

HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE			
Report Title	Out of Borough Placements		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	7
Ward	All		
Contributors	Assistant Director for Housing Services		
Class	Part 1	Date:	18 September 2019

1 Summary and purpose of this report

1.1 Lewisham Council seeks wherever possible to source accommodation in-borough for households requiring temporary accommodation, but this may not always be possible because of the housing pressures currently faced. This report provides housing select committee with detail on temporary accommodation (TA) placements made by Lewisham Council, both in and out of the borough.

1.2 This report explores:

- Homelessness pressures in recent years in London and Lewisham,
- The types of temporary accommodation and its use in London and Lewisham
- The number of placements in and out of borough and the impact that placements into temporary accommodation might have on households
- The actions the service is taking to tackle the impact of homelessness

2 Recommendations

It is recommended that Housing Select Committee note and comment on the content of this report.

3 Policy Context

3.1 The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. It supports the following priorities of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-22:

- Tackling the housing crisis – Everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable.

3.2 It will also support the delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy 2015-2020, specifically the objective of helping residents at times of severe and urgent housing need.

- 3.3 This report is consistent with the Council's Locational Priority Policy (LPP) which was approved by Mayor & Cabinet on the 11th November 2015. The LPP sets out the approach the Council undertakes when placing households into temporary accommodation.
- 3.4 This report is also consistent with the Council's Private Rented Sector Discharge Policy, which was approved by Mayor & Cabinet on the 22nd March 2017. This policy outlines the circumstances in which the use of such an offer to discharge the main housing duty would be applicable.
- 3.5 The contents of this report also refer to the Council's Allocations scheme, the most recent version of which took effect on the 10th April 2017 and 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 Background

- 4.1 The numbers of homeless households who are living in temporary accommodation has grown significantly over the last 8 years, most acutely due to a rise in the use of nightly paid accommodation.
- 4.2 There are a number of drivers of this increase, including:
- A lack of supply of affordable homes and a decline in the available social homes for let
 - The increasing cost of housing in the private rented sector (PRS) coupled with an increasing reliance on the PRS
 - Welfare reform, including the freezing of LHA rates to 2015 levels. LHA is the housing benefit ceiling rate for claimants in the private rented sector
- 4.3 Nationally, TA placements have been rising at around twice the rate of homelessness acceptances. Since 2010/11 homelessness has increased by 34% whilst the use of TA has risen by 71%.¹ This highlights increasing reliance on TA by local authorities to meet housing need, due to the drivers outlined above which are narrowing the options available in terms of housing supply.
- 4.4 In London, where affordability issues are most acute, it is becoming increasingly difficult for councils to source adequate affordable accommodation in their local area meaning a multi-pronged approach to sourcing temporary accommodation is required.

5 London wide context

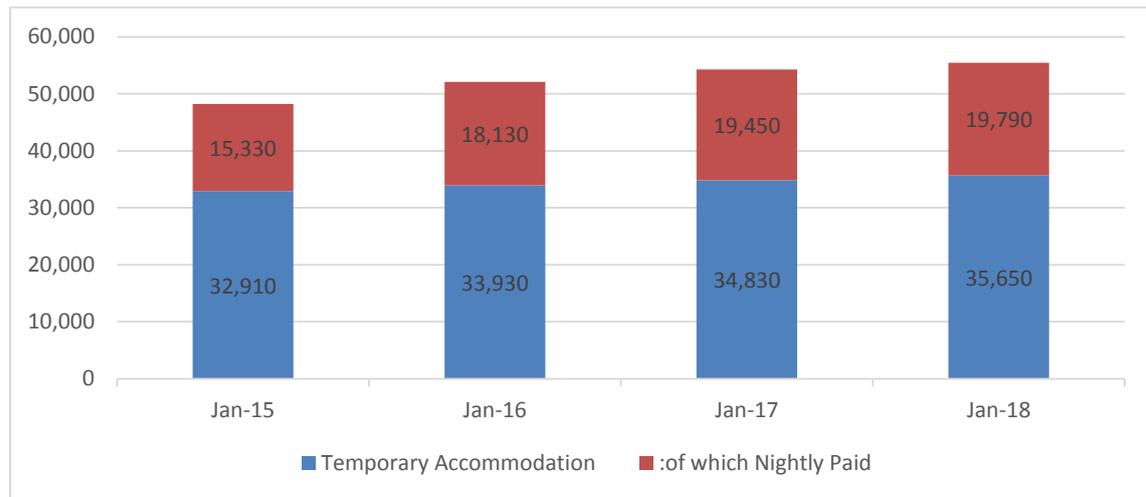
- 5.1 London accounts for two thirds of all TA placements in the UK, due to the acute affordability and housing supply issues in the capital. The number of London households in temporary accommodation has risen

¹ https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240419/the_homelessness_monitor_england_2019.pdf

by 50 per cent in the past five years, reaching 56,560 households in the final quarter of 2018.

