

# Item 4a

Report of the Executive Director Core Services  
the Executive Director Children's  
Services and the Executive Director  
Public Health & Communities to the  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)  
on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Housing & Support Model to Prevent Homelessness

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following on from the report presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2021, this report will give an update on the current homelessness position in the borough, focusing specifically on the impact of Covid and how the service has responded to this as well as considering the impact of homelessness on young people.
- 1.2 Item 4b (attached) the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 which outlines the Council's approach for tackling homelessness in the borough.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Like all services, the homeless team was impacted by Covid and there was a need to change the way the service operated, to ensure that the team could still deliver a service to those in need, whilst the office was closed, and staff were working from home.
- 2.2 A freephone number was put into operation and outreach work with rough sleepers continued throughout. The nature of the work changed slightly during the covid period as there was a ban on evictions, the asylum process paused and the 'Everyone in' mandate ensured rough sleepers were accommodated. To meet this mandate the team stepped up the management of 14 flats for rough sleepers and these were operational for 15 months. Throughout the 'Everyone in' period 141 placements of rough sleepers were made across various forms of accommodation options and some of these were the same people placed numerous times. A number of these clients are still being supported by the team in the accommodation they moved onto.
- 2.3 As we emerged from Covid a Homeless Recovery Plan was developed, focusing back on the vision and objectives contained in the Homeless Strategy which are:
- To promote a homeless prevention approach
  - Support those with complex needs
  - Reduce the demand for temporary accommodation, especially the use of B&B / hotels
  - Protect and increase local housing options
  - Maximise and maintain partnership work
- 2.4 The recovery plan focused on the following areas:
- The development of in-house Intensive Housing led Support Team focussing on those with the most complex needs including the development of residential supported accommodation unit-Queens House
  - To increase the number of council houses being used for temporary accommodation
  - To move back to a preventative approach to homelessness working in partnership
  - To strengthen links to the private rented sector
  - To develop a supported housing pathway
  - To consider the best approach to supporting 16-17 year olds who are homeless

### 3.0 Current Position

3.1 The Homeless service has been back open to the public since 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021, demand for the service has remained fairly static over the last 3 years with average presentations for advice of 1897 and homeless applications averaging 876 per annum. As things have started to move again post-Covid, the reasons people are approaching the service has changed and this is reflecting the wider dynamics in the housing market and the cost of living crisis. The top reasons for homelessness are currently:

1. Section 21 notices – no fault evictions from private rented
2. Asked to leave by family and friends
3. Rough sleeping
4. Relationship breakdown – non violent
5. Leaving prison

3.2 The service tries wherever possible to promote an early intervention approach; asking partners and stakeholders to refer people in early for advice and support so that homelessness can be prevented. Whilst the service does have a lot of success in this area it is still roughly a 50/50 split, meaning 50% off customers are approaching when they are already homeless.

#### Temporary Accommodation

3.3 The use and cost of temporary accommodation has slowly been rising over the last couple of years and coincided with the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act (2017) which was enacted from April 2018. This widened the duties we had to more customers, especially single people and re- focused the work on prevention activity. Work is ongoing to try and develop a range of temporary accommodation options, making us less reliant on the use of B&B and hotels, especially those out of area. B&B and hotels are still the most used form of temporary accommodation and at the end of May we had 26 placements in B&Bs of which 4 were families. On a positive note, this is the lowest in South Yorkshire. Other forms of temporary accommodation used include Barley Close – 8 units of family accommodation, 25 units of council housing and 6 units for those with complex needs/ rough sleeping. The graph below shows the spend and placements into B&B over the last few years.

