

	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
	4 February 2020 Report from the Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing
Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS)	

Wards Affected:	ALL
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny committee about the performance and outcomes of the Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS) since it came into effect operationally in September 2017.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee note the information provided on the Single Homelessness Prevention Service.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Council completed an Outcome Based Review (OBR) on single homelessness, which identified a gap in provision for single people who do not meet the Priority Need (vulnerability) threshold in homelessness legislation, (the Housing Act 1996, Part 7). Although the majority of these single people were homeless or threatened with homelessness, they did not qualify for significant help to meet their housing needs, beyond very general advice and assistance. This often meant that the individuals was not able to resolve their housing needs and any underlying vulnerabilities they suffered from would deteriorate.

- 3.2 Around the same time, The Homelessness Reduction Bill was passing through parliament, which later became the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the Act) on 3 April 2018. The Act effectively bolted on 2 new duties to the existing homelessness legislation, the Prevention Duty and the Relief Duty. These duties require the Council to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness, or if an applicant is already homeless, to take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available. These new duties apply to all eligible applicants (i.e. on the basis of immigration status) who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (with-in 56 days), regardless of whether or not they meet the Priority Need threshold.
- 3.3 Historically, the Council had primarily dealt with statutory homeless households, i.e. those households who met the Priority Need threshold in homelessness legislation, either because they were families with dependent children or pregnant women. Alternatively, they were a single vulnerable person with high support needs. The council did not have experience in working with single homeless people with low to medium vulnerabilities, who did not meet the Priority Need threshold.
- 3.4 The single homeless people who approach the Council, but do not meet the Priority Need threshold tend to have a range of low to medium vulnerabilities, ranging from issues with mental health, drug and alcohol abuse or being ex-offenders. Dealing with single homeless households therefore requires a different, more tailored response than homeless families, the majority of whom have no vulnerabilities beyond the fact that are in housing need.
- 3.5 It was therefore agreed that the Council should engage more with the voluntary sector, who do have the experience and expertise in dealing with single homeless people, to assist the Council to meet the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. And also to meet the gap in services, identified by the OBR, to provide more significant support to single homeless people, who do not meet the vulnerability threshold under homelessness legislation.
- 3.6 In February 2019, a review of homelessness services in Brent was undertaken, in order to evaluate current services, identify need and set a strategic vision. The team worked with local delivery partners, through the Brent Homelessness Forum, to conduct a gap analysis to take a snapshot of homelessness services available across the borough and identify any gaps in services. The review also included some qualitative research on the services available to those experiencing rough sleeping across the borough. Interviews and two focus groups were carried out with both service-users and support staff from Crisis. The findings from this review informed the development of five core strategy commitments and the basis of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and was approved by Cabinet in January 2020.
- 3.7 The SHPS service meets the five core strategy commitments, which are;
- To fully understand the challenge of homelessness in Brent and how it is experienced by individuals so we can develop informed,

targeted solutions, and continually improve the quality of the services we deliver

- Our services are prevention focused and we ensure the right advice and support is available to those who need it
- We work to increase the supply of and access to stable and affordable homes across the borough
- We minimise the use of temporary accommodation, but where this is unavoidable, work to improve the quality of accommodation offered and keep the stay as stable and as short as possible
- We seek to personalise our services to individuals' needs, and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure those needs are met

4.0 Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Funding

- 4.1 The Council submitted a successful bid to the Government's Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers fund, which secured £900K of funding, which the Cabinet agreed to match fund in January 2017.
- 4.2 The Trailblazer funding was awarded to the Council to commission local voluntary sector agencies to work in partnership with the Council to prevent and relieve homelessness for single homeless people, and couples without children. The bid was for a payment for outcomes approach, rather than a traditional commissioning model, where a service is paid for upfront. This approach was taken to allow the voluntary sector organisations to build their capacity to deliver the service and ensure value for money for the Council by only paying for successful outcomes.

