

## Appendix 2: Action Plan arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) – One year on challenge session

Recommendation	Rationale	Action	Responsibility	Date to be Completed
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Benchmark against other authorities' customer journeys and identify best practice which achieves effective service provision, straight-forward customer access, useful Personal Housing Plans and good-quality decisions.</p> <p>In order to independently gauge the quality of the customer service that clients currently receive, post pandemic when the Housing Options Service returns to business as usual, commission mystery shopping to test all aspects of the current service, including but not limited to timeliness, accessibility and appropriateness of the advice and support provided. The resulting report should be brought back to a future Housing &amp; Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-committee as well as the Mayor and Cabinet to inform future scrutiny work.</p>	<p>The challenge session aimed to provide a clear understanding of how the Homelessness Reduction Act has impacted on residents who seek homelessness advice in the Borough. These actions will provide a further 'deep dive' into the customer experience and will be invaluable as the Housing Options Service continues with its Transformation Programme</p>	<p>The pandemic has led to constraints on resources within the Housing Options Service due to the increased demand and workload pressures. As a result, now would not be the appropriate time to conduct this benchmarking work or to carry out a mystery shopping exercise given these extraordinary times.</p> <p>Once the pandemic recedes and the Service (and its peers within other local authorities) operate under more normal business conditions, benchmarking and mystery shopping can be used to inform further service improvements.</p> <p>Some benchmarking work has been undertaken, and good practice ideas explored as part of the customer access programme to improve service delivery for customers. As part of the homeless transformation programme, performance measures were also compared looking specifically at numbers in T/As and prevention and relief outcomes and PRS lets.</p>	<p>Riad Akbur</p>	<p>30th September 2021</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Consider</p>	<p>The Housing Options Service</p>	<p>As a result of the pandemic and the shift</p>	<p>Riad Akbur</p>	<p>30th June</p>

<p>developing the 'House for Good' application and scope to assess its validity as a route to channel shift enquiries from applicants. This may be particularly useful for younger applicants who are more 'tech savvy' who use mobile phones to access the internet and social media.</p>	<p>recognises that a review needs to be undertaken of its triage service to reduce the number of officers involved in a case.</p> <p>At present, there remains considerable duplication within the triage process and the Service needs to effectively filter reception, online, telephone and Duty to Refer contacts. This will mean that the current structure within the Service will need to be redesigned.</p>	<p>away from face to face appointments, in the interests of health and safety, the Housing Options Service has already made changes to ways of working, operational practice and procedures.</p> <p>The Customer Access programme has begun in earnest looking at telephony, web-content, self-service, and the use of IT solutions to conduct telephone interviews /appointments with customers</p>		2021
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Develop guidelines for the use of cubicle/interview room facilities particularly when using them in the instances where sensitive and personal information is discussed relating to a service user. Ensure that managers regularly monitor compliance with these guidelines.</p>	<p>The Housing Options Service is aware that the environment within the contact centre is not always conducive and welcoming to service users and work is planned to refresh this area. Despite there being cubicles and private interview rooms to meet with service users, these are not always used. Further concern was expressed by members that the appropriate settings are not always used when conducting delicate and highly personal interviews where there is a safeguarding or perceived threat of violence against a service user.</p>	<p>Risks Assessments relating to 'Receiving/interviewing clients at the Reception desk' will be reviewed as part of the planned move to Mulberry Place to ensure mitigations are in place to deal with the limited number of screened interview rooms available at MP. This will enable officers to maintain confidentiality at all times and guarantee staff safety and that of residents.</p> <p>DAHA accreditation is being progressed by the Service and is expected to be completed by the end of the financial year.</p>	Lade Ogunseitan & Seema Chote	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021