Table 1

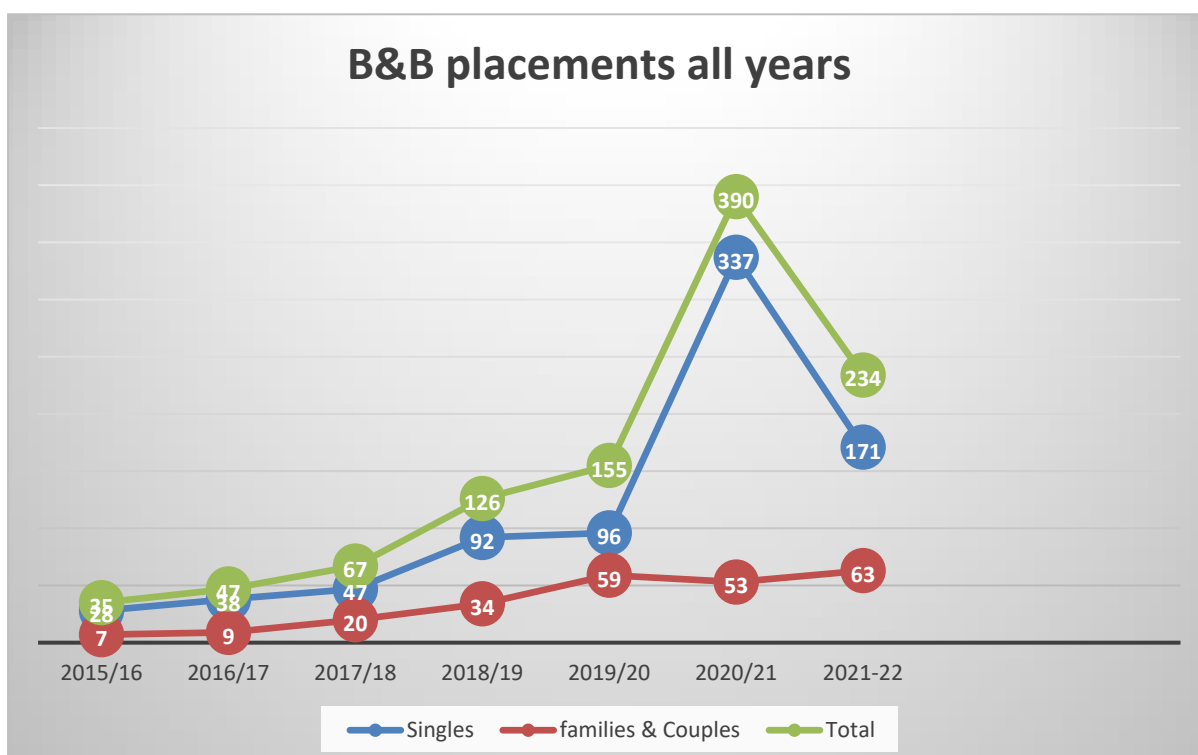


Table 2

