

# **Review of Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households**

## **Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee**

**DRAFT** Final Report

**January 2019**

DRAFT

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS18 1LD

## Contents

	Page
<b>Select Committee Membership and Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Original Brief</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.0 Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.0 Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.0 Background</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.0 Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5.0 Conclusion</b>	<b>20</b>

## **Select Committee membership**

Councillor Lisa Grainge (Chair)  
Councillor Evaline Cunningham (Vice Chair)

Councillor Faulks  
Councillor Gardner  
Councillor Hall  
Councillor Javed  
Councillor Povey  
Councillor Walmsley  
Councillor Woodhouse

## **Acknowledgements**

The Committee would like to thank the following people for contributing to its work:

Jane Edmonds, Housing Services Manager, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Bev Bearne, Team Leader – Housing Solutions  
Melanie Cant, Housing Advisor, Local Government Association  
The team and residents at Bridge House Mission  
The team and residents at Parkfield Hall (North Star Housing Group and SBC Children's Services)

## **Contact Officer**

Peter Mennear, Scrutiny Officer  
Tel: 01642 528957  
E-mail: [peter.mennear@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:peter.mennear@stockton.gov.uk)

**Foreword**

XXXXX

**Councillor Lisa Grainge**  
**Chair**

**Councillor Evaline Cunningham**  
**Vice Chair**

DRAFT

## Original Brief

### Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review relates to following Policy Principles:

Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention – people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

Developing strong and healthy communities – providing preventive services that are available where needed

### What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

The review is to examine the provision of temporary accommodation and housing related support services to homeless households.

In general terms, homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control, and is commonly associated with:

- the break-up of a marriage or relationship;
- the loss of a job, leading to the repossession of a home or inability to pay rent; or
- an addiction to, or abuse of, prescribed or illegal drugs or alcohol, or gambling.

Services within the scope of the review are provided to families and single people who may have a range of needs including but not limited to: mental health needs, disabilities, addictions, prison leavers, homeless young people including under 18s and care leavers, asylum seekers with leave to remain.

[...]

The wider context is the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This requires Councils to provide services to all those at risk of becoming homeless, in addition to those with a priority need such as families with children and those who are vulnerable. Members will be briefed on the Council's response to this new legislation and Councils recently adopted Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018 – 2023 (adopted by Cabinet in June 2018).

### The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How are services planned, commissioned and provided?
- What are the current and projected levels of demand?
- What are the outcomes and performance?
- How are clients supported to access other services and improve their health and wellbeing?
- Review the provision of 'other' supported housing services (provided for potentially homelessness households) which are not commissioned by the Council.

## Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households.
- 1.2 In general terms, homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control. The review took place against a background of rising national concern at the number of homeless people and their welfare. The Local Government Association has also voiced national concern at the financial impact on Local Authorities of the increasing reliance on temporary accommodation.
- 1.3 The Committee's review has examined Stockton's approach to temporary accommodation for people who may be homeless and often vulnerable for a variety of reasons. Referrals to the Council's Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team have increased. Many of these are dealt with effectively through the provision of advice, but around 8-10 people per day require immediate housing. The focus of the review has been on improving the effectiveness of commissioned temporary accommodation, and in particular the needs of those with the most complex lives.
- 1.4 The Committee received assurance that the Council's approach was appropriate and customer-focussed, and met the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act. A number of improvements have also been identified and can be implemented in the short term.
- 1.5 A number of opportunities for future service development have been reviewed and can be explored further, including for example Housing First. However the results of this work will fall outside of the Committee's review timescale, and so Members look forward to future updates. The Committee would particularly welcome alternative methods of delivery for those with the most complex needs.
- 1.6 The Committee recommends that:
  1. **the positive work of the Homelessness and Housing Solutions Service to address homelessness and support those households who are homeless be noted;**
  2. **the positive and constructive findings of the LGA Housing Advisor in relation to the Council's approach to addressing homelessness be noted, and the proposed actions in response by the Housing Service be endorsed (as outlined at section 4.26-4.32 of the Committee's report);**
  3. **in response to increasing service demands, the Council explores options for alternative models for 'temporary' accommodation with Housing Providers;**
  4. **the Council continues to develop detailed understanding of those who are 'hardest to house' and the barriers to accessing (and maintaining) accommodation, and explore new forms of appropriate housing options for this client group;**
  5. **updates on the results of recent funding bids made during the Review be reported to the Committee as part of the monitoring process.**

