

REPORT TO:	Streets, Environment & Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee 4 th October 2022
SUBJECT:	Housing Needs Transformation Plan
LEAD OFFICER:	Hamid Khan Interim Head of Homelessness and Allocations Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor – Head of Temporary Accommodation
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Hamid Khan Interim Head of Homelessness and Allocations Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor – Head of Temporary Accommodation
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	Public

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	At the Sub-Committee meeting on the 20 th of July 2022, the Housing Needs Transformation Plan was identified as a topic for scrutiny at a future meeting.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To receive an update on the development of the Housing Needs Transformation Plan and to examine how this is going to be delivered against the pressures of delivering in-year savings.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Housing Needs Service is undergoing a transformation as part of a longer-term plan for full transformation for the whole Department. This transformation will look at Homelessness Services and Temporary Accommodation.

2. Transformation of the Housing Needs Service

2.1. Background

- 2.2. The Homelessness Reduction Act was passed as statute in 2017. Its main aim is to prevent or relieve homelessness by discharging duty into the private rented sector, if possible. The aim is to work with homeless clients in a far more holistic fashion with a real emphasis on early intervention to prevent homelessness. Being a statutory service, if homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved, then customers are placed into emergency accommodation, then eventually into temporary accommodation

2.3. **Issues**

- 2.4. At present the structure of the Homelessness and Assessments service does not allow for early intervention to prevent or relieve homelessness. This can be evidenced by the fact that in 2020-21 Croydon was in the bottom quartile for performance in preventing homelessness: 27.7% compared to the London average of 43.7%. The table below in **Appendix 1**, shows the better performing London Councils.
- 2.5. There is a culture of working in silos within the service, leading to poor customer outcomes. There is no performance management framework and working practices are outdated and inefficient, and the data within the service is extremely poor. A poorly made decision around a homelessness case, which the Council lost in High Court, will cost another £130,000 in legal fees to appeal to the Supreme Court.
- 2.6. The present service is not customer centric, and the customer journey is, at best, totally disjointed with several routes into the service and very few options for customers. Often customers are not moved through the system and can remain in temporary accommodation for several years. 3 recent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen's investigations have found against the Council for people staying too long in unsuitable temporary accommodation.
- 2.7. The inefficiencies within the service are further exemplified by the fact Croydon is one of two councils in England who have more than 5 families in shared Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks. This contravenes the statutory instrument and has brought scrutiny from DLUHC.

2.8. **Options**

- 2.9. The only option is to fundamentally transform the whole service. The Transformation will focus on creating a service that intervenes at the earliest possible sign of homeless to prevent that homelessness. The service will focus on cultural change, introducing a performance management framework and ensure that the service is customer centric. The services will work strategically to minimise the use of emergency accommodation.
- 2.10. The Transformation will ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations and focuses only on this. New methods of service delivery will bring efficiencies throughout the service.

2.11. **Proposed next steps**

- 2.12. The Housing Directorate has identified a series of actions to transform the Housing Needs service through an emphasis on early intervention and prevention. The approach aligns with the Government's [Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) and will align with the Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2.13. The proposed actions are outlined below:

Transformation Action	Description
Restructure of the Housing Needs service	<p>This will improve the Council’s response to homelessness demand management through early intervention and ensuring that appropriate support is given to those who need it.</p> <p>The service must be re-structured to improve the Council's early intervention and demand management. The re-structure will ensure that the service is fit-for-purpose and that all staff are skills-matched to the roles needed to deliver an efficient and effective service</p> <p>Additional resource/Lead Officer is in place to support the service with this.</p>
Development of the Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy	<p>This Strategy must be in place to ensure the Council is compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Without a Homelessness Strategy, the Council risks no longer being in receipt of the Homelessness Prevention Grant which totalled £7.2m in 2022/2023.</p> <p>The existing Strategy covers the period 2019-2022 and a way forward has been agreed with DLUHC based on current capacity:</p> <p>(a) To update the current action plan so that it is fit for purpose for another year</p> <p>(b) Revise the strategy which is a bigger piece of work for another 4/5 years following a review of homelessness demand/issues in the borough.</p>
Improve poor standards of temporary accommodation	<p>Some of our emergency and temporary accommodation is in poor condition and the service is increasingly receiving complaints and legal challenges</p> <p>A dynamic purchasing system (DPS) for the procurement and management of emergency accommodation is being developed to ensure the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor compliance in accommodation standards across all placements • Effectively Contract manage the supply chain –saves times and resources • complies with procurement regulations and • achieve value-for-money for emergency accommodation.

