

Report To:	OVERVIEW (AUDIT) PANEL
Date:	21 November 2016
Executive Member / Scrutiny Panel:	Councillor Gillian Peet, Chair to People Scrutiny Panel Councillor Gerald Cooney, Executive Member (Healthy and Working)
Subject:	REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND THE DEMAND FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION
Report Summary:	The Chair to People Scrutiny Panel to comment on the Executive Response (Appendix 1) to the Scrutiny review of Homelessness and the Demand for Temporary Accommodation and the recommendations made to support future services (Appendix 2).
Recommendations:	That the Overview (Audit) Panel note the recommendations detailed in Section 8 of Appendix 2 .
Links to Community Strategy:	This review supports the Community Strategy priorities relating to 'Healthy Tameside' and 'Safe Tameside'.
Policy Implications:	The review itself has no specific policy implications. Should the recommendations of this report be accepted by the Tameside Council's Executive, the relevant services will need to assess the policy implications of putting individual recommendations in place.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	Any additional costs identified in this review need to be met from existing Stronger Communities budget. Any savings identified in this review will be utilised to ensure the Stronger Communities service is achieving a balanced budget.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	This is an area which is struggling with the balance of increasing demand against an ever reducing budget. A number of policy changes are in the process of being made and these need to be kept under review.
Risk Management:	Reports of Scrutiny Panels are integral to processes which exist to hold the Executive of the authority to account.
Access to Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Joel Hammond-Gant by:



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APPENDIX 1

Post Scrutiny - Executive Response

In Respect of: Scrutiny Review of Homelessness and the Demand for Temporary Accommodation

Date: October 2016

Cabinet Deputy: Councillor Gerald Cooney (Healthy and Working)

Coordinating Officer: Emma Varnam, Assistant Executive Director, Stronger Communities

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
1. That the Council and THA closely monitor the rise in demand for services and the specific contributing factors of need in Tameside to inform future practices and resource planning.	Accepted	<p>This is an ongoing process that is embedded in quarterly contract monitoring and reports to Homelessness Prevention Strategy.</p> <p>Reports to Senior Management Team and Board have resulted in an Executive Decision to increase homelessness prevention activities and the provision of temporary accommodation, which will be informed by the ongoing monitoring.</p>	<p>Diane Barkley</p> <p>Maureen Ashcroft</p>	Quarterly monitoring reports

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
2. That where possible the Council improve publicity and promotion of homelessness information and services with clear references to the early indicators and causal factors why individuals and families commonly become homeless in the first instance.	Accepted	<p>Discussions are currently being carried out with New Charter regarding making improvements to the website and associated publicity on Tameside Housing Advice.</p> <p>Discussions will also be held with the communications team to determine how improvements can be made to the way the service uses different communication methods and incorporate it within its strategies.</p> <p>The service will continue regularly circulating information to the police, neighbourhood teams and local businesses relating to specific homelessness issues, such as what to do if someone is sleeping rough, or providing information about severe cold weather arrangements.</p>	<p>Diane Barkley</p> <p>Colm O'Brien</p> <p>Colm O'Brien</p>	<p>December 2016</p> <p>December 2016</p> <p>November 2016</p>
3. That the Council and partners look to increase the preventative work carried out by the Debt Advice team to assist people in need of financial support who are at risk of becoming homeless.	Accepted	We are working with Health and the Integrated Neighbourhood Service to provide debt advice and support for clients in a range of settings. The multi-agency working provides us with opportunities to identify individuals and families who are at risk and in need of debt advice and support before they access the formal debt advice service.	Emma Varnam	Ongoing
4. That THA and the Council work in conjunction with private landlords to expand beyond the Bond Scheme to increase the number of homelessness applicants supported through privately rented accommodation.	Accepted	We are currently looking into the range of work currently undertaken by Tameside Housing Advice and other commissioned services with private landlords, to establish a baseline of activity. We are also looking at best practice in other boroughs to help to inform the work that is undertaken with private landlords in Tameside.	Colm O'Brien	March 2017

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
5. That New Charter Housing Trust undertakes regular reviews of both successful and unsuccessful support plans to ensure that the needs of all applicants are better met through more informed management plans.	Accepted	New Charter Housing Trust is contractually required to regularly review tenant support plans. It also carries out a self-assessment procedure as part of its quality assurance process, which is validated by Council officers. This activity will continue.	Linsey Bell	Quarterly
6. That the Council and partners strive to become more knowledgeable on the health and wellbeing impacts that homelessness can create and/or exacerbate, and options to alleviate and prevent these.	Accepted	We will investigate the option of carrying out more work with Public Health and commissioned partners to ensure that people experiencing homelessness in the borough have sufficient access to primary health care services.	Diane Barkley	March 2017
7. That the Council and THA continue to deliver future improvements to the streamlining of services and take account of the direct and indirect impacts of drug and alcohol use in homelessness support provided.	Accepted	The service is working in close partnership with Lifeline, which is also a member of the Homelessness Prevention Forum. In addition, Diane Barkley is a member of the Drug and Alcohol Strategic Steering Group. This partnership work will continue and will help to inform future activities.	Diane Barkley	Quarterly
		The service is planning to include Lifeline service users when developing specifications for the commissioning of homelessness services, to make sure that the specific needs of drug and alcohol service users are taken account of.	Diane Barkley	March 2017
8. That the annual action plans of the Tameside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-18 are informed by discussions and data sharing with all statutory and non-statutory homelessness services.	Accepted	The annual action plan is developed and its implementation is overseen by the multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Forum. This ensures that a range of agencies participate in and share responsibility for the prevention of homelessness in the borough.	Colm O'Brien	Quarterly

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
9. That Tameside's homelessness services undertake a significant, multi-agency review of the impacts of heightening resource pressure on the future delivery of services, to determine if alternate models will be required to improve sustainability.	Accepted	The Council is a part of the Greater Manchester proposal to the Department for Communities and Local Government to pilot the implementation of proposed new Homelessness Prevention Duty (Private members bill) in Greater Manchester. This will test out new prevention initiatives and help to inform future work undertaken in Tameside.	Diane Barkley	September 2017