The outcomes and payments are detailed in table 1 below

Table 1 SHPS Outcome Payments

Outcome	Payment Amount
Completion of Personal Housing Plan	300
*Prevention of Homelessness	750
*Relief of Homelessness	1,250
8 month sustainment	750

** either the prevention or relief outcome payment is made, not both*

- 4.3 However, this payment for outcomes approach presents a financial risk to voluntary sector organisations, as if they do not achieve enough successful outcomes, they may not receive sufficient payments to cover their service delivery costs. The Trailblazer bid therefore included the provision for the voluntary sector to work with a social investor, to transfer the financial risk.
- 4.4 The Council engaged the voluntary sector to identify organisations to partner with to operate the service. Organisations were invited to bid to deliver the

service and notification of the applications process was made via Brent CVS and London CVS as well as to those who attended an engagement event in January 2017, which was similarly advertised.

- 4.5 Following an evaluation process, a contract to deliver the service was awarded to a consortium of Crisis and Thames Reach, who are both highly experienced voluntary sector organisations with a strong track record in working on single homelessness. The consortium is financially backed by Bridges Fund Management, one of the UK's leading social investment funds.

5.0 End to End Process

- 5.1 The new Prevention and Relief duties apply to all eligible applicants (i.e. on the basis of immigration status), who are threatened with homelessness (within 56 days) or actually homeless, irrespective of the applicant's level of vulnerability.
- 5.2 The Council's Single Homeless Team complete an initial assessment of an applicant's circumstances, to determine their eligibility and homelessness status. They will also consider how vulnerable an applicant is to determine the correct housing pathway that best meets their needs.
- 5.3 If an applicant is eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness, and has a high level of vulnerability, then the Council's Single Homeless team will develop and agree a Personal Housing Plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness. However if the applicant has low to medium vulnerability needs, the applicant is referred to the SHPS service to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
- 5.4 SHPS work in partnership with other voluntary sector organisations to achieve positive outcomes for the applicants who are referred to them. This partnership working is tailored to best meet the needs of the applicant, and SHPS therefore do not work with a static set of voluntary sector agencies. However, the agencies listed below are most commonly worked with;
- Crisis Brent
 - Advice 4 Renters
 - Thames Reach Floating Support
 - Ashford Place
 - CAB
 - Elders' Voice
 - Asian Women's Resource Centre
 - Sufra Foodbank
- 5.5 SHPS will arrange an initial meeting with an applicant to develop and agree their Personal Housing Plan. They will then continue to engage and support the applicant to achieve a positive outcome, either by preventing, or relieving their homelessness. They will then ensure that the accommodation secured is sustained, for 8 months with no identified risk of homelessness.

- 5.6 As well as referrals made directly by the Council, from 20 January, referrals are also being made from the Job Centre Plus (JCP) offices in Wembley and Harlesden. This is because a lot of single people who visit the JCP advise staff that they are facing homelessness, which is a barrier to them securing work. JCP officers have therefore received training to enable them to directly refer applicants to the SHPS service (rather than coming via the Council) so that SHPS can engage at an early stage to prevent their homelessness.
- 5.7 SHPS are not responsible for dealing with Homeless people who are sleeping rough. The Council has services in place for rough sleepers in Brent, and will make the appropriate referrals for this cohort .
- 5.8 However, if an applicant is threatened with the prospect of having to sleep rough, after they have been referred to SHPS (normally due to the sofa surfing arrangements they had in place breaking down), SHPS are able to refer the applicant into a West London service for Rough Sleepers called Somewhere Safe to Stay. This is a Service funded through the MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative grant, to prevent rough sleeping.

6.0 Performance.

- 6.1 Since inception of the SHPS service in September 2017, the Council has referred 1,392 applicants. A summary of the outcomes achieved is listed below.

