

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 18/07/2022

Subject: Rough Sleeping, Homelessness Prevention & Temporary Accommodation

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SUMMARY

This report provides an update on rough sleeping, homelessness prevention, and temporary accommodation and the private rented sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to note and comment on the report.
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Wards Affected: None

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Creating a compassionate council	As a compassionate council, H&F is determined to reduce and eventually end rough sleeping in the borough.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Rough Sleeping

1. Sleeping rough is very rarely an active choice; the causes are multiple and people's circumstances unique but often a result of a combination of structural and personal issues. As a compassionate council, H&F is determined to reduce and eventually end rough sleeping in the borough. To help us achieve this policy priority, an expert-led Rough Sleeping Commission was established in 2017, chaired by Jon Sparkes (Chief Executive CRISIS). Jon was supported by a number of commissioners with a range of experience of delivering services to rough sleepers. The views of 108 people with experience of rough sleeping and homelessness were obtained by independent peer researchers, also with lived experience of homelessness.
2. The Commission reviewed local services; took evidence from homeless people and professionals working in the local voluntary and statutory sectors; and reviewed international and national best practice. The Commission concluded H&F was well-placed to significantly reduce and ultimately end rough sleeping in the borough, while calling upon central government to change and mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform; increase the supply of affordable housing and ensure adequate funding for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
3. The Commission's report included twenty-nine recommendations for implementation by the Council, regional bodies and central government. The Cabinet fully endorsed all recommendations in January 2018. A Delivery Board is established to oversee the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. Post-Covid a Partnership Board involving a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies as well as people with lived experience of homelessness will be re-established. The Partnership Board acts as a critical friend to the council in delivering our objective to end rough sleeping.

Voice of Rough Sleepers

4. As part of the Rough Sleeping Commission, the views of 108 people who were either currently homeless or had previous experience of rough sleeping were sought. Homeless people told us:
 - There was a strong message that no one wanted to sleep rough. Participants were asked what it would take to help them move away from rough sleeping and the most common response was to have a home, two thirds mentioned (affordable) accommodation.
 - Living in a hostel can be challenging. Time spent in a hostel should be short and with a real prospect of a home at the end.
 - We need more support to end our rough sleeping.
 - The benefits system is making it worse and causing homelessness.

5. The table below provides an update on the progress made towards delivering the Commission’s recommendations for the Council as of July 2022:

Recommendations for the Council	Action to date	Status
Adopting a No First Night Out (NFNO) approach to prevent rough sleeping	The Homelessness Reduction Act gives us a framework to prevent more people from becoming rough sleepers.	Green
Involve the public in tackling rough sleeping	Hackathon December 2018; Alternative Giving Scheme campaign.	Green
Work with local prisons/probation teams to ensure no one sleeps rough when they leave prison.	Duty to Refer processes established. Working with Probation to support forthcoming CAS3 accommodation scheme for homeless prisoners (late 2022).	Amber
Provide urgent support to private tenants who are at risk of rough sleeping.	Floating support and tenancy sustainment services are in place.	Green
Enable voluntary sector to organise and design day services around the experience of rough sleepers.	We will work in partnership to consider options to strengthen local day services for rough sleepers.	Amber
Ensure there are sufficient outreach workers to support people off the streets.	H&F Street Outreach Team was recently retendered. Supported by GLA funded Rapid Response Team to increase capacity.	Green
Provide legal advice for people at risk of rough sleeping.	3-year DLUHC RSI funding granted to the West London sub-region for specialist immigration advice to rough sleepers. Home Office have been ‘fast-tracking’ EUSS applications for rough sleepers.	Green
Develop an emergency “crash pad” service for people who cannot access hostel or other accommodation options.	Crash pad for 8 rough sleepers had to close during Covid as it was ‘shared sleeping’. Replaced with DLUHC funded 20-bed Rough Sleeper Assessment Hub in the Borough, funded until 2025.	Green
Increase the availability of Housing First and ensure people can access private rented and social housing.	Housing First has been expanded to 19 people and a proposal to increase by a further seven units is underway.	Green
Ensure NHS is involved in commissioning Housing First.	Developing the business case for NHS investment in Housing First.	Amber

Engage people with experience of homelessness in commissioning & delivering services.	A recent exercise engaged the views of 49 residents with experience of homelessness. Their views helped shape our procurement strategy for recent tender of homeless services.	Green
Provide shared accommodation solutions for younger adults.	Housing and Children's Services colleagues are working together to deliver more in-borough housing options for young people.	Green
Ensure regeneration and development provides more housing solutions for homeless people.	We are maximising opportunities on regeneration sites to let on a temporary basis for homeless households. Providing needs data to regeneration colleagues for potential future Capital asks.	Green

Rough Sleeping – Scale of the Problem

6. There are several ways we officially count the number of rough sleepers in England.

A) **Annual street count or estimate** – This provides a 'snapshot' estimate of the total number of people sleeping rough on a single night in England each Autumn since 2010.

