

Report for: Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

Title: Update on Temporary Accommodation

Report authorised by: Dan Hawthorn, Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning

Lead Officer: Alan Benson, Head of Housing Strategy & Commissioning

Ward(s) affected: All

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. Haringey has a number of households living in temporary accommodation. This is a significant financial cost to the Council, as well as adversely affecting the lives of those who become homeless. This report provides an update on temporary accommodation in Haringey and the initiatives in place to prevent homelessness and reduce the cost and improve the quality of temporary accommodation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note the report as background to the discussion in homelessness and temporary accommodation.

3. Background information

Homelessness in Haringey

- 3.1. Homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation (TA) are significant challenges to the Council. Haringey has a large number of households living in TA – currently just under 3,000, the fourth highest figure in London. The high level of homelessness in the borough is a longstanding issue and the numbers in TA have been much higher in the past; indeed there were 6,000 households in TA in 2006. This means that there are a number of households who have been homeless, and living in TA, for many years. And the high numbers in TA is a major financial cost to the Council's General Fund.

- 3.2. The breakdown of Haringey residents living in TA is as follows:

Household type

- 65% are Lone parent households (4% male applicants)
- 2.7% single person households

Age

- 5208 children under 18 live in TA with their families
- 51% of TA applicants are under the age of 40
- 32% of TA applicants are 40-49
- 1% of TA applicants are 70 and over

Ethnicity

- 26% of TA residents are Black African
- 11% of TA residents are Black Caribbean
- 10% of TA residents are Other White European

Nationality

- 46% of TA applicants are British Nationals
- 19% of TA applicants are non-EEA Nationals

3.3. The Council places both those whom it is assessing as homeless and those who have been accepted as homeless in forms of TA. Households are allocated this TA according to the Council's Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy.

3.4. The accommodation used by the Council falls into the following categories:

- Lodges: these are used to allow households to remain in Haringey in the relief period, while their homelessness situation is being investigated.
- Emergency/nightly paid accommodation: properties across London are sourced using a Dynamic Purchasing System, which is also used by other London boroughs.
- Leasing from private landlords: 3 or 5 year leases are secured from private landlords in and around the borough. The properties are fully assessed to ensure they are suitable.

3.5. In 2018/19, 3,608 households approached the Housing Demand service in HfH seeking help with their housing situation, an average of 300 households per month. This was made up of 1,540 families, 66 childless couples, 601 single people over 50 and 1,401 single people under the age of 50. A total of 529 households entered TA for the first time in 18/19, an average of 44 per month over the year and 37 in the last 6 months. In 2018/19 homelessness was prevented or relieved in 1,084 of cases. A full housing duty was accepted in 304 cases.

3.6. The most common reason for homelessness is the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy. Alongside this, 48% of households in TA are affected by welfare reform.

3.7. There are currently 2,931 households living in TA, a drop from the 3,134 households in temporary accommodation in May 2017. 668 of those households made their homelessness application before 6 November 2012, and for these families the Council's homelessness duty can only be ended by offering social housing (see para 3.10).

The regional context

- 3.8. Haringey is not alone is facing a significant homelessness and TA challenge. In June 2018 London boroughs had 56,560 households living in TA, which is over two thirds of the 82,310 households in TA across England as a whole. It is noticeable that across London this figure has been creeping up over the last two years, while in Haringey it has stayed level or fallen.

The national context and legislative framework

- 3.9. The Homelessness Reduction Act has been in effect since April 2018 and was the most significant change to homelessness legislation in 40 years. It aims to prevent homelessness by addressing its causes, as well as through better partnership working. The Act has led to an increase in the number of people approaching the Council for help with their housing situation. Figures comparing us with other local authorities and feedback from MHCLG indicate that the Council is managing the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act well.
- 3.10. The last significant change to the homelessness legislation prior to this was the 2012 Localism Act. This allowed local authorities to discharge homelessness duties through the offer of a suitable private sector tenancy. Previously a homelessness duty could only be ended through the offer of a social tenancy.
- 3.11. As well as legislation relating directly to homelessness, changes to the benefits system and the cuts to benefits that have been made, have made it harder for a number of residents to sustain their private sector tenancies. The loss of an assured shorthold tenancy is now the most common cause of homelessness in Haringey.

Our actions

- 3.12. The Council has developed, in collaboration with a range of partners, a new Homelessness Strategy. This has been in place since March 2018. The strategy responds to the changed legislative framework and emphasises close working with partners across the borough.
- 3.13. The Council also has a TA reduction plan in place. This monitors the numbers of households in TA, the cost of TA, and progress on the range of initiatives being pursued to reduce the numbers and costs. These initiatives are being funded primarily through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant that has been awarded to the Council.
- 3.14. The Housing Needs service, which sits in Homes for Haringey, was restructured and additional staff recruited to deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act. This was primarily funded through the New Burdens Funding made available to the Council.
- 3.15. Additional prevention and relief 'tools' and accommodation offers have been developed, including a review of private rented offer and incentives; a strengthening of the Supported Housing Pathway, the establishment of a dedicated Employment Officer, as well as work on mobility options. The Council is also working with partners to identify early triggers and risk factors and has developed new referral protocols.

Future work

- 3.16. The most significant contribution to reducing the numbers in TA will be the Council's programme to deliver 1000 new Council Homes. This will deliver an increased supply of affordable housing into which homeless households can be housed.
- 3.17. As well as this, other initiatives are underway. Haringey is among the 13 initial members of Capital Letters. This is a pan-London initiative to source TA collaboratively, which will reduce competition between boroughs - and therefore prices – and will result in many more people being placed in TA in or nearer their home borough. This should go live this summer.
- 3.18. The Council is also in the process of establishing a Community Benefit Society, which is a charitable body – independent of the Council - to which the Council will lease homes that it acquires in the open market for use as TA. Ultimately these properties will return to the Council at which point they could be used for further TA or for general needs rent. This will, again, enable more TA to be acquired in and around Haringey and will significantly reduce the costs of that TA to the Council. The CBS should also go live in July.