

Subject: Great Yarmouth Borough Council Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2019

Report to: Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee 14th November 2019

Report by: Tracey Slater, Service Unit Manager (Housing Options)

SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Great Yarmouth Borough Council has a legal duty to provide interim or temporary accommodation for households who approach the Council as homeless and who meet the criteria as set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). To be considered for temporary accommodation a household must be homeless (not just threatened with homelessness), eligible for assistance (meet immigration condition) and believed to be in priority need for housing. In some other cases (cold weather) the Council will accommodate for short periods of time homeless households irrespective of whether they are believed to have a priority need.
- 1.2 One of the strategic objectives of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy adopted in 2018 was to ensure that there was available a stock of suitable temporary accommodation to meet the needs of homeless applicants. This new Temporary Accommodation Strategy will look to address how the council is to achieve this element of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2018.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In April 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) was implemented which, brought about the most significant change to homelessness legislation since it was first introduced in the 1970's.
- 2.2 As is indicated in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy, following the

introduction of the HRA in April 2018 the Council has seen a steady increase in the use of temporary accommodation most notably bed and breakfast and the Council's LA Housing Stock. At the end of quarter 2 of 2019/20, the 89 households in temporary accommodation were accommodated in:

- Bed and Breakfast – 22 households
- Leased properties – 12 households
- Council owned (General Fund) properties – 12 households
- Council housing stock (Housing Revenue Account) – 43 households.

2.3 This new strategy will look to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory duties to provide temporary accommodation whilst looking to reduce our use of Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation so it is only used in an emergency for un-planned placements for families and other households, all to be restricted to a minimum time period. The Council's reliance on using its LA Housing Stock as temporary accommodation will also be minimised and we will look to make more effective use of existing temporary accommodation owned or directly leased by the Council.

2.3 By working in partnership with homeless households we will look to prevent and relieve their homelessness to reduce the number of households who require a temporary accommodation placement. Homeless households will be supported to explore all suitable options to relieve their homelessness including accommodation in the private sector or affordable housing so, if temporary accommodation is required it can be provided in a planned manner and not as an emergency placement.

2.4 This strategy will look to regularly monitor whether there is sufficient availability of temporary accommodation to meet need within the borough and where there is an evidenced need, consideration will be given to expanding the portfolio of temporary accommodation to ensure that identified needs are met.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 It is difficult to predict on-going costs for temporary accommodation as this is dictated by demand that can fluctuate. The actual cost to the Council of the provision of temporary accommodation is therefore linked to the numbers of household in temporary accommodation, the type and cost of this accommodation and the income which can be collected (as rent and other housing costs) from homeless households. The Council does however, seek to maximise the recovery of rent and other housing costs from homeless households, although it is not

possible in all cases to recover all income which is due. Spend on temporary accommodation is monitored on a monthly basis along with income received.

- 3.2 When procuring all types of temporary accommodation, we will seek to ensure that best value is achieved.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Although it is not a statutory requirement, it is deemed good practise to have a Temporary Accommodation Strategy and specific guidance was provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in July 2019 in connection with the placement of families out of area.
- 4.2 In adopting the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and implementing the Action plan the Council will have a better understanding of the need for temporary accommodation to ensure that it can effectively plan to address changes in the Council's temporary accommodation requirements, it makes effective use of existing provision and delivers better outcome for homeless households by ensuring that use of bed and breakfast provision is reduced and households are placed in the most suitable available temporary accommodation. Without the adoption of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan there is a risk that the Council could become increasingly reliant on bed and breakfast accommodation which will have a negative impact on homeless households and especially families or that spend on temporary accommodation increases without appropriate mitigation being undertaken.
- 4.3 The Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan includes specific actions around ensuring that there is an appropriate supply of housing in the private sector and of affordable homes to ensure that the Council can minimise the need for temporary accommodation. The strategy does however, recognise in some cases, that the Council may need to increase its temporary accommodation portfolio to ensure the Council's statutory responsibilities can be met in the most appropriate way.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Members are requested to approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A : Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2019

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Management Team
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Management Team
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Plan
Financial Implications:	Covered in report
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Covered in report
Risk Implications:	Covered in report
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	The Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that the needs of those with protected characteristics will be considered in the discharge of the Council's statutory duties to provide temporary accommodation.
Crime & Disorder:	None.
Every Child Matters:	Needs of children considered as part of Temporary Accommodation Strategy and suitability of temporary accommodation provided.