In Autumn 2019, figures show 4,266 people were found sleeping rough on a single night. This is down by 411 (9%) from the Autumn 2018 total of 4,677 and up by 2,498 (141%) from the Autumn 2010 total of 1,768.

Of this total, 1,136 people were sleeping rough in London in Autumn 2019. This is a decrease of 147 (11%) from 1,283 in Autumn 2018. London accounted for 26% of the total figure for England in 2019.

The Autumn 2020 annual snapshot coincided with national lockdown and the Governments call to action to bring 'Everyone In'. A total of 2,688 rough sleepers were found sleeping rough on a single night in England which is a decrease of 1,578 (36%). In London 714 people were found which is a decrease of 37% on 2019.

In Autumn 2021 a total of 2,440 people were found in England (-9%) and in London 640 people (-10%). This continued reduction was despite the lifting of Covid restrictions including the eviction ban. Local Authorities were continuing to ensure that as many people as possible were supported to move on from emergency accommodation that was provided through 'Everyone In'.

It is notable that despite reductions in rough sleeping in Autumn 2020 and 2021, the total number of people sleeping rough is still higher than in Autumn 2010 when 1,768 people were found.

B) **CHAIN¹ data** – The CHAIN database is commissioned by the GLA. It captures the total numbers of verified rough sleepers in London that have had contact with commissioned outreach teams who work with rough sleepers, throughout the year. We use CHAIN data to understand the local rough sleeping picture.

Rough Sleeping in H&F

7. In H&F, the numbers of rough sleepers counted on a single night each autumn is outlined in the table below. The numbers have been relatively small. There was a notable increase in 2018 but numbers have since reduced.

H&F Annual Rough Sleeper Count Data

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
15	8	8	10	8	5
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
6	5	12	2	3	3

8. The table below shows the numbers counted in November 2021 for all London Boroughs. H&F is ranked amongst the Boroughs with the lowest levels of rough sleeping on a single night (1/33 being the borough with the highest number). A few Boroughs provided estimates due to Covid prevalence in their local area at that time.

