

Appendix 2 – Response to the Recommendations of the Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel

Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Review into Temporary Accommodation Placements and Discharging Temporary Accommodation Residents into the Private Rented Sector.

No.	Recommendation	Suggested Response (Agreed/Not Agreed/Partially Agreed)	Response to Recommendation
1	That Cabinet lobby the government to: a) Change the TA subsidy rates and move them up to match current market prices. The rates are stuck at January 2011 rates and LAs are incurring significant debts because government hasn't uplifted the rates; b) Move the Local Housing Allowance rates up to the 50 th percentile (rather than 30%) and ensure they are up-rated annually.	Agree	Changes to the TA subsidy rules has been a consistent lobbying point by Councils and bodies that represent them, including London Councils.
2	That the Council strengthens its representations to the Mayor of London and the government around the need to agree a framework of pan-London TA rent levels, in order to prevent London boroughs competing with each other and driving up prices.	Agree	Reviewing the approach to rate setting and governance of compliance would be beneficial, however, this relies on substantial buy in and co-operation between Councils themselves. An alternative approach is through London Councils instead, where they have commissioned a consultant to lead on a review of the Inter-Borough Accommodation Agreement (IBAA), with one of the aims being to reset the rates to more realistic levels and strengthen the commitment to adhering to IBAA. Council officers have met with the consultant to ensure operational views are incorporated into any approach. This is

			more likely to yield practical difference on the ground than a Central Government led approach.
3	That the Council should ensure that it has a nominations agreement in place with each of the largest Housing Associations who operate in the borough. The Council needs to challenge housing associations when they refuse to place someone on the grounds of affordability.	Agree	Nominations to housing associations are not in scope of the development of revised TA Placement or PRSO policies, which are concerned only with how temporary and PRS accommodation is used. However more broadly, the Council has a standard nominations agreement with Registered Providers unless a separate nomination agreement has been specifically agreed, or where a local lettings plan has been agreed for a particular scheme. This agreement allows housing associations to refuse a nomination if the property would not be suitable for household because it is too big or too small but not specifically on grounds of affordability. Conversations with the largest providers are due to take place to ensure all nominations due to the Council are provided. A review of the standard nomination agreement, which dates to 2010, should also be undertaken and include the circumstances in which RPs may refuse a nomination.
4	That Cabinet commit to undertake equalities monitoring for households in temporary accommodation. This monitoring should include the ethnicity of households in temporary accommodation, the ethnicity of households who are placed out of borough and the length of time households are in TA. This is a reflection of concerns that there is a national disproportionality around ethnicity and temporary accommodation	Agree	We do collect this information and agree there could be a disproportionate number of households in temporary accommodation when considering equalities monitoring. To ensure we monitor this an annual report could be presented to support this commitment.

5	That Cabinet explore ways it can try to build in a degree of choice and agency into the process of determining how and where somebody is placed. The Council also needs to provide clear communications to residents about how long they may be in TA, as well as what the possible options are in relation to being placed out of borough. The Panel supports the idea of there being an offer available to families who are happy to be placed out of borough, and that they are supported through the process	Agree	The policy review is an opportunity to consider how elements of choice and control can be embedded in a realistic way. At present households being offered temporary accommodation, and particularly emergency accommodation, are likely to have very limited choice as it will often be the case that the Council has only one property available to offer at a given time. There is greater scope for some choice in moving into PRS sector but it is important that this is realistic. Households willing and able to move to settled accommodation outside of London are likely to have the greatest choice in terms of the locations they seek. Information on the average time waited for social housing each year is regularly provided to customers and detailed information is published on the Council's website to try to help provide as much context to customers as possible. The likely wait for more suitable forms of TA is very case specific and usually subject to changing market conditions; providing general information on this is very challenging. Work is being undertaken to better promote and share information on alternative housing options is being undertaken to reduce burden on TA and increase choice.
6	That the policy in relation to how domestic abuse survivors should be prioritised should be updated in line with latest best practice, including by removing the stipulation in the PRSO policy that police evidence needs to be provided, and by setting out that survivors may be prioritised either for in-borough/local placements OR a placement further away from	Agree	The panel's evidence and research will be very helpful in informing revisions to the current policies. This is a complex area and guidance on how different circumstances may be dealt with will vary as what would be appropriate is always driven by what are inevitably highly individualised circumstances. However, guidance on approach to prioritisation of both self-contained accommodation and local accommodation where DA is a factor will be included in the