APPENDIX 2

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

- 1.1 The People Scrutiny Panel is pleased to present this report to you. It follows a review into Homelessness in Tameside that was carried out between January and April 2016 by a working group of the Panel.
- 1.2 Being homeless can be physically and mentally difficult and homeless people are among the most vulnerable in the community. The Panel were motivated to undertake this review following the increasing media reports of the health conditions and low life expectancy that homeless people face.
- 1.3 Through their own observations, Panel members were aware that the numbers of homeless people appeared to be growing and specifically cited the increased prevalence of homeless people seen in the streets across Greater Manchester.
- 1.4 The People Scrutiny Panel carried out this review in order to gain the fullest understanding of the current situation in Tameside and to ascertain what actions can be taken to improve the wellbeing of the homeless population in the borough.
- 1.5 Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) data recorded 69,140 households in temporary accommodation across the country at the end of December 2015. This figure has been increasing every quarter for over 4 years, highlighting how crucial it is that the urgency for local homelessness is recognised and prioritised.
- 1.6 Under the Housing Act 1996, the Council has a range of duties and powers to provide suitable temporary accommodation to those in need. It should provide a range of services and support mechanisms that help to alleviate the negative impacts of homelessness, provide homeless people with a means to establish sustainable, independent living, and to prevent homelessness in the first instance.
- 1.7 Residents can present themselves as homeless for a number of reasons, often citing a complex relation of interlinking factors as the reason for them becoming homeless. Rental arrears resulting from changes to welfare provision is the most frequently quoted reason for needing to access homeless support in the UK.
- 1.8 This report will endeavour to determine the extent of homelessness in Tameside and the most effective ways for the Council and partners to help people and families in need, to ensure that all residents are accommodated and supported in sustaining independent living.
- 1.9 On behalf of the People Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.

Councillor Gillian Peet, Chair to People Scrutiny Panel

2. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

- 2.1 The acute impacts of homelessness in Tameside are exemplified by the 321% rise (118 in total) in the number of people accessing temporary accommodation since 2014. This rise has confirmed to Tameside and all other authorities in Greater Manchester the need to take sufficient, comprehensive action to counter homelessness.
- 2.2 With over 40% of homeless people in England having at least one mental health condition and a large proportion using drugs and/or alcohol, it is apparent that there is a need to take

on a more holistic approach to tackling homelessness that helps to identify the common driving causes and triggers in Tameside and determine how substance abuse/misuse and other lifestyle choices can exacerbate a person's vulnerability and ability to sustain independent living.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL – 2015/16

Councillor Peet (Chair), Councillor Drennan (Deputy Chair).
Councillors Affleck, Ballagher, Beeley, Cartey, Cooper, P Fitzpatrick, Kinsey, Ryan, Shember-Critchley, T Smith, Whitehead, Wild.

Co-opted Members Ahmed, Aspin, Gregory, Marsh, Osmond, Sharma.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim of the Review

4.1 To ensure that the Council provide the best possible services in order to:

- Reduce homelessness in Tameside
- Deal effectively with homeless emergencies
- Bring people out of homelessness

Objectives

- 4.2
1. To understand the extent of homelessness and the demand for temporary accommodation in Tameside.
 2. To examine the range of issues that can lead to an individual or family presenting as homeless.
 3. To review the services aimed at preventing homelessness and how positive, sustainable outcomes can be achieved.
 4. To look at the available options that can reduce the demand for temporary accommodation.
 5. To understand the role of the Council and the partnership approach that is required to address the range of issues related to homelessness.
 6. To understand the views and needs of the service users and look at the range of services available to them.
 7. To examine how changes to welfare and pressures on services have impacted on the most vulnerable residents of Tameside and contributed to homelessness.
 8. To produce workable recommendations to deliver reductions in homelessness and improvements in services for the homeless in Tameside.

Value for Money/Use of Resources

- 4.3 It is important that people and families without homes in Tameside are provided with safe accommodation and a supportive network and environment that leads to improved and sustainable outcomes. It is essential that the Council and partners work collaboratively to reduce the impact of homelessness and the demand for temporary accommodation. Effective strategies will identify the factors and issues relating to homelessness and improve the living environments for people and families across the borough.

Equalities Issues

- 4.4 Homelessness can impact on all sections of Tameside's communities. The review will consider strategies that lead to safe and positive environments across all ages and backgrounds.

People and Place Scorecard

- 4.5 The following targets from the People and Place Scorecard relate to the Homelessness and the Demand for Temporary Accommodation review.

Strong Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary accommodation (B&B) – number of people and days
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5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 To meet with Diane Barkley, Poverty and Prevention Manager, to receive an overview of homelessness in the borough and of the demand for temporary accommodation.
- 5.2 To meet with Maureen Ashcroft, Tameside Housing Advice Manager, New Charter Housing Trust (NCHT); Ian Schofield, Supported Housing Manager (NCHT); Colm O'Brien, Senior Housing Strategy Officer (TMBC); and Kerrie Pryde, Head of Commercial and Partnership Services (NCHT), to receive information about the statutory homelessness services provided in Tameside.
- 5.3 To visit Tameside Housing Advice Service to gain first-hand experience of how the frontline homelessness service in the borough supports people with different housing needs.
- 5.4 To visit Gibson Terrace (NCHT temporary supported housing provision) to obtain a better understanding of the range and level of support available to residents through temporary accommodation, as well as how they are helped to find and sustain permanent accommodation.
- 5.5 To meet with Janine Yates, Team Manager, Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Service; and Anne Whittle, Senior Debt Adviser, to receive information on how debt issues influence homelessness in Tameside, and how debt advice is used to support and inform residents.
- 5.6 To visit Emmaus Mossley, to understand how the service operates and proactively supports people experiencing homelessness, as well as the schemes in place to improve personal and employable skills.
- 5.7 To visit Greystones Tameside, to receive more specific information and develop a greater understanding of how the service provides help to those presenting as homeless, and helps them to find more sustainable accommodation.

6. REVIEW FINDINGS

Homelessness

- 6.1 An individual or family is defined as being statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them and is reasonable for them to continue to live in.
- 6.2 Under the Housing Act (1996), the Council has a statutory duty to secure accommodation for applicants with pending enquiries on their applications, provide reasonable notice to leave temporary accommodation if an applicant is intentionally homeless, and secure temporary accommodation pending offers of suitable, settled accommodation. The Council also has the power to provide accommodation pending the review and appeal of a homelessness decision.
- 6.3 Local authorities have a 'main homelessness duty' to help all individuals and families who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This duty also requires all authorities to ensure suitable accommodation is available to people in priority need if they are eligible for assistance and are unintentionally homeless.

Priority Need

- 6.4 Before May 2015, local authorities used the “Pereira test” to determine priority need, which ascertained this by comparing an applicant’s situation to that of a homeless person who is already sleeping rough. In 2015 the Supreme Court judged that this is not a suitable comparison and subsequently changed the assessment to assess whether a homeless applicant is more vulnerable than an ordinary person if made homeless rather than an actual homeless person.
- 6.5 The judgement also included the decision that the local authority cannot take into account the authority’s resources or issues such as lack of funding or the supply of suitable accommodation.

