

Children and Young People Select Committee Supplementary Agenda

Thursday, 23 January 2020
7.00 pm, Committee Room 4
Civic Suite
Catford Road
London SE6 4RU

For more information contact: Emma Aye-Kumi (020 8314 9534)

This meeting is an open meeting and all items on the agenda may be audio recorded and/or filmed except for items numbered 6 on the Agenda. For legal reasons, those items will be considered in private with the press and public excluded.

Part 1

Item		Pages
5.	How living in temporary accommodation affects children and young people	3 - 28

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Children and Young People Select Committee

How living in temporary accommodation affects children

Date: 23 January 2020

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Scrutiny Manager

1. Summary

- 1.1 As part of the work programme for 2019/20 municipal year, the Select Committee agreed to carry out a short review of how living in temporary accommodation affects children.
- 1.2 The scope of the review was agreed in July 2019. Evidence has been gathered through meetings with officers, Ombudsman's reports, desktop research, visits to Rathfern and Rushey Green Primary Schools, conversations with Lewisham families living in temporary accommodation.
- 1.3 The Chair also visited Hamilton Lodge, a former care home that was converted to a temporary accommodation hostel in 2016. The hostel provides 74 bedspaces over 21 units, including one after-hours emergency facility (2 bedspaces). The Chair will provide the Committee with an oral account of his visit, together with any thoughts or observations he may wish to share.
- 1.4 Housing Officers will attend to answer any questions the committee may have.

Preliminary evidence from Housing

- 1.5 Members of the Committee had an initial meeting with Lee Georgiou – Service Group Manager for Housing Needs and Refugee Services to gather background information for this review.
- 1.6 A number of themes emerged during the meeting:

1. **Preventative work** – ensuring compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
2. **Weaknesses in joined up working**
 - Concerning children with an EHCP who would normally be provided with school transport but, having been placed out of borough have to arrange transport through the borough in which their address lies;
 - Between Housing and Children’s Social Care;
 - Ensuring consistent messages from Housing to schools and other services.
3. **Quality assurance** – concerns with inspection and standards of accommodation
4. **Pressure to move** – families feeling pressurised to move out of borough and to move their child to a school close to their TA.
5. **Information and communication** – ensuring that families have access clear and accurate information.

1.7 In addition to the above, Members may wish to ask questions on the following:

- Creating homework and play spaces in hostels
- How the Location Priority Policy is reviewed
- Advice/support Housing gives to homeless families, including information available to older children
- Information available on the council website
- Checks on the quality and state of repair of Private Rented Sector accommodation
- Gathering feedback from residents and complaint handling
- Homeless 16 & 17 year olds
- What other support is available to families in TA?

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members of the Select Committee are asked to:

- note the evidence provided at Appendix A of this report;
- gather evidence from Housing officers present at the meeting; and
- consider making recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet, either at this meeting or at the next meeting of this Committee.

3. Legal implications

3.1 The report will be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet, which holds the decision making powers in respect of this matter.

4. Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report. However, the financial implications of any specific recommendations will need to be considered in due course.

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5. Equalities implications

5.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report. The Council works to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups in the community and to recognise and to take account of people's differences.

For more information on this report please contact Emma Aye-Kumi, Scrutiny Manager, on 020 8314 9534.

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Appendix A How living in temporary accommodation affects children

1. Purpose and structure of review

- 1.1 At its meeting on 30 April 2019, the Children and Young People Select Committee agreed to look at how living in temporary accommodation affects children.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed the scope and Key Lines of Enquiry on 11 July 2019. The following key lines of enquiry were agreed:

2. Key Lines of Enquiry

1. What are the homelessness and temporary accommodation rates in Lewisham? In London? What percentage of households living in temporary accommodation include school age children?
 2. What is the geographic spread of Lewisham families in temporary accommodation?
 3. How does living in temporary accommodation affect children? What data is available that illustrates the impact on children's:
 - a. Physical health
 - b. Mental health
 - c. Cognitive development
 - d. Academic attainment and school attendance
 - e. Opportunities in adulthood
 - f. Engagement with Children's Social Care, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET)
 4. What impact does the quality and location of the temporary accommodation have (eg Out of Borough placements)?
 5. What can we learn from the lived experience of families living in temporary accommodation?
 6. How do schools support children living in temporary accommodation?
 7. What other support is available for children in temporary accommodation?
- 2.1 Evidence was gathered from schools, parents living in temporary accommodation, officers in Children's Social Care, Ombudsman's reports, desk-based research and through a visit to one of Lewisham's temporary accommodation hostels.

3. Policy context

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-2022 sets out seven corporate priorities which drive decision making in the Council. Lewisham's corporate priorities were agreed by full Council and they are the principal mechanism through which the Council's performance is reported. This review supports the following corporate priorities:
 - Tackling the housing crisis – everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable
 - Giving children and young people the best start in life – every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.

3.2 The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2015 – 2018 (currently being updated) also sets the strategic vision "Together with families, we will improve the lives and life chances of the children and young people in Lewisham".