## Introduction

- 2.1 This report presents the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households.
- 2.2 In general terms, homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control, and is commonly associated with:
- the break-up of a marriage or relationship;
  - the loss of a job, leading to the repossession of a home or inability to pay rent; or
  - an addiction to, or abuse of, prescribed or illegal drugs or alcohol, or gambling.
- 2.3 The review took place against a background of rising national concern at the number of homeless people, and their welfare. The Local Government Association (LGA) has also voiced national concern at the financial impact on Local Authorities of the increasing reliance on temporary accommodation.
- 2.4 The Committee's review was particularly focussed on Stockton's approach to temporary accommodation for people who may be homeless and often vulnerable for a variety of reasons.
- 2.5 Services within the scope of the review are provided to families and single people who may have a range of needs including but not limited to: mental health needs, disabilities, addictions, prison leavers, homeless young people including under 18s and care leavers, and asylum seekers with leave to remain.
- 2.6 The review has been supported and informed by Housing Services. All commissioned services were informed of the review, and two services - Bridge House and Parkfield Hall (managed by North Star Housing Group) - were visited by Members of the Committee.
- 2.7 The Committee also received evidence from the Local Government Association (LGA) Housing Advisor who had recently completed a review of Stockton's approach.
- 2.8 Recognising the increasing pressure on the Council's finances, it is imperative that all in depth scrutiny reviews promote the Council's policy priorities and where possible seek to identify efficiencies and reduce demand for services.



## Background

- 3.1 Local authorities have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to people who are legally defined as homeless or threatened with homelessness. It requires local authorities to provide homelessness services to all customers, not just those who are vulnerable and in priority need.
- 3.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced two Duties:
- Prevention Duty – this extended the period of time that local authorities are required to work with people who are threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days (56 days is equal to the period of notice that must be given to clients of private sector rented housing)
  - Relief Duty – for those who are already homeless / 'homeless tonight', support is given for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation. This is where the Council's temporary accommodation duty lies.
- 3.3 It is important to note that not everyone who falls within the legal definition of homelessness necessarily qualifies for temporary accommodation, following an assessment. They must be eligible for assistance and have a priority need. Others who do not qualify would however be provided with appropriate advice and guidance.
- 3.4 Of those that qualify, not everyone has a right to accommodation, and someone may be refused if, for example, had worsened their own circumstances.
- 3.5 If a family is involved, temporary accommodation would be used while undertaking the detailed assessment. Temporary accommodation for homeless single/couples will also be provided if the household is considered to be vulnerable (or whilst an assessment of vulnerability is being undertaken). For single/couples who are homeless with no assessed vulnerability a homeless application will again be taken and a Housing Plan agreed (with the aim of supporting the household into sustainable accommodation). Advice/support (i.e. signposting) will also be provided to assist non-vulnerable individuals secure temporary accommodation but a direct placement would not be made by the Council in this instance. The assessment process is outlined in more detail below.

### Local context

- 3.6 The Council has recently agreed its Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018-23. This was adopted by Cabinet in June 2018 and has four Core Objectives:
1. Preventing and relieving homelessness
  2. Preventing rough sleeping
  3. Reducing the use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation
  4. Maximising the effectiveness of commissioned housing related support

- 3.7 Each objective has a number of priorities and actions identified, and this review will inform the actions taken to achieve the Strategy's aims. Priorities identified in relation to temporary accommodation are contained within Objectives 3 and 4.

