

Scrutiny Review Homelessness & Housing

1 November 2022



Some Key Achievements

Stronger Together Tameside, a coalition of third sector partners working in this field

The development of a proactive and effective RSI Service.

The reduction in Rough Sleeping from 43 in 2017 to 5 currently.

Moving over 220 people from the Rough Sleeper service to permanence during 2020-2.

The development of relationships with private sector landlords and rolling out the Help2Rent

Collaborative initiatives with the Veterans Food Company including the provision of cooked meals

Successful applications for funding from the DLUHC to support various initiatives such as Next Steps.

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Effectively adapting services within both THA and the RSI team to protect service delivery during the pandemic.

Transfer of Housing Advice into the Council



Emerging Pressures

A series of new and emerging pressures are facing Homelessness in Tameside.

- Increasing numbers of people presenting homeless in Tameside.
- Lack of availability of suitable move-on accommodation and competing demands from priority groups.
- An increase in the complexity of needs of service users and issues accessing services to meet those needs.
- Increased service demands arising due to conflict abroad.
- Challenges in accessing mental health and adult care services.
- Impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis

The Council alongside many organisations is facing an increasingly difficult financial environment within which to meet its obligations towards homeless people. It is key that this Strategy implements services in a cost effective way that prioritises the prevention of homelessness and identifies and utilises appropriate funding streams.



Recommendation 1

That Scrutiny ask the Executive to monitor the local impacts of the decision to withdraw eviction relief. That any concerns of vulnerability, inequality and increased incidence of homelessness, (local voice and experience), add to a written response to the appropriate Government Office to inform future policy in this area.

The moratorium on evictions ended in August 2021. Although the service saw a slight increase in homeless presentations, the increase was not significant. The Housing Options Service transferred to the council on 1 June 2022 & reduction in the numbers of people in temporary accommodation was made a priority. On 1 June, in excess of 230 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation. That number is now down to 198 and continues to drop, bringing significant savings to the council. The next potential pressure is the predicted cost-of-living crisis which may bring additional demand to the service.



Recommendation 2

That the Council prioritise and undertake a review of existing policies and mechanisms relating to local allocation and nomination arrangements with Registered Social Landlords. That future work in this area aims to improve transparency and accountability of decision making, with the need to generate and secure housing placements above that of recent years.

Work is underway in partnership with officers from Growth, to develop a new local allocations & nominations policy with RSLs. An initial meeting with RSLs (the Registered Provider Strategic Partnership Group Meeting) took place on 10 October & all RPs present committed to the development of these policies. They were particularly keen on developing a single choice-based lettings scheme for Tameside. Working groups are being established to work on all aspects of Housing Policy – they will report back to the Board chaired by the Leader.



Recommendation 3

With additional preventative responsibilities placed on the Council to actively identify and mitigate the associated risks of homelessness. That enhanced recording of homelessness demand, temporary accommodation and housing placements, is essential to recognise pressures within the system, to act on them promptly and effectively with greater accountability across all responsible parties. To routinely assess and review the overall success, impact and outcomes of interventions, to include financial appraisal of cost benefit analysis and value for money principles.

A series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs have been agreed in the service and are published every week (see the KPI document highlighting successes & pressures)



Recommendation 4

That the Council's current Homelessness Strategy (2018-2021) is updated for 2022 and beyond, with a review of strategic priorities undertaken on an annual basis, taking account of national and local pressures and to achieve greater alignment with objectives set within the new local Housing Strategy.

A draft homelessness strategy for 2023-2028 has been developed & is now ready for a public consultation prior to adoption by the council. It reflects new working practices and changes to both the service and legislation since the introduction of the previous strategy. The strategy will include three key priorities for the service:

- *To Further Develop Housing Options to ensure early prevention and relief of homelessness*
- *To improve availability of a range of sustainable housing options for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness*
- *To End Rough Sleeping and Promote Recovery*



Recommendation 5

That the Council reviews current monitoring tools to assess the effectiveness of homelessness interventions and how the service identifies, records and monitors future homelessness preventions and outcomes for residents.

Since the housing options service transferred to the Council on 1 June 2022, managers have been evaluating the effectiveness of the service via KPIs and the existing software system – LOCATA. Work is now underway to redesign the homelessness service to make more efficient use of the existing staff and ensure that performance is monitored in a more effective way. The timescale for the redesign to be complete is April 2023.



Recommendation 6

That the Council looks to target a reduction in the time residents are housed in temporary and short-term accommodation, with consideration to a more ambitious and cooperative pathway to secure housing solutions within a maximum timeframe.

Temporary Accommodation (TA) has been a key priority since the service transferred in June 2022. The Service recognises that temporary accommodation is not ideal, especially for families, and that TA is expensive & brings significant financial pressures. Work has been underway in 3 key areas – preventing people from being placed in TA in the first place, reducing the cost of TA and moving households on to permanent accommodation more effectively. The service is starting to see success in all three of these areas (see the KPI document)



Recommendation 7

In addition to the work with RSLs, that attention is placed on developing the Council's partnership with the private rented sector across the short and long-term. To secure greater capacity for sustainable housing placements and accommodation options; and methods to engage and support vulnerable tenants at the earliest opportunity.

Permission is currently being sought to carry out a consultation on introducing a policy which would allow the discharge of a homelessness duty in to the private rented sector. The policy is drafted & a consultation should start in the next few weeks. This policy will allow more people in TA to be accommodated in private rented housing. The Service has had considerable success in moving rough sleepers into PRS & has much improved relationships with the private rented sector in Tameside.



Recommendation 8

That the Executive look to prevent any delay in future decision-making linked with previous ambitions to improve quality and standards in the private rented sector; and to connect with regional schemes aimed to promote best practice and build partnerships with the private rented sector.

Under the new Leadership a review will be undertaken on this aspect of the Housing Strategy and the future of Good Landlord schemes and licensing arrangements.