

Place and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Homelessness Briefing
01 November 2017



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I. Introduction

The term homelessness covers a range of situations that people may find themselves these include:-

- Nowhere to live in the UK or elsewhere in the world
- Can't stay where they live due to violence or threats of violence
- Have nowhere to live where people who could reasonably be expected to reside with them (such as a partner) can live
- Don't have permission to stay where they are
- Been locked out of home and not allowed back
- Home is a boat, mobile home or caravan and they have nowhere they are allowed to place it
- Have somewhere to live but it isn't reasonable to remain due to poor conditions etc

People become homeless for lots of different reasons. There are social causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment; and life events which cause individuals to become homeless such as:

- Leaving prison, care or the army with no home to go to
- Many people become homeless through domestic abuse
- Many people become homeless because they can no longer afford the rent
- Mental or physical health problems, or substance misuse can be the trigger.
- Relationship break down,
- Losing a job,
- Being asked to leave by friends and family

2. Current Statistics - National

Homelessness has been on the rise across the country over the last couple of years.

Rough Sleeping (the most visible form of homelessness) has also been increasing nationally over the last few years. The number of Rough Sleepers recorded nationally in 2015 was 3,569. In 2016 this rose to 4,134 a rise of 16%.

Numbers of Rough Sleepers in London rose from 940 in 2015 to 964 in 2016 compared to the rest of England where figures rose to 3,170 in 2016 from 2,629 in 2015

Statutory Homelessness Applications across the country are also rising. 2015/16 saw 27,640 applications taken a quarter, compared to 29,090 applications a quarter in 2016 a rise of 5%.

With the rise in applications comes a rise in the number of households accepted for the main housing duty (those the local authority has a duty to find long term permanent accommodation for) the number of acceptances has risen nationally from 13,520 a quarter in 2015 to 14,760 in 2016 a rise of 9%.

3. Current Statistics – Local

The table below shows a range of Plymouth based statistics and how these have changed over the last couple of years

	14/15	15/16	16/17	%rise
Advice Casework	1644	1557	1654	6%
Statutory Homelessness Applications	710	698	804	15%
Statutory Homelessness Applications accepted as full duty	267	238	322	35%
Prevention	1242	1030	932	-10%
Number of Rough Sleepers	3	12	20	66%
Number of Vulnerable single people accepted as full duty	111	92	140	52%

*% rise is between 15/16 and 16/17

4. Homelessness and numbers in Bed and Breakfast and Temporary Accommodation

4.1 Current Numbers in temporary accommodation (as at 04/09/2017)

Numbers of Households in temporary accommodation 160

Number of Households in Bed and Breakfast 57

- Of which have children/are pregnant 8
- Of which are 16/17 0

4.2 Number of Families or People who are pregnant in Bed and Breakfast at end of each quarter for the year 16/17

At end of Jun 16	At end of Sept 16	At end of Dec 16	At end of March 17
6	4	3	8

Average number at the end of the quarter - 5

Total number of families/households that contain children and/or pregnant female placed in Bed and Breakfast

- 2015/16 – 54
- 2016/17 – 81

Average stay families/households that contain children and/or a pregnant female placed in Bed and Breakfast

- 2015/16 – 2.25 weeks
- 2016/17 – 2.13 weeks

Even with the increased number of families we have managed to keep the average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast to a minimum and we are working with providers to reduce this further by providing further units of alternative temporary accommodation

As alternatives to Bed and Breakfast we have:

Houselet – Houses rented in the private rented sector for families/couples and singles
 Raglan Court – Block of 13 flats owned by the council used to house families/couples and singles
 Supported Temp – 48 units of shared housing used to house single people

4.3 Number of Children in Temporary Accommodation

Total Number of Children/unborn children in all forms of temporary accommodation

- 31/03/2016 – 135
- 31/03/2017 – 124

This number will fluctuate dependent on the size of the families that are accommodated in temporary accommodation. It is a snapshot on a particular date. This number has risen over the last few years due to a rise in the number of families approaching us.

4.4 Number of 16/17 yr olds in Bed and Breakfast

There are currently **NO** 16/17 yr olds in Bed and Breakfast

We do occasionally have to place 16/17 year olds in Bed and Breakfast although we minimise this through our use of Advantage Point.

The Department for Communities and Local Government Homelessness Code of Guidance and the additional guidance issued jointly by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (following *R (G) v Southwark [2009]*) both state that bed and breakfast accommodation may not/ is not suitable for 16/17 yr olds.