#### Other Local Factors

- 3.8 In Stockton, the **number of homeless people with no immediate accommodation** and whose situation needed verifying, and often with complex needs, was around 8-10 people per day. The majority of cases dealt with by the service had accommodation at the time of the referral and could be provided with preventative advice and support.
- 3.9 A **Rough Sleepers Count** is undertaken on an annual basis nationwide. In 2017, the count for Stockton was two. The 2018 Count took place on 17 October and the Council estimated the number to be three. Information was sought from the Community and Voluntary sector (including soup kitchens for example) and Police. This figure was higher than previous years but in this regard numbers were relatively comparable across the Tees Valley.
- 3.10 During the review it was noted that some people had been observed sleeping on the street Council offices near central Stockton in the months leading up to October and these may be genuinely homeless. Otherwise, the Committee was reassured that people in high street locations would generally be associated with begging, and at the time of the review, all of these people had been spoken to by Housing Services and offered support. The bigger issue locally was more likely to be 'sofa surfing', and the needs of those who were one step away from complete homelessness.
- 3.11 Thirteen Group provide the 'Through the Gate' under contract from the Probation Service. This provides **services for those leaving prison** and to prevent them approaching the local authority. Some prison leavers did come straight to the Local Authority, however even then, not all ex-prisoners were classed as vulnerable and an assessment would be based on their individual circumstances.
- 3.12 Due to national arrangements, **asylum seekers given leave to remain** are required to leave National Asylum Support Service-commissioned accommodation at short notice once their case has been determined.
- 3.13 Asylum seekers given leave to remain who are at risk of homelessness should be signposted to the Council once they have been directed to leave their accommodation. This was not in the Council's direct control and the Home Office is not covered under the 'duty to refer' people who may be potentially homeless when they leave.
- 3.14 However, the Council does work with local support organisations to share information on what support is available, and due to their need for accommodation many people in this situation do approach the Council on the day they require temporary accommodation.
- 3.15 The LGA Housing Advisor noted that some authorities had negotiated local agreements with Home Office commissioned providers for them to provide notice to Local Authorities prior to clients leaving their accommodation, and the longest period negotiated was 28 day's notice. Details of these arrangements were to be forwarded to Housing Services to explore further as it would be beneficial to replicate this in Stockton-on-Tees.

## Findings

### Temporary Accommodation

- 4.1 There are three types of temporary accommodation: commissioned, non-commissioned, and bed and breakfast.
- 4.2 Housing related support services are **commissioned** by the Council. This is not a statutory requirement, but there was a renewed commitment in July 2017. These services are provided to a range of people with needs meaning they would otherwise struggle to maintain a tenancy.
- 4.3 Following the recommissioning of services, seven providers currently deliver accommodation, support and signposting for a short term to address the linkages between homelessness and the prevalence of multiple needs. The providers provide support to clients to ensure that they are able to participate in society and maintain a tenancy – for example by ensuring they attend appointments – but do not directly provide such services themselves.
- 4.4 When these services were procured there was significant uncertainty in the market, and a previous provider declined to bid. Ultimately, few providers bid for the new contract, and this led to a relative concentration of provision in the Central Stockton area.
- 4.5 The following units of accommodation were commissioned:

HOMELESS HOUSEHOLD TYPE	NO. OF ACCOMODATION UNITS	NO OF HOURS OF SUPPORT PER WEEK
Families	26	5
Adults	120	3-7

In addition to these units for families and adults, the contract also includes 22 units of self-contained accommodation for young people and care leavers.

