

<b>Housing Select Committee</b>			
<b>Title</b>	The work of the Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention Team (SHIP)		
<b>Key decision</b>	No	<b>Item no</b>	5
<b>Wards</b>	All		
<b>Contributors</b>	John Barker – Housing Options and Advice Manager (Singles)		
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	8 July 2015	

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report is designed to give an overview of the work of SHIP in addressing the accommodation and support needs of Single Homeless People in the Borough

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Lewisham's Housing Strategy sets aims to reduce all forms of homelessness, including rough sleeping, across Lewisham. In Lewisham, the number of accepted homeless applications increased by 24 per cent between 2010 and 2013, and the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased by 76 per cent over the last 5 years.<sup>16</sup> Across London, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation is increasing. Lewisham is no exception to this trend. Furthermore, it is estimated that the number of people sleeping rough in London rose by 13 per cent between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

## 3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report.

## 4. Purpose

- 4.1 To inform elected members of the legal framework around single homelessness, the solutions available for residents of Lewisham that find themselves in housing need or whom have support needs that effect their housing; and how to access these services.

## 5. History of Single Homelessness

### Single Homelessness in London

To understand the evolution of single homeless services in the capital it is important to understand the evolution of single homelessness post war. In

1947 only six people were recorded sleeping rough in the capital. The Second World War introduced a new cause of homelessness. Bomb damage made an estimated one in six of Greater London's population homeless at some point. Some Londoners resorted to squatting as a way of finding a home, and by the 1970s there were 30,000 squatters in London.

In 1968, 37% of the homeless population of England and Wales could be found in inner London. At that time, a group of well-established charities led by the Salvation Army and the Church Army provided temporary accommodation for mostly homeless men in large hostels. In 1966 the seminal television drama 'Cathy Come Home' depicted a working-class single mother whose family life gradually disintegrates because of her homelessness. The programme had an enormous impact on public opinion and led to the formation of the housing charities Shelter and Crisis and eventually to the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

### **5.1. 1970s**

Many of the homeless agencies and charities that we are familiar with today can trace their origins back to the 1970s when homelessness and rough sleeping began to become an issue in London. In those days the homeless community and the services that worked with them were very different.

Throughout the 1970s London was continuing to rebuild following the damage of the Second World War. There was a great deal of construction across the city and high demand for labour. Migrant workers from outside the capital were attracted by the abundance of work and moved to the capital, often disregarding the need to source proper, or indeed any kind of accommodation. A hard working, but equally hard drinking homeless population began to develop, and it was with these clients that the homeless charities we know so well now began to hone their work, often with soup runs or very basic hostels (spikes) being the sharp end of the work carried out. The 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act was introduced but excluded most single people from a right to housing and when unemployment started to rise towards the end of the decade there was an increase in young single homeless people.

### **5.2. 1980s**

The early 1980s saw "Care in the Community" begin, with the closure of many mental health institutions across the UK, and the emphasis moved to a more cost effective way of working with the mentally ill, designed not only to save public money but to address long standing concerns over the quality of care received by this vulnerable group. The inadvertent and tragic consequence of this program was that high numbers of mentally unwell adults fell out of their community care arrangements, fell out of housing solutions and took to rough sleeping. As they did this so their care arrangements became even more disorganised and a serious issue with mentally ill rough sleepers began to arise. By the mid 1980s there were over 20,000 living in single homeless projects, but still over 1,000 individuals in London sleeping rough.

The rise in this group saw the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiatives put in place across London, funding additional hostels and other services including fledgling street outreach teams. Alongside these outreach teams, funding from local health authorities started flowing to the homeless charities that were now becoming more and more established and specialist in their work. Specialist housing projects began to spring up across London that specifically catered for this client group, and inevitably it was the familiar charities that operated them.

### **5.3. 1990s**

As we moved into the 1990s, so the number of funded mental health projects began to increase. There had always been alcohol use and even meth and petrol drinkers on the streets, but now a new homeless group began to emerge with substance users becoming more prevalent and rough sleeping in areas such as the Strand and the Waterloo Bullring began to be more and more infiltrated by hard drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine.