3.3 One specific priority aim of the CYPP is

- BR4 Mitigating the negative impact of insecure or unsuitable housing for children, young people and families

3.4 A number of council policies are relevant to this report, namely:

- Housing Strategy 2015-2020, which has an objective of helping residents at times of severe or urgent housing need
- The Locational Priority Policy, which sets out the approach the council takes when placing households into temporary accommodation
- The Private Rented Sector Discharge Policy, which details how the council operates the Housing Register and determines the allocation of properties to those in housing need as per an annually approved lettings plan

4. Responsibilities of the council

The main duty

4.1 Where a council believes a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness it must carry out enquiries into that person's circumstances and reach a decision as to what duty it owes to them. (Housing Act 1996, s184)

4.2 If the council is satisfied an applicant is eligible, homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless it will owe them the main housing duty. Lewisham, like most councils, carries out this duty by arranging temporary accommodation until a suitable offer of social housing or private rented accommodation can be made. (Housing Act 1996, section 193)

4.3 The council's Private Rented Sector Policy (**Appendix B**) sets out how it will discharge the main housing duty.

No Recourse to Public Funds

4.4 No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is a condition imposed on someone due to their immigration status. The main housing duty does not apply in these cases, however families with children may qualify for limited support under s17 of the Children's Act (for example in cases of destitution).

4.5 Although not required to do so in law, Lewisham applies the same support standards and policies to NRPF families as it does to families owed the main duty.

Suitability of accommodation

- 4.6 The council must ensure all accommodation provided to homeless applicants is suitable for the needs of the household. This duty applies to both emergency accommodation (accommodation provided while the council carried out enquiries to decide whether a duty is owed) and accommodation provided under the main homelessness duty. (Housing Act 1996, section 206)
- 4.7 The council must consider whether the property is
- affordable
 - in good enough condition
 - available in a suitable location – having regard to personal circumstances, including travel time to work, disruption to education, support networks, caring responsibilities
 - the right size
 - suitable for any health issues or disabilities.
- 4.8 If accommodation falls below certain minimum standards set out in the Housing Act 2004, it is not suitable. The Homelessness Code of Guidance recommends that any accommodation should, as a minimum, be free of Category One hazards assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system. A Category One hazard is a hazard that poses a serious threat to someone’s health or safety, such as exposed wiring, very cold bedrooms, mould, infestation, lack of security.
- 4.9 The large range of nightly paid accommodation providers that the council uses makes it impossible for the council to inspect them all. Instead, the council has an agreement with nightly paid accommodation providers which includes a Code of Ethics governing the required property standards. The provider manages the properties, but the Council carries out quarterly sample inspections. It will also inspect a property if there are any ongoing or escalated issues.
- 4.10 The Court of Appeal has confirmed that what constitutes “suitable” is a matter for the council; it can only be challenged where it is clearly inadequate¹.

Location

- 4.11 The council is required under the Housing Act 1996 to find accommodation within the borough, as far as is reasonably practicable (and unless there are safeguarding concerns about doing so).
- 4.12 Lewisham council operates a Location Priority Policy (**Appendix C**). It tries to place all households in temporary accommodation that is “within or as close as possible to Lewisham”, and assesses whether applicants have priority to be located “in” the Borough, “close to” the Borough, or have no priority as to the location of a property. It also says applicants may ask for assistance in relocating to more settled accommodation.

¹ Codona v Mid-Bedfordshire District Council [2004] EWCA Civ 925 [2005] HLR 1, CA

4.13 The council must consider the location of accommodation when they consider if it is suitable for the applicant and members of their household. If a council places an applicant outside its district, it must consider, among other matters:

- the distance of the accommodation from the “home” district (using Laurence House as the point from which distance is measured)
- the significance of any disruption to the education of members of the applicant’s household
- the proximity and accessibility to local services, amenities and transport (Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012)

5. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 1

What are the homelessness and temporary accommodation rates in Lewisham? In London? What percentage of households living in temporary accommodation include school age children?

5.1 Nationally, the number of homeless families living in temporary accommodation is rising, and this is reflected across London

5.2 There are a number of reasons for this increase, including:

- A lack of supply of affordable homes and a decline in the availability of social homes for let
- The increasing cost of housing and reliance on the private rented sector (PRS)
- Welfare reform, including the freezing of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to 2015 levels. LHA is the housing benefit ceiling rate for claimants in the PRS.

5.3 The total number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of June 2019 is 86,130, which includes 127,370 children. The number of placements in London accounts for nearly a third of all placements. There are 59,950 households with 89,130 children in temporary accommodation in London.²