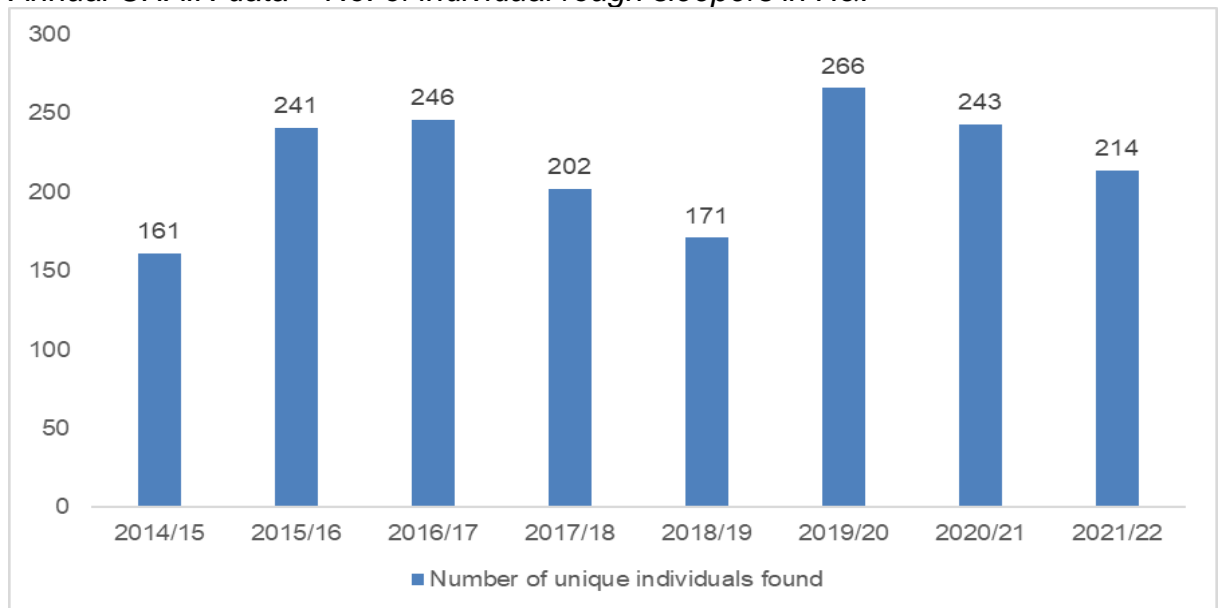
London Boroughs Snapshot Autumn 2021

Borough	Number
Westminster	187
Camden	97
Lambeth	29
Tower Hamlets	28
Kingston upon Thames	28
Ealing	23
Enfield	21
City	20
Wandsworth	18
Brent	17
Newham	17
Redbridge	15
Islington	13
Barnet	13
Kensington & Chelsea	11
Hackney	11

¹ [Http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports](http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports)

Croydon	11
Southwark	10
Haringey	10
Greenwich	9
Hillingdon	9
Bexley	7
Lewisham	7
Waltham Forest	5
Merton	5
H&F	3
Bromley	1-4 (est)
Barking & Dagenham	1-4 (est)
Harrow	1-4 (est)
Havering	1-4 (est)
Hounslow	1-4 (est)
Richmond	1-4 (est)
Sutton	1-4 (est)

Annual CHAIN data – No. of individual rough sleepers in H&F



9. The annual CHAIN data in the table above shows an 11% reduction in the total number of individuals counted throughout 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. While we are very pleased with this reduction, we face several challenges in continuing to reduce the numbers and to eventually meet our target of ending rough sleeping.
10. The CHAIN data distinguishes between different categories of rough sleepers as follows:

Category	Description
Flow	People who have never been seen rough sleeping before i.e. new rough sleepers
Stock	People who were seen rough sleeping across a minimum of two consecutive years
Returner	People have been seen rough sleeping before, but not seen during the previous year (i.e. those who have had a gap in their rough sleeping histories)

Breakdown of H&F Rough Sleepers in 2021/22

Category	2021/22	2020/21
Flow	136 (63.5%)	163 (67%)
Stock	51 (24%)	53 (22%)
Returner	27 (12.5%)	27 (11%)
Total	214 (100%)	243 (100%)

11. There has been a reduction in the proportion of new rough sleepers in the borough in 2021/22 compared to the previous year. The proportion of longer-term rough sleepers and people returning to the streets is broadly similar. Our strategy is to improve prevention and early intervention through better information, signposting and partnership working.

Who rough sleeps in H&F?

Gender

12. In the last two years over 80% of rough sleepers are Male and approximately 20% Female. This proportion has been similar for several years. We know that Female homelessness is less visible for example sofa surfing or staying with friends and family. When we do find female rough sleepers, their needs are often very complex, and they need significant support. We are currently looking at creating some female-only spaces within our supported housing services.

Age

13. There have been no significant changes to the age breakdown of rough sleepers in the borough over the last few years. We are pleased that in the last four years there hasn't been any rough sleepers under the age of 18 years. The Commission highlighted the effective work of Children's Service to prevent care leavers becoming homeless.

Nationality

14. There was an increase in UK Nationals sleeping rough in H&F in 2021/22 Compared to 2020-21 there was an increase in the proportion of UK national rough sleepers in the borough last year; from 46% to 58%. There was a reduction in the proportion of rough sleepers from Central and Eastern European countries from 29% in 2020-21 to 22% in 2021/22. There was an increase in the proportion of rough sleepers from the 'rest of the world' from 20% to 25% in 2021/22. Lots of work was done to support EU National rough sleepers to apply for and be 'fast-tracked' through the EUSS scheme. The

Government's call to bring 'Everyone In' included people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), however supporting this group is a real challenge now. We have access to specialist immigration advice through DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Initiative fund (RSI) which has funded this for the West London sub-region.