Table 2 SHPS Performance Data Sept 17 - Nov 19

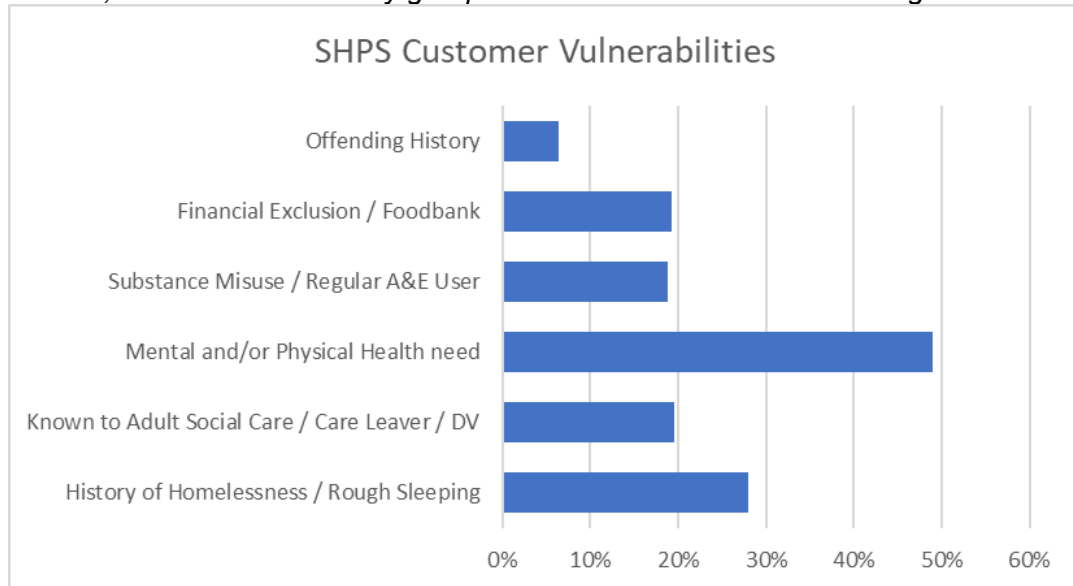
Total Referrals	1392
Total Personal Housing Plans (PHP) completed	1142
Housing Secured	497
Sustained for more than 8 months	*229

** from a maximum of 288 whose housing had been secure for 8 months*

The 250 applicants who did not complete a PHP, either failed to attend their interview, or refused to engage with the service. The maximum

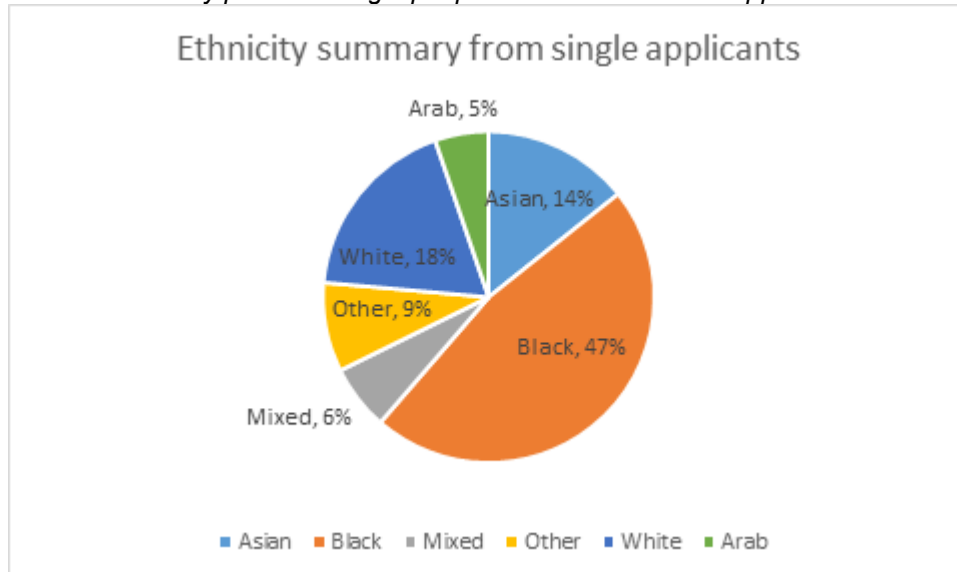
- 6.2 A breakdown of the key groups the service has been working with is presented in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1, breakdown of the key groups SHPS service has been working with