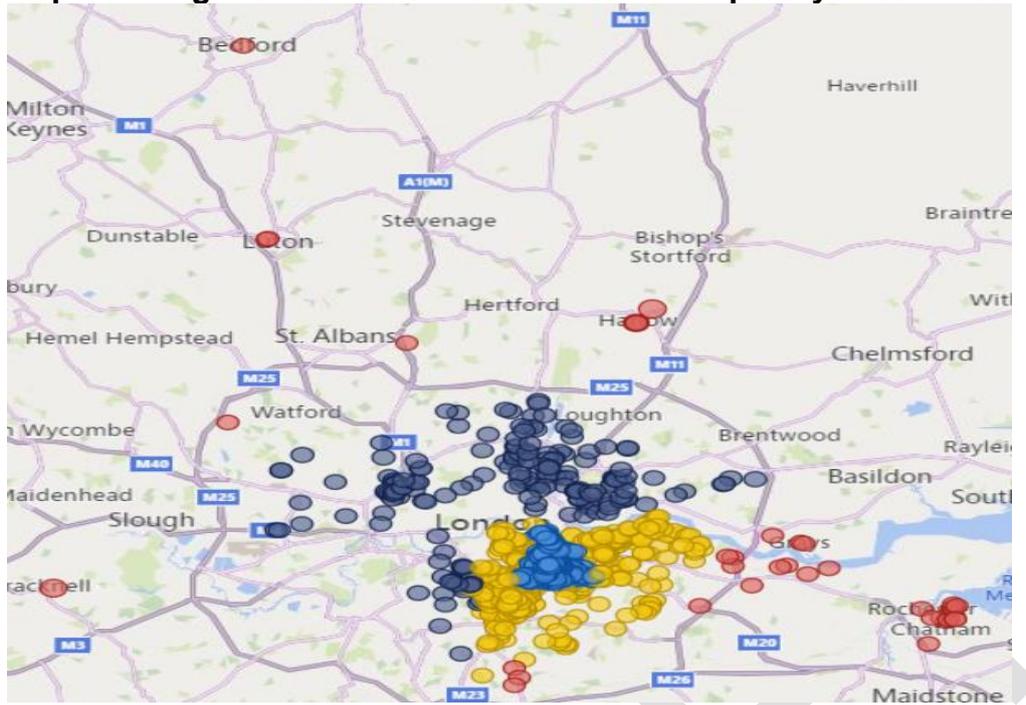
5.4 At the end of June, Lewisham had 2,195 households in temporary accommodation with 4,464 children. This number continues to increase exponentially.

6. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 2

What is the geographic spread of Lewisham families in temporary accommodation?

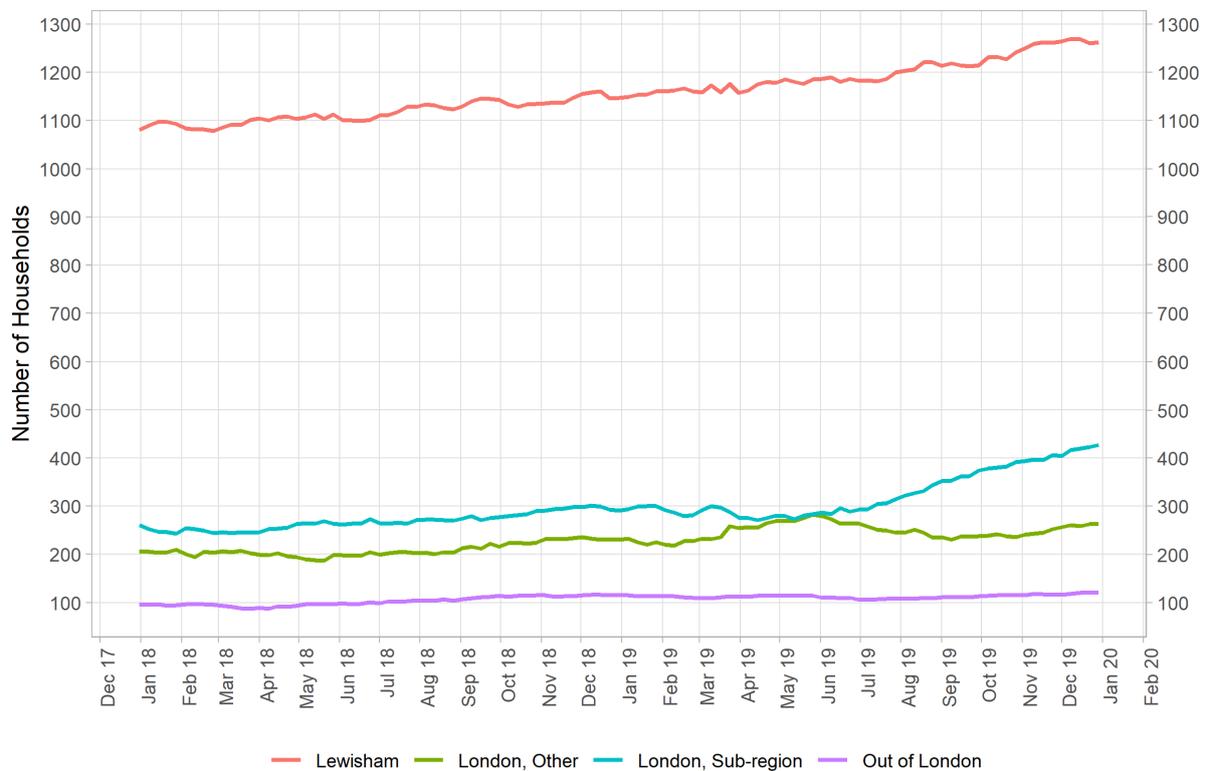
² MHCLG Live tables on homelessness - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/852920/StatHomeless_201906.xlsx