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2019

Document created	October 2019
Agreed by Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee	
Review date	October 2020

Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2019.

1. Introduction

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has a duty to provide interim or temporary accommodation for households who approach the Council as homeless and who meet the criteria as set out in the Housing Act 1996, Part VII (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.) To be considered for temporary accommodation they would need to be homeless (not just threatened with homelessness), eligible for assistance (meet immigration conditions) and believed to be in priority need for housing. An applicant who meets one of the criteria below will be considered to be in priority need;

- (a) a pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside.
- (b) a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
- (c) a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, learning disability or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside.
- (d) a person aged 16 or 17 who is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- (e) a person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a person who is a 'relevant student')
- (f) a person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (except a person who is a 'relevant student')
- (g) a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval, military or air forces.
- (h) a person who is vulnerable as a result of: (i) having served a custodial sentence; (ii) having been committed for contempt of court or any other kindred offence; or (iii) having been remanded in custody.
- (i) a person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out.

The threshold for triggering the section 188(1) duty to provide temporary accommodation is low as the housing authority only has to have a reason to believe (rather than being satisfied) that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need as indicated above.

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the provision of temporary accommodation in accordance with the Council's duties to provide interim placements made under Section 188 Housing Act 1996 and the relief duty as per Section 189B while homelessness enquires are undertaken, and longer-term temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless under Section 193 of the same Act.

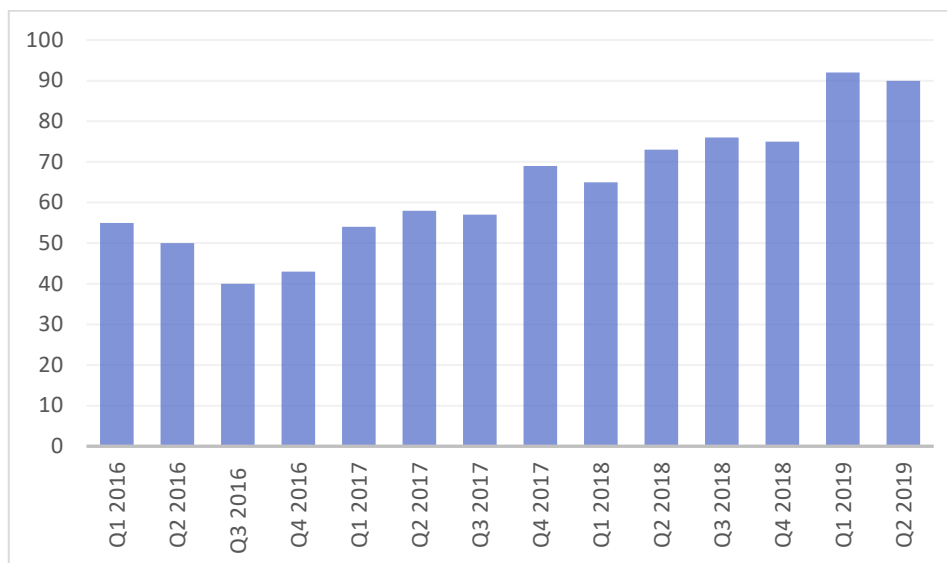
The Council also provides temporary accommodation for households for whom there is no statutory duty to provide interim or temporary accommodation under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which ensures that all street homeless households are accommodated during periods of ongoing freezing temperatures. Within this document

placements under both of these duties are referred to as temporary accommodation placements.

