

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

HOUSING AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18 MARCH 2019

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING NEEDS AND SUPPLY

UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS FIGURES

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on headline figures relating to Homelessness, and to provide an update on progress towards the Council meeting its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Background

- 1.1 The Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2018 was presented with a detailed report *Homelessness in Kensington and Chelsea and the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act* (agenda item A5). This report provides an update on headline figures relating to homelessness and on progress towards the Council meetings its duties under the Act.
- 1.2 The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed homelessness legislation. The Homelessness Reduction Act came into effect on 3rd April 2018. The Act amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, introducing new assessment, prevention and relief duties owed to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, irrespective of priority need or whether they might be deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless.
- 1.3 The Act increases the length of time that a local authority must consider a person is at risk of homelessness so that the authority should provide assistance if they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days (previously 28 days).
- 1.4 Under the new duties, local housing authorities are required to carry out an assessment and develop a personalised (housing) plan with the person. If the person is threatened with homelessness, a *prevention* duty will be owed. In these circumstances, the steps in the personalised housing plan will aim to enable the person to stay in their current accommodation or find a new place to live.
- 1.5 If a person becomes or is already homeless a *relief* duty will be owed. The steps in their personalised housing plan will aim to help the person secure suitable accommodation for a period of at least 6 months.
- 1.6 Both duties, prevention and relief, lasts up to 56 days. If an applicant is homeless at the end of the relief duty, the main housing duty may apply if they are in priority need and are not 'intentionally homeless'.

- 1.7 The new duties now mean that every person or household that is, or threatened with, homelessness and eligible has a right to approach the Council for advice and prevention support.
- 1.8 The Act also introduces a duty to refer households to a local housing authority on certain public services when they encounter clients who may be experiencing housing difficulties. This duty came into force in October 2018. The public services that are subject to the duty to refer are listed in the Code of Guidance that was published in March 2018 to accompany the introduction of the Act.

2. Update on Headline Homelessness Figures

- 2.1 Unless stated otherwise, the 2018 / 2019 figures below are presented to Q3, 31 December 2018.
- 2.2 Approaches to the Homelessness Service.

The following table shows the number of individuals or households approaching the Council for housing advice and assistance in person, by phone, email or professional referral.

	Approaches	Per calendar month
2015/16	4280	357
2016/17	4397	366
2017/18	4510	376
2018/19 to Q3	3228	359

- 2.3 Number of households for whom we have accepted a `rehousing duty`.

The table below sets out the number of homelessness investigations undertaken by the Council between 2015 and Q.3 2018/19, and the proportion of these investigations that resulted in the Council accepting a full homelessness duty towards a resident or family.

	Decisions	Acceptances	Acceptance rate
2015/16	1185	549	46%
2016/17	893	482	54%
2017/18	1067	709	66.5%
2018/19 to Q3 *	846	315	37.2%

* Homelessness Reduction Act implemented April 2018

- 2.4 2307 households were placed in temporary accommodation as of 3 March 2019.
- 2.5 Temporary accommodation profile by type (3 March 2019).

Temporary accommodation type	
Self-contained leased by the Council	88.69%
B&B, serviced apartment, nightly let	6.59%
hostels and supported accommodation	4.72%
Total	100%

2.6 Temporary accommodation profile by location (3 March 2019).

Temporary accommodation location	
In-borough	22.06%
In-borough and neighbouring boroughs	49.89%
Out of borough – Greater London	76.51%
Out of borough – outside London	1.43%

2.7 Applications to the Housing Register (28 February 2019)

Applications to the Housing Register – by bedsize				
Bed size	applications	% of all applications	No. of homeless applicants	% of all applications
studio	1034	28.7%	544	15%
one bed	229	6.4%	24	0.7%
two bed	1452	40.3%	1098	30.5%
three bed	614	17%	426	11.8%
four bed	152	4.2%	92	2.6%
five bed	21	0.6%	15	0.4%
six bed	3	0.08%	3	0.08%
TOTAL	3605	100%	2202	100%

2.8 Social housing lettings 2015/16 to Q.3 2018/19.

	Total number of Lettings	Lettings to homeless families
2015/16	460	304
2016/17	433	281
2017/18	164	82
2018/19 to Q3	189	90

3. Meeting the duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act

- 3.1 As the HRA introduces new requirements to the way that the Council delivers services to households that are threatened with, or are, homeless, policies and strategies relating to these functions will need to be developed or amended. For example, the Council now has a statutory duty to conduct a review of homelessness and prevention within the Borough which must lead to the development of a Homelessness Strategy.

- 3.3 The Council is about to undertake a Homelessness Review which is expected to conclude in June 2019 and will inform a draft Homelessness Strategy which will be subject to public consultation.
- 3.4 Pending the publication of Homelessness Strategy, the Housing Department has implemented a number of structural and procedural changes to better meet the duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act. For example, the Homelessness Team has been restructured so that distinct teams deliver specific duties, meaning there is now a front line homelessness duty service, and homelessness prevention and relief team, and a 'main homelessness duty' team who assist households whose homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved.

FOR DISCUSSION

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