In line with this, Community Connections endeavour never to place 16/17yr olds in bed and breakfast accommodation. This is not always possible for a number of reasons: - where there are no available places in commissioned accommodation; the young person is unable to be placed in the commissioned service bed because they cannot be placed with another young person; or the young person has displayed behaviours which mean they have been temporarily excluded from available commissioned services.

In the year April 2016 to March 2017, five 16/17 yr olds were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. The minimum time was 1 day and the maximum time was 58 days.

The case of 58 days was highly unusual in that this decision was taken in conjunction with the young person and multiple agencies to best support this individual and their mental health. This was a success story and the young person moved on in a positive way which had never been achieved by this young person before.

In the year April 2015 to March 2016 five 16/17 year olds were accommodated in bed and breakfast. The minimum time was for 1 day and the maximum for 31 days. Again, the cases over 1 day were linked with the specific circumstances of the young people involved.

Community Connections continue to work in conjunction with partner agencies to best support homeless/vulnerable young people to minimise both the numbers in bed and breakfast accommodation and the risk to vulnerable young people in temporary accommodation.

4.5 Number of Complex single/ childless couples

Total number of Complex Single/Childless couples in Bed and Breakfast

- 31/03/2016 – 19
- 31/03/2017 – 64
 - Of whom 22 are 18 – 25 years old

We have seen a rise of the number of single people/childless couples in Bed and breakfast and are working with partners across the Complex Lives System to look at how we can find alternative solutions. We are currently looking at issues within move on from the hostel system, talking to providers about increased provision and talking to investors about supporting the delivery of alternative products to remove the reduce the reliance on bed and breakfast

5. Changes to Homelessness Legislation

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) comes into legislation in April 2018. The Government says that the HRA will significantly reform England's homelessness legislation, ensuring that more people get the help they need to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. The Act makes changes to the current homelessness legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

The HRA places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It requires local authorities to provide new homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who are protected under existing legislation

The HRA will increase the number of people who are eligible for services and will change how some services are delivered.

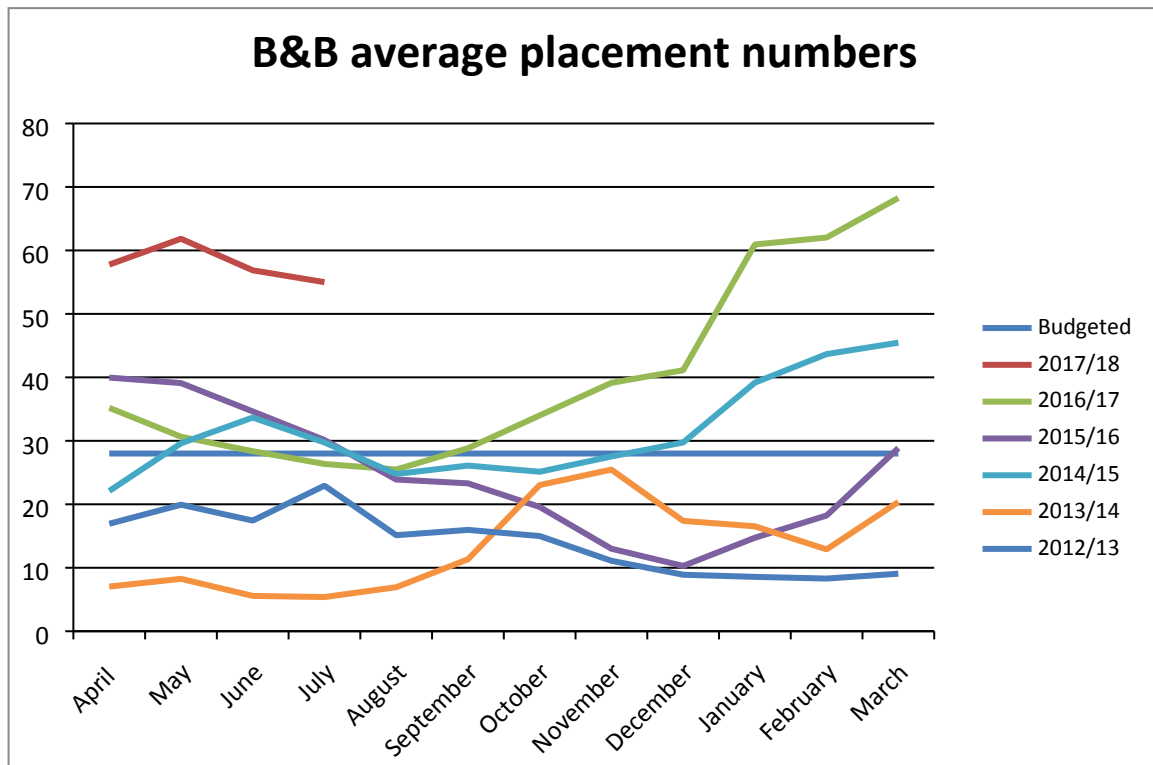
The Government has provided new burdens funding to support provision of these services and for Plymouth this amounts to £371,876 over three years