<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> The Housing Options Service develops and implements a plan to improve staff satisfaction informed by the staff survey. The plan may include performance indicators, training, regular team meetings and one-to-one as actions.</p>	<p>The challenge session heard that the morale of staff within the Service is consequently low while staffing turnover is high and this contributes further to increased stress and pressures on staff</p>	<p>Staff satisfaction and well-being is an on-going process. Regular management meetings are being held, with service meetings held monthly to keep staff up to date and supported.</p> <p>Some teams have participated in a well-being session organised through HR.</p> <p>Regular one to ones with staff are being encouraged and where appropriate staff are encouraged seek advised to use the Council's EAP.</p> <p>It has not been possible to hold a staff service away day, but if the Covid 19 Pandemic recedes, the plan is to allow staff to form a working group and plan an event perhaps in the summer period.</p> <p>Obviously, it is anticipated the customer access and homelessness transformation programme will automate some of the processes and therefore ease work pressures on staff, reducing duplication and improving efficiency. Ultimately, increasing both staff and customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>Team Managers, Staff and HR</p>	<p>30<sup>th</sup> September 2021</p>
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<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Housing Options Service to promote and publicise the good work carried by officers not just internally within the Housing Options Service but to use opportunities corporately and among partners to promote officers within the Service. This will provide recognition and a sense of value to officers</p>	<p>The morale of staff within the Service is consequently low while staffing turnover is high and this contributes further to increased stress and pressures on staff.</p>	<p>The Service agrees more focus should be given on this but isn't often possible due to time constraints.</p> <p>Managers are being encouraged to nominate staff for awards. A briefing session was held with Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care promoting the Service and its good practices. More sessions will be held. There was a briefing session at the recent Safeguarding Board on homelessness and rough sleeping – which was well received, the Board recognised the great work that the team are doing in partnership with others. In addition, at the Health and Wellbeing Board - challenges during Covid 19 (on frontline homelessness services) several homeless families participated and talked about their homelessness experiences during these challenging times. One of the households spoke very highly of officers who delivered and provided support as well as Private rented sector accommodation for them.</p> <p>A plan will be devised to ensure the good work staff do is promoted more.</p>	<p>Team Managers &amp; Lade Ogunseitan</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> May 2021</p>
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<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Develop and implement a plan for a new IT solution which is effective and efficient for the Housing Options Service.</p>	<p>Staff within the Housing Options Service are also hindered by having to use multiple IT systems to process homelessness enquiries and applications. Having these numerous IT systems leads to the duplication of work (information and processes) which are onerous and time consuming for staff creating implications in reporting. This has a major impact both on service delivery and staff morale.</p>	<p>The Housing Options Service is updating its web content to enable applicants to 'self-serve'. An automated telephone call distribution system is being implemented to enable calls to be picked up by the correct teams. On-line housing and homeless application forms are being developed which will fully integrated with back office systems</p> <p>The aim is to implement these enhancements in the new financial year. More work will be needed thereafter to improve processes and streamline IT systems further.</p>	<p>Humara Qayyum &amp; Riad Akbur</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> July 2021</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Urgently take action to significantly reduce the number of people (1,200) awaiting a decision on their homelessness approach, including setting a target for the 31st March 2022 and identifying the resources needed to achieve this outcome over and above the six additional members of staff already being recruited for this purpose if that is what is necessary.</p>	<p>This refers to the backlog of outstanding main housing duty decisions which was in place at the time of the original challenge session in March 2020 (please refer to paragraph 6.15 of this report). Since then, the Housing Options Service has taken action to clear this backlog and have applied a ringfence to these cases to ensure that a dedicated resource is assessing these cases.</p>	<p>Considerable time has passed since this challenge session was held in March 2020 and during this time the Council's scrutiny work halted because of the pandemic.</p> <p>In the interim between the resumption of scrutiny work, a team of six officers, (including a team principal officer), have been in place since August 2020. These officers are working to reduce all outstanding homelessness decisions up to 31st December 2019.</p>	<p>Leighton Davies</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> May 2021</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> Urgently provide details Housing &amp; Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-committee of the number of single homeless people who have (a) approached LBTH under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and (b) been provided with a Personal Housing Plan and (c) been helped to find a private tenancy in 2018/19 and 2019/20, and for the first nine months in 2020/21.</p>	<p>This recommendation arose after the original challenge session and will be used to measure the number of approaches made to the Council since the HRA commenced. Together with the requirement to produce PHP's and data on the number of customers helped to find a private tenancy, this will provide a view of how the Act has impacted on service provision and service delivery for both customers and staff.</p>	<p>Post challenge session, The Housing Options Service has begun a Homelessness Transformation programme focusing on upstream homelessness prevention and relief. The brokerage of tenancies in the PRS is a key driver in the reshaping of the homelessness provision in the Borough, with the programme looking to improve customer access, journeys, outcomes satisfaction, through increased efficiencies.</p> <p>The Homelessness Transformation Programme is a 3 year 'invest to save' plan - to improve homelessness prevention/relief work and reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation, thus saving cost of temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Humara Qayyum &amp; Team Managers</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> March 2024</p>
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