	the perpetrator, depending on the circumstances of the case and the survivor's wishes.		draft policy and will be consistent with the Council's wider approach and policies in this area.
7	That the Panel understands the rationale in seeking to provide more out of borough accommodation, but requests assurances from Cabinet that the Council will still be doing everything it can to secure in-borough accommodation and that discharging people into the PRS out of the local area will be a last resort. The Panel is concerned about the knock-on effects from London Boroughs placing large numbers of people in places with comparatively cheaper rent costs.	Agree	The Panel is right to highlight the importance of securing accommodation locally wherever possible; this is necessary both to provide families with accommodation where they can maintain links as far as possible and to ensure the Council is complying with its legal obligation to secure local accommodation as far as it is reasonably able to. Where in borough accommodation is not available, the Council secures accommodation as close to Haringey as possible and has no plans to secure schemes of accommodation that are a significant distance from London. An Acquisitions Policy that sets out i) the Council's expected level of demand for homelessness accommodation, ii) how much it expects to be able to secure locally and iii) it's approach to securing the difference between i) and ii) as close to the Borough as possible, would be a robust mechanism to evidencing compliance with its legal obligation.
8	The Panel are concerned with the possible impact on community cohesion if London Boroughs start placing large numbers of people into the PRS outside of London. The Council should ensure that a risk assessment is conducted when placing families out of borough, which takes into account possible community tensions and whether they can effectively be mitigated.	Agree	The Panel raise an important point regarding decisions as to where to offer residents accommodation and ensuring appropriate consideration is given to difficulties that may be faced if placed in an area where they would have no ethnic, cultural and/ or religious links. Prior to making an offer of accommodation, particularly outside of the local area, the Council will assess the suitability of the offer for the resident, including whether the location is appropriate taking into account the above.

			Haringey does not currently use a significant number of properties outside of London but it is expected that this will increase in the future. However, there is no plan to use accommodation substantial distances from London and we will always take into account whether the area is likely to meet the needs of local residents being resettled.
9	The Council should model best practice by communicating with the local authority they are placing a household in, if placing out-of-borough, and request that the household is supported to arrange primary school placements, access to GP surgeries and any other local services that may be of use to them. Haringey should also provide this for any households placed in Haringey by other councils.	Agree	While we acknowledge that appropriate support should be available to families who are placed both into the borough by other local authorities and outside of the borough by Haringey, there are resourcing implications to this recommendation that are not insignificant. Councils are currently under an obligation to assess the suitability of any accommodation offered which includes consideration of factors such as whether a suitable school place would be available in the placed area. Councils also have a statutory duty to notify that authority that they have placed a family in that area. Any change in obligations would need to take into account that placing authorities will have less knowledge and control over local structures, e.g. school places. Creating additional legislative responsibilities on the placing authority to ensure the family have been contacted/ been able to enrol with service such as GP and schools, would have resource implications. London Councils have been progressing work to improve the level and consistency of information shared when placing a local authority to better enable the receiving authority to understand what support and information is likely to be needed. Whilst it would not have legislative force, there is a