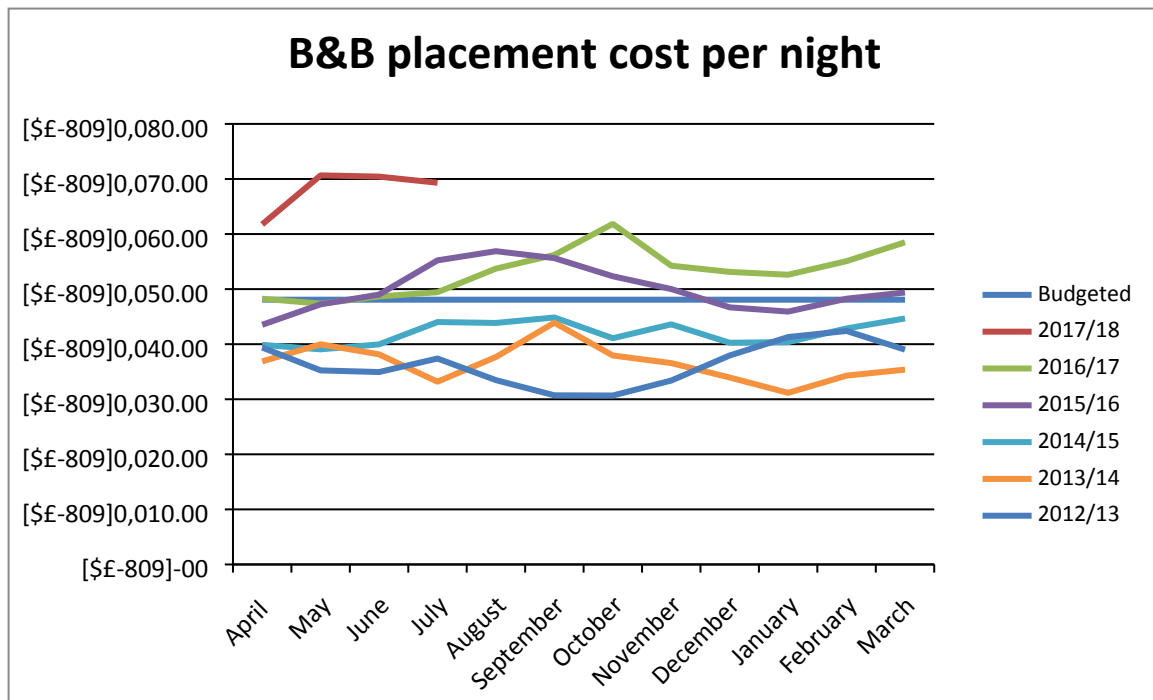
6. Bed and Breakfast usage on Budget

The budget for bed and breakfast spend for 2017/18 was originally built on a forecast of 30 households across the year.

The original budget was £330,000

We have seen both a rise in demand in the numbers of households in bed and breakfast and a rise in the average cost of bed and breakfast. This led to our month 2 forecast showing a £703k overspend





This overspend has already been managed down and by Month 5 has reduced to 494K (and is being offset by further budget savings) but the team continue to try and bring the overspend down further.

Current placement numbers are a challenge but a series of actions have been put in place to further reduce placements and thus reduce pressure on budgets

The team are currently working to reduce demand and thus flow into B+B, Cost of B+B and the length of stay of households once they are in B+B. All of which will help reduce budget pressure

7. What are we and the system doing?

We have a network of services some of which we currently commission to support the Local Authority to maintain our positive work on Homelessness and that have supported us to minimise some of the increases.

We have set up the System Optimisation Group (SOG) across homelessness, substance misuse, mental health and offending called complex lives to support this work and to bring partners together to discuss issues and find alternative solutions and to deliver services differently

We have an outreach service run by Plymouth Access to Housing that works with Rough Sleepers to remove them from the streets and into accommodation, monitoring and signposting to local services

We have emergency overnight stay provision such as Safesleep and WARN, where vulnerable people at risk of rough sleeping can be safely accommodated whilst longer term options are explored.