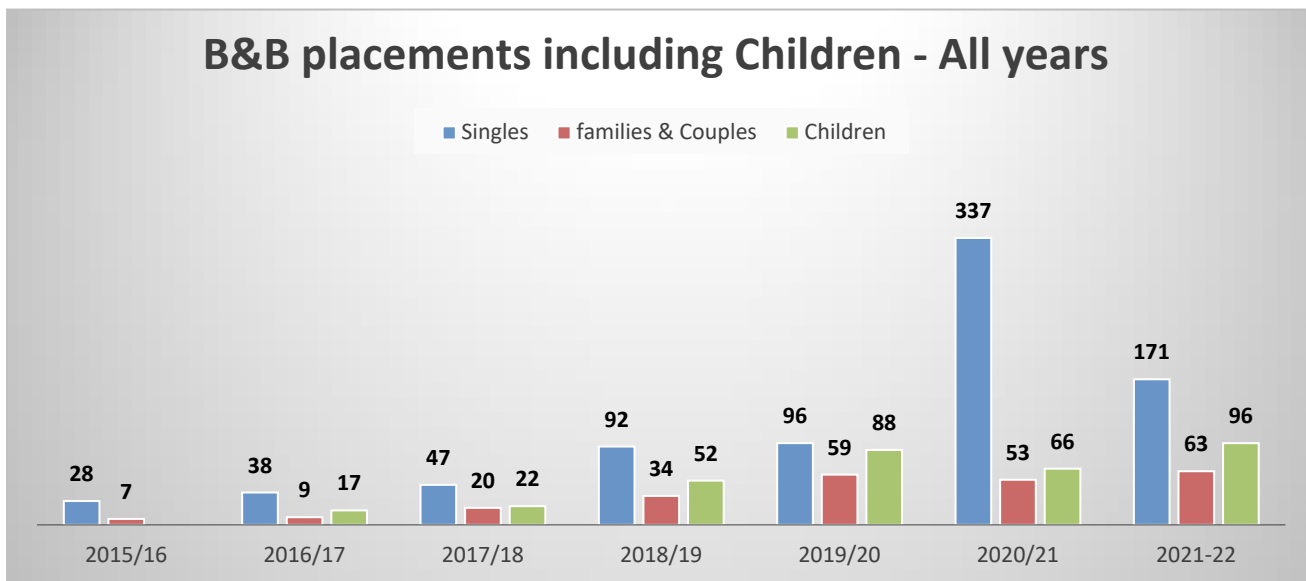
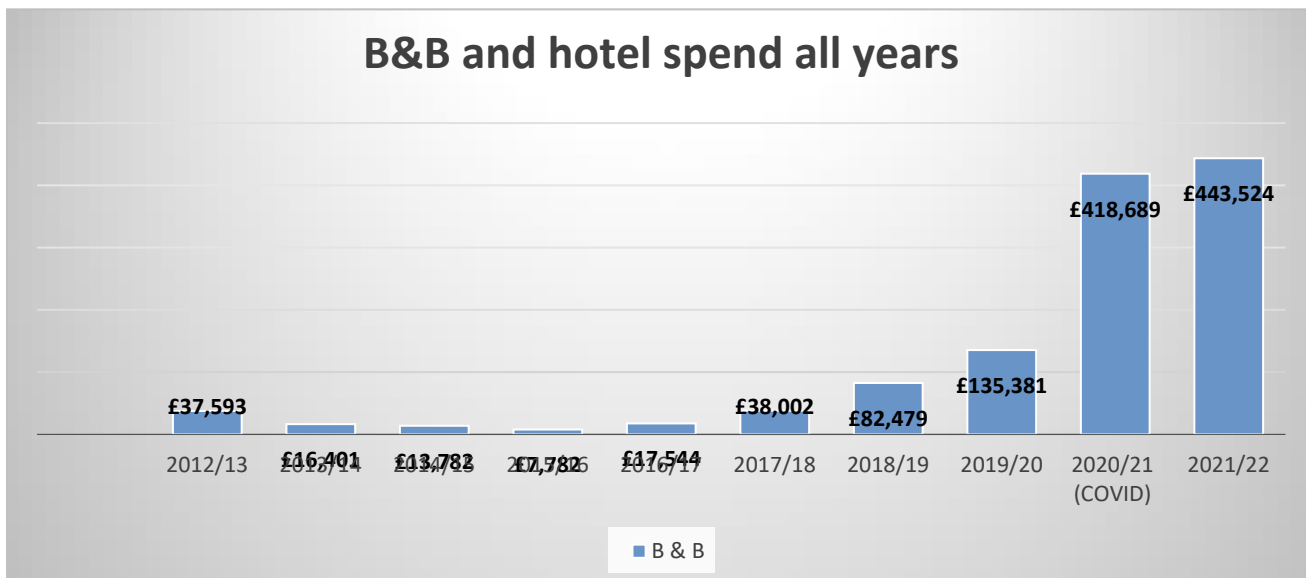