The Assessment Process

- 6.6 The authority must also decide whether the applicant is actually homeless and vulnerable, whether the homelessness was intentional and whether they have a priority need because they or at least one person involved in the application comply with one of the following:
- Living with dependent(s) under 16 or under 19 and in full-time education or training
 - Pregnant
 - Aged 16 or 17 and are not eligible for housing from social services
 - Aged 18 to 21 and previously lived in care
 - Been made homeless by fire, flood or another disaster or emergency
 - Vulnerable (due to old age, physical or mental health problems, have been in care, fleeing violence or harassment, served in the armed forces, or served time in a prison/young offender’s institute)
- 6.7 The authority may also consider whether the applicant has a local connection with the borough.

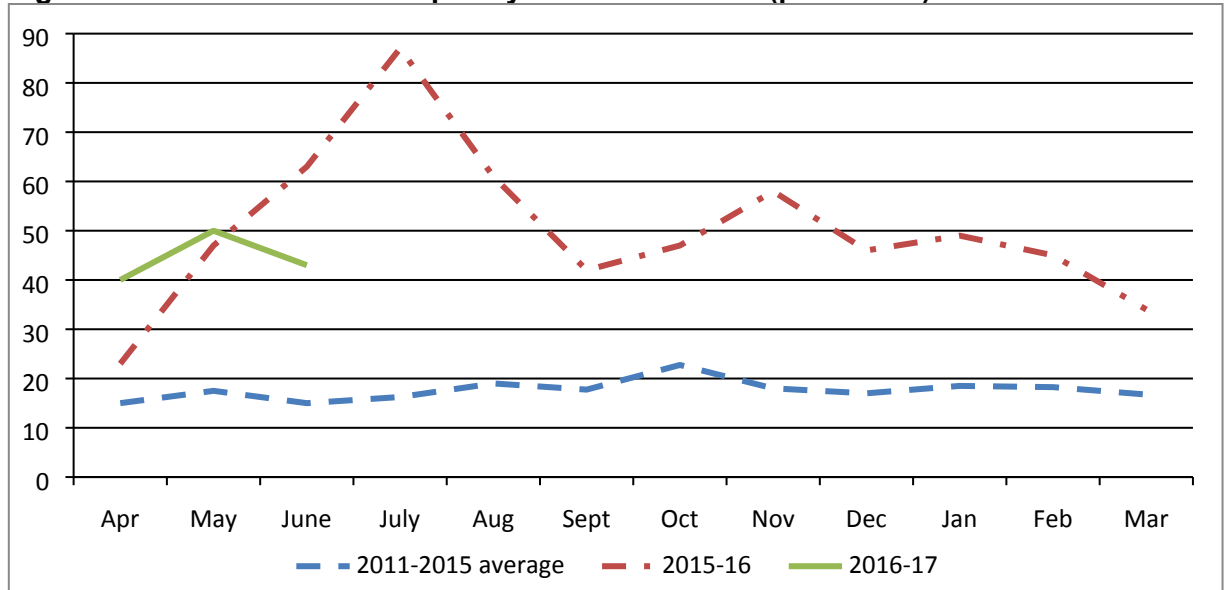
Temporary Accommodation

- 6.8 The rising number of homeless people combined with an increasing pressure placed on Council resources, has led to a quick rise in the demand for temporary accommodation in Tameside. These are short term, temporary housing provisions that are used until settled accommodation becomes available.
- 6.9 As at 2 February 2016 there are 52 units of supported temporary accommodation in Tameside (see Section 6.45) which are allocated to people in accordance with the Council’s duties and powers to provide temporary accommodation. In 2015 the Supreme Court ruled that local authorities should always strive to find in-borough temporary housing where practicable, or otherwise accommodate applicants as close to their previous residence as possible.

The Local Picture

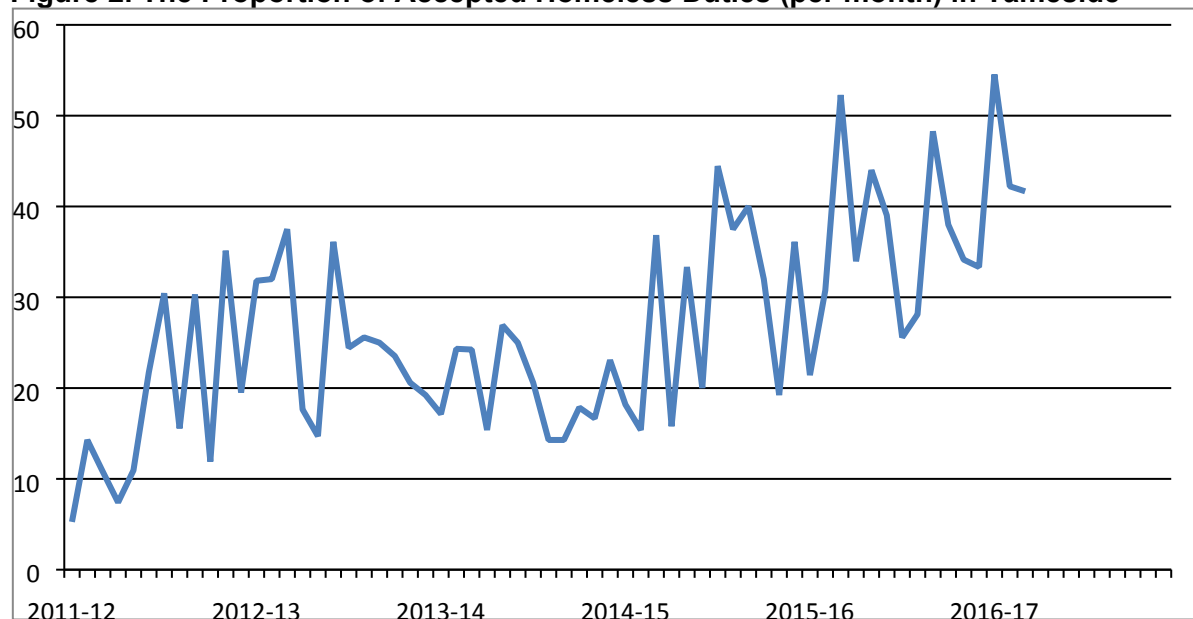
- 6.10 The levels of homelessness and the demand for temporary accommodation in Tameside have both risen considerably since 2014. The data for this period shows a sudden increase compared to previous year, which is likely attributable to the 2015 Supreme Court rulings.

Figure 1. The Demand for Temporary Accommodation (per month) in Tameside



- 6.11 Figure 1 above shows the contrast between the demand for temporary accommodation in the first quarter of 2016/17 (averaging at 48 individuals placed per month), 2015/16 (averaging at 52 individuals placed per month), and the previous 4 years (averaging at 17 individuals placed per month).
- 6.12 As at 4 January 2016 a total of 53 households were in temporary accommodation, which comprised of:
- 35 one person households
 - 11 families with children or an expectant child
 - 7 couples
- 6.13 Despite the rise in demand for temporary accommodation, the number of people accessing Tameside Housing Advice (THA) was lower in 2015/16 (302 people per month) than the previous 4 years (353 people per month). This contrast could be due to increased efforts and resources focusing on early intervention and prevention.