- 4.6 Services have been commissioned with the intention of providing services up to six months, however within the contract there is built-in provision for those clients who will likely stay longer than this.
- 4.7 Providers charge an enhanced rental charge due to the extra cost of providing this specialist accommodation service. The majority of clients are eligible for housing benefit to fund the accommodation. The Council funds the advice and support element within the contract.
- 4.8 These short term accommodation based support service contracts are commissioned by Adult Social Care. Referrals in for adults and families are managed by Housing Services; referrals in for young people are managed by Children's Services. Ongoing formal contract management processes are undertaken by the Procurement Team.

4.9 Current commissioned providers are as follows:

Organisation	Homeless Household Type	Number of Units	Type of accommodation	Location(s)
Bridge House	Adults	28	Single occupancy rooms with shared facilities	Central Stockton
Community Campus	Adults Families	30 6	Self-contained flats and houses	Various locations (Central Stockton and Thornaby)
Mental Health Matters	Adults	13	1 bedroom self-contained flats	Central Stockton
Sanctuary	Adults Families Young People	6 20 12	1 and 2 bedroom Self-contained flats in purpose built blocks	Norton Road And Portrack
New Walk	Adults	23	Single occupancy rooms with shared facilities	Central Stockton
Turnaround Homes	Adults	20	Single occupancy rooms with shared facilities	Central Stockton
North Star Housing Group	Young People	10	Purpose built 1 bedroom self-contained flats	Central Stockton

4.10 Members visited Bridge House and North Star Housing Group's provision during the review. The visit emphasised the different types of accommodation provided. Bridge House is an adapted listed property with a highly complex client group, and Parkfield Hall is a modern purpose built block for a smaller group of young people.

**Bridge House** is located in a grade 2 listed building, which has been extended. It has capacity for 28 service users and there are 15 members of staff.

Rooms are single occupancy, with shared facilities, including lounge, and communal dining. The client group is mixed and at the time of the visit there were 7 females and 17 males.

Under their contract Bridge House were due to accommodate a ratio of one complex client (7 hours of support per week) to three non-complex (3 hours of support per week). At the time of the visit there were 16 complex clients to 8 non-complex (nb. the service recognises that they accept more complex clients than they were contractually obliged to).

The client group has a range of particularly complex needs, with males typically entering the service with five presenting issues, and females with seven. As well as the inability to secure or sustain accommodation, common issues include life and social skills, mental health, offending, and debt management.

Drugs were noted as a major underlying issue. Within the client group housed by the service at the time of the visit, only one did not have a drug addiction. Members of staff were first aid trained and received psychological support to help them in their work.

Since 2017 and the new contract, the service has been more focussed on providing housing related support with signposting to other types of support services (to avoid duplication with other support services).

Bridge House reported that, due to the nature of their needs, clients were often unable to take advantage of the signposting to other services, and had lifestyles that were too chaotic for independent living. Once in independent living, clients may receive floating support but due to trust issues and their wider needs, these often fail.

It was recognised that clients were often difficult to engage with. A range of activities and trips were provided to provide more meaningful activities for clients. Cooking skills were offered on site.

The service has achieved a number of positive outcomes, although for some clients it was felt impossible to turn their lives around in a six month stay. The provision of the service did however prevent further issues that would have arisen should clients have been housed elsewhere, and enabled their situation to be stabilised.

Bridge House had a good working relationship with the Council's Homelessness and Housing Support Service. It was vital for the Council's team to have an overview of where individuals were placed in order to manage risks, and manage their cases, including the offer of floating support when they leave Bridge House.

