

## Appendix D

<b>Children and Young People Select Committee</b>			
<b>Title</b>	How living in temporary accommodation affects children	<b>Item No</b>	7
<b>Contributors</b>	Scrutiny Manager		
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	<b>Date</b>	11 July 2019

### 1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1 As part of its work programme the Committee has agreed to undertake a short review of how living in temporary accommodation affects children.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the rationale for the review, provides some background information on the work that has already been carried out in relation to this topic within Lewisham and sets out proposed key lines of enquiry for discussion and agreement by the Committee.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Select Committee is asked to:
  - note the contents of the report
  - consider and agree the proposed key lines of enquiry for the review, outlined in section 7, and the timetable, outlined in section 8.

### 3. Policy context

- 3.1 The Council has a new corporate strategy (2018-22) and this review is particularly relevant to the following priorities:
  - Giving children and young people the best start in list
  - Tackling the housing crisis

### 4. The housing crisis

- 4.1 Temporary accommodation is used by councils to house homeless people.
- 4.2 According to a report published in May 2019 by the London Assembly Housing Committee, the number of London households in temporary

accommodation has risen by 50 per cent in the past five years, reaching 56,560 households in the final quarter of 2018, including 88,500 children.<sup>1</sup>

## **5. What is homelessness?**

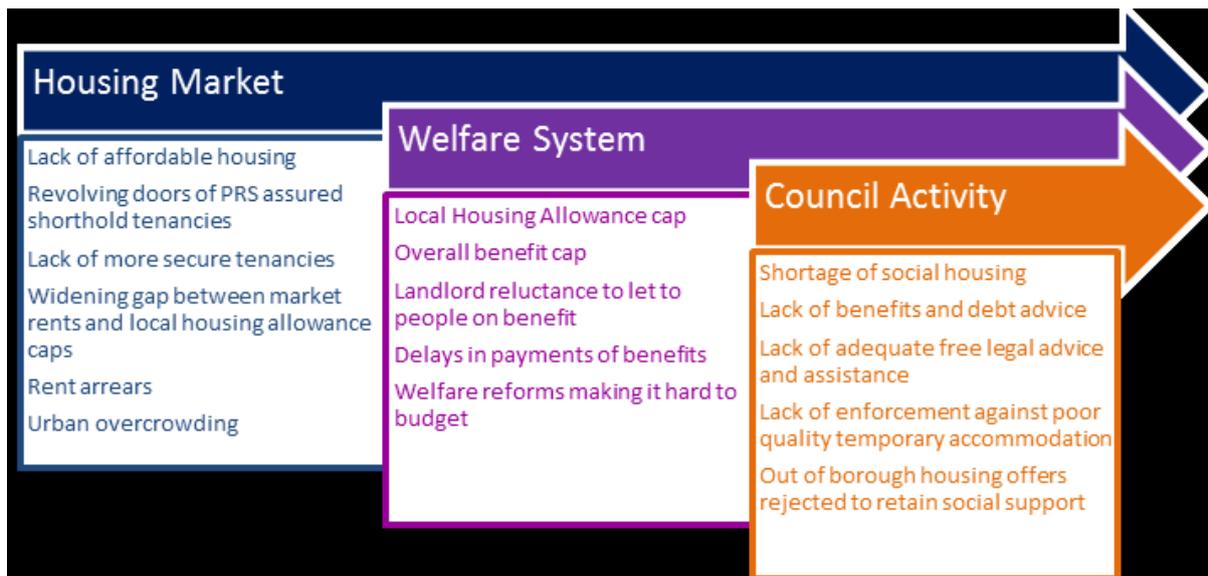
- 5.1 A person is homeless if they have no legal right to occupy accommodation – for example squatting, sofa-surfing, sleeping rough - or if their accommodation is unsuitable to live in – perhaps due to violence, health problems, severe overcrowding. A person can also become homeless where there is a legal right to occupy accommodation, but they cannot access it, for example because they have been unlawfully evicted.
- 5.2 Homelessness in London is rising due to a perfect storm of factors, illustrated by the graphic below. The private rented sector is overheated and landlords are seeing opportunities for increasing rents and ending assured short-hold tenancies, leaving renters, particularly families, struggling to find an affordable alternative. Loss of an assured short-hold tenancy is now the biggest cause of homelessness in London.
- 5.3 Lack of social housing means that local authorities are having to rely on the private rented sector for homelessness relief. Levels of housing benefit have been capped while rents have rocketed, and the resulting affordability gap has meant local authorities have had to procure placements in other boroughs where accommodation is cheaper or out of the capital altogether. Waiting lists for social housing far exceed available housing stock.
- 5.4 At the lower end of London's lettings market, rents increased 45% in the five years to 2016.
- 5.5 There are around 10,000 households on the housing register in Lewisham and 2,000 homeless households in temporary accommodation. This includes those on Lewisham's housing register that are placed in out of borough temporary accommodation<sup>2</sup>. A detailed look at available data will be undertaken as part of the review.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/temporary\\_accommodation\\_report\\_-\\_living\\_in\\_limbo\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/temporary_accommodation_report_-_living_in_limbo_-_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s65666/07%20resident%20engagement%20scoping%20paper%20-%20040619.pdf>



**Fig. 1 Drivers of Homelessness**

## 6. Statutory duties of the local authority<sup>3</sup>

- 6.1 Where a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness<sup>4</sup> within 8 weeks, the council has a duty to provide a plan to prevent homelessness, or provide accommodation for at least 6 months.
- 6.2 Councils can place applicants in emergency accommodation, such as a B&B or a hostel, while investigating a homeless application.
- 6.3 If the council accepts a duty to house the applicant, the council must then provide suitable temporary accommodation until a final offer of permanent accommodation can be made. Permanent accommodation may be an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector, or a more secure tenancy in the social rented sector, either in the local area, or further afield if it is not reasonably practicable to find accommodation in the borough.

## 7. Key lines of enquiry (KLOE)

- 7.1 It is proposed that the review takes place over one meeting and looks to hear from families, schools, officers, research to address the following key lines of enquiry:

<sup>3</sup> The main homelessness duties are provided under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

<sup>4</sup> This duty does not extend to those who do not meet immigration or residence conditions. In such cases the council need only offer general advice/ signposting.

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:
  - i. physical health
  - ii. mental health
  - iii. cognitive development
  - iv. academic attainment
  - v. opportunities in adulthood.
4. What can we learn from the lived experience of families living in temporary accommodation?
5. How do schools support children living in temporary accommodation?
6. What other support is available for children in temporary accommodation?

## **8. Timetable**

- 8.1 Evidence gathering through visits to schools (September/ October)
- 8.2 Call for evidence (via the council website) from families with children that are living, or have recently lived, in temporary accommodation (Aug-Sept). (Members and the Council's Communications Team will be asked to promote this via social media channels)
- 8.3 Desktop evidence research.
- 8.4 Evidence from council officers.
- 8.5 The final report (collating the above evidence) will be considered at the CYP Select Committee meeting on 5 December 2019.

## **9. Further implications**

- 9.1 At this stage there are no specific financial, legal, environmental or equalities implications to consider. However, each will be addressed as part of the review.