Figure 2. The Proportion of Accepted Homeless Duties (per month) in Tameside



- 6.14 Figure 2 above shows that the number of accepted homeless duties in Tameside has continued to rise over the last 5 years (April to March). Data collected by THA shows that since 2011/12, the annual average of accepted duties has risen from 18% to 46%.
- 6.15 The number of rough sleepers in Tameside has risen quite significantly over the space of 12 months. The Council estimated that as at 19 November 2015 there were 14 rough sleepers in the borough, an increase of 100% from 2014/15.
- 6.16 It is acknowledged that without an extensive qualitative investigation, it is difficult to conclusively state why more people are becoming homeless. The Homeless Monitor: England 2015 study is the most comprehensive undertaken to date, and states that a combination of welfare cuts, policy changes and pressure on the housing market is the major cause of increased homelessness.

Conclusions

1. The demand for temporary accommodation is approximately 200% higher in 2015/16 than the average of the previous four years.
2. All local authorities have a statutory duty to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and ensure that accommodation is always available to those in priority need.
3. The Supreme Court altered the way vulnerability assessments are conducted in 2015 to the effect that all homeless applicants are now given the most appropriate help and support possible, which has led to a higher proportion of applicants in Tameside receiving a statutory homelessness duty.
4. Homeless Monitor found through a 2015 study that an interlinking combination of welfare cuts, policy changes and pressure on the housing market is a common cause of homelessness across the UK.

Causes of Homelessness

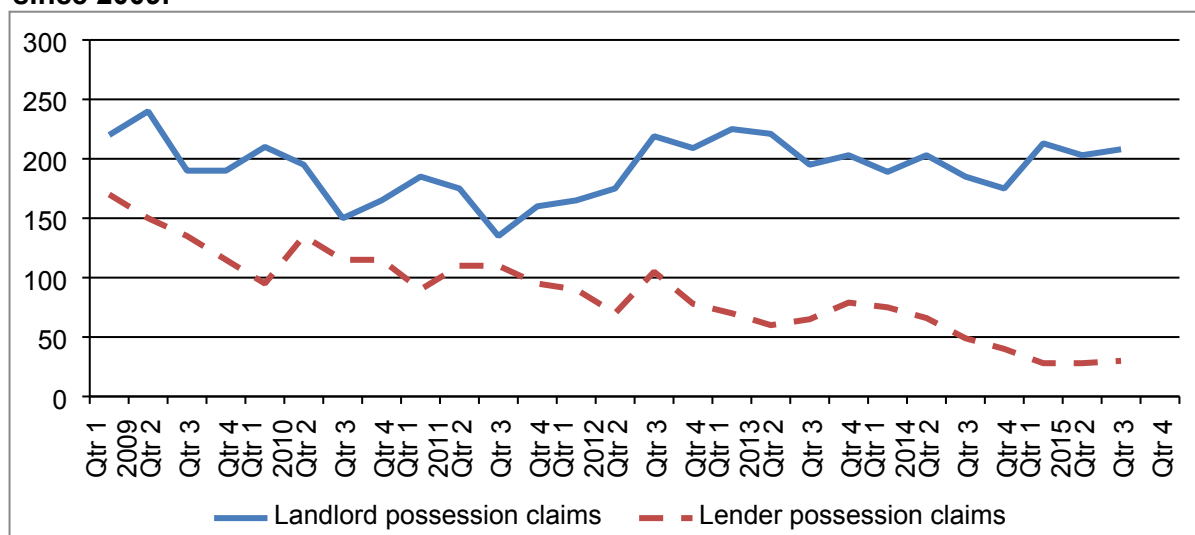
- 6.17 The causes of homelessness are diverse and most often the consequence of a combination of interrelated individual factors and wider structural issues. The ending of a short-term tenancy as a result of housing benefits and welfare payments not matching rent price increases is the most frequently cited cause of homelessness in England.
- 6.18 Anecdotal evidence confirms that this is also an issue for Tameside tenants, with a high proportion of those receiving benefits finding it increasingly difficult to access private tenancies and afford housing costs. With fewer landlords taking advantage of the Council's Bond Scheme (see Section 6.40), fewer homeless applicants are receiving the chance to sustain independent living.
- 6.19 The most common reasons for homeless applications being submitted in Tameside between April and November 2015 were:
- Relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate
 - Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
 - Non-violent breakdown of a relationship with a partner
 - Violent breakdown of a relationship with a partner
- 6.20 The range of personal circumstances that can contribute to a person becoming homeless include:
- **Relationship Breakdown** – The breakdown of a marriage or partnership (violent and non-violent) can result in the loss of permanent accommodation for a significant amount of time. If a person has no friends or family to stay with then they may present as homeless.

- **Lack of Qualifications/Employment** – Lack of work is seen as a contributing factor to the cause and consequence of homelessness. In Tameside, 35% of residents aged 16-74 have no qualifications and 18% of all residents are currently claiming out-of-work benefits.
- **Personal Debt** – The Trade Union Congress (2016) has found that the proportion of household debt is continuing to increase and is currently at its highest for five years, with all UK homes owing an average of 26.5% of their annual income on loans and credit cards.
- **Mortgage or Rent Arrears** – Mortgage and rent arrears are becoming increasingly common causes of homelessness. During 2013/14, mortgage and landlord possession claims were made on 1 out of every 85 households within Tameside.
- **Health Issues** – Physical disabilities, mental illnesses or dependency issues can trigger, or be a part of a chain of events leading to someone becoming homeless.
- **Family Background** – There is wide research and documentation on the link between childhood abuse (physical and mental) and homelessness, and becoming homeless in adulthood.

6.21 The following social and economic impacts can also have an impact on the levels of homelessness:

- **Housing Market** – Rising house prices are resulting in increasingly unaffordable mortgage deposits/payments and rental agreements, which combined with the growing lack of housing supply, are making it more difficult for people to secure housing.
- **Unemployment** – Aside from the foremost impact of a lack of sustainable income, people not in a job can lose self-esteem and confidence which can make them less proactive in accessing support services. It is widely acknowledged by various authorities that improving the transferable skills and confidence in homeless people is crucial to improving their long-term situation.
- **Poverty** – People in poverty live with less than 60% of the median income and resources compared to the 'average' household and therefore struggle to sustain accommodation. Joseph Rowntree Foundation research has also found that poverty can generate conditions that make criminal activities in younger people more likely than would otherwise be the case. Youth offenders can find it more difficult to maintain employment and afford accommodation in future, which in some cases leads to homelessness.
- **Welfare Changes** – The changes that have been made following the Welfare Reform Act (2012) (see Sections 6.23 – 6.30) have had a considerable impact on residents in Tameside, particularly their ability to afford accommodation.