As the 1990s progressed, the mental health projects became more and more successful in helping the mentally ill away from the streets and in accessing proper psychiatric care, but the number of drug users continued to rise and the associated anti social behaviour and health problems began to become an issue on the streets.

### **5.4. New Labour Government**

The existing services had managed to reduce rough sleeping in the capital to around 600 individuals before the incoming Labour government announced the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit to tackle key social issues and the Rough Sleepers Unit, was created in 1998 specifically to address the plight of the national single homeless community and services become more and more defined to address the acute problems presented by the homeless community.

This program was shortly followed by the funding stream known as Supporting People that primarily provided the funding to the charities that worked with single homeless. Local Authorities, alongside their Homelessness Strategies also began to directly commission their homeless services and more importantly began to verify and audit the quality of support and care that they were providing to their customers. These two streams, working hand in hand achieved the Rough Sleeper Unit's target of reducing London's rough sleeping by two thirds. The sector grew further and became more professional and developed into something very similar to what we have now.

### **5.5. 2000**

The sector reached it's zenith in the mid 2000s and many single homeless people were supported from the streets into independent accommodation with a strong emphasis on employment and recovery outcomes. More and more

joined up work with Mental Health Teams, Drug and Alcohol teams and training and employment services gave single homeless people a real boost in rejoining society. The credit crunch and subsequent recession have seen the sector scaled back somewhat, however the expertise and professionalism that has developed over the years has mitigated somewhat the effects of these cuts and the services we have today are still very effective in helping single homeless people rebuild their lives.

## **5.6. The onset of austerity**

Rough sleeper numbers began to rise again from mid 2000 onward and in 2009 the Mayors officer launched the London Delivery Board with the aim of ending rough sleeping in London by 2012. As part of this, a target of the capital's most enduring 205 rough sleepers was created. This "205 list" is still being worked on today.

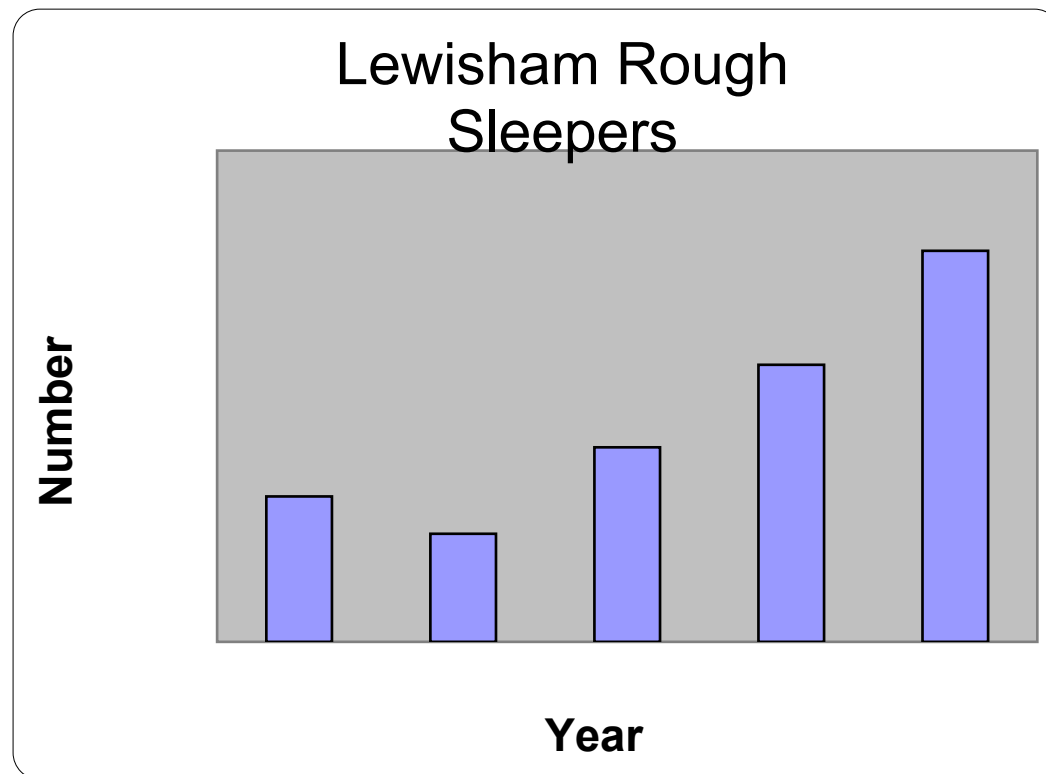
The effects of the recession and the related austerity continue to be felt today, and single homeless numbers and numbers of rough sleeping are now rising across the capital and in Lewisham. The full impact of the further welfare changes that are proposed by the new government have yet to be fully assessed but could result in a further contraction of services and increase in single homeless numbers.