5.2 A significant proportion of this increase is attributed to a rise in the use of nightly paid accommodation, which is the most expensive and often the poorest quality. Between March 2015 and March 2018 there was a 39% increase in the number of households in Nightly Paid accommodation arranged by London authorities, from 14,200 to just under 20,000, as illustrated by Chart 1.

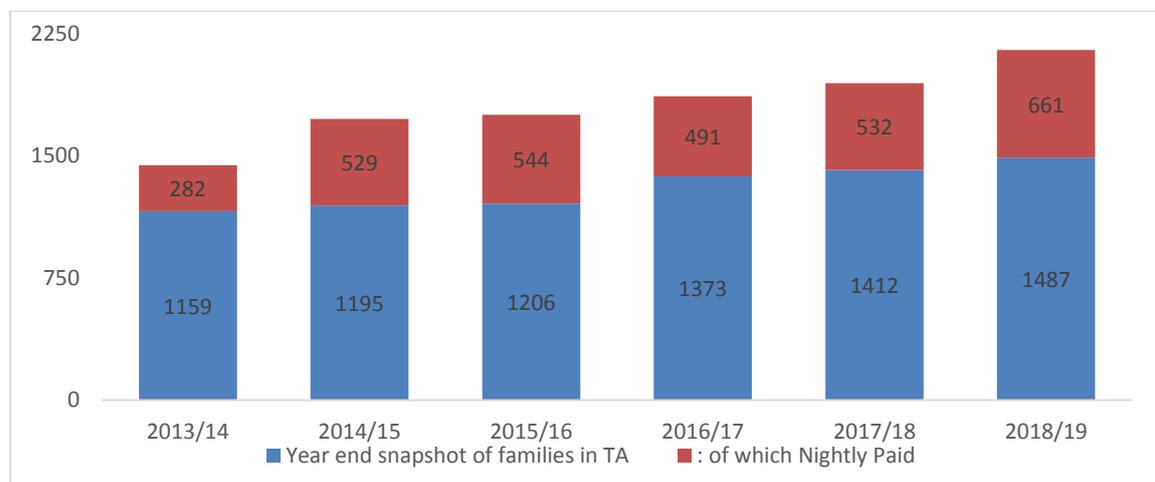
Chart 1 - Number of households in temporary accommodation in London



6 Lewisham context

6.1 As at the end of July 2019, there were 627 households in nightly paid accommodation and over 2,200 households in temporary accommodation arranged by Lewisham. Chart 2 below shows the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by Lewisham since 2013/14.

Chart 2 – Number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by Lewisham



6.2 These figures should be contextualised with the year on year decline in lets, highlighting the correlation between lack of supply and increased need for TA. Chart 3 shows a 45% decrease in the number of social and affordable lets in Lewisham since 2010/11, as the number of available affordable properties has decreased.

Chart 3 – Number of lets to households on the housing register



6.3 Currently there is not enough permanent affordable housing for those in TA to move into. The reliance on TA will continue to rise without the corresponding number of affordable housing to match the ‘inflow’ of households into TA, or increases in homeless prevention and settled moves into the PRS.

6.4 Between April 2015 and March 2018 almost 50% of all accepted homeless households have been made homeless due to the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the PRS. The decreasing number of affordable PRS properties place additional pressure on the Housing needs service, as well as the officers who are securing affordable properties for temporary accommodation, increasingly from the private rented sector.

6.5 Temporary Accommodation places a large financial pressure on the Council, particularly nightly paid TA. The net cost of TA between 2014/15 and 2018/19 was £13.4m, and in 2018/19 alone the net cost of temporary accommodation was over £3.6m, of which £2.8m was attributable to nightly paid TA.