Table 3



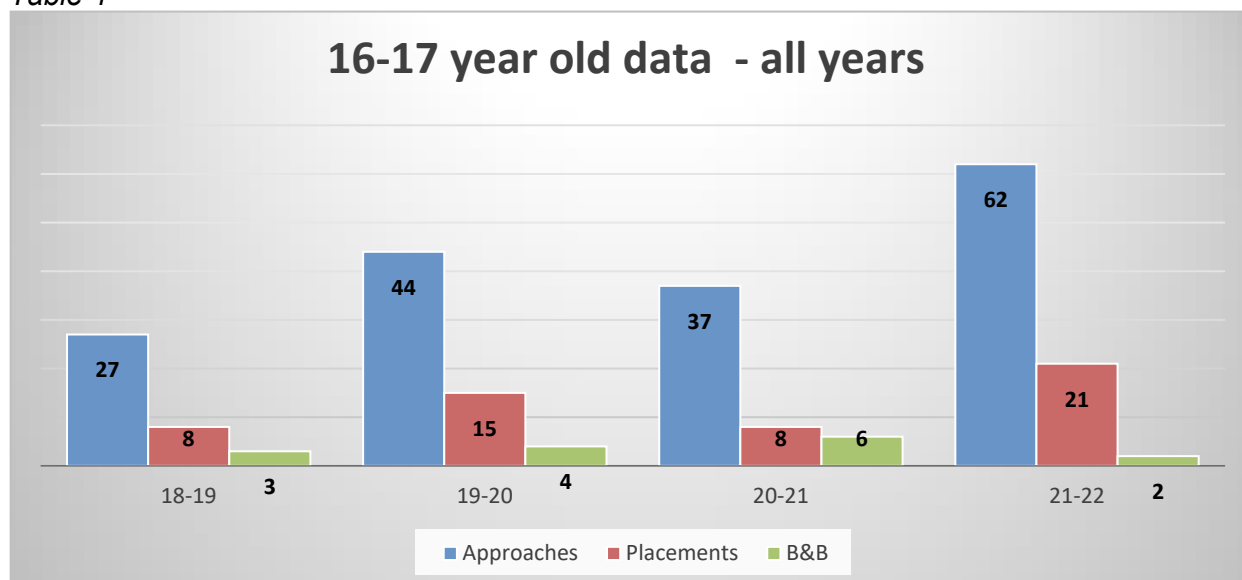
3.4 As can be seen above, there were significant increases in all areas during the Covid period and the recovery plans is focusing on these areas to try and address the impact through the following routes:

- The Intensive Housing Led Support Team has been recruited to
- A building has been purchased and renovated and will be opening at the end of June as additional temporary accommodation for those with complex needs/ rough sleepers
- An additional 5 units of council housing for use as temporary accommodation, taking the total up to 30, will be sourced this financial year
- Work has commenced on the scoping of a supported housing pathway, linked to the re commissioning of the supported housing contracts
- Additional units of supported accommodation have been secured for rough sleepers through the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) government bidding process
- Additional units of accommodation for Domestic Abuse through the implementation of the new Act
- The lettings policy is currently being reviewed and the changes will support the homeless agenda

## Young People and Homelessness

- 3.5 A key area of preventative activity is around young people to stop them becoming homeless and presenting in crisis at 18. This requires a corporate approach and joint working with children's social care; and has been a key work stream over the last couple of years. Over the period 01.04.21-15.05.22, there were 495 approaches to the service from 16–24-year-olds for assistance, this represents nearly a quarter of all approaches to the service. Of these 179 were owed a homeless duty, (84 a prevention duty and 95 a relief duty). An analysis of 16-17 year olds approaching the service is summarised below:

Table 4



- 3.6 The number of 16–17 year-olds approaching the service for assistance has grown steadily over the last few years. The main reason is due to family and friends no longer willing to accommodate and sofa surfing. Housing Options for this age group are limited as they cannot legally hold a tenancy until they are 18, the only supported housing available is Centrepont which is not always available when approaches are made to the service and going into care is not always the best or preferred option. All approaches to the service from this group are referred to children's social services as the main aim is to try and keep them at home or within wider family networks.
- 3.7 The evidence shows that the young people that present as homeless rarely just have a housing issue, there are a combination of factors leading to their homeless situations and a lot of support is required to get them ready for independent living. There is a clear 'cliff edge' at 18 and this is when the young people are at their most vulnerable in terms of transitions into adulthood and the services and people around them.
- 3.8 To address some of this the service has been working closely with children's and adults social care to develop better pathways into housing and support for vulnerable young people. This led to the establishment of the Directions Panel; a multi-agency group of professionals working together on transition plans for those young people who are vulnerable and at significant risk of homelessness. The aim is to ensure that there is a smooth transition into adult's services in terms of housing, adult social care, mental health, substance misuse etc to give them the best possible start as they move into adulthood.
- 3.9 Another new initiative to support this pathway and the young people is the employment of a Homeless Social Worker. This position was recruited to in November 2021, and sits between the homeless team and children's social care, with the main aim of working with 16-17 year old homeless young people to try and prevent it through mediation and support or to ensure a more managed move into appropriate housing. This post receives referrals through both homelessness and children's social care front door and is probably why there has been an increase in approaches to the service in 2020-21.

3.10 Progress has been made to prevent and support 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness however it is acknowledged that further work needs to be done in reduce the number of homeless presentations and placements of young people. Consideration of further accommodation options may be necessary, especially for those young people who have experienced trauma and present with a range of multiple and complex needs. The only existing commissioned provision ostensibly is an “adult” service through Centrepoint and this, in the main, is used to ensure homeless statutory duties are met for the 18–24 year-old cohort. As a last resort B&B will be used, but this is never a preferred option. Key areas for development for this age group include and form part of our ongoing development considerations:

- Ensuring an early help/ preventative approach is taken as soon as possible to mitigate any homelessness at 16-17
- Review and further develop the joint protocol/ assessment process between housing and children’s social care to maximise opportunities to achieve positive outcomes
- Consider the joint re- commissioning of services to ensure they meet the needs of this cohort, including the development of wider housing options such as trainer flats, supported lodgings, Night Stop etc. The service has piloted some of these approaches
- To continue to develop the Directions Panel and the development of an improved transitions model, which includes consideration of current and future housing needs

### Rough Sleeping

3.11 Rough sleeping has been high on the national agenda for the last couple of years and there have been various pots of money which Local Authorities have been able to bid for to support their work with rough sleepers. Barnsley has been successful in securing RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative) funding for the last 4 years and more recently secured RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme) funding in partnership with SYHA (South Yorkshire Housing Association), securing 5 units of accommodation dispersed throughout the borough. A further RSAP bid has been submitted, for an additional 5 units, the outcome of which is imminent.

3.12 The service remains committed to ending rough sleeping in Barnsley, this is a key focus in the strategy and a target of no more than 5 rough sleepers at any one time has been agreed with government. The reasons for rough sleeping are complex and varied, but the key to success is having the right options and wider support available to ensure any time on the streets is brief. The stats below show the position in Barnsley.