Map showing distribution of households in temporary accommodation



Number of households in TA over time, by location

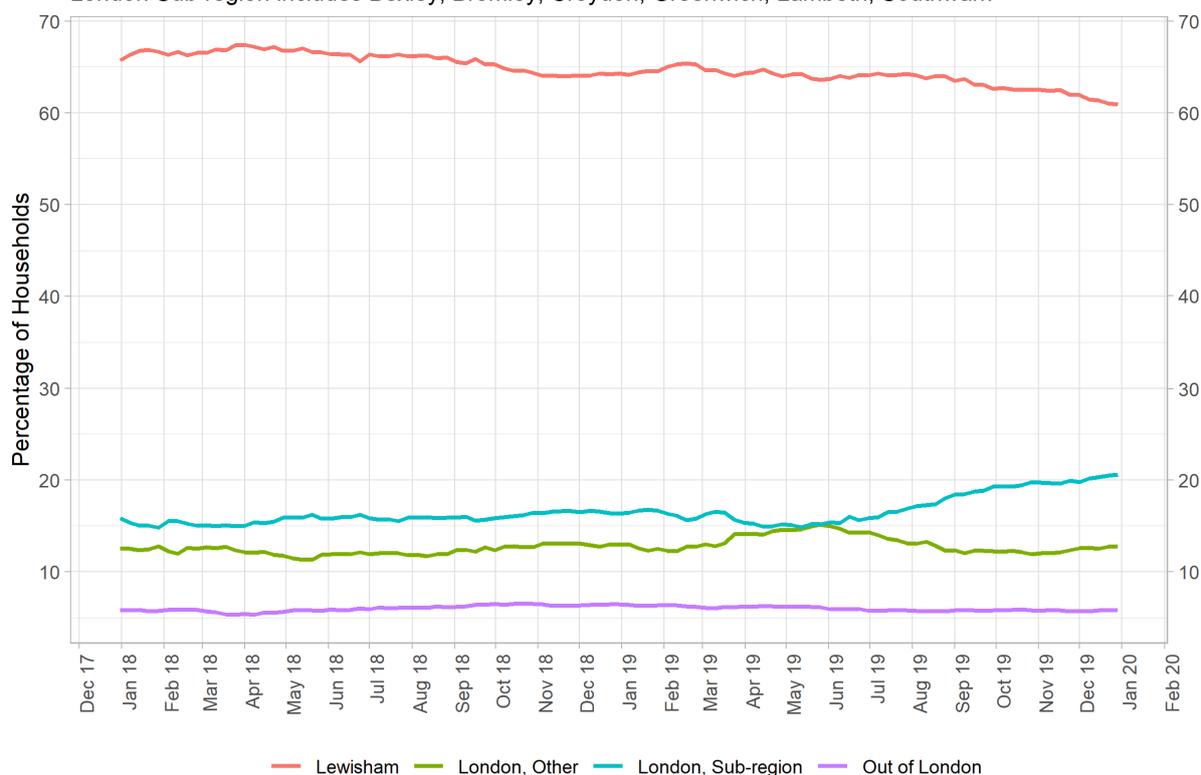
London Sub-region includes Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Southwark



Source: Housing Insight

Percentage of households in TA over time, by location

London Sub-region includes Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Southwark



Source: Housing Insight

7. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 3

How does living in temporary accommodation affect children? What data is available that illustrates the impact on children's:

- a. Physical health
- b. Mental health
- c. Cognitive development
- d. Academic attainment and school attendance
- e. Opportunities in adulthood
- f. Engagement with Children's Social Care, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET)

7.1 There is extensive evidence regarding the negative impact that living in temporary accommodation has on children. A list of sources is provided in the footnote³.

³ Panos, Eleanor & Stuart 1998

"Homelessness and its impact on children", 2019, The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Hambrick, Rubens, Brawner & Taussig, 2018

Astone, McLanahan 1994; Hagan et al 1996

a) physical health

- Difficulty sleeping, due bed-sharing or being disturbed by the noise of siblings or adults sharing the same room
- Poor quality accommodation can increase the risk of severe ill-health or disability by up to 25% during childhood and early adulthood
- Children living in overcrowded housing are up to 10 times more likely to contract meningitis, and as many as one in three people who grow up in overcrowded housing have respiratory problems in adulthood.
- Children living in damp, mouldy homes are between one and a half and three times more prone to coughing and wheezing - symptoms of asthma and other respiratory conditions – than children living in dry homes.

b. mental health

- Social isolation from peers – particularly acute in secondary children where lack of access to toilet and washing facilities can mean hair and uniform goes unwashed
- Feeling self-conscious and 'different' to peers
- Anxiety – younger children can be withdrawn and less social whereas older children become more aggressive and confrontational
- Homelessness has long-lasting effects on mental health. Anxiety remains after permanent rehousing
- Homelessness-related anxiety affects girls more than boys, thought to be because female-related puberty amplifies anxiety.

