

<b>Committee:</b> Community and Children's Services Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 09/10/2019
<b>Subject:</b> Housing Register and Temporary Accommodation Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
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### Summary

A report published by the Children's Commissioner for England in August 2019 highlighted the issue of thousands of homeless families living in unsuitable temporary accommodation. In response to a Member's question regarding this issue, comparative data is provided regarding the number of homeless households with children: nationally, in Greater London and in the City of London.

This report also summarises the current status of our housing register and provides Members with details regarding the number of households awaiting rehousing (by bedroom category), along with average waiting times for those recently housed.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Children's Commissioner for England published a report in August 2019 titled, *Bleak houses: Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England*. The report said that, as of 2016/17, approximately 120,000 children in England were living in temporary accommodation, with a further 90,000 'hidden homeless' children who were 'sofa surfing' or subject to precarious living arrangements.
2. The report highlighted that some households have been housed in unsuitable conditions, including 'bed and breakfast' accommodation, converted office blocks

and even repurposed shipping containers. Families can be housed in this accommodation for extended periods, meaning that 'temporary accommodation' is often a misleading term.

3. A lack of new affordable housing, and a decline in the provision of new social housing, has led to more households relying on the private rented sector, which is often unaffordable, even for those households who are in work.
4. The City of London manages 1,929 social housing properties. As of 31 August 2019, there were 668 households on the housing register. Only a very small proportion of these families are homeless or living in temporary accommodation.

### **Current Position**

5. At the time of writing, the City had placed 23 households in temporary accommodation. However, only 12 of these households were statutorily homeless and owed a housing duty by the City of London. The remaining 11 are households to whom a discretionary duty has been taken under special schemes (for example, rough sleepers).
6. Of the 23 households in temporary accommodation, all were accommodated outside the City of London: 19 in self-contained accommodation, and four in accommodation with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. All four of these households are single people.
7. It is difficult to give a precise timescale for the likely waiting time before a homeless person is housed in permanent accommodation; the wait depends on multiple factors, including any additional priority they have, how active they are at bidding for properties, and how flexible they are in terms of the locations they bid for.
8. Single-person households typically wait for six months to two years; households requiring a larger property can wait for up to three years for settled accommodation.
9. Statistics on waiting times for households currently on the housing register are shown in Appendix 1. Members may wish to note that, of the 668 households registered at the end of August 2019, only six had priority due to homelessness. Not all households placed in temporary accommodation by the City under a homelessness duty will appear on our housing register, as the local connection criteria for homelessness and the housing register are different. Households who are on our housing register, and remain in temporary accommodation for 12 months, are given additional priority. This normally means they are housed in settled accommodation within a relatively short time.
10. The City of London plans to build a further 700 homes for social rent by 2025. This will greatly increase the supply of affordable housing and alleviate some pressure from the housing register, particularly for family-sized homes where waiting times are longest.

11. However, it should be noted that not all 700 properties will be allocated to those on our housing register. Lettings are subject to agreements with host boroughs that may have nomination rights over a proportion of properties on each development.

## **Conclusion**

12. The recent report of the Children's Commissioner for England shows that an estimated 120,000 children currently live in temporary accommodation nationally, including many households living in unsuitable accommodation on a long-term basis while awaiting settled homes.
13. The City of London has a very small number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation, and many of those currently placed by the City are being housed on a discretionary basis. Only a very small number of those on the City's housing register have priority due to homelessness, and increased priority is given to those households remaining in temporary accommodation for 12 months or longer.
14. In accordance with the aims of the City's Housing Strategy for 2019 –24, 700 additional homes for social rent are planned for our existing housing estates. These homes will enable more people to be housed from our housing register. It will benefit those awaiting larger properties which are currently in short supply. It should be noted that some of these homes will be allocated to applicants from housing registers in the host boroughs pursuant to nominations agreements with those authorities.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Temporary accommodation and housing register statistics

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