	<p>In addition, frequent visits are taking place in response to complaints.</p> <p>Additional resource/Lead Officer is in place to develop the DPS system.</p>
<p>Reduction of Households spending long periods of time in emergency and temporary accommodation</p>	<p>The availability of affordable new supply of accommodation has reduced year on year for a combination of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% of private landlords have left the market in the last year. • Local Housing allowances are still stuck at 2011 rates and rents continue to rise which makes many properties unaffordable. • The cost-of-living crises means cost overall are increasing and landlords are demanding higher and higher incentives <p>As a result, households are remaining in emergency and temporary accommodation for a long period of time. In addition, there are a number of families in shared Bed & Breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks which is a breach of legislation.</p> <p>Council voids and pipeline of properties are being allocated in a targeting way to help create a churn within the system to move families out of emergency & temporary accommodation. A project team is in place to support the families who have spent the longest time in emergency/temporary accommodation and those who are in shared B&B by moving them into suitable accommodation. To monitor progress, monthly meetings is held with DLUHC.</p> <p>A team of officers will also be recruited to review the circumstance of all the households living in emergency and temporary accommodation so that pro-active targeted support can be given to enable them to move into settled accommodation either in the private or social sector.</p>
<p>Cleansing of Housing Needs data</p>	<p>A detailed analysis of the service data activity is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accurate data is submitted to the government as this has an impact on the level of Homelessness Prevention Grant that the Council is awarded. • Help the service to establish accurate baseline so that realistic targets for managing and reducing the spend across the year can be set • Support accurate budget forecast assumptions.

	Additional resource/Lead Officer is in place to support the service with this.
Occupancy check of temporary accommodation units	A team of officers will be recruited to conduct occupancy checks of temporary accommodation units to ensure our existing provision is used effectively.
Recharge of housing associations	To maximise the supply of accommodation from Housing Associations in the borough, a Liaison Officer is being recruited to develop nomination agreements or where one exists, to review it to ensure the Council receives the required nominations. This will create a supply churn for people on the waiting list including those living in emergency and temporary accommodation.

- 2.14. The delivery of these actions will be monitored and assessed by the Housing Directorate Management Meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Hamid Khan, Interim Head of Homelessness

Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor, Head of Temporary Accommodation

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix 1

Appendix 1- % of applications accepted at prevention and relief stage (2020/2021)

Local Authority	No. of h'lessness Applications	No. of prevention duties accepted	Prevention Duties as % of total applications	No. of Relief duties accepted	Relief Duties as % of total applications
England	282,240	119,400	42.3%	149,160	52.8%
London	54,890	23,990	43.7%	27,770	50.6%
Hillingdon	1,751	1287	73.5%	440	25.1%
Merton	567	396	69.8%	155	27.3%
Lewisham	3,166	1830	57.8%	1318	41.6%
Barking and Dagenham	1,505	864	57.4%	543	36.1%
Islington	1,698	938	55.2%	685	40.3%
Barnet	2,111	1124	53.2%	906	42.9%
Havering	1,837	977	53.2%	755	41.1%
Waltham Forest	1932	996	51.6%	927	48.0%
Ealing	2,471	1234	49.9%	1205	48.8%
Lambeth	3,243	1535	47.3%	1679	51.8%
Enfield	2,029	955	47.1%	950	46.8%
Kingston	449	210	46.8%	217	48.3%

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London	54,890	23,990	43.7%	27,770	50.6%
Brent	2,951	1280	43.4%	1639	55.5%
Haringey	3,438	1486	43.2%	207	6.0%
Bromley	1,190	500	42.0%	650	54.6%
Tower Hamlets	2042	760	37.2%	1178	57.7%
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,076	400	37.2%	663	61.6%
Kensington and Chelsea	1,049	389	37.1%	637	60.7%
Sutton	962	353	36.7%	451	46.9%
Bexley	788	273	34.6%	513	65.1%
Greenwich	1,750	595	34.0%	951	54.3%
Hackney	2,224	725	32.6%	1429	64.3%
Richmond UT	295	95	32.2%	192	65.1%
Harrow	682	213	31.2%	433	63.5%
Camden	1,203	343	28.5%	755	62.8%
Croydon	2,379	658	27.7%	1629	68.5%
Southwark	3669	1005	27.4%	2390	65.1%
Westminster	1805	348	19.3%	1253	69.4%
City of London	12	2	16.7%	10	83.3%

Source: Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None