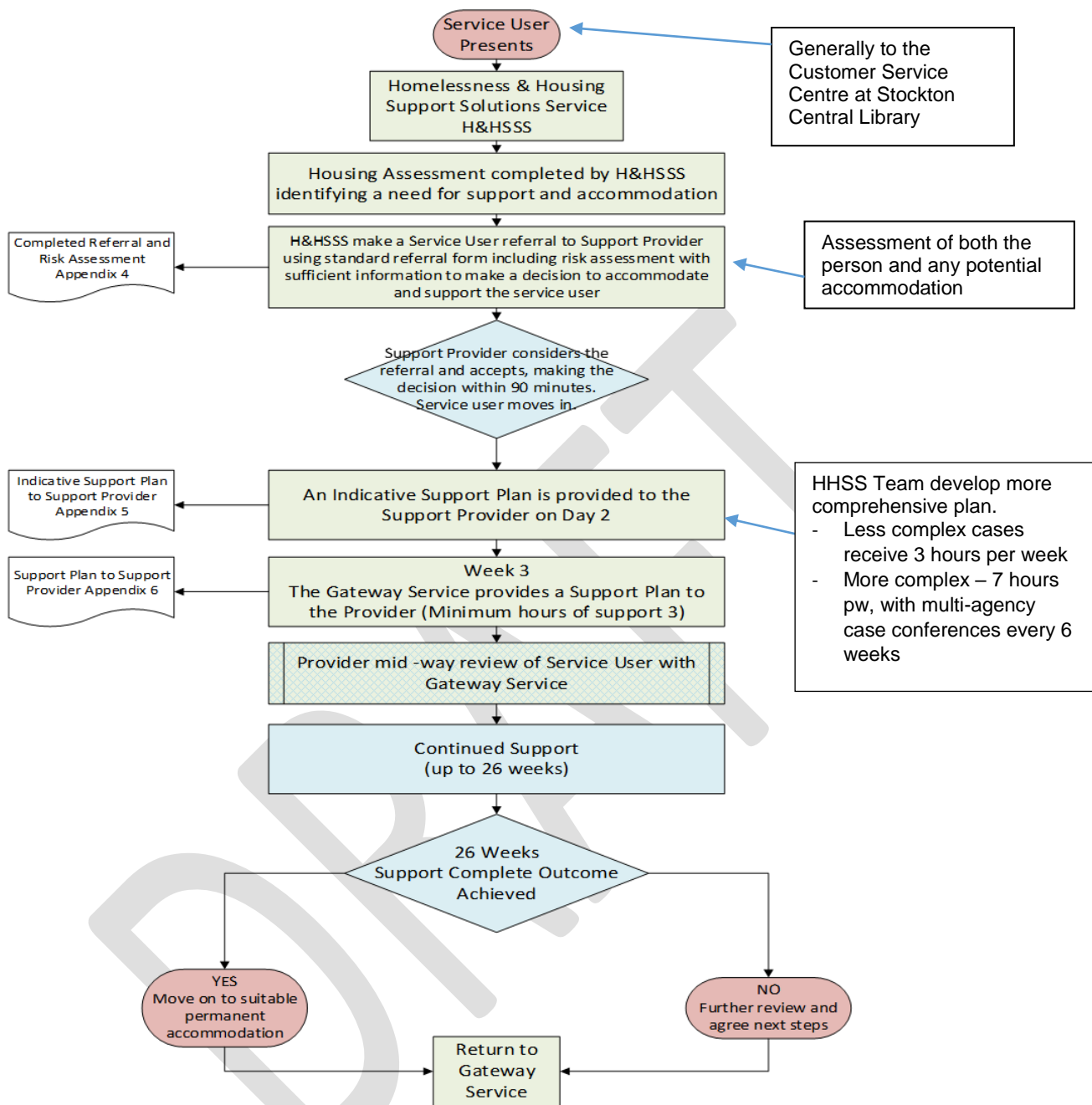
**Parkfield Hall** is purpose built accommodation for foster care, and residential care leavers aged between 16-18, and 18-25. It was opened in 2010 and is managed by North Star Housing Group.

There are tenancies available for 10 young people, and a crash pad for short term emergency use. The accommodation is intended for young people to be able to build up independent living skills on a planned basis, or to provide for those who become homeless.

Flats are fully self-contained with kitchen and bathrooms, with a communal lounge area. Young people have tenancies for between 6 months and two years, and are continually assessed on their skills so that they move on into independent living at the appropriate time.

