

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee - 2 December 2020

Subject: Update on Homelessness in the City of Manchester

Report of: The Director of Homelessness

Summary

To receive a report on the work that is taking place to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the city.

Recommendations

Members are invited to consider and comment on the information contained within this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Having high quality homes reduces the need to waste valuable resources on heating properties. This will help reduce the amount of carbon used.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Having good quality accommodation will help people to thrive. Reducing the number of people who are homeless or, placing them in appropriate accommodation with help to access employment and learning opportunities, will contribute to Manchester becoming a thriving and sustainable city.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Having accommodation that people can access, in areas where they have a support network to help them, and their children, into education or employment will help grow talent in the city.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Having good quality accommodation in our communities improves the environment people live in and helps them to make a positive contribution.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Ensuring properties are a good quality and high standard will reduce the need to heat properties and therefore reduce energy waste.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	N/A

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

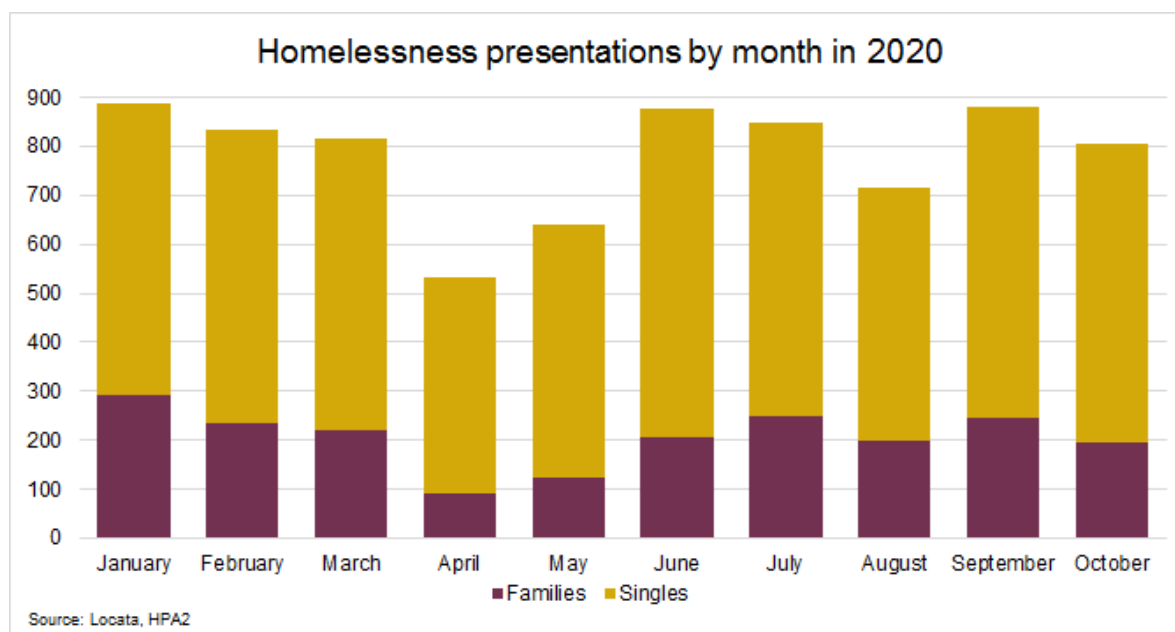
Not applicable.

1.0 Introduction

This report is to provide an update on the work the Homeless Directorate is undertaking in order to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the city.

2.0 Background

Although the numbers of people presenting as homeless dropped in April and May, since then, the numbers presenting have returned to average and have remained consistently high. Officers have worked hard throughout the pandemic to deal with the demand and try and ensure as many people are adequately accommodated and remain safe as possible.



Number of homelessness presentations by recorded area of where the applicant presented from:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Manchester	552	495	429	242	300	435	505	405	540	437
Other Greater Manchester authorities	92	67	68	38	41	68	55	65	67	49
Outside Greater Manchester	50	69	35	25	18	36	42	32	42	31
Not known*	195	202	284	229	282	339	246	212	230	290
Total	889	833	816	534	641	878	848	714	879	807

*This figure is made up of addresses recorded as 'Not known', 'No fixed abode' and where the address field was left blank

3.0 Section 21 and Evictions

Since March 2020 private sector landlords have continued to issue Section 21 notices. From the start of the moratorium, the initial presentation numbers from April

decreased significantly, however they are now approximately at the same levels as last year, see table below. As is usual, a proportion of Section 21 notices are invalid, and these applicants are advised to return home.