2. Current Position

The Council is dependent upon a supply of temporary accommodation to meet the needs of homeless households. The supply of temporary accommodation needs to be able to meet the needs of a range of household types and sizes as well as ensure that households who require ground floor accommodation or wheelchair accessible accommodation can have their requirements met.

Average number of Temporary Accommodation units in use per quarter from 2016 - present



As is indicated above, the Council's use of temporary accommodated has steadily increased since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 (Q2 2018 onwards).

The Council needs to have access to some temporary accommodation which is accessible immediately to meet the needs of those households who approach the Council when they are homeless, including those who contact the Council for assistance out of normal working hours. Temporary accommodation that can be accessed in a more planned manner also needs to be available.

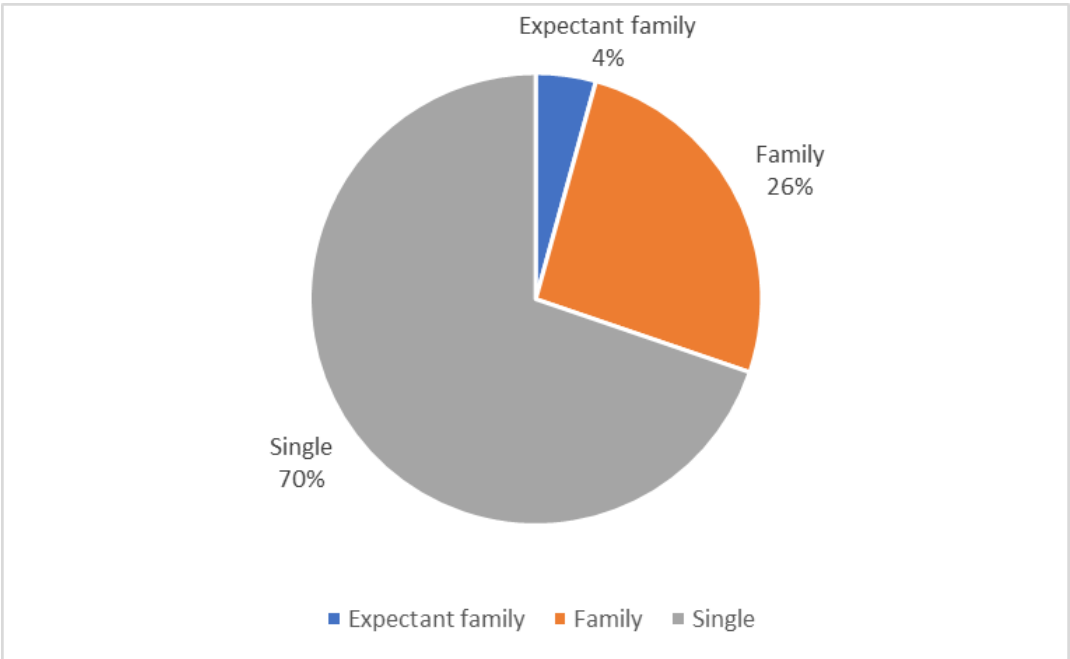
To meet these requirements the Council uses a range of different types of accommodation:

- Private sector leased properties
- Council owned properties developed specifically for or bought for use as temporary accommodation –
- The Council's own housing stock
- Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation

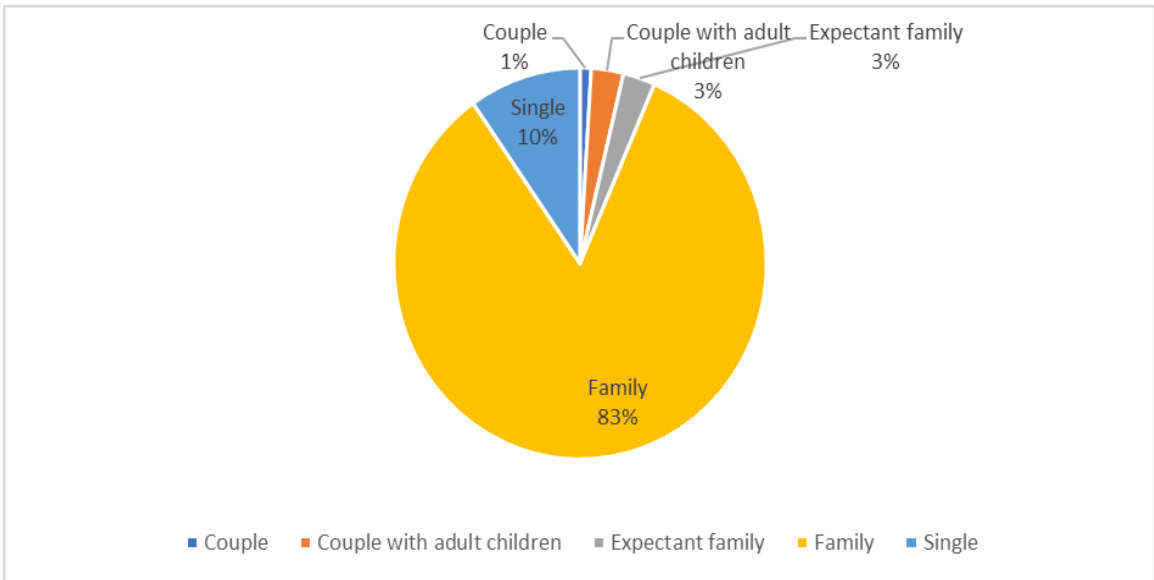
Other than Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation, all temporary accommodation is self-contained and will be provided with carpets in all bedrooms and living rooms. Self-contained accommodation is available furnished or unfurnished.

Generally, at any one time 70% of households in Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation are single people and 30% households with children whereas, within self-contained units 11% are single people and 89% households with children as shown by the graphs below:

Percentage of households in Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation by household type as at 31.10.19



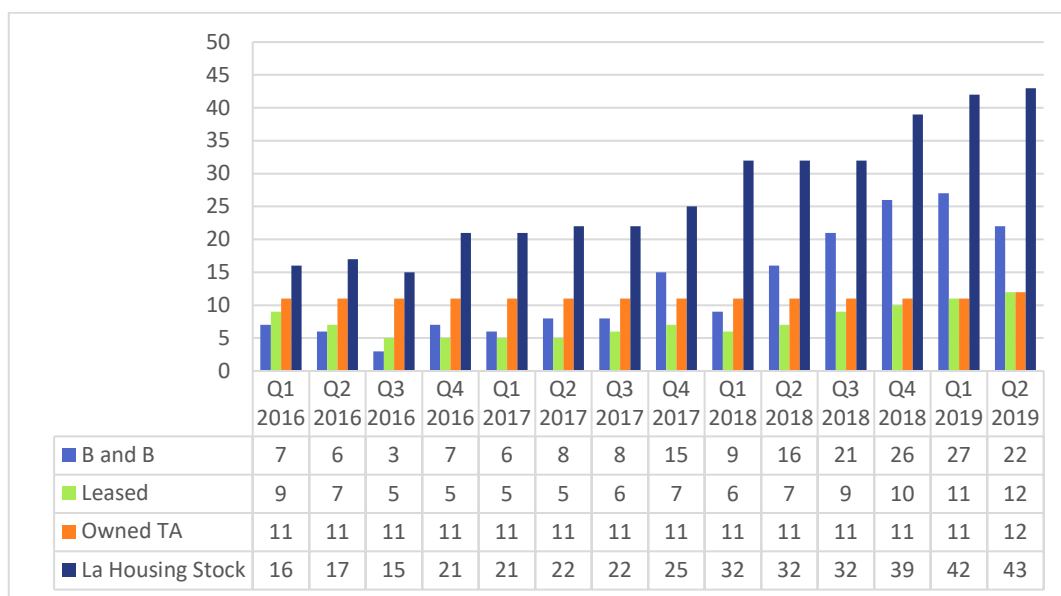
Percentage of households in self-contained Temporary Accommodation by household type as at 31.10.19