Figure 3. Quarterly Landlord and Lender Possession Claims Submitted in Tameside since 2009.



- 6.22 Figure 3 above shows that possession claims on mortgaged properties have declined significantly since 2009, owing largely to recent lower mortgage interest rates. Rental property possession claims, in contrast, have been consistently high since 2012 when the Welfare Reform Act was introduced.

Impacts of Changes to Welfare

- 6.23 One of the first changes after the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act was in January 2012 to Local Housing Allowance. Restrictions were applied to the shared room rate for all single people aged up to 35 instead of the previous 25. This means that all new, and some existing claimants are only entitled to the reduced shared room rate.
- 6.24 In April 2012, the number of hours that a couple had to work to qualify for tax credits increased from 16 to 24, with at least one person per household required to work a minimum of 16 hours to qualify for working tax credits of up to £3870 per year. At the time that this was implemented it is estimated that 850 households in Tameside with approximately 2000 children were affected by the change.
- 6.25 A restriction on benefits (commonly known as Bedroom Tax) was implemented in April 2013 which reduced the help received by households with one unused bedroom by 14% and by 25% for those with more than one spare bedroom. It is believed that this is one of the largest contributing factors that has led to the heightened number of households in rent arrears.
- 6.26 Reforms to Disability Living Allowance introduced a new replacement benefit called Personal Independence Payments from June 2013. Some residents who have been reassessed have had their benefits reduced or stopped entirely, which has led to a number of households falling into arrears.
- 6.27 The total amount of benefits that a household can be in receipt of was capped in 2013 and saw non-working households with children limited to £500 per week, and £350 per week for those without children. These totals are due to be capped further in November 2016 to £385 and £258 a week, respectively, with any excess amount taken from Housing Benefit.
- 6.28 When Universal Credit was introduced in April 2013 claimants had to wait a minimum of 5 weeks before receiving the first payment, meaning that some households consequently ended up falling behind on rental or mortgage payments. On top of this, claimants now have an additional waiting period before a claim can be made of 7 days.
- 6.29 In April 2016 it is planned for backdated Housing Benefit payments to be reduced to one month rather than six. Backdated payments have until now been utilised by debt advice services and local housing providers to help prevent housing evictions. At the same time, the waiting period for support with mortgage interests will be increased from 13 weeks to 39. These reductions in financial support for housing are likely to increase homelessness in the future.
- 6.30 Another upcoming change to welfare includes the removal of the Family Premium (an additional £17.45 allocated within housing benefits for households with one or more dependent children) from 1 May 2016, which will affect new claims from this date.

Conclusions

5. The causes of homelessness are often very diverse and may be the result of a combination of interrelated individual and structural issues.
6. Homeless applicants in Tameside most frequently cited having no family or friends willing to accommodate them, or the breakdown of a relationship with a partner as the reason(s) for them becoming homeless.
7. A number of residents in Tameside have been put under financial pressure as a result of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) and as a result are more frequently entering into rent or mortgage arrears.

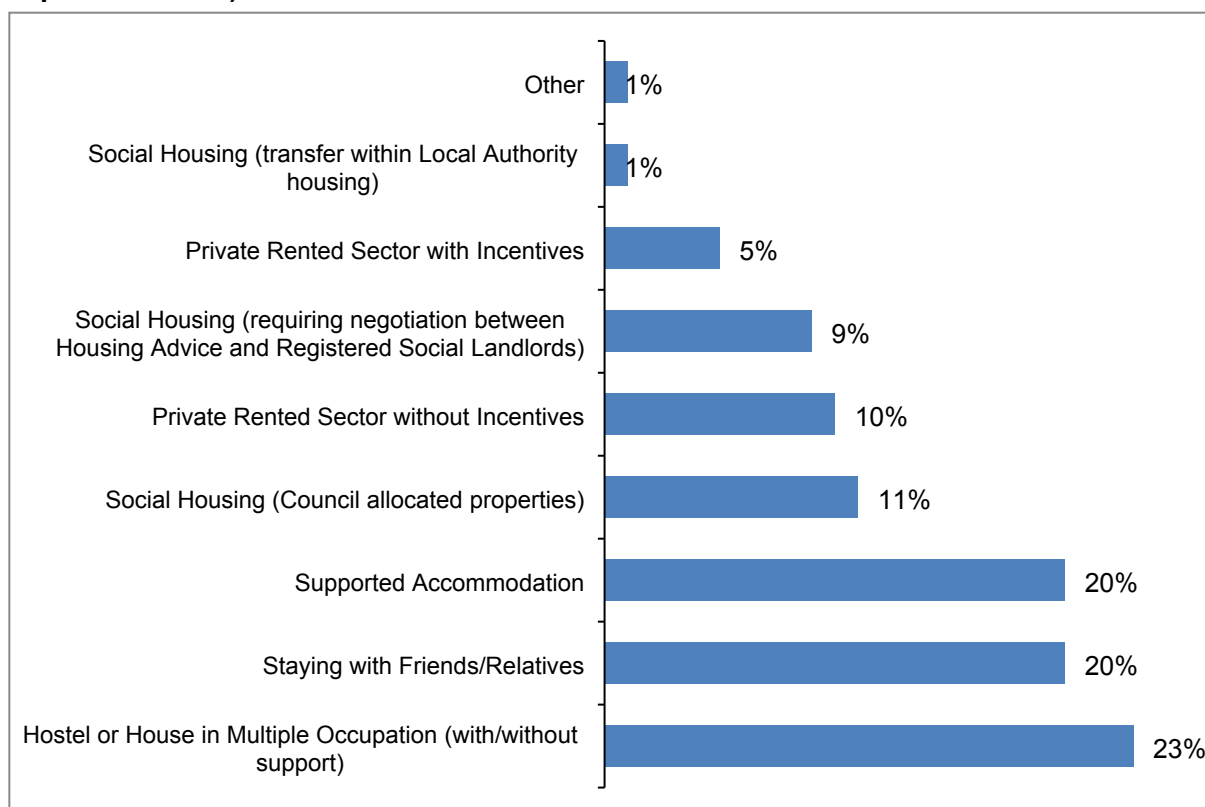
Recommendations

1. That the Council and THA closely monitor the rise in demand for services and the specific contributing factors of need in Tameside to inform future practices and resource planning.
2. That where possible the Council improve publicity and promotion of homelessness information and services with clear references to the early indicators and causal factors why individuals and families commonly become homeless in the first instance.