			high level of engagement to improve this area in terms of the level of information shared. Although primarily focused on referrals between London currently, the LGA has also been involved with the aspiration of moving towards a more robust national mechanism.
10	The Cabinet consider setting up a dedicated fund, that people in TA can apply to, in order to help them meet the additional costs and difficulties caused by being in TA, particularly when placed away from the borough. The financial support should be tiered to the type of accommodation they have been placed in and whether they have access to cooking and laundry facilities, for example. If someone is placed in a different part of the country, they will require support with relocation costs.	Agree	Some central Government funding has recently been announced in this area and planning is taking place on how families can best be supported with it. Although, consideration should be given to the fact this is limited and unlikely to be sufficient to cover all elements mentioned. Many of the sharpest difficulties are caused by extended and uncertain stays in B&B accommodation; reducing B&B use and particularly out of area B&B is a key priority, however, the revised policy is an opportunity to consider what support could be offered to families that are placed in B&B. Only in highly exceptional circumstances are households now placed in accommodation where cooking facilities are not available but contributions towards food are made by the Council. All other forms of accommodation have cooking facilities. There is also an existing resettlement payment available to households to moving out of the local area. Whether accommodation is affordable in practice, e.g. when any travelling costs are taken into account, is also a necessary consideration as part of establishing any offer of accommodation is suitable. In addition, those who are eligible can apply to the Haringey Support Fund. The fund can give one-off emergency payments for: Help with basic living needs like:

			• items for day-to-day living such as food and essential household items • utilities including support with gas and electricity costs • help with buying things not budgeted for, like clothing and footwear destroyed in a flood or fire Help with other urgently needed basic living items and support with buying essential household items like: • a fridge or washing machine • bedding, mattresses and some types of furniture • cooking equipment, or other essential kitchen items https://www.haringey.gov.uk/community-safety-antisocial-behaviour/haringey-here-to-help/haringey-support-fund/what-haringey-support-fund-can-be-used#lqd-guides_title
11	In addition to a dedicated fund, there should also be a dedicated TA support officer(s) to provide updates on a person's case, ensure that people receive any financial support through the proposed TA support fund, and also to ensure there is dedicated resource available for those applying for TA to contact. It is suggested that there should be an in-person offer available for residents who may be digitally excluded.	Agree	All households in TA under a main housing duty have a specific Rehousing Officer to provide advice and support, including reassessing circumstances when there are changes and producing a joint Rehousing and support plan. Caseloads are a challenge, but officers will provide information and update applications when contacted. Administering a TA support fund would be an additional activity that is not currently undertaken and would have resource implications. We find that the issue is often that the officer is not able to provide the information or solution sought, e.g. how long a family are likely to be in bed and breakfast, where they will be moved to next and a preference for social housing are common issues that are difficult to provide a response that satisfies the resident are common examples.

			Households that are in the most problematic types of TA and for whom non-TA housing options are realistic will receive intensive support to secure settled forms of accommodation from a newly recruited Rehousing Team. A Rehousing Officer is based in Customer Services and officers can make face to face appointments where this is needed.
12	That the Council ensures there is a robust inspection regime to ensure that accommodation is up to standard. If the number of people being placed out of borough is to increase, then the Council will need processes in place for inspecting accommodation that is outside of the local area. It is anticipated that this will require additional staffing resources.	Agree	Whilst this is not strictly part of the TA Placement or PRS policies, the importance of this is acknowledged. The Council has existing regimes to ensure that homes used as temporary accommodation are up to standard. Homes leased directly from private landlords are inspected to ensure that they meet the Council's standards. The majority of homes used as temporary accommodation are procured as nightly-paid accommodation. The Council uses the adamhousing.co.uk portal for its nightly paid temporary accommodation. This is a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), allowing any provider who meets the criteria to offer accommodation to Haringey. Providers are required to upload pictures and all compliance information for the properties. Due to the high number of NPAs which the Council currently procures, property negotiators are required to inspect properties within 1 month of them being let.
13	The Council should also maintain a register of landlords and managing agents that we are willing to work with when discharging people into the PRS. This is linked to the inspection regime above.	Agree	The Council works with private landlords and managing agents with properties both in the borough and further afield. These private sector homes are used either as temporary accommodation (i.e. the Council leases homes from landlords to use for households as temporary accommodation) or to provide assured shorthold tenancies directly for individuals, either to prevent homelessness or as discharge of duty. Council officers have existing strong working relationships

			with landlords and agents who provide us with good quality accommodation to use as either TA, prevention or discharge.
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