



PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report subject	Families in Bed and Breakfast/Hotels
Meeting date	19 July 2023
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>In response to the request from the committee, for a report on family homelessness demand, focusing on those placed in to Bed and Breakfast/Hotel accommodation, this report outlines the current position.</p> <p>The approach and pathways to prevention, accommodation and support are detailed and data is provided in order to demonstrate the scale of the current challenge.</p> <p>The paper sets out the programmes currently underway to respond to the demand and examines future demand to establish additional requirements. Options currently under consideration to meet these requirements are noted.</p> <p>The significant challenge of homelessness demand is the top priority for the Housing service and the BCP Homelessness Partnership. The partnership is holding an away day during the period between the writing of this report and the committee meeting itself. The Homelessness Partnership will be developing a targeted action plan and an update can be provided verbally at the O&S Committee meeting on 19 July.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Members note the content of the report. ii) Members consider how they may wish to be involved in future scrutiny.
Reason for recommendations	<p>This report is intended to raise awareness of the challenges relating to family homelessness and the direction of travel that the council and it's partners are taking to tackle this. A detailed action plan is to follow and will be approved and overseen by the Homelessness Reduction Board. This report is therefore a position statement and further developments can be reported on at future Overview and Scrutiny sessions.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Kieron Wilson – Cabinet Member for Homes & Regulation
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operating Officer

Report Authors	Kelly Ansell - Director of Housing & Communities Ben Tomlin – Head of Strategic Housing & Partnerships
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For update and information

Background

Homelessness Reduction Board

1. The [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 21-25](#) was co-produced with the BCP Homelessness Partnership and approved by Council in April 2021. The strategy and action plan is monitored by the Homelessness Reduction Board, with a range of Action Groups delivering its key objectives. The strategy focuses on the following priorities which relate to family temporary accommodation;
 - Continue to focus resources into the **prevention of homelessness**
 - Increased settled **move on supply**
 - Secure the best **value for money** with any temporary accommodation
2. This paper focuses on homelessness from the perspective of families, however there are also a number of priorities relating to single people and couples which form part of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The Council's Duty

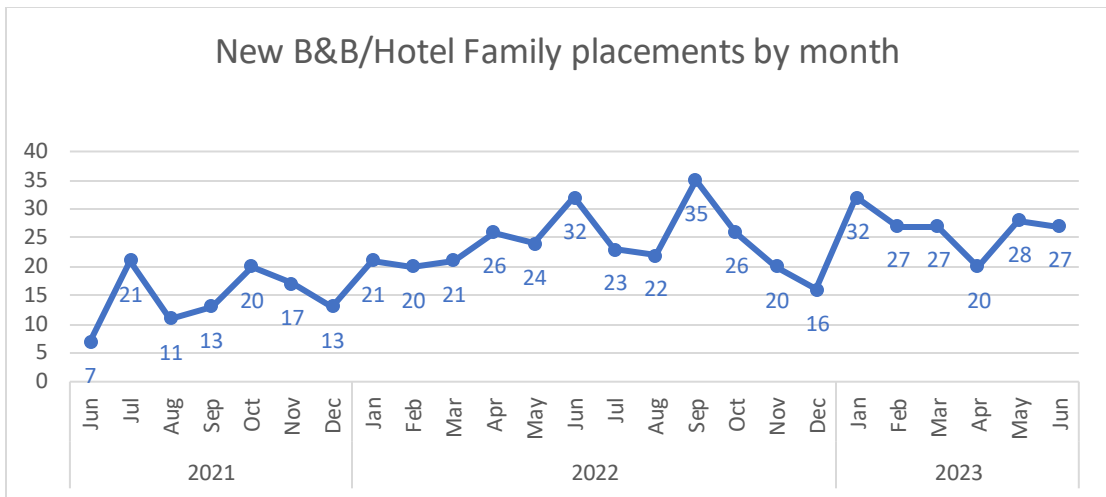
3. As the Housing Authority, the Council is required to assess a persons homelessness under the terms of the 1996 Housing Act (amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). Whilst the assessment is complex, in most cases for families and vulnerable adults, a statutory responsibility is placed upon the Council to provide an offer of a suitable home.
4. The key methods the Council uses to discharge this responsibility are:
 - Agreeing a return to the last previous accommodation through support and intervention
 - Identifying a suitable alternative private rented sector tenancy
 - Providing an allocation of social or supported housing
 - Providing an offer of a tenancy managed by the Councils wholly owed company, Seascope Homes & Property.
5. Homelessness legislation requires each housing authority to prevent homelessness where possible and where a household becomes homeless, investigate the circumstances for this including the support and housing solutions required to alleviate it. Housing and Children's services work closely together with families who are impacted by homelessness, dedicated Housing Family Outreach Workers and a Family Support and Inclusion worker ensure there is focus upon Early Help and social care needs of families who need additional support.