Preventing Homelessness

- 6.31 Under the Homelessness Act (2002), all local authorities are required to have a homelessness strategy that focuses on preventing and alleviating the impacts of all forms of homelessness. This must also include plans for securing sufficient temporary accommodation for any sized family at any point in the year.
- 6.32 The Tameside Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 has the following key themes:
- Early Intervention and Prevention
 - Accommodation and Access
 - Positive Move-on and Sustainability
 - Improving Health and Wellbeing
- 6.33 **Early Intervention and Prevention** – The early intervention and prevention of homelessness is a key priority for local authorities nationwide. Funding is provided by the DCLG through a Homeless Prevention Fund that is to support prevention initiatives.

Figure 4. Accommodation Solutions for Homeless Cases in Tameside (April 2013 – September 2015)



- 6.34 Figure 4 above shows that there are a range of solutions that have been used to resolve homelessness applications in Tameside. Between April 2015 and June 2016, THA was able to prevent 905 homeless applicants from experiencing homelessness.
- 6.35 **Debt Advice** – The importance of receiving timely debt advice has been emphasised by the rising numbers of households falling into arrears and/or having county court possession claims for their properties. Homeless Monitor estimate that in 2014/15, a total of 220,000 potential homelessness applicants accessed debt advice services and prevented formal homelessness applications being submitted.
- 6.36 In order to account for the growing impacts of Welfare Reform on Tameside residents, the Council's debt advice team have been co-located within THA to offer residents an immediate response for any financial issues. The majority of work carried out by the Council's Debt Advice team is with residents at risk of homelessness due to rent or mortgage arrears.
- 6.37 Residents most commonly received advice on lender and landlord negotiations, organising repayment plans and/or representation at County Court hearings. In 2015, mortgage and rent arrears accounted for 26% and 8% respectively, of the total debt dealt with by the service.
- 6.38 Since 2009, mortgage lenders have been required to inform the Council whenever they are taking action in the County Court to gain possession of a property. The Debt Advice service sends an individual letter to each of these households offering advice and support, however, during this time only 23% have accepted the offer of assistance.
- 6.39 Between January and December 2015:
- 490 residents were given debt advice (71% of which were in rented accommodation)
 - 203 of the cases required more detailed intervention through casework
 - 63 cases were represented at County Court (with a 95% success rate)

- 471 of the cases managed were completed and closed

- 6.40 There are a number of other schemes run borough-wide that aim to prevent homelessness. For example, THA runs the Tameside Social Lettings Service, which includes both the Tameside Bond Scheme and the Tenant Finder Scheme. The Bond Scheme is intended to increase the numbers of private landlords accepting homelessness applicants as tenants, by assuring them that the Council will finance initial deposit costs. As at March 2016, the scheme has helped to successfully re-house 5% of homeless applicants that met the criteria for having a housing duty.
- 6.41 The Tenant Finder Scheme seeks to make renting to homelessness applicants more appealing by supporting landlords with the legal requirements and repairs when renting their properties. Efforts to promote both of these schemes are ongoing and will continue.
- 6.42 New Charter Housing Trust (NCHT) runs the Sanctuary Scheme in Tameside, which was established to specifically aid households affected by domestic abuse. Residents are supported and encouraged to feel safe remaining at home by providing enhanced in-situ security measures, such as window and door locks, gates, and CCTV.
- 6.43 Tameside Public Health funds a Homelessness Prevention Officer to work with local hospitals to deliver the Greater Manchester Hospital Discharge Protocol. The officer enables medical and homelessness staff to work together to provide patients with a pathway from the hospital to suitable accommodation upon discharge.
- 6.44 **Accommodation and Access** – Based on the information provided in a homelessness application (personal background, financial situation, employment and accommodation history, local connections), THA officers are able to ascertain whether an applicant meets the criteria and is eligible for the main homelessness duty.
- 6.45 THA will conduct a suitability assessment, which determines the most suitable temporary accommodation for the needs of the applicant(s). This takes account a wide range of factors including the proximity to employment and/or schools.

Figure 5. Temporary Accommodation Provisions in Tameside (February 2016)

	Number of Units	Support Available
Gibson Terrace (Ashton)	21	24/7 staff support
Waterton Lane (Mossley)	15	Day staff and on-call response
Lyne View (Hyde)	11	Day staff and on-call response
Dispersed Units (on NCHT Estates)	5	Visiting staff and on-call response

- 6.46 The table above shows the break down and dispersion, and the level of staff support present at the 52 temporary accommodation units contracted to NCHT. These units are available to people and families in accordance with the Council's powers and duties under the Housing Act (1996).
- 6.47 Due to the growing demand on temporary accommodation and pressure on Council resources, it is becoming increasingly common for households to be placed in bed and breakfast establishments (B&Bs) or out-of-area provisions. It has also become necessary to utilise the private rental sector to help to move more people on to independent living and free up temporary accommodation provisions.

- 6.48 Resource pressure on the local authority has resulted in a 65% reduction in the provision of commissioned supported housing. This has had a notable impact on the homelessness prevention options available to the Council, and has consequently put considerable pressure on services to continue providing effective personal and housing support despite the reduction in capacity.
- 6.49 Applicants who do not qualify for the main homelessness duty can be supported in different ways (see Sections 6.62 – 6.77). In addition to this, THA will ensure that all applicants are on the Council's housing register and are receiving the correct support through benefit payments. Social housing is provided by a number of Registered Providers in Tameside including NCHT, Ashton Pioneer Homes and Peak Valley Housing Association.
- 6.50 Homeless households can access permanent accommodation through the Council's housing register administered at THA. The Council has a statutory duty to give reasonable preference in the allocation of accommodation to those who have been given a homelessness duty alongside other types of household who have been defined by legislation as being in housing need.
- 6.51 The Council also has nomination agreements in place with the majority of key social housing providers operating in the borough who provide an agreed percentage of their properties once they become vacant. The level of priority any household gets once they have been accepted onto the register is outlined in the Council's Allocation Scheme with a new policy due to be introduced in October 2016.
- 6.52 **Positive Move-on and Sustainability** – To make best use of temporary accommodation, stricter move-on targets have been established. NCHT now aims to move residents on to suitable, sustainable and permanent accommodation within 3 months.
- 6.53 All residents in NCHT temporary accommodation provisions are appointed a key worker who helps them to progress into independent living by creating individual support plans that focus on:
- Resettlement and move-on
 - Life skills (budgeting, benefits and welfare rights)
 - Social, leisure and community access
 - Education
 - Training and skills building
 - Employment
 - Health and safety
 - Counselling
 - Drug and alcohol advice
 - Children's play and learning activities
- 6.54 Housing associations stress the importance in producing effective support plans that cater to as many of the above factors as possible in order to successfully develop confidence and transferrable skills in the applicant. Confidence-building is cited by a number of authorities working with the homeless as the most important factor in helping them to develop a solid foundation to build on and work towards securing employment and permanent accommodation.
- 6.55 For households moving through NCHT temporary accommodation, 92% moved through in a planned way with a positive outcome. These individuals and families moved-on into the following accommodation:
- Secured social housing (60%)
 - Supported housing (20%)
 - Secured private sector housing (11%)
 - Moved in with family/friends (9%)