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19
No. of cases	35	84	94	62	72	64	85	53
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20
No. of cases	56	71	83	10	24	36	69	56

The Housing Solutions Service is working closely with homeless applicants and landlords, looking at short term measures to ensure affordability, negotiating with Landlords to extend or provide new assured short hold tenancy agreements (ASTs), making DHP (Discretionary Housing Payments) applications, Repossession Prevention Fund (RPF) payments whilst evictions are on hold.

The service is also assisting with property searches and making referrals for private rented sector (PRS), once an applicant has found a suitable property to rent. This is similar to normal practice, business as usual. The caseload of the officers is increasing because the notice period for evictions has increased.

Landlords have not been able to enforce warrants since March 2020 and would only be able to if Manchester was to move to Tier 1 on the local system. The national lockdown until 2 December 2020 means that no evictions can be listed in England until after this date. Manchester could in theory move into Tier 1 on 3 December. However, it was announced in the summer that there would be a 'Winter Truce' on evictions from 11 December until 11 January 2021. Consequently, it is more than likely that any eviction dates would be after 11 January. The courts capacity to process evictions has been greatly reduced, which will impact on the number of possession orders granted.

The Council is working closely with our advice partners to encourage people to get advice and help as early as possible if they are struggling with paying their rent. Many people who would not normally view themselves as potentially homeless, may now be struggling with rent and bills as they lose employment or struggle on furlough. A 'get help early' campaign has started because it is easier to help people at the beginning of any concerns, rather than people ignoring their difficulties until it is too late to help them with prevention work. An information campaign has been agreed, and press releases and interviews given encouraging people to 'get help early'.

4.0 Facilities to support and accommodate Homeless People

As well as providing a statutory service, the council commissions a range of housing related support (HRS) services. In 2019 these services were commissioned as a new pathway model, underpinned by the vision from Manchester's new Homelessness Strategy. There are currently four pathways:

- Adults Pathway - services for people with a range of needs who are homelessness, rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping.

- Specialist Support Pathway – services for people with a history of rough sleeping and high support needs.
- Drug and Alcohol Pathway – services delivering specialist drug and alcohol support.
- Young People’s Pathway - services for young people aged 16-25, including young people who are homeless or sleeping rough, or who are at risk of homelessness or sleeping rough.

These pathways offer both accommodation and resettlement based support with the aim of helping individuals to develop resilience and recovery; practical life skills; relationships and community connections; and personal interests and talents. The length of time that individuals are supported is based on individual need and progress. However, there is an expectation that services work closely with individuals to facilitate move-on by using Personalised Move-On Plans and encouraging a wide range of tenancy options.

The housing related support services ensure that large numbers of people do not end up presenting as homeless, thereby performing a valuable and needed prevention service.

5.0 Voluntary sector providers who support homeless people with accommodation and other services

A range of voluntary sector providers continue to provide support to homeless people across the city, including during lockdown. This support includes accommodation, takeaway food and welfare parcels, support and advocacy, medical care, and outreach services. This is not just limited to organisations funded by the city council but also includes a wider group of partners.

COVID-19 has meant that many organisations have had to adapt their ways of working. Where possible face to face interaction and support has continued, with appointment systems put in place to manage numbers. In instances where face to face delivery is not currently possible, online and telephone services have been established.

Details of these organisations and the support offered are listed in Appendix 1.

6.0 A Bed Every Night

Phase 3 of the A Bed for every Night (ABEN) scheme mobilised for 1st July 2020 and is currently funded until March 31st, 2021 with GMCA funding £1,322.069 and an additional £297,000 for No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) with the latter being funded by the Mayors Charity.

Officers have started detailed conversations with GMCA around the scope of Phase 4 ABEN with a focus on the potential funding envelop available to Manchester. Mobilising the provision in early July presented some real challenges due the significant pressures and impacts around COVID –19 for all stakeholders. It also presented some opportunities as we were able to transition two large accommodation schemes from “*Everyone In*” to ABEN assisting greatly with our

wider Hotel exit strategies ensuring residents had a continued offer of accommodation.