“The impact of homelessness on children and their development” a presentation by Marcus McPhillips, Shelter
https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/39202/Chance_of_a_Lifetime.pdf

c. cognitive and physical development

- Pregnant mothers are less likely to receive consistent early prenatal care
- Exposure to long term stress affects foetal brain development
- Poor maternal nutrition can increase risk of birth complications. Low birth weight, preterm and pre-term birth
- Reduced access to health and dental care
- Impaired parent/child bond due to frequent moves and an unpredictable or chaotic environment
- Lack of access to toys resulting in understimulation
- Late weaning due to lack of facilities to sterilise bottles and feeding equipment
- Delayed crawling and walking due to lack of floor space
- “buggy babies” – infants being left in prams for extended periods causing soft skull bones to become misshapen
- Delayed toilet training, speech delays, bed wetting

d. academic attainment and school attendance

- Falling asleep in class, or appearing physically fatigued and distracted.
- Sleep has recently been shown to have a mediating effect between Adverse Childhood Experiences ACEs and delinquency
- Behaviour – lack of personal belongings or “comforter” items, which can be lost or packed away during a rushed move. Children can become aggressively possessive with other pupils.
- Frequent moves are associated with lower educational attainment by late adolescence
- Lack of study or homework space impacts on academic progress
- Missed school time – particularly if housed far away from school
- Increased risk of exclusion

e. opportunities in adulthood

- Long-term health problems and low educational attainment increase the likelihood of unemployment or working in low-paid jobs.
- Opportunities for leisure and recreation are undermined by low income and health problems.
- The behavioural problems associated with bad housing (including homelessness, overcrowding and poor quality housing) in childhood can manifest themselves in later offending behaviour. In one study, nearly half of young people who had offended had experienced homelessness.

f. engagement with Children’s Social Care, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET)

- 7.2 The Scrutiny Manager met with a representative from Children’s Social Care (CSC) who gave evidence that being in temporary accommodation does not necessarily make it harder for CSC to engage with a family, since they can be in TA for a number of years, and their whereabouts is known.
- 7.3 TA is a factor in the lives of many children who are subject to a plan. While it is not usually the sole reason that a plan is necessary, chaotic and uncertain living arrangements can be an exacerbating factor. For all of the families it has dealings with, Children’s Social Care does gather information on the type of accommodation (temporary/ permanent/ hostel/ PRS) and how long they have been living there.
- 7.4 For those children or young people who are Missing, Exploited or Trafficked (MET), TA is a recurring feature however there is no clear evidence that it is harder for CSC to engage with them or their families.
- 7.5 Homeless families are not routinely referred to CSC for a s17 Child in Need Assessment unless they present as homeless on the day. In most cases a family has 28 days notice that the tenancy will end and so no CSC intervention is needed. A CSC referral is automatically triggered where a family has No Recourse to Public Funds.
- 7.6 CSC identified three areas where it was felt improvements could be made, namely:
- a. Homeless 16 & 17 year olds and care leavers being placed in inappropriate TA – eg B&B or out of borough accommodation - due to lack of suitable accommodation for Young People
 - b. Working with families who are at crisis point but are not owed a housing duty because they are considered to be intentionally homeless
 - c. Support for families in social housing who default on rent payments. Intervening early to prevent the ‘domino rally effect’ of eviction, requiring joint working between between Housing and Children’s Social Care.
- 7.7 CSC suggested a Housing and CSC jointly funded post to address some of these issues and to implement automatic CSC referrals where social tenants with children default on rent, might be beneficial.

8. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 4

What impact does the quality and location of the temporary accommodation have (eg Out of Borough placements)?

Location

- 8.1 During visits to Rathfern and Rushey Green Primary Schools, and in gathering evidence from parents living in temporary accommodation with their children, members of the Committee heard that where a family is placed outside the borough

distance from school can be a major problem for families, both in terms of long travelling times and cost. The Committee heard of a family that had to leave the house shortly after 6am to get to school on multiple buses as the £8 per day cost of train travel was unaffordable.

- 8.2 The early start can mean little time for breakfast and the children arriving at school hungry. Even if the child has eaten breakfast, a very early start means a long gap between breakfast and lunch, and hunger can affect concentration.
- 8.3 Long journeys and very early starts are exhausting for children, and schools reported loss of learning time due to children falling asleep or being too tired to engage fully at school.
- 8.4 A parent pointed out that if one child in the family, or indeed the parent in a single parent family, is too unwell to make the journey to school, it can mean all of the children missing school.
- 8.5 Although the journey can make attending school difficult, schools reported that on the whole, families in TA make a huge effort to get their children to school.
- 8.6 Changing schools may seem like the obvious solution. However, the temporary nature of the accommodation and lack of certainty about how long they will be there means families can be reluctant to change school. Plus many families hold onto the hope that they will secure settled accommodation back in Lewisham. The Committee heard the experiences of one family that had moved between temporary accommodation four times in as many months, across four boroughs spanning London. Whereas a long-term gradual transition from one school to another may be appropriate in some situations, it is often not possible or beneficial to the child to move schools with each housing move.
- 8.7 A key concern for parents living with the uncertainty of temporary accommodation is creating consistency in their children's lives. Having a safe and familiar place to go, where the child and family is known to the school becomes increasingly important. When everything else in a child's life is changing, school as the constant can be a protective factor mitigating the impact of homelessness.