The Homelessness Prevention Duty

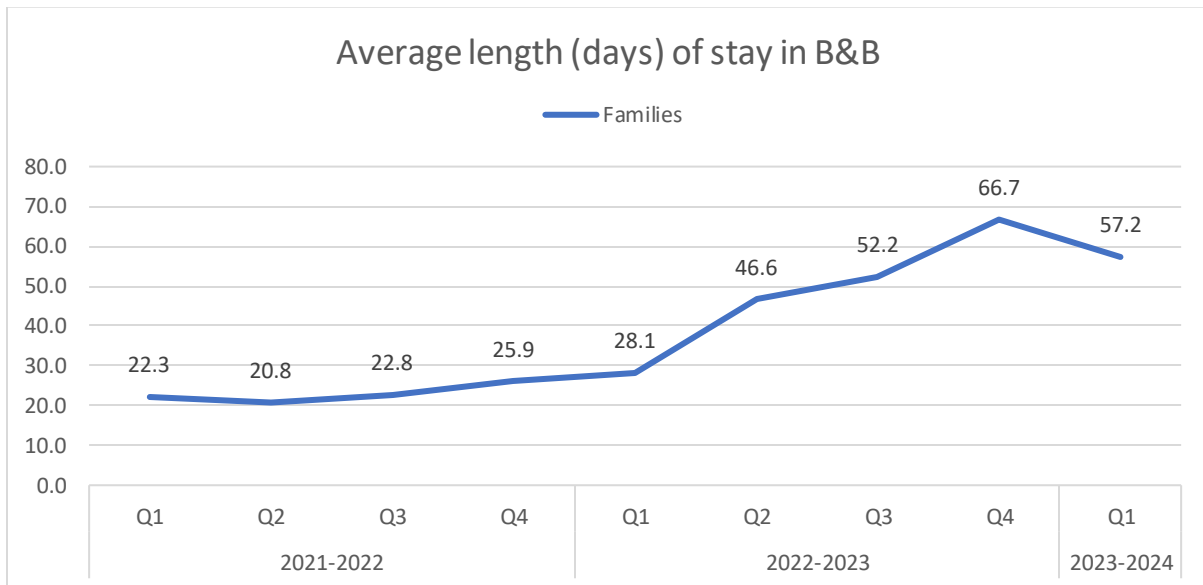
6. Families can be threatened with homelessness for a range of different reasons. The Housing Options team, working alongside other relevant partners, provide every resident threatened with homelessness with a personal housing and support plan to prevent or relieve their homelessness. Specialist support roles exist across the service to meet a range of family needs, from financial resilience support, family reconciliation and early help to direct tenancy support and landlord negotiation.
7. Evidence illustrates that the earlier support and interventions are provided to someone threatened with homelessness, the greater the likelihood a household will avoid becoming homeless and require interim housing support. Households are therefore encouraged to seek advice and support at the earliest opportunity.

Temporary Accommodation – Bed & Breakfast (B&B)

8. The Council uses local B&Bs and hotels to provide interim housing for families. Families who currently become homeless are offered B&B accommodation which is available in as suitable an area to their schooling, employment, support network and or childcare as possible. Due to the limited availability of suitable B&B / hotel provision in terms of cost, standard and availability, families are sometimes placed in areas which is not always their preferred location. It is extremely rare for temporary housing to be provided outside the BCP area.
9. Every family staying in any type of temporary accommodation has an allocated Housing Options Officer, who will investigate homelessness and coordinate and agree a Personalised Housing Plan, with a Support and Inclusion Officer also assigned to provide ongoing support across a broad range of generic support needs including enabling effective move-on planning.
10. The average length of stay for a family in B&B / hotels is currently 8 weeks. Every effort is made to support families to secure settled housing as soon as possible. However, where this is not possible, move-on from B&B is enabled to either self-contained property or to a shared hostel. Self-contained accommodation is prioritised for families with more children or where there are additional needs with any household member. This can relate to a physical or mental health issue, social or learning difficulty. Sensitive matches are carried out on a case by case basis, with length of time spent in B&B a key factor. Longer family stays in B&B are typically due to the limited availability of larger properties.
11. Of the circa 230 households currently occupying B&B/Hotel accommodation, 100 are families. Placements of families by month into interim temporary B&B/Hotels is illustrated below. There has been a 216% increase in family B&B placements in the past year, driven largely by private rental evictions, coupled with reduced supply of affordable housing for move-on. Monthly demand is illustrated in the chart below;