The graph below indicates the types of temporary accommodation used over the period April 2016 to September 2019. This shows that the main increase in the type of temporary accommodation used has been in the use of Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation and the Council’s own housing stock. As the number of Council voids appears to be declining annually, it is not in the Council’s interest to be too reliant on using the Council’s housing stock as such

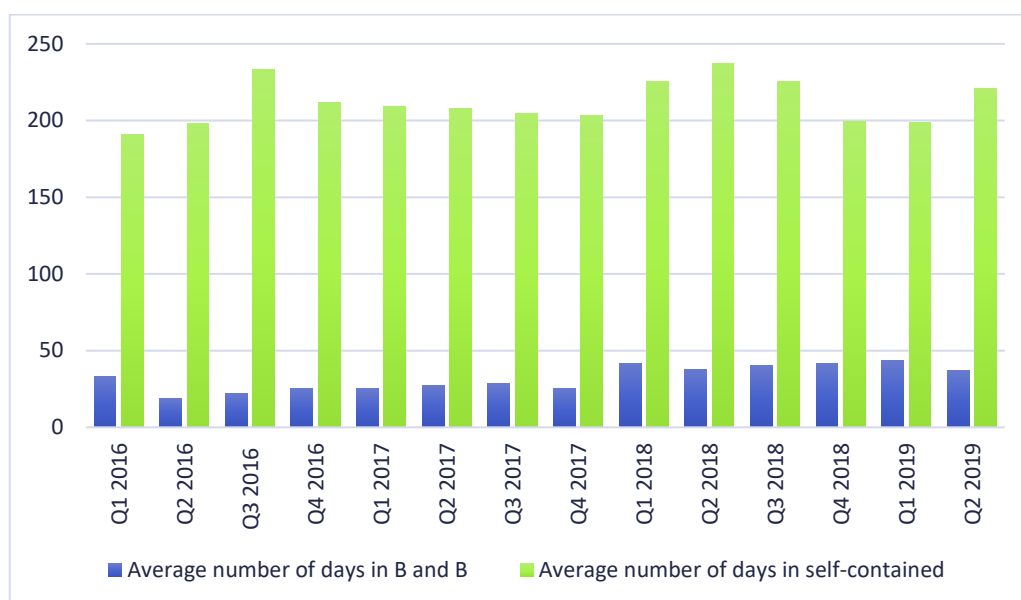
uses restricts the ability to use these properties to permanently rehouse applicants on the Housing Register.

Usage of temporary accommodation by type per quarter from 2016 to present



The graph below shows that the average number of days spent in temporary accommodation from April 2016 to September 2019 has remained steady although the number of households accommodated has increased throughout this period.

Average number of days spent in temporary accommodation per quarter from 2016 to present



3. Suitability of accommodation

The Council's approach to the provision of temporary accommodation takes into account the statutory requirement on local authorities in respect of the suitability of temporary

accommodation, including the Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 and has regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, as required by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

When deciding if a temporary accommodation placement is suitable, consideration will be given to Chapter 17 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2019) which states that the following factors need to be taken into account:

Needs, requirements and circumstances of each household member – this includes any identified health or mobility issues, any care or support provided by agencies or the need to access specialist medical services. The key factor to consider when assessing medical issues is whether the condition itself would make the accommodation unsuitable. Consideration will be given to whether the accommodation is affordable for the applicant and their household.

The location of the accommodation – factors to consider include the ability to access the workplace if in paid employment, avoiding disruption to the education of young people, especially those at critical points in time such as being close to GCSE examinations. In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate for a placement outside of the area to be arranged should the applicant be considered to be a risk to others or at risk should they be placed in temporary accommodation within the borough.