Three members of staff provide guidance, for example help with budgeting, with up to 10 hours per week available for each young person. In-reach guidance is provided by organisations such as Youth Direction and Princes Trust. Young people living on site would generally also have social worker or personal adviser support.

4.11 The Homelessness and Housing Solutions Service (H&HSS) manage entry into temporary accommodation for adults and families; the team has six members of staff. The following chart shows the process followed for those who present to the Team with and who have no option for housing on the night:



4.12 The Committee found that 780 referrals had been received between July 2017 and September 2018, and over 500 cases have been closed. Of these:

- there were 139 successful move-ons (ie. customers have completed support plans and moved into settled accommodation);
- 250 placements were terminated due to customer behaviour/non-engagement with support;
- 127 placements did not process/accommodation refused by customers.

- 4.13 Some of the successful cases involved issues that can be resolved quickly – for example, if someone needed to establish their National Insurance number in order to be able to access the Housing Register.
- 4.14 These figures represent a success compared to previous contracts which saw very few positive 'move-ons'. However there have been over 370 cases that were terminated or refused. These were all single people and this highlights the challenge faced by services supporting some of the more vulnerable and chaotic residents.
- 4.15 The Committee queried the number of repeat referrals to services. It was found that 97 individuals accounted for 168 referrals. Of these:
- 5 x people were referred 4 times;
  - 14 x people were referred 3 times;
  - 77 x people referred into services twice.
- 4.16 Most individuals were under 39 (22 were aged 40+). The main reasons for placement breakdown included: violence, drug use, weapons, non-engagement, or non-attendance.
- 4.17 Those who are accepted to the service but return several times may receive services for a total of four times. Some landlords may eventually refuse to take them. If there is a refusal to engage with Housing Services in any form, there may then be a referral to Adult Safeguarding where appropriate.
- 4.18 The Service has faced a number of challenges, particularly relating to the nature of its high risk client group. These include:
- matching customers to available accommodation/managing risk;
  - multi-agency working;
  - complex customers / placement break downs / no other available options;
  - embedding new ways of working with Service Providers - the new contract saw the H&HSS Team determining which clients would be entering accommodation, and this was a change in practice for the Providers;
  - contract issues.
- 4.19 Use of **non-commissioned services** provides options for the Council when attempting to accommodate the hard to house customers, or move on options for those leaving commissioned accommodation. It is important to ensure that the ability for clients to flow through the system is retained.
- 4.20 Housing Services have developed relationships and working protocols with a number of well-established supported accommodation providers (including My Space and NACRO). By working closely with such providers the Council has an overview of such accommodation within the Borough and the people these providers are housing, and where.
- 4.21 The Council has a duty to offer reasonable accommodation which may include **Bed and Breakfast** if necessary and appropriate. However Bed and Breakfast placements are regarded as the last resort in terms of placements for interim accommodation and are made in cases of emergency where no other suitable accommodation is available at the time to

meet the needs of the person or family. For example, when accommodation is needed outside of office hours or during the weekends (or when it is not otherwise suitable to house them in the Borough).

- 4.22 The numbers of all children in B&B are reported quarterly to the Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 4.23 A snapshot of one year's bed and breakfast usage between April 2017 and March 2018 is as follows:
- average length of stay – 13 days;
  - number of families place in B&B – 35 families;
  - national Asylum Seeker Support leavers (ie. the main client group placed in B&B) – 20 families (out of the 35 families in total)
  - number of single people placed in B&B – 35.
- 4.24 As noted above, asylum seekers who receive leave to remain are required to vacate their accommodation the next day, and also tend to have larger families which may result in initial difficulties in finding suitable commissioned accommodation.