We have changed the way the local authority team works, we have restructured the team to allow more staff to do homelessness prevention and to allow us to intervene earlier to stop people becoming homeless

We commission a broad range of supported housing for vulnerable homeless people including hostels for the homeless; refuge for victims of domestic violence; accommodation with support provided for people with mental health issues and learning disabilities

We have a range of advice and information provision such as Housing Information Service and floating support provision through to day service provision for vulnerable people alongside practical support delivered to people in their own homes when they're crisis due to complex mental health, substance abuse and offending issues.

We have the Renting Support Scheme to support people to access good quality Private rented accommodation by supporting with deposits

We have a social letting agency in the city set up by Plymouth Access to Housing called PH4L to support vulnerable people to find and keep PRS accommodation

Targeted work to address poverty and financial exclusion, with income maximisation, support to manage debt and budgeting skills being key to supporting people to access and sustain housing.

We are working with partners to develop new types of delivery around temporary accommodation

Numerous contracts providing single homeless people with Hostel accommodation with providers such as BCHA, Salvation Army and DCH

We are also working with providers to provide 'move on' shared housing for people who are either homeless or vulnerably housed.

We are currently in the process of refreshing our action plan and will be consulting very shortly on our homelessness delivery plan

We recognise that in order to respond to the challenges within homelessness we require a whole system transformational approach. In 2018, homelessness services will be commissioned as part of the complex needs procurement which also encompasses substance misuse, offenders and some mental health provision. Using a collaborative model the focus will be on creating systemic change: changes to culture, funding structures, commissioning and policy which support a new way of working. Together we will create a contractual environment where suppliers share responsibility for achieving outcomes and are mutually supportive, making decisions based on the best outcome for the service user.

8. Commissioning spend for complex lives

Accommodation Services

Total spend is £2,785,057 on a range of accommodation services such as George House, Devonport Lifehouse

Advice and Support Services

Total spend is £1,037,432 on a range of advice and information services such as the Housing information Support Service and the Renting Support Service

Substance Misuse Services

Total spend is £4,038,822 on a range of substance misuse services such as treatment and day services

9. Specific Actions to reduce bed and breakfast usage and reduce budget overspend

- **Recommission Houselet service**

We are working with providers to recommission Houselet to ensure we have access to more properties, better turnaround and better flexibility to help us better meet demand. We have let the contract to a new provider and hope to be able to start working with them at the beginning of November. We will be looking for the new provider to offer an additional 10 properties within the first 6 months of the contract. This will increase additional properties in the Private Rented Sector for both families and single people which will enable us to move people out of bed and breakfast.

- **Procure more supported temporary accommodation beds**

We are working with BCHA the current provider to commission another 12 beds of supported temp. BCHA are procuring 4 new 4 bed houses to use as shared accommodation for single people.

This will reduce our need for bed and breakfast for single people and will take the total number of supported temp units to 58 by the end of 2017.

- **Work with Bed and Breakfast Providers to reduce costs**

We are working with providers to see if we can reduce costs of B+B by block booking beds rather than our current method of spot purchasing.

- **Refocus staff to proactive robust move on from Bed and Breakfast accommodation**

We have focused some of our locality staff to support our Access team in move on from Bed and Breakfast accommodation. This includes targeting specific individuals and working 1:1 to ensure quick move on into other forms of temporary or permanent accommodation.

We have also instigated weekly meetings for managers to problem solve difficult cases and to ensure oversight of current issues

- **Work with Complex Lives System Optimisation Group (SOG) to set up a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to work with the most complex**

We are working with SOG to set up a MDT that can engage flexibly with the most hard to reach and hard to support complex homeless individuals. This will help break down barriers and provide move on support and prevent exclusions within the system. This will also provide assertive outreach into B and B accommodation to move people onto more sustainable accommodation in a timely way.

- **Work with SOG to look at training, evictions policy across the homelessness pathway to ensure that partners are supporting us.**

We are working with SOG to ensure that they are not creating demand for us through evictions from hostels and will be ensuring we are supporting staff with training such as Motivational interviewing and Assessing risk, relational security and de-escalation. This will help to reduce the number of households entering bed and breakfast by supporting maintenance of other placements

- **Audit of the front end**

Working with the Access team to ensure that placements and reasons for placements are robust and that we are maximising prevention and working with people to where possible keep them where they are whilst helping them solve their impending homelessness

- **Creative Solution Forum**

We are setting up a specific creative solutions forum to look at some of the more difficult cases in Bed and Breakfast and to support the team to find solutions. This is a multi-agency approach to problem solving and will provide move for a number of current people in B+B.