

**TO: ADULT SOCIAL CARE HEALTH AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL
11 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**HOMELESS REDUCTION ACT
(Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing)**

1 Purpose Of Report

- 1.1 Further to actions arising from the report presented on 24 July 2018 to the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the purpose of this report is to advise the panel on the outcome of the sensitivity analysis of the impact of changes in homeless demand and effective prevention activity.

2 Recommendations

The Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to:

- 2.1 **Note the impact of changes in homeless demand since the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.**
- 2.2 **Note the number of cases owed a prevention duty since 3 April 2018 and number of unsuccessful preventions since then which may then progress to relief duty. This will help to forecast fluctuations to numbers provided in the report provided on 24 July 2018.**
- 2.3 **Note the effective prevention activity since 3 April 2018.**

3 Reasons For Recommendations

- 3.1 On 3 April 2018 the provisions of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 came into force. This brought new obligations for the Council in terms of homeless prevention and relief. There has been additional funding available to assist Councils in meeting these new obligations.

4 Alternative Options Considered

Not applicable.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 introduced two new elements for Councils to provide in relation to homelessness. Firstly, if a household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days the Council is obliged to help them prevent becoming homeless regardless of whether they have a local connection with Bracknell Forest or whether they are in priority need. The Council will work to develop a personal housing plan with the household with a set of actions that are agreed with the household to help them avoid becoming homeless.
- 5.2 If it has not been possible to prevent homelessness and the household is homeless as a result, the Council has a duty to relieve homelessness for 56 days (Relief Duty.) Under this duty, local authorities must take 'reasonable steps with reference to the applicant's assessment to help all homeless eligible applicants to secure

accommodation for at least six months unless the applicant is referred to another local authority due to having no local connection to the authority they have applied to. Once triggered, the relief duty would continue for 56 days unless it is brought to an end via one of the prescribed conditions. If there is reason to believe that the household is in priority need (has dependent children as part of the household or vulnerable) then the Council is required to provide temporary accommodation at the relief stage. If the household has a local connection to another local authority area then a referral to that local authority can be made at the relief stage. At the end of the 56 days, if it has not been possible to relieve homelessness then the homeless duty must be met and the Local Authority must determine what duty if any is owed to the client. If the household is eligible (immigration status), homeless, has a local connection, unintentionally homeless and has a priority need, the Council will provide temporary accommodation pending the offer of a suitable home in the private rented sector or a housing association property.

The Bracknell Homeless Demand Context

- 5.3 Over the last 5 years we have seen a gradual decrease in the number of homeless applications to Bracknell Forest as demonstrated in Table 1 below. These figures do not include those clients who were given advice and assistance only as this did not constitute a homeless application under the old legislation.
- 5.4 Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the additional duties e.g. extension of the definition of the period when a person is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, prevention and relief duties and the Act being prescriptive that the prevention duty also applies at the time of a valid notice to quit (Section 21 notice) for those households in private rented accommodation, this has resulted in a dramatic increase in the first quarter of 2018.

Table 1:

	April 17- March 18	April 16- March 17	April 15- March 16	April 14- March 15
Homeless Demand	133	152	204	218

- 5.5 Based on the approaches in April and May 2018, a total number of 29 single/adult couple households were owed a relief duty. This could be equivalent to 174 cases under relief duty in the financial year of 2018/19. It is estimated that the council could owe an accommodation duty to 50% of the total number of cases owed a relief duty as it may have reason to believe they are in priority need. Thus there could be a requirement to provide accommodation for 87 additional households compared to those the Council accommodated in previous years.
- 5.6 From April 2018 until July 2018 a total number of 58 households started under the prevention duty status. 12 of these households then progressed to the relief duty due to unsuccessful attempts to prevent their homelessness. Therefore if patterns continue in this way, the numbers provided under paragraph 5.3 may fluctuate and increase by 36-40 households per year who may progress from prevention to relief stage.

5.7 With current measures in place, the council has been able to prevent homelessness in 11 instances from April 2018 to July 2018. There are a high number of cases which are still open to the service as there are circumstances where due to ongoing prevention work, officers are required to continue to work with households and cannot close down applications. Therefore the proposals of measures to be put in place by using the Flexible Homeless Support Grant will seek to address the gaps in service so that the council can provide assistance to more households to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

5.8 Therefore the current impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act is that there has been a significant increase in number of approaches to our service since 3 April 2018 compared to previous years. The panel is asked to note that the projected numbers provided above are based on the service demand in the last 5 months and may change dramatically as the real impact of the legislation is not yet known due to the short time lapse since enactment.

6 Borough Solicitor's Comments

6.1 Not applicable.

7 Borough Treasurer's Comments

7.1 Nothing to add.

8 Other Officer's Comments

8.1 Nothing to add.

9 Equalities Impact Assessment

9.1 Not applicable.

10 Consultation

10.1 Not applicable

11 Background Papers

11.1 None

12 Contact for further information

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