## **6. Lewisham's Single Homeless Population**

Traditionally, Lewisham has not had the kind of rough sleeper populations that have been seen in the West End, areas such as Westminster, or even in neighbouring Southwark and Lambeth. Through the 1990s and 2000s when rough sleeping was a very visible issue in those boroughs, Lewisham's homeless population remained more hidden, with one mid 2000s street count, identifying 5 rough sleepers, in comparison to Westminster's 153. An established network of squats was one of the contributors to this alongside the lack of a central commercial and social setting where drugs were readily and cheaply available unlike Lambeth where Brixton and Clapham became a focus or Southwark where the London Bridge has always attracted rough sleeping. Lewisham has had a long history of providing single homeless services in the borough, with two major single homeless hostels, a large number of mental health schemes and a large cohort of supported housing being the mainstay of service provision. Single homeless activity has largely always been focussed on the north and central areas of the borough, and this is reflected by the numbers of services located in New Cross, Deptford and Brockley compared with say Grove Park or Downham.

The causes of the borough's single homeless population has mirrored the London wide issues, with mental health, alcohol and substance use and youth homelessness being a prevalent issue within the borough. The last 10 years have reflected national trends with mental health issues and alcohol being an ever present factor closely followed by substance use, although this now

perhaps is diminishing to a small extent. In recent years Lewisham has also reflected trends in rough sleeping, and from figures available from CHAIN, the UK's national rough sleeper database, we can see that that rough sleeping figures have nearly trebled since 2010.



Unlike many other London Borough's the customers that SHIP currently works with are predominantly local people so the SHIP service provides a local solution for members of the Lewisham Community.

## 7. **Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention Service (SHIP)**

SHIP is the single point of access for single homeless people within the borough of Lewisham. The team was originally created in 2008 in response to the increasing numbers of single homeless with support needs within the borough to coordinate access into the borough's extensive range of supported housing options funded through the supporting people programme.

Launched in April 2003, Supporting People is a UK government programme aimed at helping vulnerable people in England and Wales live independently and help them to remain in their home. Initially, it was targeted to help tenants maintain their social housing tenancies and to provide housing related support for anyone regardless of housing status. This includes private and social tenants, home owners, homeless people and those in temporary accommodation as well as people in sheltered accommodation or other specialist housing. It is administered by local government and mostly provided by the voluntary sector.

As well as funding for services, the SP Programme also provided a Quality Assurance Framework in which providers had to work in order to retain their contracts. This framework ensured that service users were able to access joined up services and holistic support and that their rights and aspirations were at the forefront of their support.

SHIP ensured that the local solutions funded by Lewisham, were allocated and accessible to local people and those seen as a priority by the council. Before the inception of SHIP, Providers were able to take their referrals from a number of different routes and were able to choose who they worked with and who they did not. SHIP enabled the council to determine who was a priority for getting the accommodation based support that the borough funded and to ensure those accepted had a local connection.