- 6.56 **Improving Health and Wellbeing** – Homelessness is commonly linked to a range of health and social issues that can exacerbate the vulnerability of a homeless person. Substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental health issues, low educational attainment and domestic violence are some of the notable problems linked with homelessness in Tameside.
- 6.57 Research from Homeless Link stresses the importance of improving health and wellbeing as a means of preventing further homelessness, after finding that:
- 86% of homeless people reported mental health difficulties
 - 44% reported long term (over 12 months) health problems
 - 27% admitted to alcohol misuse/abuse
 - 41% use/are in recovery for using drugs
 - 43% use drugs and alcohol to cope with mental health difficulties
- 6.58 In addition, a study undertaken by the Royal College of Physicians found that two thirds of serious health problems suffered by homeless people predated their homelessness but that by being homeless their conditions were worsened such that treatment costs rose by up to a third.
- 6.59 Multi-agency meetings, formally known as Clean Room Discussions, are held at the Denton Hub to provide services and authorities with the opportunity to discuss particular complex cases, to make sure that any homeless people or families with complex needs are receiving the robust support that they require.
- 6.60 Making Every Contact Count is another initiative that was implemented in Tameside to help to improve the wellbeing of residents. It requires agencies across all sectors to:
- Take a long term view to encourage change at an organisational, community and individual level
 - Promote the adoption of healthy lifestyles to people in Tameside
 - Actively encourage involvement by all partner organisations working to improve health and wellbeing
 - Provide training and resources for key workers who are able to promote and support healthy lifestyles
- 6.61 Making Every Contact Count has emphasised the need for partnership work between all authorities and sectors and promotes the sharing of cases between sectors to ensure the most effective outcomes for homeless people, as well as the most efficient use of resources.

Conclusions

8. Owing to the growing pressure on resources, the Council is utilising alternative forms of temporary accommodation including B&B's and out-of-area provisions to make sure all residents have access to accommodation.
9. Tameside's Preventing Homelessness Strategy is built on early intervention and prevention, providing accommodation to as many as possible, promoting positive move-on and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
10. Between April and December 2015, Tameside Housing Advice was able to prevent 448 homeless applicants from becoming homeless in the first instance.
11. The Council's Debt Advice service provided advice to 490 residents and gave representation at County Court for 63 cases with a 95% success rate. In 2015, over 96% of the cases were completed and closed.
12. New Charter Housing Trust has been able to help 92% of residents in its temporary

accommodation move-on into sustainable accommodation.

13. Homelessness is closely tied to an abundance of social, physical and mental health issues that can make a person more vulnerable when sleeping rough, and to other issues like substance misuse.

Recommendations

3. That the Council and partners look to increase the preventative work carried out by the Debt Advice team to assist people in need of financial support who are at risk of becoming homeless.
4. That THA and the Council work in conjunction with private landlords to expand beyond the Bond Scheme to increase the number of homelessness applicants supported through privately rented accommodation.
5. That New Charter Housing Trust undertakes regular reviews of both successful and unsuccessful support plans to ensure that the needs of all applicants are better met through more informed management plans.
6. That the Council and partners strive to become more knowledgeable on the health and wellbeing impacts that homelessness can create and/or exacerbate, and options to alleviate and prevent these.
7. That the Council and THA continue to deliver future improvements to the streamlining of services and take account of the direct and indirect impacts of drug and alcohol use in homelessness support provided.

Non-Statutory Homeless Support

- 6.62 If a person or household is not deemed to be in priority need of a homelessness duty, they are triaged through THA and referred to non-statutory homeless support services that operate within the borough. These services provide a range of supported accommodation where staff are available to help homeless people to deal with issues such as debt, benefits, access to health and other services to assist them to move on to independent living.
- 6.63 As part of the triage process, housing officers will provide all relevant advice and refer people to a number of different housing, healthcare and/or social care services. They will also ensure that they are properly registered on the social housing register and understand how the private rented sector works, as well as where they can receive debt advice.
- 6.64 THA is now the single point of access for homelessness applications, triaging and advice, and supporting housing in the borough. Applicants and the organisations supporting them now only need to make one referral and can still receive the most suitable options available to them, while best use is being made of the limited supported housing resources available.
- 6.65 **Foundation** – Foundation Tameside provides 16 units of supported accommodation for single homeless people with complex needs. The accommodation is provided in a combination of hostel-based and dispersed accommodation at various locations in the borough.
- 6.66 Foundation aims to deliver a holistic service to those in need, to help them to develop confidence and make positive choices in all aspects of their lives. Good health has been identified as a priority area in Foundation's Development and Growth Strategy 2015-18.
- 6.67 **Threshold** – Threshold provides 16 units of supported accommodation for single homeless people with less complex needs, which is provided in a range of units that are located across the borough.

- 6.68 Threshold and NCHT jointly manage the women's refuge, which is part of the Council's integrated domestic abuse service. The refuge provides accommodation and support for a minimum of 17 women and children, with 24-hour staffing. It also provides dispersed accommodation and resettlement support to people living in the community.
- 6.69 **Greystones** – Greystones Tameside is a supported and temporary accommodation provision for males with additional support needs, most commonly for substance/alcohol abuse. The Council commissions 15 units of supported accommodation that is located within a scheme in Ashton. All residents are helped to tackle specific issues that are preventing them from sustaining independent living.
- 6.70 Greystones can be used as a care-of address for the residents to apply for, and receive their entitled benefits. Over the last year, of the 27 residents discharged from the service, 25 were successfully re-housed into more long term solutions.
- 6.71 **Impact** – Impact delivers an outreach and accommodation service for reported cases of rough sleeping and a day service for Tameside residents who are currently, or at risk of becoming homeless. People can be provided with food, washing facilities, a clothing store and help with accessing other key services.
- 6.72 **ANew Approach** – This service is part of the Council's commissioned drugs and alcohol support provision that is delivered by Lifeline. A sub-contract within the Lifeline service provides supported housing in small, shared houses for people in recovery from drugs and alcohol misuse/abuse.
- 6.73 **Adullam Homes** – Adullam provides tenancy support for people living in their own homes and those who have moved on from supported and temporary housing who need help to avoid homelessness. Through its five year corporate strategy 'Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives', programmes of activities are provided to make sure that people can maintain their tenancies and access training and work opportunities. It also provides an accredited peer mentoring course and a range of volunteering opportunities.

Conclusions

14. There are several supported and temporary accommodation provisions across Tameside that are available to homeless applicants who do not qualify for a statutory homelessness duty.