12. The homelessness legislation dictates that the maximum length of stay in B&B/hotel accommodation should be no longer than 6 weeks (42 days). As a result of the pressures described, the length of stay in B&B/hotels has consequently increased above this threshold for some families, affecting 40 of the 100 families currently placed. The table below shows the increase in length of stay from Q1 of 22/23 which peaked at 66.7 days in Q4;



13. In comparison to other Councils, BCP has an average number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA), however a disproportionately high number in B&B / hotels. In the past year, overall homelessness enquiry demand has increased by 19% and overall TA use has increased by 23% (587 households). Despite the challenges, households where interventions have prevented homelessness has increased by 5%.

14. The Council has recently been selected, as one of six areas in the UK, to take part in 'Homewards', a transformative five-year, locally led programme that will aim to demonstrate that together it's possible to end homelessness – making it rare, brief and unrepeatable. BCP Council alongside the Homelessness Partnership will have new space, tools and relationships to show what can be achieved by working together and focusing on preventing family homelessness.

Other Temporary Accommodation (TA)

15. The table below illustrates the provision of self contained temporary accommodation homes in BCP. These homes are provided both on a furnished and unfurnished basis. The rent is provided at affordable rent levels.

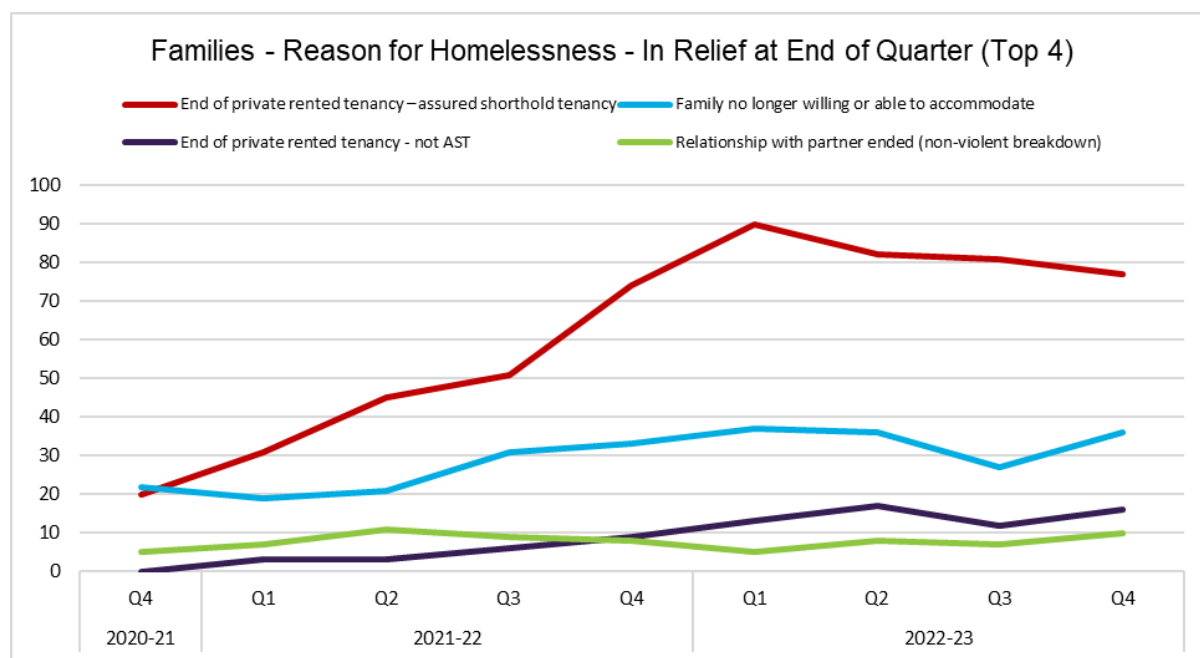
Self Contained Homes	Number
Council Owned (General Fund)	22
Council Owned (Housing Revenue Account)	21
Private Lease Arrangement (inc Housing Association)	59
Housing Association Temporary Housing	40
Total	142

16. Temporary Housing for families is also provided in shared hostels, where there are 43 rooms over 3 sites, where kitchens and bathroom facilities are shared. For 2022/23 the average stay in self-contained Temporary Housing was 65 weeks and 18 weeks in shared hostels.