In a continuous cycle of analysing and improving each iteration of ABEN, key improvements from Phase 1 to 3 include:

- A collaborative partner approach to the design and delivery of the service including a long-established partner steering group, user engagement and themed meeting with key support providers.
- A referral process that gives equal referral opportunities for a large but designated number of partner agencies.
- Additional focus and aligning of key agencies and partners to facilitate NRPF client move on. Additional GMCA funding of Greater Manchester Aid Immigration Unit and the Booth Centre in addition to existing MCC funding helps provide the requisite support and advice.
- A move from 60% shelter provision to 100% single room provision which assists in COVID –19 infection control practices. This has resulted in more of the accommodation being supported by housing benefit entitlements, however this has presented challenges around HB subsidy regulations that officers are working through to reduce impact for ABEN Phase 4
- Year on year increase in high needs accommodation and the introduction of a dedicated female only and LGBT offer to better meet distinct needs of the wider cohort.
- More integrated support from health, harm reduction services, justice and probation and inhouse homeless assessment services.
- Better insight, reporting and contract management to maximise provision to ensure it's meeting the City's strategic aim to reduce the number of people sleeping rough on our streets.

Overview of current provision

Provider	Bedspaces and Needs
Revolving doors	44 High Needs
Sanctuary Supported Living	11 High Needs
Riverside Housing	18 Female High Needs
Withington Rd	6 LGBT+
Stop, Start, Go (SSG)	47 Low Needs
Sanctuary Supported Living	9 Low Needs
Supporting People in Need	20 NRPF, European Union
The Boaz Trust	5 NRPF, Asylum, Refugee
Stepping Stones	5 NRPF, Asylum, Refugee

Provision is now stable, and focus is on the design and funding of ABEN phase 4, maximising wider move on pathways so there is as much flow through the provision as possible. Here officers are taking a “one system” approach acknowledging the importance of services and support up and downstream from ABEN provision.

7.0 2020/2021 Cold Weather Plans

Like all Authorities, Manchester delivers a Cold Weather offer to provide shelter during periods of severe weather. Often this is activated when temperatures fall on or below zero but is also activated when other severe weather conditions are encountered. For example, last year the Council activated for storm Dennis even though the temperature remained above zero. In Manchester there is an enhanced offer where we activate for 1 day of severe weather and provide accommodation for at least three nights. Guidance states that activation is required after three subsequent days of severe weather if these conditions continue, in effect this could be just for one night.

This year the Council's plans have been influenced by the COVID – 19 pandemic. A collective decision has been made with key partners not to use shelters this year due to increased infection control concerns and the need to provide COVID – 19 safe accommodation. Equally our referral processes will be “street based” to reduce instances of people congregating in buildings.

The Council's accommodation offer will consist of hotel rooms, vacancy capacity within both ABEN and Next Steps hotel provision. Officers have planned for approximately 70 spaces per night.

This year officers are planning to extend the stays in Hotels past the minimum three days until a more permanent accommodation offer is found. To facilitate this all ABEN and Next Steps bedspaces will be prioritised for those in cold weather accommodation.

Although it is difficult to predict when, and for how long, the cold weather offer will be mobilised, based on past analysis, the average over the last three years has been 16 days provision over 4 cold spells.

Homeless partners and voluntary sector agencies are key to both designing and delivering the offer to people sleeping rough. A significant amount of the referral process, staffing, and outreach activity is provided by partners, as is the food offer.

8.0 MHCLG Funding and accommodating people during the Covid Crisis

'Everyone In' - accommodation during the Covid Crisis

At the start of the pandemic, in March, the Council implemented Everyone In. This was a MHCLG initiative, and the programme of work included opening hotel accommodation, staffing the accommodation and ensuring that everyone who was sleeping rough was given an individual room to stay in. Outreach work was undertaken to encourage as many people as possible to access the accommodation, food and clothing were also provided. The hotels had a number of services going in to provide additional support, for example, drug and alcohol support, mental health support, St John Ambulance for physical health support, public health officers to provide smoking cessation support and electronic cigarettes, wellbeing activities to encourage people to stay in the accommodation and not return to the city centre, as well as voluntary sector and support worker support, which included registering

people with a GP, getting identification, opening bank accounts, getting people on benefits etc.