Quality of accommodation

- 8.8 Parents commented on the quality of accommodation as being problematic, citing examples of condemned boilers, dangerous fixtures, rats and mice, landlords being slow to make repairs. Some reported feeling as though they were being treated in a derogatory way or in a way that undermined their dignity.
- 8.9 Overcrowding was reportedly a problem too. Overcrowded conditions include situations where different sex children aged 10 or over have to share a bedroom, where parents have to share a bedroom with a child or children, where there are more than two children in a bedroom; and where rooms such as kitchens and living rooms are used as bedrooms.

8.10 Some felt that PRS landlords were not being adequately held to account. Parents had experienced used condoms, syringes and other drug paraphernalia in communal spaces, rough sleepers in the hallway, and filthy foul-smelling common parts. One school shared that a 5 year old had seen a man with a gun in the building. All of the parents that gave evidence were single women. They reported feeling isolated and vulnerable in their accommodation. Several parents reported that their children were reluctant to go home from school, due to issues with the accommodation.

9. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 5

What can we learn from the lived experience of families living in temporary accommodation?

9.1 Evidence suggests that better communication is needed, with clear signposting to housing advocacy services, details of named housing officer and details of how to deal with repair requests.

Lack of clarity

9.2 A recurring theme in the discussions the Committee had with schools and parents was lack of clarity of information. This is also reflected in two Ombudsman's⁴ decisions. Evidence indicates a lack of clarity over

1. likely time in emergency or temporary accommodation (the parents we spoke to did not differentiate between the two). One parent said she had been advised she would likely spend between 6 weeks and 6 months in temporary accommodation but had in fact been in temporary accommodation for 8 years. Another reported living in one room with her 2 children for 4 months, having been told she would be there for no more than 6 weeks.
2. likelihood of being offered settled accommodation in the borough.
3. who to deal with regarding repairs, pest control and other complaints, and how to escalate.
4. whether being in temporary accommodation out of the borough impacts on chances of being offered social housing within the borough – one family felt that they had been deliberately housed in out of borough TA so that the council could claim they had not been resident in the borough for 5 years and therefore did not qualify for social housing in Lewisham
5. who to go to for independent housing advice, since the Citizen Advice Bureau in Catford had closed.
6. the role of local MPs and ward councillors, and how to contact them.
7. Rights and responsibilities of tenants, landlords and the council. Parents gave examples of bad practice from PRS landlords such as threatening tenants with eviction for spurious reasons such as “complaining too much”, or landlords not dealing with repairs in a timely fashion. One parent had been caught in a dispute between a letting agency and the council. Another had had problems with a previous tenant trying to gain access to the accommodation.

⁴ <https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/housing/homelessness/17-013-673>
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/housing/homelessness/17-012-265>

- 9.3 When asked what would help, parents wanted that support to move forward, with better representation, to help them have a voice.

10. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 6

How do schools support children living in temporary accommodation?

- 10.1 As support services such as Children's Social Care and CAMHS become harder to access, schools say they are left with little choice but to try to meet the needs that they are presented with. To receive an effective education, the child needs good school attendance, to be punctual, to have space to do homework and space to play, to have a healthy diet and lifestyle, to be well rested and able to engage in lessons. Adequate living accommodation is at the heart of this. While schools endeavour to support families as best they can, the knock-on effect for children goes wider than school achievement, affecting mental and physical health, development, wellbeing.
- 10.2 Schools reported a shift in the support needs of families. Whereas previously support was needed in the form of additional lessons, increasingly families needed additional play opportunities, emotional and mental health support, somebody to talk to, support with job applications, CV preparation, benefits applications, housing advocacy.
- 10.3 Practice in schools varies on a school by school basis. The Committee heard details of some of the measures put in place to support families, including making an extended day available to families struggling with long journeys to enable children to have time before school to eat breakfast, and after school to play or do homework. One school described a child becoming very possessive when toys were brought out. The child's toys had all been packed away because the family was in very cramped temporary accommodation. The school responded by making toys available to be played with after school.
- 10.4 One school gives out recycled uniform to all Reception children regardless of need, and subsidises school dinners so that all children can have second or third helpings. Both of the schools visited are part of the Magic Breakfast⁵ programme, and give out bagels for breakfast before school.
- 10.5 Schools can only offer support to families living in temporary accommodation if they are aware of their living arrangements. Schools reported that families often take a long time before they open up to the school, whether because of embarrassment – one parent said “I feel like a failure for not providing a nice home for my children” - or fear of officialdom, particularly if they have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Usually, schools find out through dealing with SEN. If the child does not present with needs, then the school would not know. However schools felt it was important to identify early help needs sufficiently early in order to break trajectories and see academic success and to avoid exclusions.
- 10.6 Both schools acknowledged that while social work is not the school's responsibility, they have no choice but to take on that role, supporting parents, signposting to specialist services, writing letters to help resolve housing problems. Often, letter

⁵ www.magicbreakfast.com

writing has little practical effect other than giving the parent a voice and offering much needed reassurance. Both schools reported increasing demand for feedback vouchers.