The size and facilities of the accommodation – the accommodation provided should have adequate space for the household taking into account the needs, requirement and circumstances of the household. Households requiring temporary accommodation will often be placed into accommodation that has fewer bedrooms than a household would be entitled to on a permanent basis.

Assessments in regard to suitability of a temporary accommodation placement are completed on a case by case basis to ensure that any temporary accommodation offered is considered reasonable and suitable for the household. These assessments are made within the context of the accommodation and resources that are available to the Council.

The Council will wherever reasonable and practicable try to secure suitable temporary accommodation within the Great Yarmouth Borough area to allow a household to maintain their existing networks, such as employment, schooling, medical care and family and social support. However, this may not be possible in all cases, where out of borough placements are used, the Council will use its best endeavours to minimise the time that a household is placed outside of the Borough. Where an out of area temporary accommodation placement is made, the host Local Authority will be notified.

Bed and Breakfast placements.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council will use Bed and Breakfast or hotel accommodation to meet its temporary accommodation duties. Examples of when such accommodation will be used are:

- Providing accommodation to single or couple households under SWEP arrangements
- When no self-contained accommodation is available
- In an emergency (including out of hours placements).

Bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation will not be used for any young person of 16 or 17 years of age and when used for families will only be used as a last resort or on an emergency basis. Families will be moved to self-contained accommodation as soon as an alternative temporary accommodation placement can be found.

Temporary accommodation requirements

The Council will seek to reduce the need for temporary accommodation through its work with homeless applicants to prevent or relieve homelessness. Homeless households will be supported to explore all suitable options to relieve their homelessness including accessing good quality and suitable accommodation in the private rented sector or affordable housing. There will however, be an ongoing need for temporary accommodation and this need for temporary accommodation will be regularly monitored to assess whether there is sufficient availability within the borough to meet need, with monthly monitoring of:

- Number of households placed in temporary accommodation
- Size and type of household
- Need for accessible temporary accommodation
- Usage by type of temporary accommodation.

Where there is an evidenced need based on the monitoring of the need and usage of temporary accommodation to increase the Council's portfolio of temporary accommodation, consideration will be given to expanding the portfolio to meet identified needs through;

- Leasing of additional private sector units
- Acquisition/ development of temporary accommodation within the General Fund
- Joint working with Registered Providers.

The Action Plan sets out the actions the Council will take working with partners to ensure that there is an appropriate supply of temporary accommodation across the borough.

Monitoring and review

The strategy and action plan will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Temporary Accommodation Action Plan

To ensure that there is an appropriate supply of temporary accommodation to meet the needs of homeless households who require it, over the period 2019-2024 the Council will:

- Work in partnership with homeless households to prevent and relieve their homelessness to reduce the number of households who require a temporary accommodation placement
- Seek to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation for all household types by at least half (including SWEP usage)
- Ensure that no family stays in Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation for more than two weeks
- Inspect all Bed and Breakfast/hotel accommodation within the borough prior to first use and on a regular basis
- Monitor the use of temporary accommodation ensuring that the supply of accommodation available (owned or leased) is sufficient to meet the needs of those households who require it
- Seek to reduce the overall amount of time that homeless households stay in temporary accommodation
- Minimise the use of the Council's own Council housing stock for use as temporary accommodation
- Provide a range of furnished and unfurnished accommodation to meet specific needs of homeless households
- Ensure value for money is obtained in securing and providing temporary accommodation
- Increase homeless household's ability to access the private rented sector through financial support (rent deposits/bonds)
- Provide additional support in partnership with Registered Providers and local charities to homeless households to successfully maintain their temporary accommodation placement and ensure they have the skills to maintain their subsequent tenancy
- Identify ways to support the victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes where it is safe to do so
- Work in partnership with local domestic abuse charities to ensure that refuge provision is not blocked as residents are unable to move on when they are ready to do so
- Increase the supply of affordable housing owned by the Council and Registered Providers across the borough.