

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee December 2021

Homelessness and Housing Register



Housing Register and PRS discharge



- Policy change from 25/11/20 to allow homelessness cases discharged into PRS out-of-borough to remain on or join Housing Register
- Since introduction of policy up to October 2021 70 households discharged into PRS out of borough (Ave. 6 lets pcm)
- Majority of lets in East London; all lets are inside London
- More work required to inform applicants of right to join SHR
- Of the 70 households, currently 2 'live' and actively bidding, 9 pending. Nil permanently rehoused.



HRA 1 Year On – Action Plan



- HRA 1 Year On Recommendations
 - Benchmarking, App development, maintaining confidentiality during interviews, improving staff satisfaction, promoting good work and best practice, IT improvements and clearing the backlog of homeless assessments
- HRA 1 Year On Action Plan subsumed and widened by Homelessness Transformation Programme 2021-24
- HRSCC approval requested to close off HRA 1 Year On Action Plan on the basis that actions will be delivered through the Homelessness Transformation Programme



Homelessness Transformation Programme 2021-2024



Transformation Focus

- Upstream **early homeless prevention** and **greater use of PRS and mediation**
- **Timely decision-making and case management** to get better outcomes and avoid unnecessary time spent in TA. There are around 1000 households in TA awaiting a decision.
- **Reducing use of most expensive TA, increasing income collection, and rate of move-on from TA.** There are around 1700 households in TA to whom the Council owes the 'main homeless' duty, of whom 90% through the use of the Council's homelessness powers could be moved to suitable accommodation in the PRS.
- Programme incorporates **HRSSC 'HRA One Year On'** recommendations
- **£2m reduction** in net expenditure by 2024. **£1.85m** investment in transformation over the next three financial years.



Homelessness Transformation – Progress so far



The Homelessness Transformation Programme was launched in April 2021. The first year of the programme is focussed on mobilisation and establishing systems. Key milestones delivered since the launch:

- **Baseline multiple data sets** sourced
- **New appointment system** introduced to better respond to upstream prevention and homelessness crisis
- **Casework reduction** targets set and caseloads reducing
- **Backlog of pre-2020 cases reduced** to 166 cases (850 at start of 2021)
- **Training strategy** for staff agreed
- **Positive customer feedback**
- Monthly service meetings **promoting staff achievements and positive feedback**
- **Increase in staff satisfaction** in last staff survey on most indicators
- Ongoing **benchmarking and learning from other LAs** (e.g. Brent, Haringey, Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham)
- **1st ben cap TA family starts job** through new BEAM service (Sept. 2021)
- **1st homeless family moves into social tenancy through Homefinder UK**
- **New management panels** agreed to oversee office booking requests for TA and TA move-on
- **TA decant** in Merton being used to **pilot new TA move-on approach**
- **IT changes** initial scoping undertaken



Homelessness Transformation, Forthcoming milestones



- Focus on **homelessness casework standards** and **quality outcomes**
- Improve **upstream notification** from partners and **joint-working**
- Implement **end of Eviction Ban** action plan
- Take forward **staff training** programme
- Increase Capital Letters **PRS procurement** capacity
- Commission out of borough **PRS resettlement floating support**
- Introduce facility for **online viewings** of PRS properties
- Commission short **PRS marketing** video and **pre-tenancy training**
- **Customer charter** – our PRS offer
- **Explore good practice**, e.g. Haringey 'Find Your Own' scheme
- **TA control measures** and **move-on panels** commenced
- **Service user feedback** mechanisms introduced, undertake Mystery Shopping exercise
- **IT improvements** – take forward short-term changes; specify wider requirements, consider options and investment decisions.
- **Business process improvements** identified and implemented working with Corporate Business Analyst.