- 10.7 Both schools said that the majority of their families start off in emergency accommodation in Ilford, before being moved on to temporary accommodation as far away as Strateford, Whitechapel, Redbridge, Croydon, Watford, Romford.
- 10.8 Families and school expressed frustration about their dealings with Housing officers. According to schools, families cannot always name their Housing Officer. Schools also reported that families do not know how long they will be in temporary accommodation, and think that if the school writes on their behalf they will be moved back into the borough.
- 10.9 Staff had experience of working in other schools in the borough and the Committee heard that good practice in supporting families living in temporary accommodation is not consistent across all Lewisham primary schools. They felt families could benefit from examples of good practice being shared across the borough's schools via Lewisham Learning.
- 10.10 The Committee heard that the waiting list at Kaleidoscope does not feel any better to schools, who are having to find alternative ways of supporting mental health needs, such as through charities.
- 10.11 Shelter has recommended a number of good practice examples that schools can do to effectively support homeless children⁶. While some of the references are out of date – Connexions no longer exists – the recommendations are still useful. Many schools in Lewisham will be doing some of these things already, but this will vary on a school by school basis. Shelter's recommendations are available at **Appendix D**.

11. KEY LINE OF ENQUIRY 7

What other support is available for children in temporary accommodation

11. [evidence to be gathered from Housing at the 23 January meeting]

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https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/81010/Engaging_with_homeless_children_-_Guidance_for_education_professionals.pdf

Appendix B Location Priority Policy

Appendix C Private Rented Sector Policy

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Recommendations

There are many things that education professionals can do in order to effectively support homeless children.

- Identify children living in temporary accommodation or bad housing by getting to know pupils as individual personalities. This can make it easier for teachers to identify changes in their behaviour or character and make any necessary concessions.
- If a child is identified as being homeless all relevant teachers and support staff should be informed.
- Provide staff-supported homework facilities both during the school day and out of school hours, including school holidays.
- Offer access to funding for transport to and from school for homeless children who have been forced to move a considerable distance away from the school.
- Provide funding for special supplies required for schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or school trips that may not otherwise be affordable.
- Introduce children to welfare staff, such as mentors or Connexions staff as they may be nervous about making contact with these people independently. It is important that education professionals have regular meetings with the child, allowing them to keep up-to-date with how the child is progressing, and to ensure there are no further problems.
- Make contact with parents for an informal chat if they have missed parents' evenings, ensuring that contact is maintained between the school and the parents.
- Include details of support that is on offer from school in any correspondence to parents of new pupils and in any information packs or prospectus.
- Where a child has been moved to a new school as a result of their housing situation, it can be beneficial to pair the child up with a 'buddy' to look after them while they settle in.
- Allow staff, including Connexions staff, the time to develop links with local organisations that may be useful for signposting children or parents to. For example, this could include developing links with a local housing advice agency or forum.
- Have designated members of staff for pastoral care who do not have teaching responsibilities.
- When providing additional help and support to a child, care must be taken to ensure that this is done in such a way as to not single them out from their peers.
- Take the time to speak to the child about their interests, and where relevant offer invitations and support which will allow the child to access after-school activities and clubs.
- Take each individual's personal situation into account when issuing sanctions, eg when a child is persistently late, as this could be because the child has been moved to temporary accommodation a substantial distance from the school.
- Keep a store of school uniform for those pupils whose parents have insufficient funds to purchase a new uniform.
- Be creative in problem solving, there doesn't always have to be a large monetary cost to solutions.

Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity

Righting housing wrongs

38 Old Street
London EC1V 9HU

www.shelter.org.uk

Registered charity in England and Wales

Shelter



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**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR POLICY**

DRAFT – Subject to approval by Mayor and Cabinet

Scope

- 1.1 This Private Rented Sector Discharge Policy will provide a framework for the way in which the London Borough of Lewisham ('the Council') will discharge the main housing duty under s.193 Housing Act 1996 ('the main housing duty') by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. The policy therefore applies to applicants for housing assistance under Part VII Housing Act 1996 ('HA 1996') and not allocations under Part VI HA 1996.
- 1.2 All PRSOs secured by the Council must satisfy the requirements as to suitability under the HA 1996 and delegated legislation (which includes affordability). In addition, the Council will apply the locational priorities set out in its Location Priority Policy to PRSOs.
- 1.3 When making decisions under this policy, in accordance with section 11(2) Children Act 2004, the Council will have regard to the principal needs of any children in the household, and the need to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. In particular, regard will be had to any disruption to schools, medical care, social work, and other key services and support.
- 1.4 The Council will also have regard to the circumstances of the entire household and will have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED') under s.149 Equality Act 2010 when making decisions under this policy which affect those with a 'protected characteristic' as defined under the Act. This policy will be monitored and reviewed, as set out below.

When PRSOs will be arranged

- 2.1 The Council will normally seek to bring the main housing duty under Part VII to an end by arranging a PRSO, subject to the exceptions set out below, and provided that the Council can identify available accommodation which it is satisfied is suitable for the circumstances of the individual household.
- 2.2 A PRSO will not normally be offered where there are exceptional circumstances which make a PRSO inappropriate. Such cases may include the following:
 - (a) Where a household requires adaptations to meet health and disability related needs which it is not reasonably practicable to achieve in private rented sector accommodation.
 - (b) Where a household is unable to manage a tenancy in the private rented sector without a substantial level of tenancy related support.