7 Temporary accommodation in Lewisham

Lewisham council uses a varied stock of temporary accommodation to meet its duty to assist those in housing need. This includes,

- Nightly paid accommodation with shared facilities
- Self-contained nightly paid accommodation
- Council-owned hostels
- Privately leased or privately managed accommodation

- Homes owned or managed by housing associations
- Homes owned by the Council or Lewisham Homes

- 7.1 The sourcing of temporary accommodation is focused in Lewisham or as close to Lewisham as possible. The issues outlined in the earlier sections of this report make it increasingly challenging for Lewisham Council to find adequate affordable temporary accommodation in London for those in need.
- 7.2 Where possible, the Council seeks to make placements within Lewisham; only where this is not possible will a placement be made outside of the borough, in such instances the focus is on making the placement as close to the borough as practicably possible and according to the locational priority policy.
- 7.3 The locational priority policy outlines how households will be prioritised for available accommodation, as set out below.
- In-borough priority – This will be awarded where a household member has specific health, educational or social needs or commitments that cannot be suitably met elsewhere.
 - Close to borough priority (within 90 minutes) – This will be awarded where a household member has specific work requirements or where child is undertaking GCSE, AS or A Levels within the current or next academic year.
 - No location priority – This will be awarded where no household member meets any of the above requirements.
- 7.4 The below table shows the number of households in temporary accommodation as at March 2019 broken down by temporary accommodation type and whether the placement was in borough or out of borough.

Table 1 – Households in Temporary Accommodation as at March 2019

	In-Borough	Out of Borough
Shared Nightly Paid	87	77
Self-Contained Nightly Paid	167	330
Hostel	355	0
Privately Leased or Managed	561	212
Housing Associations	141	0
Council/Lewisham Homes	216	2
TOTAL	1527	621

- 7.5 In percentage terms, as at March 2019, 71% of placements are in-borough and 29% of placements are out of borough. Of the out of borough placements, over 80% (509) were in postcode areas covered by London boroughs of which 182 placements were within the SE London postcode region.

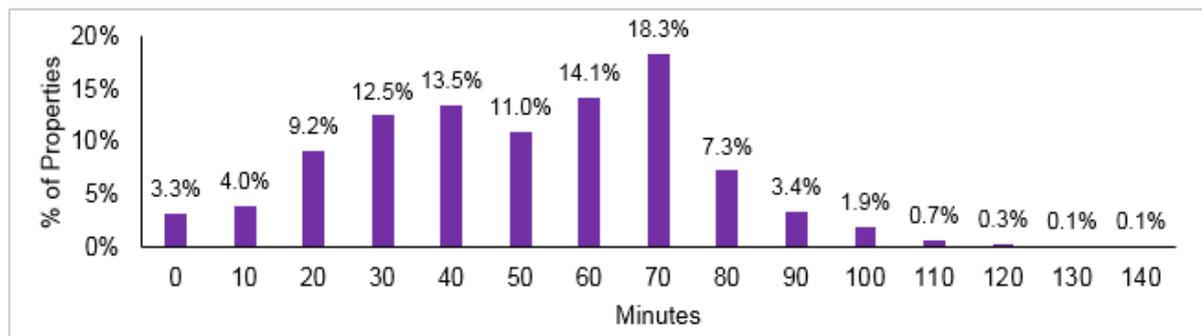
- 7.6 As the number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by Lewisham has increased, the proportion that have been temporarily placed outside of the borough has also increased slightly. Between March 2016 and March 2019 the proportion of all placements that were outside of Lewisham increased from 23% to 29%.
- 7.7 In comparison to London wide figures, Lewisham places comparatively less households outside of the borough: as at March 2018, 36% of temporary accommodation placements arranged by London boroughs were out of borough².
- 7.8 Households placed into temporary accommodation have a statutory right to a review of their placement. Where a review was requested on the grounds of the suitability of the location, it is estimated that the review was successful in 5% of instances.