Improving Customer Access



TELEPHONES

- Improve customer experience – minimise hunt group call drop-off
- Telephone rota for homelessness caseworkers
- Transform into ACD automated call triaging and distribution of calls (hmlss, lettings, housing options)

WEB CONTENT AND SELF SERVICE

- Improved self help and information and advice on website
- Housing Options Online Triaging including self-booked appointments
- Improved functionality of Housing Online Registration Form

APPOINTMENTS

- New appointment system for emergencies and upstream demand
- Use MS Teams/other solutions to conduct telephone/video link appointments



Improving Customer Access



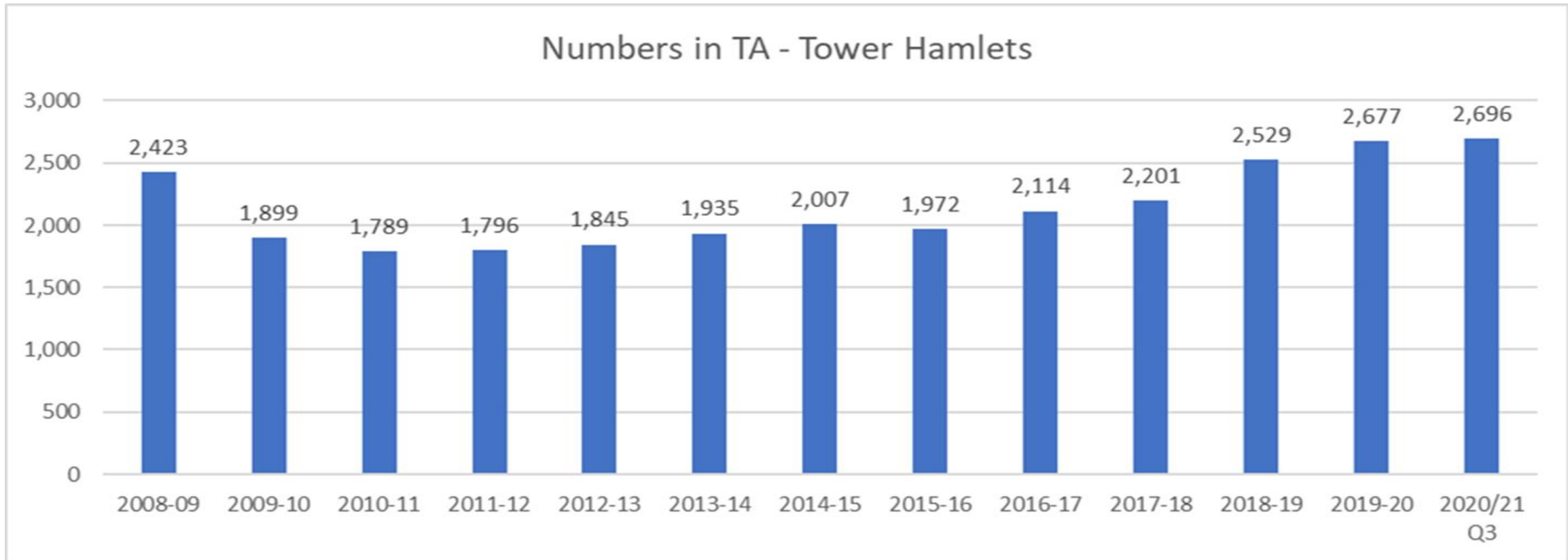
- ACD live from July. 2870 calls received in September (2300 calls received in August 2021)
- Average call waiting time for Lettings = 48 secs and 98% answered; Homelessness/TA line = 5 mins and 89-87% answered.
- New Housing Options web content for ACD live
- New Housing Options Finder tool live
- New Online homelessness self-referral form built, back-end integration approach agreed, and being built
- New customer portal homelessness module being built – document upload, view PHP, SMS appointment reminder and email interface with caseworker
- Housing Reg Northgate forms built (application form, and CoC)
- Successful bid for tablets and mobile phones (PH Outbreak Monitoring Fund)
- Telephone and virtual Zoom interviews; cubicle interviews for face-to-face at Mulberry Place to ensure confidentiality and privacy



Temporary accommodation increasing costs, Covid and non-Covid related



There had been an underlying upward use of TA prior to Covid



Temporary accommodation costs, Covid and non-Covid related



- March 2020 significant increase in number of single people needing to be placed in temporary accommodation, particularly B&B; decline in family homelessness during the pandemic
- 260 single adults rough sleeping or at risk given emergency accommodation by Tower Hamlets under 'Everyone In' (46 'no recourse to public funds')
- Budgetary pressures are compounded by HB subsidy loss – on average HB subsidy loss is £120 per week for bed and breakfast accommodation. Subsidy loss for other types of temporary accommodation generally much lower.
- Since Covid peak of 464 in B&B, reduced to approx. 316 in October 2021