At this time it was more usual for cross borough referrals to be made across the capital. This was gradually coming to a halt and in 2008 local funding was increasingly being ring fenced for local people. With the credit crunch in its infancy, teams like SHIP started to spring up across London's local authorities to ensure that local projects and solutions were being used for local people.

Prior to SHIP, Supported Housing Providers were "awarded" a quota of move on nominations and simply made a move on application to the housing register when they perceived a customer was ready to begin to live independently. Often these decisions were arbitrary with providers often rushing to make applications to "use up" their quota towards the end of the financial year. It was clear at the time that the lack of coordination of who was coming into supported housing was equalled by the lack of coordination of who was moving on from the projects. The creation of the SHIP team changed this overnight.

## **8. The work of SHIP:**

Lewisham Single Homeless and Prevention Team is the sole point of access for single people in housing need. The current make up of the team is:

- Service Manager (Housing Options and Advice Manager – Singles);
- Housing Prevention & Support Team Leaders x 2
- Housing Prevention and Support Officers x 7
- Independent Move on Officer
- Children and Young Peoples Services Social Worker Liaison

The Housing Prevention and Support Officers roles are split into different duties thus:

- 2 x Young Persons Officers
- 4 x Generic Vulnerable Adults Officers
- 1 x Offenders officer

These three areas broadly reflect the categories of single homeless clients that the team most commonly works with; with the generic roles being further split into areas such as Rough Sleepers, Substance Use, Elderly and Vulnerable and Mental Health.

Currently the service runs an open reception "Drop In" 5 days a week, from 9am to 3:30pm each day apart from Wednesday when doors open at midday.

Access to the service is primarily by one of two routes. Customers can drop in during opening times, for assistance and advice, and many of our first contacts with clients are made in this way. The second route is by way of referral from other statutory and voluntary agencies. The types of agency or organisation that we commonly take referrals from are:

- London Street Rescue Outreach Service
- Community Mental Health Teams
- Lewisham Hospital
- Community Drug and Alcohol Team
- Community Advice and Assistance Agencies (Deptford Reach; The 999 Club; Bench Outreach etc)
- Probation Services
- HM Prison Service
- No Second Night Out

SHIP will only work with people who are eligible, homeless and have a local connection as set out by the Housing Act 1996. However, one important difference is that for the majority of our clients we do not necessarily take into account Priority Need or Intentionality of Homelessness.

The primary reasons for this is that single people often, even when they have specific vulnerabilities and support needs, do not meet the criteria to be in Priority Need as set out by legislation; and often, their support needs and vulnerabilities have contributed to their homelessness in such a way as to categorise it as intentional. If we did not provide support to this group then we would be risking a high rough sleeper population with the inherent added social problems that would go with it.

SHIP has a number of different housing options at its disposal, and these are dependent on the circumstances of the individual who has come to or been referred to the service. The way in which this is assessed is as follows:

**For a customer attending the reception**, they will first be seen by the reception worker who will provide a brief advice and triage service. The reception worker will try to ascertain from the customer whether they are in the right place and whether SHIP are likely to be able to offer a service to them. If the customer is someone who it is likely SHIP will not be able to help then the reception worker will still look to give the customer some advice on finding a new home themselves. Often this advice will be based around practical tips for finding affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.

**For a customer whom the reception worker feels needs more thorough investigation**, or for whom we may have a chance to prevent their homelessness, then they would be sent through for an initial assessment with a caseworker. This assessment, whilst quite brief, will determine their eligibility, local connection and what needs they may have as well as enabling the service to find out more about the circumstances of the customer's homelessness. Often the landlord or excluder will be contacted if there is a chance that homelessness can be avoided or indeed delayed so that the customer is safe whilst further investigation or assessment is made.

The initial assessment is key because it enables the case worker to highlight and discuss potential options with the customer. It is where expectations can be managed, but also where the correct housing option for that person is identified and it is dependent on the initial assessment as to what happens next.

For customers referred to the service the process can be similar. Each referral will be allocated to a case worker and the case worker may then call them in to submit evidence or to undergo a further assessment of need. It is by this process that their homelessness can be investigated and any prevention options be identified.