8 Household experience of temporary accommodation outside of Lewisham

- 8.1 In 2017, the Council commissioned an independent study of households that were living out of the borough. The report sought to understand their experience of temporary accommodation and the impact that living out of borough had on them.
- 8.2 Over 340 households living in temporary accommodation out of the borough on a longer-term basis were invited to participate in an online survey, with 73 households responding. Of those respondents, 19% were placed in the Inner SE London area, 11% in the outer SE London area, and 70% in other areas. A greater proportion of households in “Other BRMA” areas responded to the survey than the actual proportion of households in these areas (70% vs. 56%).
- 8.3 Around 45% of households being placed out of the borough felt that the information they received regarding their accommodation was either ‘very useful’ or ‘just useful enough’, and 43% of respondents reported that there were no issues with their property when they arrived. 62% of respondents felt that overall communication and information provided from the council was below their expectation, and that they did not feel supported during their move.
- 8.4 Generally, households placed in Inner SE London were, on average, more likely to rate the Council’s service as above expectation, compared to HHs placed in Other BRMA areas
- 8.5 93% of all of the over 1,500 placements analysed as part of the report were within 90 minutes of the Laurence House by public transport. The below chart shows the distance from Laurence House for every placement analysed.

² https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240419/the_homelessness_monitor_england_2019.pdf

Chart 3 – Placement Distance from Laurence House



- 8.6 The report further established that over 50% of households continued to travel back to Lewisham for health services, schools, community services and other reasons, although a large proportion were found to be engaging with employment services and health services in their new area.
- 8.7 It was also identified that households placed in areas close to Lewisham were considerably more likely to return to Lewisham to continue to access services.
- 8.8 A key finding of the report was that many households had not found local services as they were of the impression that their stay in temporary accommodation out of the borough would be short enough as to not warrant the upheaval. This was not necessarily borne out by the lived experience of households, many of whom had been placed out of the borough for some time, nor is it reflective of the increasing length of time which households on the housing register, including homeless households, have to wait to be successful in bidding for a property.
- 8.9 Over 20% of those surveyed stated that they would be willing to permanently relocate to the area they were currently placed in, and when this area was in close proximity to Lewisham this rose to 67% of those surveyed.
- 8.10 Amongst the reasons given by those households willing to relocate permanently to the area they were currently placed in were to prioritise their children, to minimise the likelihood of further relocations, to remove themselves from stressful and difficult challenges they had experienced in Lewisham and the fact that they had developed more ties to their current location than they had had in Lewisham.

- 8.11 Where longer-term accommodation can be found for households in areas where they have been placed the outcomes are often very positive. One household that was found longer-term accommodation in Harwich advised that they were ‘.....*sceptical about moving when my housing officer called me about a property in Harwich. However since I have moved I have not looked back. The area is cleaner, safer and I feel like I have provided a better life for my children. My property is more spacious than a London property and I have a garden and live 2 minutes from beach.*’ Other feedback from residents accommodated in this area reflected on the quality and availability of local schools, the desirability of the location, and an intention to remain in the area and find accommodation for the longer-term.
- 8.12 A key theme in queries and complaints submitted to the council are the challenges faced by households in emergency nightly paid accommodation out of borough, linked to the disruption and difficulty of the uncertainty associated with this type of accommodation. The average self-contained nightly paid accommodation length of stay is 44 weeks, demonstrating that on average self-contained nightly paid accommodation can be longer term accommodation.
- 8.13 Since April 2019 the resettlement officers have followed up with all residents who have been resettled out of borough in private rented accommodation. Between April and June 2019, 80% of households that have been found longer-term accommodation in the private rented sector reported that they were happy with their placement and their relationship with their landlord.

9 What the Council is doing

- 9.1 The Council is committed to reducing the number of households in nightly paid accommodation, which is the most expensive and the least secure of all forms of temporary accommodation available, and to making as many placements in-borough as possible. Where this isn’t possible, our aim is to keep households as close to Lewisham as practically possible to minimise the impact of the move to TA.
- 9.2 A multi-pronged approach has been adopted to achieve this, focussing on a range of measures including but not limited to:
- **The development of new permanent social homes:** the new homes better places programme delivering 500 social homes for residents, as well as the commitment to develop 1000 new social homes for those in housing need
 - **The development of high quality, in borough temporary accommodation:** 24 high quality homes for temporary accommodation have already been delivered at Place Ladywell, and 4 new modular housing developments are being planned for homeless families. Planning permission has been granted and the tender process is underway for Edward Street in Deptford, a development of 24 new homes for TA. Planning permission has

recently been submitted for a development on Mayow Road which will provide 26 new family sized 2 and 3 bed homes for TA alongside 6 specialist housing units.