During the summer, MHCLG asked that the hotels be closed and people moved on from the accommodation. A programme of work commenced in ensuring that everyone in the hotel accommodation had a homeless assessment and were moved onto the most appropriate alternative accommodation. This was a mixture of statutory temporary accommodation, ABEN accommodation, private rented sector properties or Next Steps accommodation. Next Steps accommodation is explained more fully below, but consists of two hotels from the 'Everyone In' hotels that the Council has kept open to provide additional covid safe accommodation and support over the winter period. Everyone who was in hotel accommodation has now been successfully moved on.

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

In July, MHCLG opened a bid round for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme. This consisted of revenue funding until March 2021, to provide short term accommodation for people sleeping rough, and capital monies, which is now known as the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (see below).

Manchester was successful at receiving £2million from the NSAP bid. This has provided:

- Funding towards ongoing supported accommodation at two hotel sites from the 'Everyone In' hotel cohort until March 2021;
- The short-term continuation of an additional 'Everyone In' hotel to ensure that there was sufficient time to move all individuals to alternative accommodation;
- Funding towards a subsidy shortfall in the GMCA funding for the ABEN provision;
- Funding towards private rented sector initiatives and insurance products to encourage landlords to rent accommodation to people who are homeless.

All people accessing the Next Steps accommodation are put on the 'Manchester Access and Support' (MAS) Gateway. This is the process by which people are moved into the most appropriate housing related support accommodation for them.

Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)

The RSAP is the capital funding part of the NSAP bid. Manchester City Council partnered with a number of Registered Providers to put in a bid to Homes England and the MHCLG for capital investment into the city. The bid is for the financial year 2020-21; but there will be future phases of the programme over the financial years 2021-22; 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The vision is that the longer-term capital options in the bid will create 1 bed accommodation for people who are currently residing in supported accommodation, and who are therefore more tenancy ready. This will subsequently make space in supported accommodation to move people from the Next Step hotels and from the streets into this supportive environment. Although this phase of RSAP will not meet the full demand, consisting of 75 units, the units will start to address the need for

more accommodation for homeless people, and especially people who sleep rough, in Manchester.

The capital accommodation is provided by a mixture of registered providers to ensure there is enough capacity in the system so that the provision is delivered before March 2021. The accommodation is a mixture of acquisitions and refurbishment to provide additionality, and accommodation that would have otherwise not been available to bring into use for people who are homeless. The accommodation will be ringfenced for people coming from supported accommodation to create the required vacancies for people who sleep rough.

The long-term plans for future MHCLG RSAP phases of this programme will address the shortage of a range of affordable accommodation for single people in Manchester either in the social housing sector or private sector. Manchester Housing Provider Partnership members have committed direct capital funding over the lifetime of this programme to deliver newbuild and refurbished accommodation and supported housing as a long-term asset available for single people to 'move on' from supported housing. Development programmes will reflect this strategic priority and future bids will look to deliver 100-150 homes per annum.

GMCA also put in a bid for capital funding for 54 units of accommodation for people who sleep rough. It is unknown as yet how many of those units will be for people from Manchester, but officers are working with Greater Manchester Local Authorities and the Combined Authority to agree provision.

'Protect Programme' - accommodation

The 'Protect Programme' is a new scheme to help protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19. £15 million will be allocated across 20 local authorities to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for people who sleep rough during the pandemic, Manchester has been identified as one of these authorities. The funding will be until March 2021.

Officers are working with MHCLG and the Homeless Partnership to agree the best way to target this funding. Current plans are to focus the funding on people who have struggled to remain in accommodation options for a myriad of reasons, providing intensive mental health and drug and alcohol support as well as general support to help them sustain their accommodation.

Shared Outcomes Fund

Public Health England is in discussions with Greater Manchester Local Authorities, and the Combined Authority to understand the need for a hospital discharge and covid positive accommodation offer. Local Authorities are hoping for the funding to open a suitable site for this to ensure there is an offer available.

Other Work

Whilst significant work has been undertaken to ensure that people are accommodated safely during the covid crisis, some people have been unable to

sustain the accommodation despite the support given. The Council has therefore worked hard to ensure that there continues to be a support offer on the streets as some day-centres have had to change their working practices to be covid safe. The support offer has included ensuring there is a food offer for people; working with public health to increase the number of toilet facilities and covid safe shower facilities; ensuring there continues to be a face-to-face mental health offer and access to substance misuse services. As footfall decreased, and begging opportunities decreased, officers saw a rise in the number of people who were willing to access substance misuse services, and stabilise their addictions.