## **9. Housing Options for Single Homeless People**

The following housing options are available for SHIP customers:

### **9.1. Supported Housing**

In 2014-15 SHIP made a total of 220 Supported Housing placements for customers.

The council funds a number of supported housing projects that are split into three separate pathways. Each is accessed via SHIP and the first stage of each is an assessment centre. These assessment centres are 24 hour staffed accommodation services. The three pathways are:

#### **9.1.1. Young Peoples: Pathway designed for 16-21 year olds with low support needs.**

There are currently up to 142 units of varied accommodation in this pathway and support is focussed on mediation with family, independent living skills, education, training and employment and keeping safe.

#### **9.1.2. Vulnerable Adults: Pathway designed for 18 years and over with low / medium or high support needs**

189 units of different accommodation currently, although this number fluctuates as new schemes are identified and others are decommissioned to



improve stock. Support is focussed on independent living skills as well as addressing any emotional health or wellbeing issues that the customer may have. Alcohol and Drugs issues are also prevalent within this pathway and joined up work with the Borough's Drug and Alcohol treatment providers is a large part of the pathways success.

### **9.1.3. Mental Health: Pathway designed for 18 years and over with low / medium or high support needs and who are subject to the Care Programme Approach through Mental Health Services.**

The largest pathway comprises of over 250 diverse schemes, from hostels to an adult placement service where vulnerable adults are housed with hosts throughout the borough. A recent review of all mental health support accommodation in the borough has recommended that in addition to the 250 funded units, the unfunded, private mental health accommodation providers should join this pathway which will increase it by up to 150 units.

Both the Young Peoples Pathway and the Vulnerable Adults Pathway have some kind of emergency bed space or provision which, if available, can be used to keep someone safe on the day.

Supported Housing cases make up approximately 50% of the work that SHIP carries out.

## **9.2. Homelessness Application**

SHIP registered 124 Housing Applications in 2014-15.

If a client is assessed as being in priority need or potentially being so, and if a prevention option cannot be identified or is not seen as suitable, then SHIP will take a homelessness application from a customer. We will also do this if asked to do so and if we cannot prevent homelessness. In some cases a homelessness application is genuinely the best option for a client and can be completed quickly and efficiently to enable the council to take on a housing duty under the Housing Act.

Sadly, we often get inappropriate requests to take homeless applications from agencies or solicitors and this can often limit the work we can do with a homeless customer and lead to a protracted investigation resulting in a discharge of duty to the customer. SHIP is primarily concerned with avoiding such cases and discussing other more realistic options with the customer but we are often thwarted by their advisor.

## **9.3. Semi Supported Housing Options**

Outside of the council funded accommodation based support projects, there are other organisations that can provide accommodation with some support. Unfunded by the council and funded through charitable means, these provide a valuable resource for people with support needs that perhaps do not meet

the threshold for council funded supported housing schemes. It is essential to note that SHIP does not have exclusive referral rights to these schemes, which total about 25 units in the borough currently and whilst SHIP only housed 10 people in this option in 2014-15, this is a cohort of housing that is becoming increasingly important to us and forms a large part of our future planning.

#### **9.4. Private Rented Sector / Hostels Diversion**

For some years, SHIP has, in tandem with the Supporting People programme and Thames Reach Floating Support Service (Lewisham Reach), operated a Private Rented Sector procurement scheme with support, aimed at keeping people with lower support needs out of the pathway and providing an alternative to supported housing. Recently the funding has expired for this project and it is no longer as effective as it was, however SHIP still seeks to provide a PRS option for some customers who are assessed as being vulnerable and having support needs, but who can be supported in the community; and these simple prevention options have proved successful for many customers previously. SHIP now works more closely with the Private Sector Housing Agency in an effort to increase and improve access to the PRS for single homeless clients. 2014-15 saw 37 PRS placements, a figure which will increase in coming years.