- **Converting properties into emergency housing:** The conversion of Hamilton Lodge and Kelvin House has provided almost 50 homes for residents in housing need; work is currently being undertaken to expand the number of hostels that the Council has in borough,
- **Homelessness prevention:** A focus on preventing homelessness which resulted in a 26% increase in successful preventions and reliefs between 2017/18 and 2018/19,
- **Additional resettlement support for residents:** Increasing the resettlement service by 50%, adding 3 new posts to the team following a successful bid for resources to MHCLG to add to the strength of this key service targeted at residents who are moved out of Borough. In addition there is a planned review of the roles and responsibilities of this function to maximise the support available for residents as they move into new homes and areas.
- **Proactive procurement, targeted in borough:** A proactive procurement approach aimed at maximising the number of homes available for those in housing need and minimising the need for nightly paid accommodation,
- **Property acquisition:** Providing £40m of loans to Lewisham Homes to fund the acquisition of over 150 homes; a further £5m of loan has been agreed for Lewisham Homes for further acquisitions,
- **A focus on pan-London working:** Joining the Pan-London Capital Letters venture, seeking to maximise the procurement of homes for those in housing need, as well as exploring a pan-London project focussed on the standard of B&B accommodation,
- **Partnership working:** Ongoing work with CYP to support and minimise the impact of temporary accommodation on children.

9.3 The Housing Services Plan for 2019/20 sets out a number of targets that will improve outcomes for households that approach. These include,

- Reducing the use of shared nightly paid accommodation, much of which is out of borough, by 50% during the course of the year.
- Working to achieve a substantial reduction in our use of all nightly paid accommodation through social lets, other more appropriate temporary accommodation and the private rented sector discharge.
- Successfully preventing or relieving homelessness for over 750 households.
- Developing a robust procurement strategy informed by improvements in performance data

9.4 The Private Sector Housing procurement team continue to focus their procurement efforts in-borough and as close to Lewisham as possible. As reported to Housing Select Committee on 18th September 2018, Lewisham Council have joined the pan-London Capital Letters initiative

which will procure TA across London and assist boroughs to access accommodation within their own borough. The Council are also supporting a new pan-London 'setting the standard' approach for nightly paid B&B accommodation, which will ensure that all nightly paid B&B TA providers commissioned by boroughs meet the agreed minimum standards.

- 9.5 In response to the feedback received from the survey of residents placed OOB, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to shift the conversations between residents and officers to be more based on motivational interviewing and collaborative conversations. Work has been done to ensure that communications with residents are clear on the likely length of time a household should expect to stay in TA. The research also highlighted that more resource was needed to assist residents to re-settle following a move to TA. As a result, an additional 3 resettlement officers are currently in the process of being recruited into the service to join the 3 resettlement officers currently working with households placed into temporary accommodation out of borough. This followed a successful bid to MHCLG for additional resources.
- 9.6 The role of the resettlement officers are to work with households to help ensure a smooth transition into TA - helping households access services, benefits and to signpost to partner agencies. The officers will also mediate where there is a dispute between landlords and tenants, work with households to establish longer-term housing solutions and assist with any other issues a household might be facing which are acting as a barrier to the above.

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications to this report, it should be noted that there are significant costs associated with providing temporary accommodation, managing the provision of housing and providing services to those experiencing homelessness or the threat of homelessness.
- 10.2 Temporary Accommodation is generally the most expensive form of accommodation and is affected over time by the demand for housing. To mitigate against this, the council has committed to a programme of providing additional social housing in an attempt to relieve some of the pressures relating to supply.

11 Legal Implications

- 11.1 Where a person applies to a local housing authority under Part 7, Housing Act 1996 and the authority are satisfied that he is homeless, eligible for assistance, has a priority need and has not become homeless intentionally then, unless the authority refer the application to another housing authority, they must secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant (s.193(2)). So far as reasonably practicable, accommodation should be within the district of the authority (s.208;). If

the accommodation is outside of their area, the authority must have regard to, *inter alia*, its distance from their area (Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, S.I. 2012/2601; *Nzolameso v Westminster City Council* [2015] UKSC 22; [2015] H.L.R. 22).