Rough Sleeper Initiatives

15. We have been successful in securing 3-year funding from DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Initiative fund (RSI, 2022-2025). At the time of writing the full information is under embargo pending formal announcement by DLUHC. Our DLUHC and Council funded initiatives include:
- a) A 20-bed **Rough Sleeper Assessment Hub** including limited provision for people with No Recourse to public funds. Access to Emergency Beds is a key Commission recommendation and will enable the outreach team to offer rough sleepers an immediate route off the streets.
 - b) Funding to continue our **Housing First** service, bringing the total number of people supported to 19. Notting Hill Housing has agreed to provide some self-contained units for Housing First, including out of borough, where a resident requests this.
 - c) Four **rough sleeping Navigator** posts employed by St Mungo's to work intensively with rough sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping. Navigators will provide intensive support and co-ordinate referrals into a range of services. This will assist up to 35-40 people every twelve months.
 - d) A **Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator** employed by the council to co-ordinate all the various initiatives and to ensure a co-ordinated and holistic approach across council departments and our partners.
 - e) Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (**SWEP**) – We are more used to thinking about an action plan for the cold weather for rough sleepers, but the hot weather can pose as many, if not more risks to rough sleepers who may be using drugs and/or alcohol, have underlying health conditions and exposed to heat. We have implemented emergency action plans in recent extreme weather periods including, extra outreach shifts; distributing water, hats, sun cream and encouraging people to attend day centres and other indoor services in the hottest parts of the day.
 - f) **Floating Support** – two posts through Hestia to support rough sleepers with low needs who are in unsupported temporary accommodation and/or who have moved on into the Private Rented Sector.
 - g) **West London Sub-Regional Services** – Alongside the West London Boroughs we benefit from access to a 9-bed complex needs Female-only hub, specialist immigration advice and a 29-bed 'Somewhere Safe

to Stay' prevention hub for people with low needs who are at imminent risk of rough sleeping.

- h) **Street Outreach Team and Housing First Team** – This service actively finds rough sleepers across the Borough, provides assessment and support and an offer away from the streets. Uniquely in H&F we have combined this with our Housing First support in recognition that support is often needed outside of office hours and support that can be flexible to both inside their home and on the street. The provider for this service is Thames Reach.
 - i) **Supported Housing Pathway** – The Council commissions 129 hostel beds across 8 sites in the Borough. The pathway was recently retendered, and the support provider is St Mungo's.
 - j) **Homeless Health Project** – this service increases engagement and access to healthcare services for homeless people, particularly those with multiple and complex needs who struggle to do this. The service aims to reduce non-elective hospital admissions and the inappropriate use of emergency services. This service is delivered by St Mungo's.
 - k) **EASL** – This service supports the workforce in our hostels and our outreach team to become more resilient so they can better manage the very complex cases and trauma prevalent amongst our hostel residents and rough sleepers. This workforce ensured that these critical front-line services were fully operational throughout the pandemic.
16. We are delighted to be able to deliver services to support rough sleepers and to help reduce the numbers. The RSI funding is for 3-years which we hope will provide some stability for the sector following recent years which have been only funded on a short-term basis. As we are aiming to reduce and ultimately end rough sleeping, we will need to develop an evidence-based plan to ensure that when DLUHC funding ends in 2025 we have the right services in place to continue our work and goal of ending rough sleeping.

Partnership working

17. We are pleased to have strong, long-standing partnerships with local homelessness services in H&F such as the Barons Court Project, the Upper Room and local churches who provide essential services such as food, showers, employment, and training, all of which help rough sleepers and homeless or vulnerably housed people throughout the year. We will shortly be discussing our plans together for Winter 2022/23. Other important partnerships to support rough sleepers include Turning Point for substance misuse support and Health who have funded Mental Health workers across 3 West London Boroughs who will go and see rough sleepers whilst they are on the street.

Homelessness Prevention

18. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (“HRA”) came into force in April 2018, changing the way that local authorities deliver homelessness services. Many local authorities including Hammersmith & Fulham were already working to prevent homelessness, but the Act puts prevention of homelessness on a statutory footing. The introduction of the ‘prevention duty’ requires local authorities to develop a personalised housing plan with residents who will be homeless in the next 56 days, giving us the opportunity to prevent their homelessness by helping them to remain where they are or to find suitable accommodation before they are made homeless. However, the majority of our approaches from residents are made once they are already homeless.