#### **9.5. Assistance with Rent in Advance**

For those customers who are able to source their own accommodation, but for whom the financial commitment of a deposit or rent in advance is out of reach then SHIP, in conjunction with the Local Support Scheme and Lewisham Plus Credit Union, can assess the suitability of the customer for a loan for rent in advance. This loan is funded from the Local Support Scheme and dispersed by the credit union, who also take on the responsibility for debt recovery. The scheme, in operation since November 2014 has proved successful so far as a pilot with 33 referrals being made.

#### **9.6. Specialist Schemes**

There are a number of specialist or complimentary schemes that SHIP may also access such as Housing First. Housing First is a scheme designed to provide a quick accommodation option in mainstream accommodation for the most excluded individuals in the borough. SHIP give access to a small number of social housing nominations for the scheme and are unique in London for working in this way. We are increasingly being seen as the set up which other boroughs should follow in this increasingly popular housing pathway. The first year Pilot of Housing First, up to April 2015 has seen 10 placements in permanent housing. None of these placements has failed.

#### **9.7. Housing Register**

SHIP takes on Housing Register work for single people and will often recommend a Housing Application to customers that meet the threshold, particularly the over 55s. Our officers support customers through this process.

## **9.8. Work with Offenders**

Homeless Offenders are a large cohort of the work that we do. We have a SHIP officer that runs a surgery within Lewisham Probation Office and who caseworks all prison release cases also. The Housing Prevention and Support officer working with offenders carries a caseload of approximately 50 at any one given time.

SHIP also sits on the regular Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement forums at MAPPA level 2 and is also a mandatory attendee at any MAPPA level 3 forums and is a very important partner in this area.

Additionally, SHIP acts as the access point and facilitator for the London wide Safe and Secure Scheme

## **9.9. Youth Homelessness**

SHIP also specifically deals with youth homelessness. In the last year (2014-15) 81 16 and 17 year olds approached SHIP for assistance. Homeless 16 and 17 year olds are automatically seen as in priority need under housing legislation.

An important factor to consider when dealing with homeless 16 and 17 year olds however is the Supreme Court judgement in May 2009 known as the Southwark Judgement. This judgement ruled that homelessness for a 16 or 17 year old was never purely an accommodation issue and that all 16 and 17 year olds in this situation should be assessed under Section 20 of the Childrens' Act to determine whether they should become looked after. A Children and Young Persons Social Worker sits within SHIP to perform this function. Typically it is only children with multiple or complex needs, or whom are excluded from more mainstream young people's services that end up becoming looked after by the borough.

The priority in working with 16 and 17 year olds is, where safe to do so, to get them home or to a placement within the family setting. However, this is not always possible and a range of options exist to cater for their accommodation and support needs.

All 16 and 17 year olds where SHIP is unable to successfully negotiate a return to home are referred to the Young Persons Supported Housing Pathway, and then on to a number of semi independent accommodation options. Emergency placements are also available through a scheme called ELAN (Emergency Landlords Accommodation Network). ELAN is funded sub regionally through SELHP and provides supported lodgings with members of the public for up to 28 day placements. This option is invariably preferable to any kind of temporary accommodation placement that SHIP could make for this priority group. Funding for ELAN unfortunately expires in October 2015 and the 5 borough partnership are looking to solutions for this, including Comic Relief assistance among others.

## **9.10. Independent Move On**

As stated above, a significant change in the pre SHIP and post SHIP coordination of the Supported Housing pathway relates to move on arrangements. Since the creation of SHIP, the supported housing move on arrangements have been coordinated by the council as well as the original supported housing placements.

The supported housing pathway currently comprises around 600 units of accommodation (this number is fluid as schemes open, close and redevelop) and this is soon planned to increase by approximately 120 units as more non-funded accommodation units come into the pathway sphere. The key to the success of the pathway is ensuring that there is an adequate churn of service users moving on to enable new customers needing support to access the accommodation. To this end the role of Independent Move on is pivotal and crucial to the success of the pathway.