Officers have been working with a dedicated NHS team who are part of the national Hepatitis C elimination programme who have identified the rough sleeper and homeless cohort as a group to focus resources on. Officers have set up a programme of awareness and testing across ABEN, Temporary Accommodation and in-house accommodation schemes. Recent sessions at schemes are showing significant positive outcomes. As an example, there were 33 tests carried out in one of the large high needs ABEN schemes with 9 positive cases identified. This has reduced the work of the small testing team and provided a more efficient and effective way of identifying and treating individuals who have hep C.

Officers have also worked hard to ensure that as many people as possible have accessed their flu vaccination. It is important to ensure that people are immunised against flu so that they do not catch both respiratory diseases at the same time, putting additional pressure on the NHS.

9.0 Inspections of Temporary Accommodation

The Inspection Team started operating in late July 2019, it has 4 property inspectors who arrange and carry out inspection of the dispersed properties.

The landlord of the dispersed properties has the responsibility of keeping the property to a standard that meets with their contractual obligations with Manchester City Council. The purpose of this is to ensure that the accommodation the Council provides is safe, well maintained and meets the required HHSRS (Housing health and safety rating system) standards. A visit is made to each property and an internal and external visual inspection of each property is made by the Council's property inspection team. Any issues/repairs are identified, and a report completed, which is then sent to the landlord with an expectation that the issues/repairs identified are completed within a given timeframe. This also includes the following:

- Having up to date gas safety certificates - including maintaining records of the expiry of same and following up these as and when they expire, including renewal.
- Electricity wiring condition report certificates - including maintaining records of the expiry of same and following up these as and when they expire, including renewal.
- EPC gas safety certificates that meet at least a rating of E - including maintaining records of the expiry of same and following up these as and when they expire, including renewal.

- PAT (portable appliance testing) certificates - including maintaining records of the expiry of same and following up these as and when they expire, including renewal.

In respect of these visits, the main issues encountered by staff are/were tenants not making appointments and not letting the Officer know, even though the team arrange the appointment with the tenant, telephone them the day before and an hour before the appointment. These missed appointments currently represent a minimum of 25% in lost time. Unfortunately, this is something that cannot be controlled by Officers.

During the initial Covid lockdown, tenants were very uneasy and reluctant to allow staff into their properties. Contact was maintained via a telephony offer. Inspections of empty properties in readiness for re-letting has been undertaken during the period of Covid19. The inspections process for occupied properties has recently been risk assessed to ensure the service can be stepped back up now for occupied properties.

10.0 The length of time people stay in temporary accommodation

Most homeless families who present to the service are initially placed in emergency B&B accommodation. The current average length of stay for a homeless family in this type of accommodation is 18 days. From B&B accommodation those to whom a duty is owed are placed in dispersed temporary accommodation which is located across the city and wider Greater Manchester area. Support is delivered by the Homelessness Floating Support Service, taking a holistic approach to address the support needs of households, focussing on three key elements of support which ensures:

- safeguarding needs are met;
- rents are in payment/arrears are addressed; and
- preparation of the household to become tenancy ready in order to move on to their own property.

The local authority's duty to end homelessness under the Housing Act is discharged via our '*one offer policy*' which can be either a private rented sector or social housing property. Depending on the circumstances and needs of a household, it can take years before a suitable social housing property becomes available. Due to the ongoing limited supply of social housing, the focus of the service is to support people to move on into the private rented sector which guarantees a faster opportunity to be rehoused and a greater degree of choice over where a household can live.

There is a dedicated team of Move On workers who work with households in dispersed temporary accommodation to source and secure the right types of home to meet their needs within the private rental market. Utilising bond schemes and landlord insurance products in addition to securing welfare packages the team works to establish a strong start to a family's new tenancy. The work of this element of the service did slow down during the initial 'lockdown' period, yet despite this the team has rehoused some 132 households into the private rented sector so far this year.