Other Homelessness Services in Tameside

- 6.74 In addition to the supported housing services commissioned by the Council, Greystones provides safe housing with low level support for men who have previously experienced homelessness in two other locations in Tameside.
- 6.75 **Emmaus** – Emmaus follows an alternative view to helping the homeless and offers housing, work and support to 24 previously homeless and unemployed 'companions'. All companions are required to work to help the project function, and in doing so, are able to take on a number of different working roles.
- 6.76 The project is able to finance itself through a combination of housing benefit and social enterprise. Donations and collections of furniture, bric-a-brac, antiques, electrical appliances, clothing, books and toys are accepted and sold on at the Emmaus Second-Hand Superstore.
- 6.77 A workshop is present at the project, which offers training in the manufacturing and renovation of different materials and furniture, helping to develop the companions' skills, and familiarise them with a daily working routine for when they move-on. Up-cycled goods are either sold to help finance the project or given to families in need.

Going Forward

- 6.78 The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2021 sets out a number of priorities to help residents have the best possible opportunities to live healthy and fulfilling lives that also relate to reducing the incidence and severity of homelessness:
- Helping people to live independent lifestyles supported by responsible communities
 - Improving housing choice
 - Protecting the most vulnerable in the borough
 - Improving the health and wellbeing of residents
 - Reducing levels of benefit dependency
- 6.79 In addition to this, the Tameside Homeless Prevention Strategy 2013-18 was introduced to establish more focused plans to tackle homelessness. As mentioned in Section 6.36, the First Year Action Plan 2014/15 of the strategy put a focus on four key themes in order to create the most robust and holistic approach to homelessness prevention.
- 6.80 The Strategy is implemented via an annual action plan created by the Preventing Homelessness Forum. This multi-agency group is responsible for ensuring that the Council is pursuing all relevant targets and priority issues relating to homelessness.
- 6.81 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is also reviewed annually to allow any necessary amendments to be made to its targets and approaches to combat any future policy, budget or commissioning changes, and to incorporate new and changing homelessness prevention themes.
- 6.82 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16 has a number of the strategies related to alleviating the impacts of homelessness, such as its 'Living Well' priority. This states that the Council and partners will put a greater focus on reducing homelessness and addressing the effect that the changes to welfare benefits has on vulnerable groups in Tameside MBC
- 6.83 Along with ongoing targets and strategies to prevent homelessness, the Tameside Community Strategy also sets out to continue striving to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, focus on early intervention and prevention, and join-up commissioning and create a more integrated service delivery. This will continue to help to support and protect the most vulnerable residents of Tameside.

Conclusions

15. The Tameside Community Strategy (2012-22) and Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2013-18) set out a number of strategies and priorities that aim to reduce the incidence of homelessness and alleviate the impacts on those presently homeless in Tameside.
16. Strategies are reviewed annually to make sure that they are focused on tackling the priority homelessness issues in the borough.

Recommendations

8. That the annual action plans of the Tameside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-18 are informed by discussions and data sharing with all statutory and non-statutory homelessness services.
9. That Tameside's homelessness services undertake a significant review of the impacts of heightening resource pressure on the future delivery of services, to determine if alternate models will be required to improve sustainability.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The demand for temporary accommodation is approximately 200% higher in 2015/16 than the average of the previous four years.
- 7.2 All local authorities have a statutory duty to help all people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and ensure accommodation is always available to those in priority need.
- 7.3 The Supreme Court altered the way vulnerability assessments are conducted in 2015 to make sure that all homeless applicants are given the most appropriate help and support possible, which has led to a higher proportion of applicants in Tameside receiving a statutory homelessness duty.
- 7.4 Homeless Monitor found through a 2015 study that an interlinking combination of welfare cuts, policy changes and pressure on the housing market is a common cause of homelessness across the UK.
- 7.5 The causes of homelessness are often very diverse and may be the result of a combination of interrelated individual and structural issues.
- 7.6 Homeless applicants in Tameside most frequently cited having no family or friends willing to accommodate them, or the breakdown of a relationship with a partner as the reason(s) for them becoming homeless.
- 7.7 A number of residents in Tameside have been put under financial pressure as a result of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) and as a result are more frequently entering into rent or mortgage arrears.
- 7.8 Owing to the growing pressure on resources, the Council is utilising alternative forms of temporary accommodation including B&B's and out-of-area provisions to make sure all residents have a roof over their head.
- 7.9 Tameside's Preventing Homelessness Strategy is built on early intervention and prevention, providing accommodation to as many as possible, promoting positive move-on and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 7.10 Between April and December 2015, Tameside Housing Advice was able to prevent 448 homeless applicants from becoming homeless in the first instance.
- 7.11 The Council's Debt Advice service provided advice to 490 residents and gave representation at County Court for 63 cases with a 95% success rate. In 2015, over 96% of the cases were completed and closed.
- 7.12 New Charter Housing Trust has been able to help 92% of residents in its temporary accommodation move-on into sustainable accommodation.
- 7.13 Homelessness is closely tied to an abundance of social, physical and mental health issues that can make a person more vulnerable when sleeping rough, and to other issues like substance misuse.
- 7.14 There are several supported and temporary accommodation provisions across Tameside that are available to homeless applicants who do not qualify for a statutory homelessness duty.

- 7.15 The Tameside Community Strategy (2012-22) and Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2013-18) set out a number of strategies and priorities that aim to reduce the incidence of homelessness and alleviate the impacts on those presently homeless in Tameside.
- 7.16 Strategies are reviewed annually to make sure that they are focused on tackling the priority homelessness issues in the borough.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Council and THA closely monitor the rise in demand for services and the specific contributing factors of need in Tameside to inform future practices and resource planning.
- 8.2 That where possible the Council improve publicity and promotion of homelessness information and services with clear references to the early indicators and causal factors why individuals and families commonly become homeless in the first instance.
- 8.3 That the Council and partners look to increase the preventative work carried out by the Debt Advice team to assist people in need of financial support who are at risk of becoming homeless.
- 8.4 That THA and the Council work in conjunction with private landlords to expand beyond the Bond Scheme to increase the number of homelessness applicants supported through privately rented accommodation.
- 8.5 That New Charter Housing Trust undertakes regular reviews of both successful and unsuccessful support plans to ensure that the needs of all applicants are better met through more informed management plans.
- 8.6 That the Council and partners strive to become more knowledgeable on the health and wellbeing impacts that homelessness can create and/or exacerbate, and options to alleviate and prevent these.
- 8.7 That the Council and THA continue to deliver future improvements to the streamlining of services and take account of the direct and indirect impacts of drug and alcohol use in homelessness support provided.
- 8.8 That the annual action plans of the Tameside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-18 are informed by discussions and data sharing with all statutory and non-statutory homelessness services.
- 8.9 That Tameside's homelessness services undertake a significant, multi-agency review of the impacts of heightening resource pressure on the future delivery of services, to determine if alternate models will be required to improve sustainability.