Percentage of cases where resident is already homeless when they approach		
2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
53%	64%	60%

19. Public sector bodies such as hospitals, prisons and the Department of Work and Pensions have a duty to refer anyone who is faced with homelessness within the next 56 days. The number of homelessness approaches that have originated from a duty to refer from a public sector body has increased over the past few years; demonstrating our work in partnership to get in early to prevent homelessness. However, many of these referrals are received when someone’s already homeless; we continue to work with partners to address this.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total no. of Homeless Applications	967	955	896
% of homelessness prevented	70%	77%	70%
Homelessness Main Duty Accepted	168	160	245
Total no. on the Housing Register (Snapshot in March each year)	2,491	2,803	2,533

‘Duty to refer’ homeless approaches by partner agencies – top referrers			
Agency	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Prisons, police & probation	17	34	33
Department of work and pensions (DWP)	8	4	17
Hospitals and health	8	14	17
Social care	3	6	17
Others	8	13	15

20. Although we have seen the number of homelessness approaches decrease annually since the large spike in approaches which followed the introduction of the HRA in 2018, the effect that the moratorium on evictions (which was in place during the pandemic) and the subsequent delays in court proceedings across the country will have on homelessness approaches in the coming months and years is unknown. We are aware across the sector that various factors are likely to increase homelessness; namely the cost-of-living crisis, increasing rents in the private rented sector whilst housing cost welfare benefits have not aligned with the private market since 2016 and we are seeing increased homelessness amongst Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.
21. Some central government funding received at the end of 2020/21 has allowed us to do more pro-active work to support renters from becoming homeless; both in terms of practical and financial support.
22. In April 2019, we became the first borough to partner with Beam, a social enterprise using the platform of public crowdfunding to support people who are experiencing homelessness to fund vocational training and secure work, enabling tenancy sustainment and greater affordability. Beam also support residents to crowdfund deposits to secure suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

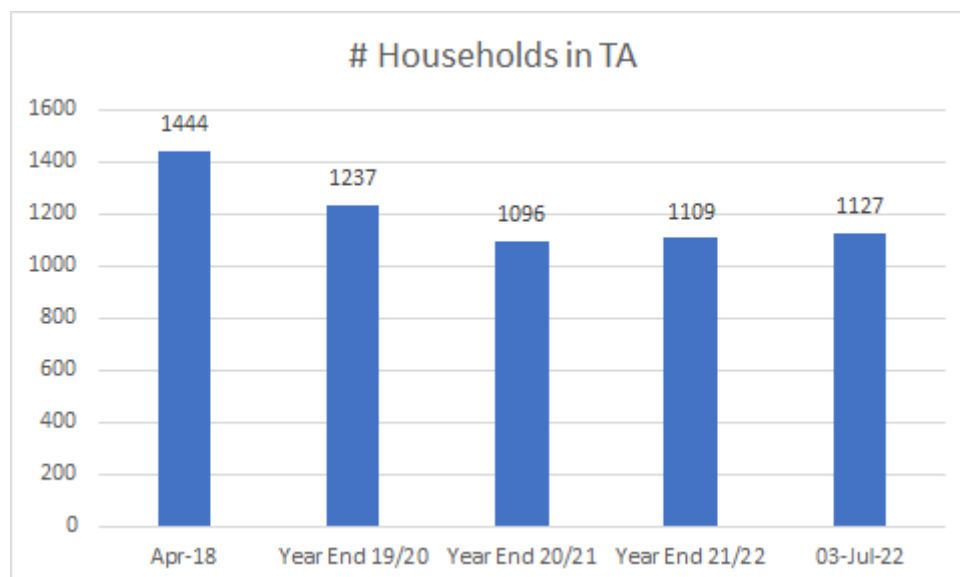
Beam outcomes	
Campaigns fully crowdfunded	166
Total and average donations	£376,429 total £2,267 average
Number of H&F residents who have started work	64
% sustained work for 13 weeks	81%
Number of H&F residents who have been helped to find accommodation – homelessness prevented	35

Temporary Accommodation and the Private Rented Sector

23. Local housing authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation (TA) pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
24. Nationally, 96,410 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2021, up 0.9% from the previous quarter; single households increased 1.5%, and households with children increased 0.5%. In London, there were 16.6 households living in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households, compared with 1.9 households per 1,000 in the Rest of England. (DLUHC govt. published statistics)