The expectation on supported housing providers within the pathway is to prepare their customers for independence, or the next best permanent or long term accommodation option. It is not the expectation that all customers within the pathway will move on independently as support needs or vulnerabilities can worsen for some people, however, for the overwhelming majority, successful move on is the goal.

The expectation for all supported housing clients is that their own move on options should be explored; however, the reality is that for a number of customers, obtaining their own accommodation is often financially out of reach. For this cohort of customers, the SHIP Independent Move on route is the primary move on option.

Currently within the allocations policy, up to 150 nominations to the housing register are allocated for Supported Housing Move on, and these nominations are managed within SHIP. The nominations include nominations to studio flat accommodation, which, through the Choice Based Lettings System are rarely bid for by customers.

The criteria for independent move on is based around circumstances when first approaching the council for supported housing assistance, and the progress made within supported housing, alongside the vulnerabilities presented when someone is ready for independence.

Applications for independent move on are made by a customer's caseworker within the pathway and have to be signed off as approved by the relevant provider manager. They are then assessed against the eligibility criteria and further assessed as to whether the customer has, within their supported housing placement, demonstrated the required independent living skills to move independently. This would include such areas as financial management, medication compliance, conflict resolution as well as independent living skills.

Once accepted a customer may be offered a Band 2 nomination, or a management offer. SHIP in all cases reserve the right to allocate a property directly or bid on a customer's behalf and the nomination is awarded on a strict one offer only basis.

2014-15 saw 173 independent move on placements completed.

### **9.11. Rough Sleepers**

As charted above, statistics from the GLA give rough sleeping numbers in the borough over the last 5 years as follows:

<b>2010 - 11</b>	74
<b>2011 - 12</b>	55
<b>2012 - 13</b>	99
<b>2013 - 14</b>	141
<b>2014 - 15</b>	199

SHIP works with a number of agencies to try to address rough sleeping as a matter of urgency to mitigate the harm caused to individuals by long term street living.

The borough is fortunate to have a varied number of agencies primarily working with rough sleepers and these agencies form a partnership for supporting people off of the streets, with SHIP being the conduit for doing this. These partners include:

Kings Church – Jericho Road Project  
Deptford Reach  
Bench Outreach  
The 999 Club  
London Street Rescue

The borough also hosts the No Second Night Out South London Hub, which is an immediate place of safety for those new to the streets and which is targeted at preventing a more entrenched street lifestyle from developing.

SHIP works closely with No Second Night Out in identifying appropriate accommodation options for their Lewisham Connected Customers and in assessing their suitability for supported housing and other options.

SHIP also organises the annual Rough Sleeper Street Count, co-ordinated by Homeless Link Nationally to get an idea of figures on one given night a year.

### **9.12. Other Work**

Accessing the PRS - The SHIP service also undertakes a myriad of other functions to address and prevent homelessness. In modern times an increasing number of presentations are from customers that have newly become homeless due to economic reasons, or who have split from long term

relationships and have become single and homeless at the same time. To attempt to address some of these issues and to prevent people from putting themselves at risk or developing physical or mental health issues, SHIP works closely with the Private Sector Housing Agency in identifying potential medium term accommodation options so that these vulnerable individuals can be placed safely at no expense to the borough. These housing benefit funded options are not easy to come by, but can be the difference in preventing a spiral of homelessness and poor health for some individuals.

Working with Health - SHIP is currently involved in looking at Homeless Hospital Discharge and Frequent Attenders, and we are aiming to coordinate multi agency care plans for those vulnerable adults in the borough that are in / out users of A&E and associated services. Often this client group do not finish treatment and this is a major cost to the health budget. With the coordination of SHIP we can put A&E services in touch with the relevant support providers to try and prevent customers falling out of their treatment plans and avoiding them having to repeatedly start again.

In addition to this we are piloting Homeless Patient Notification with Lewisham Hospital to increase the ability to plan for homeless patients discharge and prevent unnecessary delay.