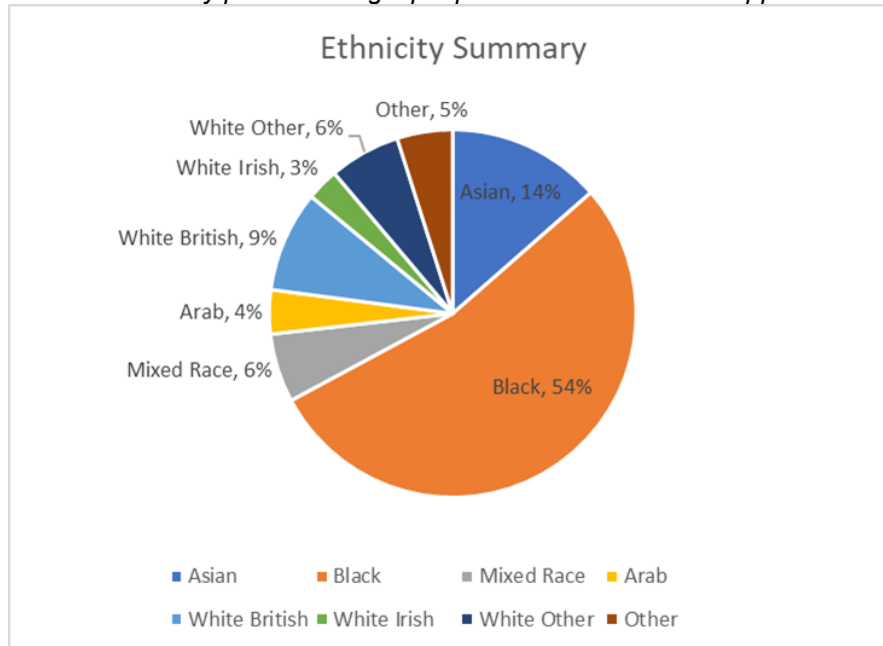
6.3 The chart 2 below shows the ethnicity of single people who have made an application to the Council's Single Homeless Team, from April 2018 to December 2019.

Chart 2 - ethnicity profile of single people who have made an application to the Council



6.4 The ethnicity profile of referrals made to SHPS is very similar (see chart 3 below), with a higher proportion of Other in the Council's data set, whereas the SHPS referrals have a higher proportion of referrals from people from a Black ethnicity. This is evidence that the SHPS service is being accessed by the ethnic profile who are approaching the Council for assistance with their housing needs.

Chart 3 - ethnicity profile of single people who have made an application to the Council



- 6.5 The graphic below shows the destination of the cohort of applicants who had their PHP completed before the end of June 2019. In total, 433 (49%) we have evidenced successful prevention or relief of their homelessness situation. In total, 61% had a positive outcome, 27% declined or refused the service and 12% are still active. Of those that have had their homelessness prevented or relieved more than 8 months ago, we have currently evidenced 79% have sustained their housing situation



- 6.6 The majority of the 433 people who have evidenced successful prevention or relief of their homelessness situation have been secured suitable accommodation in the Private Rented Sector under the Relief Duty. The SHPS team are able to access the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) budget, to help secure accommodation, which is mainly studio flats in and around Brent. The 165 applicants who declined or refused to engage with the service are predominately people who refused (multiple) offers of accommodation, or thought that SHPS was a way of accessing social housing, and so refused to engage once they realised it is not.
- 6.7 The SHPS Service has been shortlisted for three national awards since its inception, most recently the Local Government Chronical (LGC) awards, where the winners are due to be announced in March 2020. The model is also being adopted by Councils across London, and has gone live in Ealing and Islington and due to be live in Spring 2020 in Lambeth, Hackney, Enfield and Bexley. There are ongoing conversations with the other boroughs about future waves.



