergency services worker housing as an important planning issue for London.

As London moves towards becoming a megacity with ten million plus residents, so the capital's risk threshold will increase. Ultimately, the most reliable way to have sufficient levels of operational staff available to be swiftly deployed when required, is to ensure they live in reasonable proximity to their work area. As this is a matter of strategic importance, and to ensure clarity over responsibility, the Mayor of London should consider becoming an Owner – Landlord of housing stock for London 'blue light' emergency services workers. This could guarantee secure tenures for specific operational staff – and also offer a future revenue stream for City Hall.

Candidate Khan pledged to create *Homes for Londoners*; a new body consolidating Mayoral housing, planning and land powers along with an expert advisory function to raise investment, assemble land and commission and construct new homes.⁵³

Mayor Khan should look to enhance and improve the London Land Commission that was created to identify publicly-owned land for development and synchronise its activity with his *Homes for Londoners* agency.

There are sufficient land assets within the GLA family and other public bodies,⁵⁴ that the new Mayor could utilise to potentially broker deals with selected developers that see a proportion of housing units built on the released land set aside as homes to rent only for emergency services workers – with the Office of Mayor of London as long-term landlord.

At the same time, over 7,500 local authority homes in London worth £4 billion are currently lying empty,⁵⁵ amid calls to bring them back into use.

Recommendation 4: The Mayor of London should consider assuming an Owner – Landlord position for housing stock for London 'blue light' emergency services workers.

Recommendation 5: A dedicated unit should be established within the Mayor's *Homes for Londoners* to act as an intermediary to secure, commission or build homes specifically to rent to emergency services workers.

Recommendation 6: *Homes for Londoners* should work with the London boroughs to bring local authority empty homes back into use for London emergency services workers to rent

Liberating more land to build more homes will be a challenge; yet, an approach tempered by realistic short-term and long-term objectives, as well as practical considerations on how to unlock the potential of available land, could begin to deliver the homes that London's emergency services workers need.

⁵¹ GLA (2015): *The London Plan*, pp.14-17

⁵² Ibid, pp.121-123

⁵³ Sadiq Khan (2016): *A Manifesto for all Londoners*, Sadiq Khan and London Labour's Manifesto 2016

⁵⁴ There are over 100 ha of available land within the London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police Service and NHS London. LCCI analysis of GLA (2016): *GLA Group Land Assets*, at <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/gla-group-land-assets>, and Department of Health (2015): *Release of NHS owned land for development*, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/release-of-nhs-owned-land-for-development>

⁵⁵ Evening Standard: *Councils have 7,500 homes worth £4bn lying empty across London*, 25 May 2016