**Table 5**

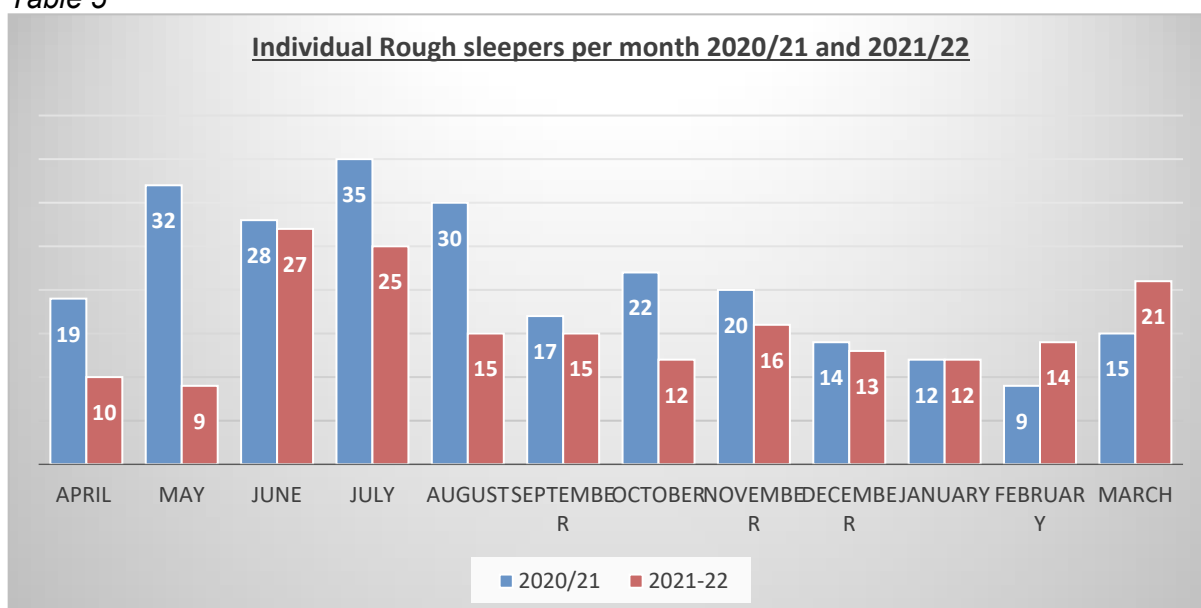
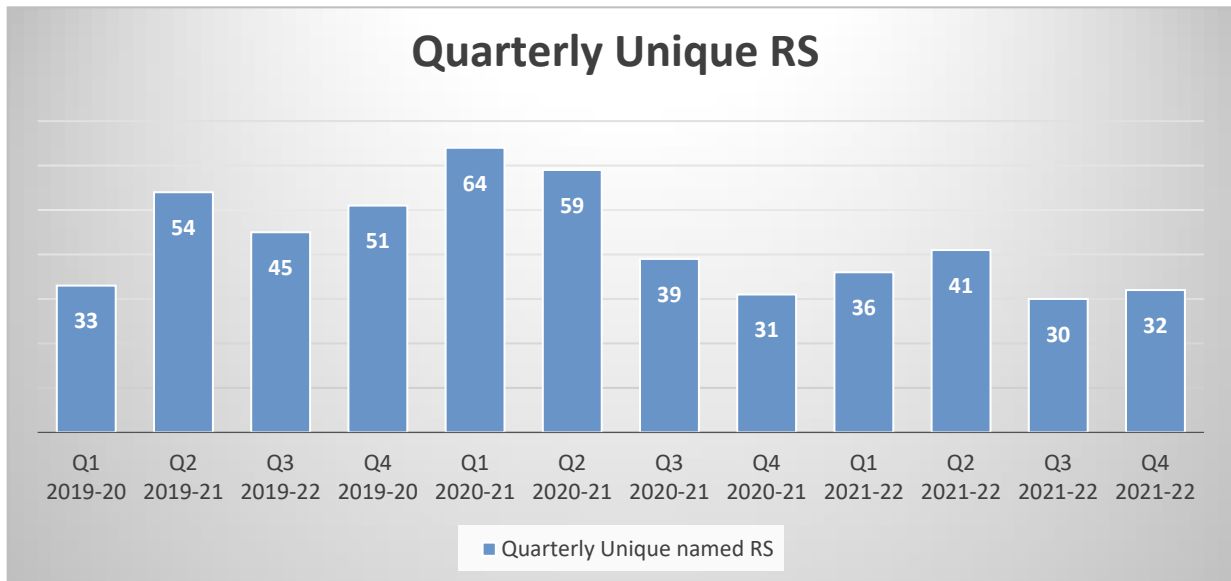