17. Families stay longer in self contained temporary accommodation for different reasons. These households are generally larger and the supply and availability of settled large family homes is more limited, making move on challenging. Families become more settled in self-contained housing and are more specific about move-on requirements, compared to families who share facilities, where access to the comfort and benefits of a self contained housing changes families decisions in housing choices.

Reasons for Homelessness

18. The reasons for homelessness for families is illustrated below;



19. Increases in family placements into temporary accommodation have been driven by Private Rented Sector (PRS) evictions and increasingly limited access to the

affordable PRS sector, which was previously used more frequently to relieve homelessness. The end of private rented tenancies, most commonly due to landlord sale or where the landlord intends to return to live in the property, is the primary factor in local homelessness demand. Family and friend breakdown is the secondary key cause. Homelessness demand is driven overwhelmingly by circumstances which are beyond the control of the households being impacted, with only a minority of families requiring additional support to sustain a home.

National Research and Best Practice

20. Efforts to improve our understanding of 'what works' locally and nationally has identified some key interventions critical to ending homelessness in a locality;
 - Supported families in settled housing is critical to reducing homelessness and relieving pressures on the social care, health and criminal justice sectors.
 - Financial support and advice can prevent repeat homelessness
 - Programmes that support people leaving prison or hospital can reduce homelessness
 - Extending support for young adults leaving social care improves outcomes
 - Providing access to alternative secure accommodation is important for people leaving unsafe environments.
 - Stable housing with support can work for people with long histories of homelessness
 - Supporting people with their healthcare needs can help improve housing stability
 - Support services need to consider individual needs to be most effective
 - Training staff who work with people impacted by homelessness in Psychologically Informed Environments, Trauma Informed Care, Strength Based Practice BP
21. The Council provides all of the above services to varying degree, some internally, some commissioned and importantly, in partnership with statutory & the Voluntary & Community Sector. Services that prevent the need for temporary accommodation are as important, if not more important than services in place to help when someone becomes homeless.

Forecasting Future Demand & Throughput

22. Forecasting the impact of homelessness demand is challenging, however there are a number of current Government policies and socio-economic factors which are likely to generate new and or additional demand in the system this year and beyond;
 - The ongoing impact of cost of living, inflation and associated household pressures impacting the stability of family / friends housing relationships, including domestic abuse.
 - Rent reform uncertainty and a shrinking of the affordable Private Rented Sector market, including rising interest rates
 - Additional Refugee housing demands following Afghan bridging hotel closures, Homes4Ukraine housing demand and additional Asylum Seeker application fast-track approvals requiring housing.
23. 2023 has seen a stabilising of numbers in temporary accommodation despite an overall continued increase in demand. This is largely due to improvements in recruitment of a stable housing options team workforce without agency dependency and increased targeting of social lets to households in temporary accommodation. The national policy factors described above are likely to generate an ongoing 20%

increase in demand.

24. Typically, monthly throughput (exiting from Temporary Accommodation) is currently achieved through;

Move on/throughput	Projected number per month
Maintaining an increased proportion of general needs social lets (over 70%) to households in temporary accommodation, via direct letting or emergency banding.	18
Supported Housing allocations	8
Private Rented Sector using Rent Deposit and / or landlord incentive	6
Family / Friends	5
Other accommodation or return (prevention)	8
Abandonment / lost contact	8
Total	53

Housing Delivery Pipeline

25. To end the use of B&B, 230 new homes are required overall, 100 of which would be required for family demand. In addition, a net total of 120 homes per annum is required to meet an ongoing forecasted demand.

26. A number of developments and programmes are in place/underway as summarised below;

Temporary Accommodation Delivery Programme (all households)	Total Number of Homes 2023/24	Number of Family Homes 2023/24	Total Number of Homes 2024/25	Number of Family Homes 2024/25
Herbert Avenue development	24	24		
Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF 1)	25	25		
Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF 2)			10	10
Help To Let / PRS procurement	24	30	12	12
Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (Supported Housing)	39	0	31	0
Additional Homelessness Prevention	12	12	24	24
Total Delivery Homes Forecasted	124	91	77	46

27. Taking account of the new homes expected through these programmes and the throughput/move on outlined at para 24, the net requirement for additional new homes to meet family homelessness demand in 2023/24 is 36 plus 50 in 2024/25. Additional homes would be required to further reduce families staying in other forms of temporary accommodation.