## **10. Developing the service – SHIPs priorities for this and future years**

SHIP has now come through the wider housing needs restructure and our immediate plans for the future are to multi skill our staff in completing their more generic role.

Until the current restructure, the SHIP officers have worked in specialist cohorts to reflect the client groups that they work with. Whilst these specialisms are retained in the team, the officers are now expected to be able to cover across all areas of single and indeed families homelessness to better support the work of the entire Housing Needs Service. Joint training, workshops, casework sessions and learning opportunities are now being put in place across Homeless Prevention and Support Service for Families and SHIP to ensure that all officers can reach the skills and experience needed across the piste to be able to perform their roles. Lewisham will broadly lead on this in London, with other local authorities, especially those in our sub region, looking to set up their services in a similar way.

The reduction in staff that we have gone through since opening means that consideration is being given to having a dual service of drop ins and appointments. An all day drop in service puts pressure on the front line reception function of SHIP and means that customers are seen generally on a first come first served basis. This can lead to longer waiting times and a higher footfall in the SHIP office which is counterproductive to finding and providing solutions.

A dual service of limited drop in for emergency cases, and an appointment based system for all other contacts would enable officers to better manage

their increasingly precious time, reduce unnecessary waiting for customers and allow us to focus and deploy our resources where they are needed, rather than facing the demands of a drop in that may or may not be utilised each day. We face a number of weekly requests for our officers to attend forums, meetings and assessments away from the office environment that we are currently unable to facilitate due to the need to maintain an open drop in service, and it can be greatly argued that our customer group would greatly be benefitted by our staff being able to respond to these requests and take it further into providing outreach assessment an advice perhaps by surgeries in day centres, the hospital and other areas where our customers are first identified.

Recent changes in legislation, especially those concerning Priority Need under the housing act, will have a potential impact on the work that SHIP is doing. Recent judgements in the Supreme Court have effectively lowered the threshold for who will be in priority need and it is expected that SHIP will be presented with more homeless applications as a result of this. This makes the preventative part of our work even more paramount to deal with this expected increase in demand. In reaction to this, and to the increasingly changing demand and nature of our customer cohort; SHIP needs to work more to define and access low cost accommodation options for our clients.

We are increasingly seeing numbers of “economically” homeless single people, being priced out of the housing market in the borough, unable to access the private rented sector through lack of a rent deposit or lack of availability of appropriately priced accommodation. In addition to this we are seeing increasing numbers of single people as the pressure of modern day living and austerity result in family breakdown and a couple housed in one unit become two single people needing two units. In many of these cases, quick access into an affordable accommodation option can limit the damage done by homelessness. Such damage as less employment opportunities or failing health, or even a decent into a more damaging lifestyle such as alcohol use, drug use, rough sleeping, crime; which can be prevented with the correct and early accommodation intervention. The types of presentation we are seeing in this area is not limited by age, and younger people, finding themselves with nowhere to live, are also looking at wholly in appropriate accommodation options springing up over the capital including room and in some cases, even bed shares.

Identifying adequate accommodation, within LHA rates, can provide this client group with a safe place in which to restart their lives and avoid the other varied pitfalls and challenges added by homelessness and exclusion.

SHIP works closely with commissioners of our supported housing services in informing demand and the changing need of the client base. This closeness is all important to be able to face the challenges of continued funding cuts and austerity and to enable single homeless people to have a better chance of recovery and to limit the damage done by their housing situation.

## **11. Financial implications**

11.1 This report is for information only and, as such, there are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **12. Legal implications**

12.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, save for noting the relevance of the Equality Act 2010 within the context of the Council's functions, including in particular the work of the 'SHIP' team as covered by this report.

12.2. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

12.3. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The duty continues to be a "have regard duty", and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

12.4. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice". The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>



12.5. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
- Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
- Engagement and the equality duty
- Equality objectives and the equality duty
- Equality information and the equality duty

12.6 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

### **13 Background documents and originator**

13.1 If you require further information on this report please contact John Barker, Housing Options and Advice Manager (Singles) on 020 8314 6945