For many households there can be a reluctance to accept a PRS tenancy. The reality is that due to the level of demand on social housing the length of time prior to

securing a registered provider property in Manchester can be years. The service works with households to ensure that they are placed on the correct band on Manchester Move. As per Manchester's Allocation and One Offer Policy, homeless applicants are subject to the automated bidding process. Automatic bids will be placed on any properties that are listed for bidding, and which meet the criteria of the social housing application. The automated bidding system has been set up so that bids will be made on properties that the household stands the best chance of being offered. This also ensure bids are relevant to the housing need according to size of the household.

As of the 31st October, there were 1630 families and 215 single people living in dispersed temporary accommodation. Of these households the length of time in temporary accommodation is currently as follows:

Less than 1 year – 40%
1 to 2 years – 36%
2 to 3 years - 17%
3 to 4 years - 5%
More than 4 years – 2%

Of these 70% of households are live and bidding on Manchester Move. There can be several reasons why a household is not 'live' on Manchester Move. It could be because of a failure to provide missing detail in relation to an application such as a change in circumstances, or current or historical rent arrears, previous antisocial behaviour issues, which will need to be addressed before the application can be made live. In some instances, despite frequent contact arranged, some households fail to engage with the support service.

The service works through individual issues with a household, such as setting up rent arrears repayment plans to bring amounts down to a point where the household can be made live on Manchester Move. In addition, the service works with a multiagency approach with Revenues and Benefits to put in place any backdated housing benefit payments or Discretionary Housing Payment's to reduce and address arrears wherever possible. Regarding a small number of Universal Credit 'legacy cases' the service is working with DWP to secure outstanding housing element payments for some households effected by this to address arrears from a time when householder's housing element was paid by DWP.

Working with colleagues at Northwards Housing the top 200 longest staying households in dispersed TA are currently being addressed. Households are being made live on Manchester Move through addressing individual issues, reviewing historic arrears and Rehousing Review List entries. This multiagency detailed approach has led to considerable success. Between August and October 2020 of the 81 families who have been in our dispersed TA since 2017, 38 families have been rehoused through this process into social housing properties.

A shortage of larger properties presents a challenge for move on from dispersed TA for larger families. For, example of the households of the 81 cited above 17 have a 4 bed+ need. In conjunction with partner Registered Provider's, purchase of larger properties for this cohort has been underway for some time. To date 29 properties

have been purchased and 25 of these are now let. The remaining 4 are being refurbished and a further 23 properties are in the pipeline at varying stages of the conveyancing process.

The directorate have been working with Manchester Move, extra care homes and older people services to 'rightsized' accommodation and assist people to move from larger properties to smaller, more manageable homes. 43 people have been assisted to move this year, with all accommodation going to people in temporary accommodation.

The current average length of stay for homeless single people that the service is required to accommodate in emergency B&B accommodation is 82 days. There are currently 214 single people in B&B's.

The average length of time in in-house temporary accommodation for single people is between 6 to 9 months on average. The current number of live and bidding homeless single people on Manchester Move from homelessness temporary accommodation is 349.

There are minimal direct lets from the RP's of one bed properties for single people, due to limited number of properties of this type becoming available in RP stock. The private rented sector is a route the service promotes to move single people out of temporary accommodation. For those under 35, shared accommodation in the Private Rented Sector is the primary route due to Universal Credit constraints. Length of stay in in-house temporary accommodation for people with more complex needs/tri-morbidity is longer than the above average in some cases up to 18 months. This is due to the lack of permanent supported accommodation that can support the longer term needs of this cohort.

11.0 Homeless Partnership and Prevention Work

Manchester has a very strong Homeless Partnership that consists of public, private, charity, faith sector, education and voluntary sector organisations as well as people with lived experience of homelessness. The Partnership meets on a regular basis and has a number of action and task and finish groups within it. Each group addresses a specific issue to do with homelessness, for example cold weather; employment; mental health; wider aspects of health; day centre and rough sleeping provision; employment etc.

One of these groups focuses upon prevention and what the Council, and partners across the city, can do to reduce the number of people who become homeless. This includes the wider prevention work looking at what our advice services can do to help reduce debt, and our campaigning to encourage people to access advice at an early stage, therefore stopping people from becoming homeless, as well as the more immediate prevention work of helping people access timely advice when they first become homeless, including access to discretionary housing payments, and negotiations with landlords.

Recommendations

That Members consider and comment on the information in the report.