7.0 Future of SHPS in Brent

- 7.1 Bridges have been awarded £4.7m of central government top-up funding from the Life Chances Fund (LCF) to roll the service out across London to support approximately 5000 vulnerable Londoners over the next 3 years. The LCF is an £80m fund, which aims to help those people in society who face the most significant barriers to leading happy and productive lives.
- 7.2 The £80m has been committed by central government to contribute to outcome payments for payments by results (PbR) contracts which involve socially minded investors - i.e. towards Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). These contracts must be locally commissioned and aim to tackle complex social problems.
- 7.3 The current funding for the SHPS service (£900K from MHCLG trailblazer fund plus £900K match funding from the general fund) is forecast to end in September 2020. In anticipation of the funding coming to an end, Brent was part of the LCF bid, to extend the SHPS model across London. The bid was successful in securing 35% funding for the service, which means that 35% of all outcome costs will be paid by the LCF.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 A conservative estimate of costs avoided to date from the SHPS service in Brent, looking at both costs to the council and wider services has been

conducted using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) New Economy Unit costs database. The database contains costs across crime; education and skills; employment and economy; fire; health; housing; social services and energy, and is a recognised tool used to calculate public sector savings. The analysis used the unit cost data from the GMCA Research unit combined with actual outcomes achieved and cohort data from the SHPS service in the first 2 years.

- 8.2 The analysis shows that having commissioned the SHPS service and delivered it through a payment for outcomes approach, £1.8m of costs in terms of accommodation and staffing are believed to have been avoided. This was calculated by using savings achieved through the positive outcomes (homelessness either prevented or relieved) that SHPS have achieved for the 497 people since September 2017. The cost to the council of funding the service, including 50% of outcome payments, is £0.5m since September 2017.
- 8.3 It is also estimated from the GMCA model that a further £1.2M of costs have been avoided for other external and in-house services, such as mental health, drug and alcohol, probation etc.

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Where a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness and eligible, it must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for her/his occupation. This is known as the prevention duty which was brought into effect by section 4(2) of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ("HRA 2017") which amended section 195(1) of the Housing Act 1996.
- 9.2 Where a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible, it must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that accommodation becomes available for at least six months. This is known as the relief duty which was brought into effect by section 5(2) of the HRA 2017 which inserted section 189B(1) of the Housing Act 1996.
- 9.3 A local authority will have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to a homelessness applicant under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 if he/she satisfies the following five criteria until such time as the duty has ended:
- The applicant is [homeless or threatened with homelessness](#)
 - The applicant is [eligible for assistance](#)
 - The applicant is in [priority need](#)
 - The applicant is not [intentionally homeless](#)
 - The applicant has a [local connection](#) with the borough. If the other four criteria are satisfied and this criterion is not satisfied, the applicant will be referred to another local authority in an area where the applicant has a local connection.

- 9.4 A single person will not satisfy the priority need criterion as set out in the previous paragraph unless he/she comes within one of the categories of vulnerability, or is 16/17 years of age, or is a care leaver and is aged between 18 and 20 years of age, or has lost their accommodation as a result of an emergency (e.g. flood, fire, other disaster). The categories of vulnerability include old age, persons with mental illness or physical disabilities, care leavers aged 21 or over, members of the armed forces, people who have been in custody, people who have left accommodation because of violence or abuse and people who are vulnerable for some other reason or a combination of reasons.

10.0 Diversity Implications

- 10.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 excludes the Vulnerability limitation to homeless applicants in relation to the new Prevention and Relief duties as set out above to all members of the public who are eligible and threatened with or are homelessness. The SHPS service has had a positive impact on service users, achieving a positive outcome for the majority of applicants referred to the service.

Report sign off:

Phil Porter

Strategic Director of. Community
Wellbeing