25. Post Covid and lifting of the Government's ban on evictions, many Local Authorities are seeing an increase in homeless presentations compared to pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, the supply of affordable privately rented homes is contracting across London following the housing market bounce-back, compounded by people returning to London for hybrid working arrangements and the anticipated legislative changes to the private rental market, around the Government's proposal to abolish the section 21 notice process for PRS tenants. We are also seeing rental increases fueled by inflationary increases and rise in cost of labour and materials when bringing properties up to lettable standards.
26. Hammersmith & Fulham Council currently have approximately 1120 households in temporary accommodation. The Council has successfully reduced the number of households by 23% over the last four years, from over 1444 in 2018. This reduction has delivered savings to the General Fund. The average cost of accommodating a household in TA is approx. £24,000 – this is based on an average annual cost of £4,800 and an average rehousing time of 5 years. The table below shows the gross expenditure on temporary accommodation provision, income, and net cost to the Council for the last 5 years.

Financial year	TA Net Cost
2017/18	1,622,395.52
2018/19	2,418,228.58
2019/20	2,319,333.90
2020/21	3,266,347.00
2021/22	2,943,339.45



27. Hammersmith & Fulham are proud of the excellent on-going effort which has seen the avoidance of unsuitable B&B hotels as temporary or emergency accommodation for families for over 5 years, this type of accommodation is

not only very expensive but with shared facilities is wholly unsuitable for children. The Service has also avoided the general use of expensive nightly let accommodation, which is commonly used by many London LA's. This type of accommodation is the least financially viable form of TA for the Council and least secure for families with dependent children.

28. The Council manages a mixed Temporary Accommodation portfolio. Most of the stock is privately owned, self-contained and leased directly or through a 3rd party provider to the Council. The table below provides a breakdown of the of the current TA portfolio.

Type	Number of units	%
Self-contained leased	856	76
Council owned stock	57	5
Bed & Breakfast	102	9
Homeless Hostels	67	6
Housing Association	45	4

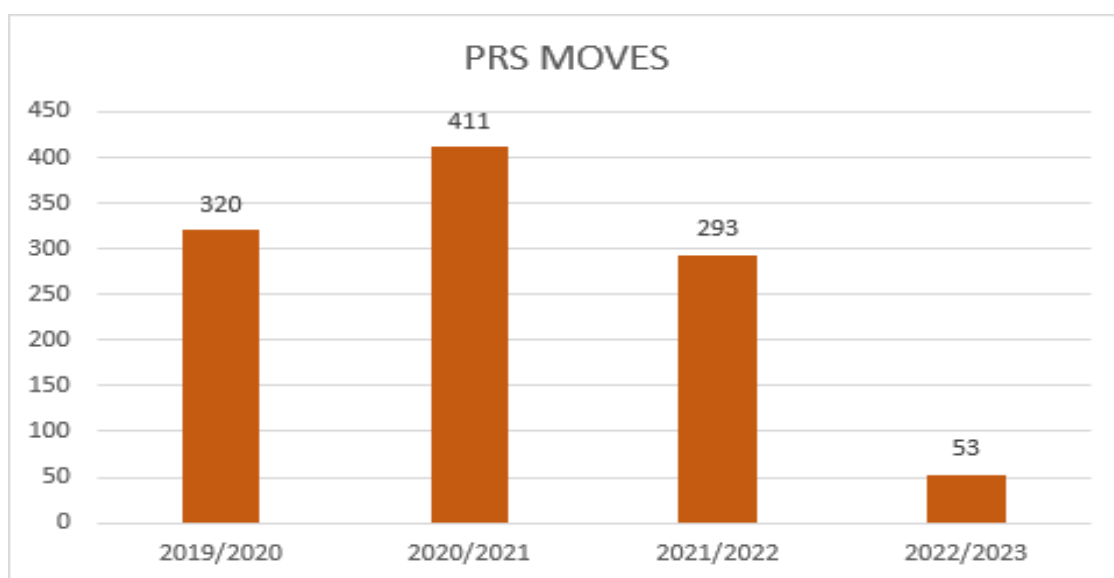
29. Hammersmith and Fulham is recognised as the 4th most expensive borough nationally, with some of the highest rents in London. Whilst every effort is made to secure its temporary accommodation provision within or close to the borough, due to the high cost, it is simply not always possible to do so. The Government has restricted the amount which tenant's dependent upon welfare benefit can claim for housing costs and this had a negative impact in regard to affordability. This gap has left many households unable to afford accommodation within central London incl Hammersmith and Fulham.
30. The table below provides a basic breakdown of the location of TA within and outside the borough. The Council operates a policy which restricts its TA procurement to within the London M25. Whilst 58% of the TA portfolio is located outside of the borough, much of this is located within the west London neighbouring boroughs which offer good transport links back to the borough. As we are unable to place every household within the borough, we operate a TA placement policy which sets out how we prioritise households for placement.