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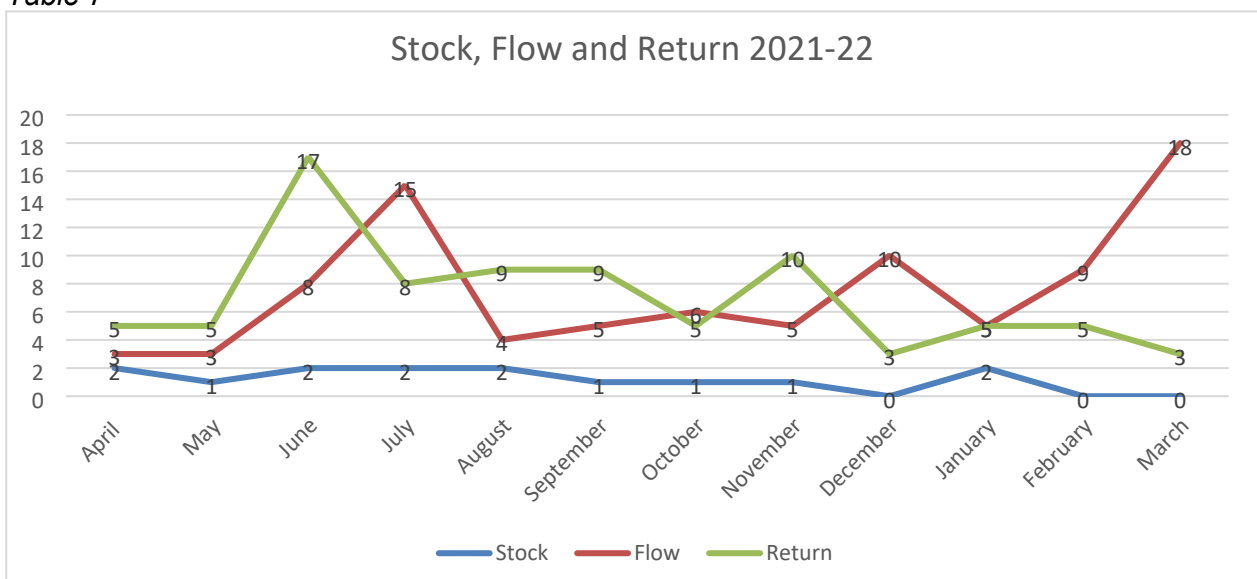


3.13 The government categorises rough sleepers as stock (been on the streets for 6 months or more), flow (are new to the streets) and return (have returned to the streets, but not been there for a consecutive 6 months) and the graph below summarises this. The number of stock rough sleepers is low, however the new flow to the streets is quite high and this is where efforts need to be concentrated to ensure they don't move into returners or stock.

3.14 The team continues to undertake early morning outreach with key partners to offer support and respond to any rough sleeping reports. The new Intensive Housing Led Support Team and Queens House will assist in ensuring there is a potential housing options available. What is key with rough sleepers is:

- Preventing it in the first place
- Working in partnership to address the underlying problems which led to rough sleeping
- Working in partnership in high-risk areas of rough sleeping i.e. prison release, hospital discharge (the team currently have an RSI dedicated post working in this area)
- Trying to minimise the number of people who return to rough sleeping
- Ensuring there are a range of housing options available as one size doesn't fit all and making sure there is a pathway on move on through the system to avoid any bed blocking

Table 7



3.15 All rough sleepers are offered support and wherever possible an accommodation option, however it has to be acknowledged that due to their complex and multiple needs, they have often exhausted all the accommodation options available to them. This is where the service will continue to offer support and work with partners to address wider issues, which are normally a combination of substance misuse, offending, mental and physical health, domestic abuse, and trauma. At the last outreach there were 5 verified rough sleepers found.

#### **4.0 Future Plans & Challenges**

4.1 The service now needs to take stock and re- focus its activities back on the strategic outcomes whilst acknowledging that the world we are operating in has changed significantly over the last few years and recognising the pressures that are coming in the future. With this in mind there will be a review of the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and a new one will be published by April 2023.