#### Development of service improvements

- 4.25 The Committee agreed to focus the review on services for those who are hardest to house in long term settled accommodation, and the development of 'move on' options. It was noted that the Committee had limited time to complete the review prior to the Local Government Elections, however the review's findings would be fed back through service delivery to shape future commissioning – including exploring models for the most chaotic residents.
- 4.26 The Committee also received evidence from the LGA Housing Advisor. In conjunction with Redcar and Cleveland, and Hartlepool Councils, Stockton-on-Tees Council had secured funding to work with an Advisor to review processes and in particular consider alternatives to Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 4.27 The Advisor confirmed that in their opinion the Local Authority was meeting the requirements of the new Act and provided services with the customer at the forefront. It was however noted that services are seeing more people (due to the local economic and social situation) which is causing financial and staffing strain on the organisation.
- 4.28 The quality of the accommodation provided in Stockton was better than in many other areas - some areas make more use of Bed and Breakfast and hotel provision, but this was being avoided where possible in Stockton.
- 4.29 The Advisor stated that there were some potential areas for improvement. Current commissioned services were providing a good service and were enabling the Council to discharge its duty to provide temporary accommodation where appropriate. However, in legislation, 'temporary' accommodation was intended to provide temporary relief and enable an assessment to take place.



- 4.30 It was noted that in some instances the current, commissioned temporary accommodation services were providing accommodation to some individual clients for up to two years on short hold tenancies. These were therefore in effect a form of supported housing rather than 'temporary accommodation'. The Committee noted that as a result of the Advisor's findings Housing Services had moved quickly to redefine its accommodation and had actively sought to close some cases where appropriate.
- 4.31 It was also suggested that in light of new the Homeless Reduction Act, it may also be appropriate to review the current Allocations Policy. The Council was required to secure an 'offer of suitable' accommodation in the Borough to eligible clients in temporary accommodation but not necessarily facilitate the client's exact choice of location, tenure and property type etc.
- 4.32 The aim of tightening up the 'offer' process would be to ensure the timely move of individuals (especially families who are homeless but do not need supported hostel accommodation services). Committee was assured that this process would be undertaken by the Housing Service in a sensitive manner, with suitability assessments undertaken in each case. Once accommodation had been secured should clients still wish to move then they could seek to transfer to another area of their choosing via the normal route.
- 4.33 It was suggested the Local Authority also explores the possibility of partnering with Housing Providers in order for them to allow an element of their housing stock to be made available as temporary housing on a 'rolling' basis. This would work by the Authority 'holding' an available and suitable property whilst a housing assessment on a family took place. Should a suitable property be identified for eligible clients, they could be housed there instead of within the current range of Commissioned Services. This would in turn both free up Commissioned Services for those who have more complex needs and/or address the rising demand for services. Subject to their individual circumstances, clients may be able to remain in the property for their long term settled accommodation.
- 4.34 Use of 'rolling stock' with housing providers would help in efforts to avoid the stigma associated with temporary accommodation services. Benefits for the provider would also include a reduced numbers of voids and hard to let properties.
- 4.35 By way of an example, in York, void social housing stock was used for temporary accommodation where this was appropriate for the client, and attempts were made to ensure the clients could remain in the property for the longer term where possible.
- 4.36 In addition, the Council's Housing Services recognise the potential to review the Floating Support Contract to make this more fit for purpose and deliver support to households as they move into independent living.

#### Alternative Models

- 4.37 Alternative models of delivery for those most 'difficult to house' have been explored throughout the review.
- 4.38 **Housing First** is one such model being considered in housing policy discussions across the UK and beyond. The ability to maintain access to housing over the longer term is often predicated on a client's ability to achieve certain standards of behaviour - for example to cease using drugs and alcohol. This may be extremely difficult for the most stigmatised

clients lacking in any form of real social support, and mainstream services are not necessarily equipped to meet a range of complex needs.

4.39 Housing First is based on the principle that long-term accommodation should be quickly provided to a client, and a flexible approach is taken whereby no conditions regarding their 'housing readiness' would be forced on a client at the point when they are provided with housing. This housing is provided for the long term if needed, and the only condition of long term support is that clients would need to continually engage with their dedicated Housing First support worker.