Duty accepted before Pre-November 9th 2012

- 3.1 Where an applicant has applied to the Council for accommodation or for assistance in obtaining accommodation under Part VII HA 1996 Act; and the duty to secure that accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation under Part VII has arisen and not ceased, before 9th November 2012, no PRSO will be made.

Viewing and Offers

- 4.1 So far as is reasonably practicable, applicants will be given an opportunity to view a property proposed to be subject to a PRSO before deciding whether to accept or reject it. Where this is not reasonably practicable, an Information Pack will be provided.

Monitoring & Review of this Policy

- 5.1 The Council will monitor the application of this policy and it will be reviewed within 12 months of the date of its commencement.

Dated 22nd March 2017



LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

LOCATION PRIORITY POLICY

General

- 1.1. This Location Priority Policy will provide a framework for the fair allocation of affordable temporary accommodation within and close to the London Borough of Lewisham. This policy applies to the allocation of temporary accommodation secured under Part VII, Housing Act 1996 and under Part III, Children Act 1989.
- 1.2. Officers will endeavour to place all households within or as close as possible to the London Borough of Lewisham. This policy outlines which households will have priority for accommodation in these areas.
- 1.3. This policy does not prevent a household from considering other housing options, including asking the Council for advice, support and assistance in relocating to more settled accommodation.

Categories of Location Priority

- 2.1. If the local authority has a duty to secure accommodation, an assessment will be carried out to determine the location priority of the applicant. The assessment will determine whether the applicant has:
 - Priority to be located in the London Borough of Lewisham
 - Priority to be located close to the London Borough of Lewisham
 - No priority as to the location of a property.
- 2.2. The award of an 'In-borough' or 'Close to Borough' location priority does not guarantee the provision of temporary accommodation within those areas, rather priority for such accommodation should it be available and suitable.
- 2.3. Where the household is in receipt of welfare benefits, this may place additional constraints on the availability of affordable accommodation, including constraints on its type and location.

- 2.4. The Council will have due regard to the principal needs of any children in the household, and the need to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. In particular, regard will be had to any disruption to schools, medical care, social work, other key services and other support.

In-borough Priority

- 3.1. Priority for available in-borough accommodation will be given to certain households who have a particular need to be housed within the London Borough of Lewisham. Applicants and their household members to be housed with them who satisfy one or more of the following criteria will qualify for 'In-borough' priority:
- a. They are receiving treatment for a physical or mental health condition from a specialist hospital unit which cannot be transferred to another NHS service or they are at a critical point in their treatment.
 - b. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan in the London Borough of Lewisham which cannot be transferred to another local authority without causing serious detriment to a child's welfare.
 - c. Children subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a Statement of Special Educational Needs in the London Borough of Lewisham which cannot be transferred to another local authority without causing serious detriment to the child's welfare.
 - d. They have a longstanding arrangement to provide essential care to another family member in the London Borough of Lewisham who is not part of the household. Carers must be in receipt of Carer's Allowance.
 - e. Other circumstances which demonstrate an exceptional need which cannot be met outside of the London Borough of Lewisham.
- 3.2. An 'In-borough' priority does not guarantee an in-borough placement, but should suitable and affordable accommodation be available within that area, it does give that household priority over others without this assessed priority.

Close to Borough Priority

- 4.1. 'Close to Borough' priority is defined as priority for accommodation located within 90 minutes travelling distance of the London Borough of Lewisham by public transport.

- 4.2. Such priority does not guarantee a placement within 90 minutes travelling distance of the London Borough of Lewisham by public transport, but should suitable and affordable accommodation be available within that area, it does give the household priority over others without that assessed priority.
- 4.3. Applicants or their household members to be housed with them who satisfy one or more of the following criteria will qualify for 'Close to Borough' priority:
- a. They have been continuously employed close to the London Borough of Lewisham for 16 hours or more per week in a role which cannot be transferred to another area. Applicants must have been employed in this role for six months prior to the date of application and remain so employed. Wherever practicable, the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance, by public transport, from the place of employment at the time of application.
 - b. Women who are on maternity leave from employment and meet the above criteria will also be prioritised for placements close to the London Borough of Lewisham. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance by public transport from their place of employment.
 - c. Children who are enrolled in GCSE, AS, or A level courses in the London Borough of Lewisham, with public exams to be taken within the current or next academic year. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance by public transport of their school or college.
 - d. Other exceptional circumstances, where applicants demonstrate an exceptional need to be housed close to the London Borough of Lewisham.

No Locational Priority

- 5.1. Applicants who meet none of the 'In-borough' or 'Close to Borough' criteria will be offered properties further afield than 90 minutes travelling distance of the London Borough of Lewisham by public transport, when no suitable property is available within these areas.
- 5.2. The Council will have regard to the principal needs of any children in the household, and the need to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. In

particular, regard will be had to any disruption to schools, medical care, social work, other key services and other support.