4.2 Key areas of work will be:

- Moving back to a preventative approach and working with wider stakeholders to promote this
- Ensuring that the Housing led Support team and Queens House is operational including the development of a supported housing pathway
- Developing the young person's agenda, including the transitions model
- Working with the private rented sector and social landlords to develop better pathways and housing options
- Working with the non-commissioned sector to bring up quality and outcomes
- Reducing the use of B&B and creating better temporary accommodation options

4.3 The challenge will be ensuring that the service can respond to the wider external factors which are impacting and driving homelessness. The housing market has changed which means there are a lot less affordable properties available in the borough and social housing turnover is slow. A minority of rents now fall within the local housing allowance levels and landlords have their pick of tenants as people are choosing to rent as they cannot afford to buy. The cost of living crisis and general poverty is impacting on people's ability to pay rent and other bills, leading to arrears and homelessness. Landlords are exiting the market with some are selling due to the high house prices and others are being impacted on the cost of living themselves.

#### **5.0 Invited Witnesses**

5.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:

- Michelle Kaye, Group Leader Housing & Welfare, Public Health & Communities Directorate, BMBC
- Linda Middlewood, Head of Service Adult Social Care, Public Health & Communities Directorate, BMBC
- Paul Brannan, Head of Safer Barnsley, Public Health & Communities Directorate, BMBC
- Wendy Lowder, Executive Director Place, Health & Adult Social Care, BMBC
- Phillip Hollingsworth, Service Director Communities, Public Health & Communities Directorate, BMBC
- Amy McKenzie, Service Manager, Assessment & Strong Families, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
- Sophie Wales, Service Director Children's Social Care & Safeguarding & Interim Executive Director Children's Services, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
- Julia Burrows, Executive Director, Public Health & Communities, BMBC
- Cllr Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson Children's Services, BMBC
- Cllr Caroline Makinson, Cabinet Spokesperson Public Health & Communities, BMBC

## **6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation**

6.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What has gone well over the last 12 months and what could have gone better?
- What are the main areas of concern now and in the next 12 months and what are your greatest challenges?
- How have the audits on the deaths of four young homeless individuals in 2020-21 in Barnsley altered your work?
- How confident are you that you are meeting your duty to young people who are at risk of homelessness as set out in legislation (including the Children's Act)?
- How effective was the Homeless Recovery Plan? How do you know?
- Can you give examples of how you work together to provide effective support and positive outcomes for young people? How can joint working be strengthened?
- How does being homeless impact upon the lives of children and young people and what is being done to support them in other areas of their lives?
- Have you evaluated the success of the pilot approaches for young people? What were the findings?
- When do you expect to have effective provision in place for 16-17 year olds?
- What is the average time that a family is expected to be in temporary accommodation; what are the implications and what are the challenges associated with finding more secure accommodation?
- How are those who have experienced homelessness involved in shaping the service delivery?
- Can you give examples of how best practice has been used to inform decision making and service delivery?
- How do you work with third sector organisations, the criminal justice system, education providers, employers and private landlords to support those at risk of becoming, or those who are already, homeless?
- How is the service working towards making their homelessness outreach work proactive rather than reactive? What more could be done?
- How do you ensure communication is accessible and easily understood for service users and for those who are hard to reach?
- Do you have both the resources and capacity to implement improvements?
- What can members do to support the work to tackle homelessness in Barnsley?

## **7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links**

Item 4b (attached) Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents>

Provision of Accommodation for Children in Need guide



[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/8260/Provision\\_20of\\_20accommodation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8260/Provision_20of_20accommodation.pdf)

Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Homelessness in Barnsley report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021

<https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g6410/Public%20reports%20pack%2023rd-Mar-2021%2014.00%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

## **8.0 Glossary**

8.1	B&B	Bed & Breakfast
	RS	Rough Sleeping
	RSI	Rough Sleeper Initiative
	RSAP	Rough Sleeper accommodation Programme
	SYHA	South Yorkshire Housing Association

## **9.0 Officer Contact**

Jane Murphy, Scrutiny Officer, [Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk)  
20 June 2022