Future Options & Next Steps

28. The Homelessness Reduction Board are holding an away day in July to agree priorities for the next 12 months and to appraise current strategy action plan. A deep dive and review of the approach to family homelessness is a focus of the day. The following future options will be included within that strategy discussion to support reduction in Bed & Breakfast use and reducing time spent in other TA;
- Prioritise interventions which are most effective at Preventing family homelessness. This includes improving our early help support offer to families where threat of homelessness triggers are identified and working with landlords whose tenants breach tenancy or license conditions.
 - Appraise a range of different temporary and settled accommodation solutions which increase suitable and affordable homes for families. To consider interim use of existing development sites and different models of build, such as modular construction as well as extended landlord incentive schemes and leasing models.
 - Complete a value for money review of existing temporary accommodation. Identifying processes and procedures which could be improved, such as how we use hostels, furnished homes for TA and provide homes for people, their pets and belongings.
 - Commission 'Oracle' (homelessness lived experience group, BCP Homelessness Partnership) to engage families impacted by homelessness and experiencing temporary accommodation to provide valuable insight to inform future temporary accommodation arrangements.
29. The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan to address family homelessness will be updated following this review and is currently on the Cabinet Forward Plan for the Autumn, allowing opportunity for further scrutiny and review of the arrangements once further work has been completed.

Summary of financial implications

30. The gross cost of homeless B&B provision to the Council in 2022/23 was c. £4m, with around 25% recoverable from Housing Benefit / Universal Credit. The service budget is c. £300k with net cost managed through receipt of ring fenced government grant (including legacy reserve which is exhausted in 23/24).
31. The current MTFP forecast for temporary accommodation (B&B) indicates a £250,000 pressure for 23/24 and £2.2m for 24/25 and the proceeding 3 years. The updated forecast pressure is expected following 22/23 outturn.
32. The Council receives over £4m of ringfenced related homelessness grant each year, the majority covering the cost of TA. National strategy supports the use of grant for prevention services rather than direct TA costs.
33. The temporary accommodation value for money review will consider the following indicators to support a local approach.
- Use of cost and effectiveness data to take a strategic approach to stock management and procurement;

- Use of TA that is as low cost as possible;
- Use of TA that is fully fit for purpose;
- Use of TA that is as short as possible and enables people that are homeless to move on to settled accommodation as rapidly as is feasible.

Summary of legal implications

34. Statutory homelessness provisions provide that homeless families should not be placed in B&B or hotels for more than 6 weeks. The Council is at risk of Judicial Review when this occurs.
35. This risk is detailed on the Housing service risk register and corporate performance exception report, relating to a specific KPI.

Summary of human resources implications

36. There are no direct human resources implications to this report. However, it should be noted that housing staff work exceptionally hard in often very challenging circumstances, to prevent and relieve homelessness. Current caseloads are high. The resilience of staff working in the service is a priority. Whilst the current position is challenging, the performance of the staff results in countless households avoiding homelessness and being settled in to accommodation following their stay in Bed and Breakfast/Hotel.

Summary of sustainability impact

37. A sustainable development scheme of 24 new homes at Herbert Avenue, Poole will become available for homeless families in September 2023. The new homes will be a range of one, two and three-bedroom apartments, plus three accessible apartments.
38. These energy efficient homes are being built to Low Passivhaus standards to provide lower fuel bills and fitted with mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units (MVHR), as well as air source hot water units.

Summary of public health implications

39. People experiencing homelessness face significant health inequalities and poorer health outcomes than the rest of the population. The homeless population face barriers to accessing health and social care services including stigma and discrimination, a lack of trusted contacts, and often more rigid eligibility criteria for accessing services. This can include families staying in insecure housing settings and temporary accommodation.
40. Targeted approaches to support homeless families have the same standard of health and social care as those in settled housing, are required. A range of national and good practice guidance exists which emphasises the importance of understanding the specific needs of families, so health and social care professionals are able to provide them the services they require in a sensitive and flexible way.

Summary of equality implications

41. The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy which underpins the approach provided to families and potential families reflects on protected characteristics and

other vulnerabilities, seeking to achieve positive outcomes for all. An Equality Impact Assessment outlines the need to ensure families with certain characteristics require additional help and support accessing the services they need, particularly when homeless.

Summary of risk assessment

42. Compliance with the statutory requirement to ensure families spend no more than 6 weeks in B&B is the greatest area of risk, Whilst an operational plan to reduce the number of families in B&B has been agreed with the Housing Advice and Support Team at the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities, the increased delivery of new homes for families impacted by homelessness remains the most viable option to alleviate current and future demand.