4.40 Support workers have a smaller case load of clients than in other models:



Housing First in England – The Principles (Homeless Link: 2016)

4.41 In effect the model ensures that housing becomes the key, most stable element of a client's life, and provides a platform on which to build.

- 4.42 Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham have taken part in pilot schemes with different types of criteria. The devolved administration in Greater Manchester had been identified and provided with Government funding to take forward a significant project with 650-700 clients over a year across ten Boroughs. This scheme was for those who were consistently not engaging with services; have chaotic lifestyles; and were at risk of homelessness.
- 4.43 A CentrePoint project had focussed on young people using a similar model. There had been ten young people supported by two support workers who were highly skilled in support and therapy. The clients were able to engage as and when, on their own terms.
- 4.44 The model could be adapted to suit a particular area's needs, and any local scheme in Stockton-on-Tees would be on a small scale. Housing First is not a low cost option, as intensive support over a period of time may be needed, however research suggests savings could be made to the public purse as a whole due to reduced reliance on other forms of services (eg. supported housing, health, criminal justice).
- 4.45 The Committee recognised that support for residents with people who have neighbours who display disruptive behaviour may be necessary. It was agreed that the location of any Housing First-led accommodation would be key but the inclusion of Housing First link officers with small caseloads was a key difference in this type of scheme compared to some existing schemes.
- 4.46 There was no current funding available from the government for this type of scheme aside from Manchester's pilot project, and any local scheme would have to be funded following the development of a business case. Exploring the options for local delivery of Housing First and monitoring the pilot schemes would however improve the Authority's position should national funding become available, and the Committee believes this should be progressed.

#### Funding Bids

- 4.47 Some national funding opportunities have become available during the period of the review. In addition to the funding that enable the work of the LGA Advisor, the Committee reviewed the following:

- a) Move On Fund (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) - The Move On Fund '*aims to free up hostel and refuge spaces by increasing the availability of affordable move-on, or second stage housing, for rough sleepers and those in hostel accommodation, and victims of domestic abuse currently living in refuges who are ready to leave this type of provision but might otherwise not be in a position to access the next stage of housing.*' ie. people with low/medium support needs.

This would provide capital and associated funding to provide a level of supported accommodation for up to two years. The Local Authority is currently working with North Star Housing Group with the aim of shortly submitting a bid. Funding end in 2021 but schemes were needed to be in place by March 2020.

- b) Private Sector Access Fund (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) - The Private Rented Sector Access Fund '*will make available £20 million to fund schemes that will enable better access and sustainment of tenancies for people who are, or at risk of becoming homeless*'.

It is aimed at developing the private sector housing options and working with all Local Authority partners identifying a standardised approach to prevent eviction. The deadline for the bid was 21st November 2018.

- c) Rough Sleepers Rapid Access Fund (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) - The rough sleeper's strategy was aiming towards the Housing First Model but the Authority must demonstrate there were sufficient numbers who sleep rough. The Authority had confirmed an expression of interest and bids for this fund also had a very tight deadline.

4.48 The results of these bids were not available during the period of the review but could be reported to the Committee in future.

## **Conclusion**

- 5.1 This review has enabled the Committee to review local arrangements for the relief of homelessness, against a background of rising national concern.
- 5.2 The focus has been on improving the effectiveness of commissioned temporary accommodation, and in particular the needs of those 'hardest to house'.
- 5.3 The Committee received assurance, including from the LGA, that the Council's approach was appropriate and customer-focussed, and met the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act. A number of improvements have also been identified and can be implemented in the short term.
- 5.4 The Committee would particularly welcome alternatives for those with the most complex needs as this is a clear area for development.
- 5.5 A number of opportunities have been reviewed and can be explored further, however the results of this work will fall outside of the Committee's review timescale, and so Members look forward to future updates.