- 11.2 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty) which replaced, broadened and expanded upon similar duties which already existed in relation to race, disability and sex. 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.
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 The duty continues to be a “have due 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.
- 11.5 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/legaland-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>
- 11.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
2. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
3. Engagement and the equality duty
4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
5. Equality information and the equality duty

11.7 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirement 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-equalityduty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

12 Environmental Implications

12.1 There are no specific environmental implications to this report.

13 Equalities Implications

13.1 Compared to the borough as a whole, a disproportionately large number of households that approach and are accepted by the Council for homelessness assistance are Black or Black British. Over 28% of those accepted for homelessness assistance in 2018/19 were Black or Black British African, whereas the 2011 census established that 11.6% of the borough identified as such. Almost 18% of those accepted for homelessness assistance in 2018/19 were Black or Black British Caribbean, whereas the 2011 census established that 11.2% of the borough identified as such. The below table shows the ethnicity of the lead applicant for homelessness approaches and acceptances in 2018/19.

Table 1 – Approaches for assistance and acceptances in 2018/19 by ethnicity

	Approaches	Acceptances
Any other Asian background	50	16
Any other ethnic group	195	60
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	23	5
Any other White background	148	50
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	3	1
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	17	6
Asian/Asian British: Indian	20	5
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	9	2
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British: African	573	203
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	591	126

Don't know / refused	313	101
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	13	4
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	32	9
Other ethnic group: Arab	25	4
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	516	122
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	0
White: Irish	1	1

13.2 One parent households with dependent children are also more likely to approach the Council for homelessness assistance, and to be accepted as homeless, relative to the number of households identifying as such during the 2011 census. Almost 60% of all acceptances in 2018/19 were of one parent households with dependent children, whereas the 2011 census established that around 11.5% of households in the borough were one parent households with dependent children. The below table shows the household composition of those approaching the Council in 2018/19 and those being accepted.

Table 2 – Approaches for assistance and acceptances in 2018/19 by household composition

	Approaches	Acceptances
All other Households	134	49
Couple with dependent children	277	109
One Person - Female Applicant	519	91
One Person - Male Applicant	668	38
One Person (Female) w/ dependent children	842	386
One Person (Male) w/ dependent children	92	42

13.3 The above table also shows that female applicants, particularly single female applicants with or without dependent children, are more likely to approach the council for assistance and to be accepted as homeless. Almost 54% of all approaches and over 69% of all acceptances were from households with a single female lead applicant.

13.4 The impact of temporary accommodation placements out of the borough on the above mentioned households is mitigated through the operation of the locational priority policy, which ensures that those households with the greatest need are given preference for any accommodation within or close to Lewisham that is procured. Further to this, the Council has an Annual Lettings Plan which allocates a large number of 2 and 3 bed properties to households in temporary accommodation, which has a positive impact on the above groups by providing increased access to the properties available through the choice based lettings system.

13.5 In addition, the support and assistance in accessing services that the resettlement officers provide helps to mitigate any negative impact that might be experienced by being placed outside of the borough.

- 13.6 Almost 3% of households that approached for assistance during 2018/19 included a pregnant household member, and almost 6.5% of all those accepted included a pregnant household member.
- 13.7 Over 80% of households that approached the council for assistance in 2018/19 were heterosexual/straight, and of those households where a duty was accepted this was over 88%. 0.6% of those approaching for assistance identified as gay/lesbian, and of those households where a duty was accepted this was 1.2%. Over 1% of households approaching recorded their sexual orientation as other, with the same proportion of households accepted being recorded as such. The remaining households either chose not to provide this information or it was not captured.
- 13.8 Households where the lead applicant member is between 24 and 44 represented the majority of all approaches for assistance in 2018/19 (56%) as well as the majority of acceptances (62%). 17% of all approaches, and all acceptances, were from 16-23 year olds, and the remaining 28% of approaches and 20% of acceptances were from households where the lead applicant was over 45. Within this category, 2% of households accepted as homeless were over 65 years old.
- 13.9 Whilst the service collects data across all protected characteristics during the provision of a Homelessness service, there was not enough information present to provide a detailed analysis. The service will redouble its efforts to capture this information going forwards to enable more detailed analysis of the service and those using it and to inform analysis assessments.

14 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 14.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications to this report.

15 Background reports and report author

- 15.1 Background Documents

Locational Priority Policy and Procurement Strategy	Approved at Mayor and Cabinet on Wednesday 11 th November 2015
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- 15.2 For further information please contact Lee Georgiou on Lee.Georgiou@Lewisham.gov.uk or 0208 314 7413.