Number of TA units	Number	Percentage
TOTAL	1127	100%
Outside LBHF	653	58%
Inside LBHF	474	42%

31. The Housing Solutions Service within the Economy has collectively developed a TA Reduction Strategy which acknowledges that TA is very costly, the

accommodation procured is often at the lower end of the market and is not always located within Hammersmith & Fulham. The priority is to reduce the use of TA and increase access to the private rented sector (PRS). The avoidance or reduction of TA reduces the financial impact on the Council's General Fund whilst providing quality, suitable and settled homes.

32. The graph below demonstrates the Service's strong performance over the previous three years when procuring private rented accommodation. This shows that over 1000 households were supported and assisted into the private sector and have avoided placement into costly temporary accommodation. Families who are affected by the welfare benefit caps, are encouraged to engage with BEAM for training and employment opportunities which if successful will secure exemption from the benefit caps and open many more potential rehousing pathways.



33. The table below provides examples of actions and steps taken across the services as part of the strategic objective to reduce the number of households in TA.

Aim	Action	Status
Create a focus on TA reduction with collective ownership	Created a working group with membership across the various housing services. Bi-weekly meeting maintains a collective focus on TA reduction across the various services	Delivered
Increase awareness of TA placement trends & drivers	New TA placements monitored & discussed at working group forum; good practices highlighted and implemented.	Delivered

Promote Homefinder as an alternative option to social housing.	Established a lead officer to champion Homefinder and develop promotional publicity.	Completed
Promote rehousing opportunities in the private rented sector	Created new dedicated PRS Access Officer role currently funded through DLUHC funding	Completed
Develop New Housing Offer for customers seeking housing assistance	New Housing Offer created & implemented which includes more housing options and a personal support budget, funded by DLUHC grant	Implemented
Create TA savings within the TA provision	Analysis of current supply carried out, returned/replaced expensive TA units. Annualised savings of £160K delivered during 2021/22 .	Delivered & ongoing
TA occupancy audit	An occupancy audit was undertaken with an intensive property visit programme across all TA units. This led to the recovery of a number of TA units and ensured the units were occupied as intended.	Completed
Create better reporting tools	Suite of reports introduced and in circulation incl. demand pipeline, TA placements, creation of powerBI reporting	Implemented/remain under review
Increase supply of suitable/affordable housing in the Private Rented Sector	The Council has joined Capital Letters, a joint endeavour between London boroughs to reduce the cost of housing procurement & deliver improved outcome for homeless families.	Delivered & ongoing
Reduce TA households in TA in the face of growing demand.	Despite increases in housing demand, we have reduced the number of households in TA by approx 23% over three years.	Ongoing

Tenancy Sustainment

34. Tenancy sustainment is recognised as key to tackling the need for TA therefore the Team provide a tenancy sustainment service which include:

- Strict affordability checks: ensures that household circumstances are thoroughly assessed, and accommodation is affordable. This helps guarantee that rent can and will be paid and the tenancy can be sustained.

- Tenancy training: sessions offered to help and support households to understand and manage the expectations of living in the private sector.
 - Resettlement support: offering support from a caseworker to ensure tenants are successfully settled and set up in their new accommodation. This includes help with utility bills, rent payments, schools, GPs and, most importantly, completion of welfare applications.
 - Enabling the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to facilitate housing costs such as rent in advance, deposits, and removal costs.
 - Helpline for landlords or tenants to assist with issues that may arise at an early stage.
35. Going forward and building on our success in reducing the overall number of households in TA, we will continue to actively assist homeless residents to live independently in suitable and affordable housing in the private rented sector. We will undergo a campaign directed at our TA residents to publicise and promote the benefits of moving from TA to PRS. Our housing offer to those households seeking housing assistance will prioritise an offer of PRS (where suitable), this will help to reduce both the overall number of households in temporary accommodation and the financial burden on the General Fund.
36. Finally, we will continue to work in partnership with BEAM with the aim to assist households into training and employment opportunities, which will alleviate them from the benefit caps and widen their housing options.

APPENDICES

None.