



Housing Options – CHP Update

Wednesday 7 August 2024

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Housing Options Manager

Background

- The Housing Options team is responsible for administering the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Homelessness Legislation.
- This includes:
 - Providing an advice service to all residents
 - Dealing with approaches for housing assistance
 - Providing advice and assistance to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
 - Providing housing for those households that meet the relevant criteria
 - Using available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness (payments for arrears, deposits, rent in advance, etc)

Current Team

- The Housing Options team currently consists of
 - Housing Options Manager
 - Housing Options team leader
 - Temporary Accommodation Manager
 - 3 x Housing Options Officers
 - 2 x Temporary Accommodation officers
 - 1 x Temporary Accommodation Support Officer
 - 1 x Administration Officer
 - 4 x Housing Options Officers (Fixed term, Grant funded contracts)

Responsibilities

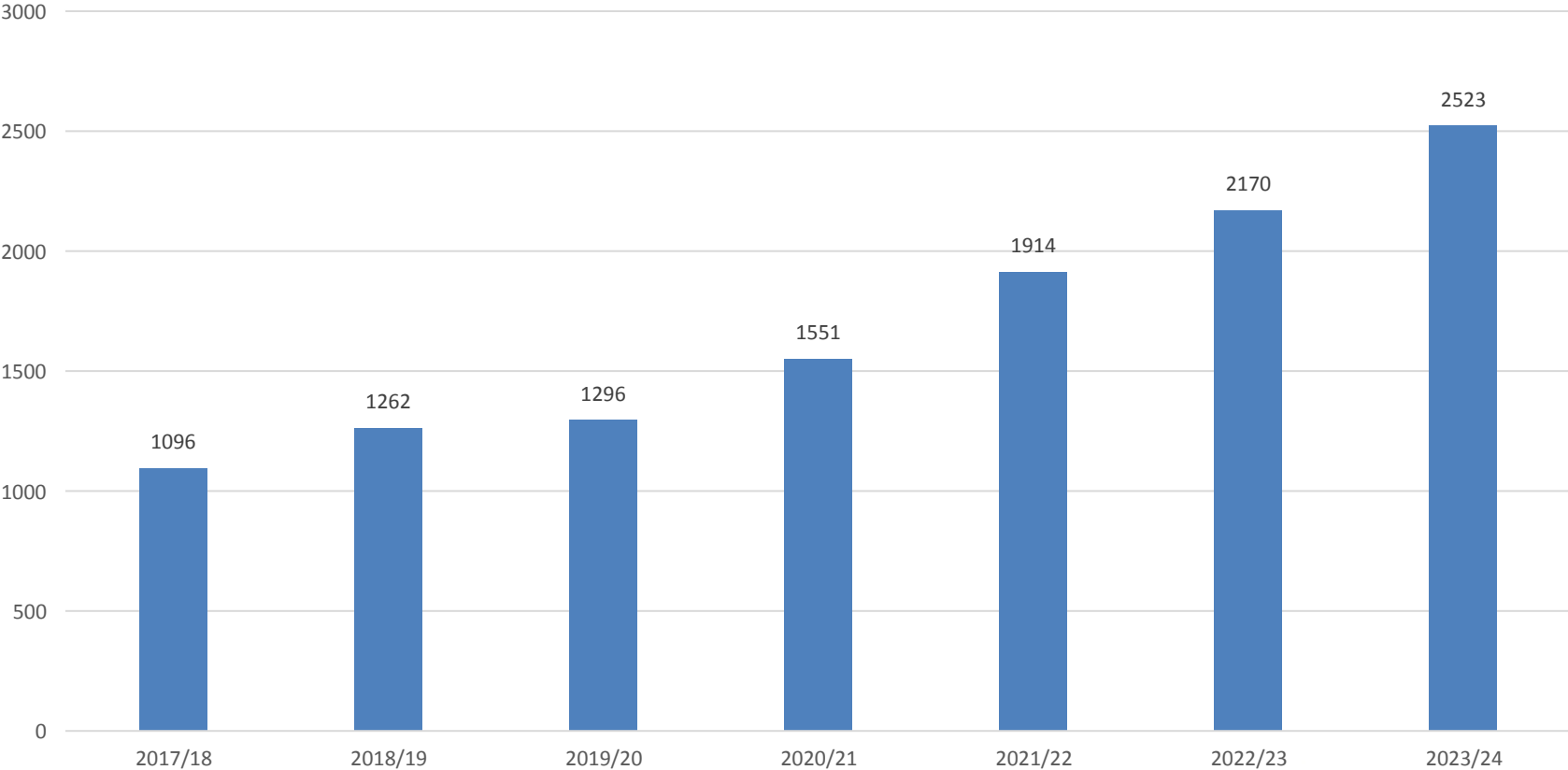
- Primary Focus – Prevention of Homelessness
 - Negotiating with excluders (relatives, landlords, letting agents) in order to maintain accommodation
 - Securing alternative accommodation (social housing, private sector housing, supported accommodation)
- When Prevention is not possible
 - Advice to assist people find accommodation
 - Referrals to other partners
 - In some cases, Council provides accommodation

Changes

In 2018, new legislation (The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) came into effect, changing the way that local authorities were required to deal with members of the public approaching them for assistance.

There has been a significant increase in the number of approaches being handled by the Council since these changes, and along with it, a huge increase in the number of households requiring accommodation.

Approaches



2018/19 vs 2023/24

2018/19		2023/24
1262	Number of approaches	2523
850	Number owed a duty under the law	1093
67%	% of approaches owed a duty	43%
271	Number assessed as homeless	457
32%	% that were homeless	42%
548	Number assessed as threatened with homelessness	550
64%	% that were threatened with homelessness	50%
31	Number assessed as threatened with homelessness (s21/private sector accommodation)	86
4%	% that were being evicted from private sector accommodation	8%
Family eviction Private Sector Eviction Non-abusive relationship breakdown	Main reason for approaching (top 3)	Family eviction Private Sector Eviction Domestic Abuse
219	Total number housed into TA	408

Temporary Accommodation

- The term used to refer to the housing that is used to accommodate households that qualify
- Not everyone is housed by the Council
- Not dependent on how long someone has lived in the district
- Only those that meet legal criteria are entitled to accommodation
 - Families with dependent children
 - Those that meet specific definition of vulnerability
 - Victims of domestic violence
 - Several other categories

Temporary Accommodation

We have 5 sites of temporary accommodation, owned by the Council

In Hatfield:

- Burfield Close – 20 units of former sheltered accommodation, mostly one bed flats
- Hazel Grove House – 20 units across 4 floors, mostly one bed flats but includes adapted properties

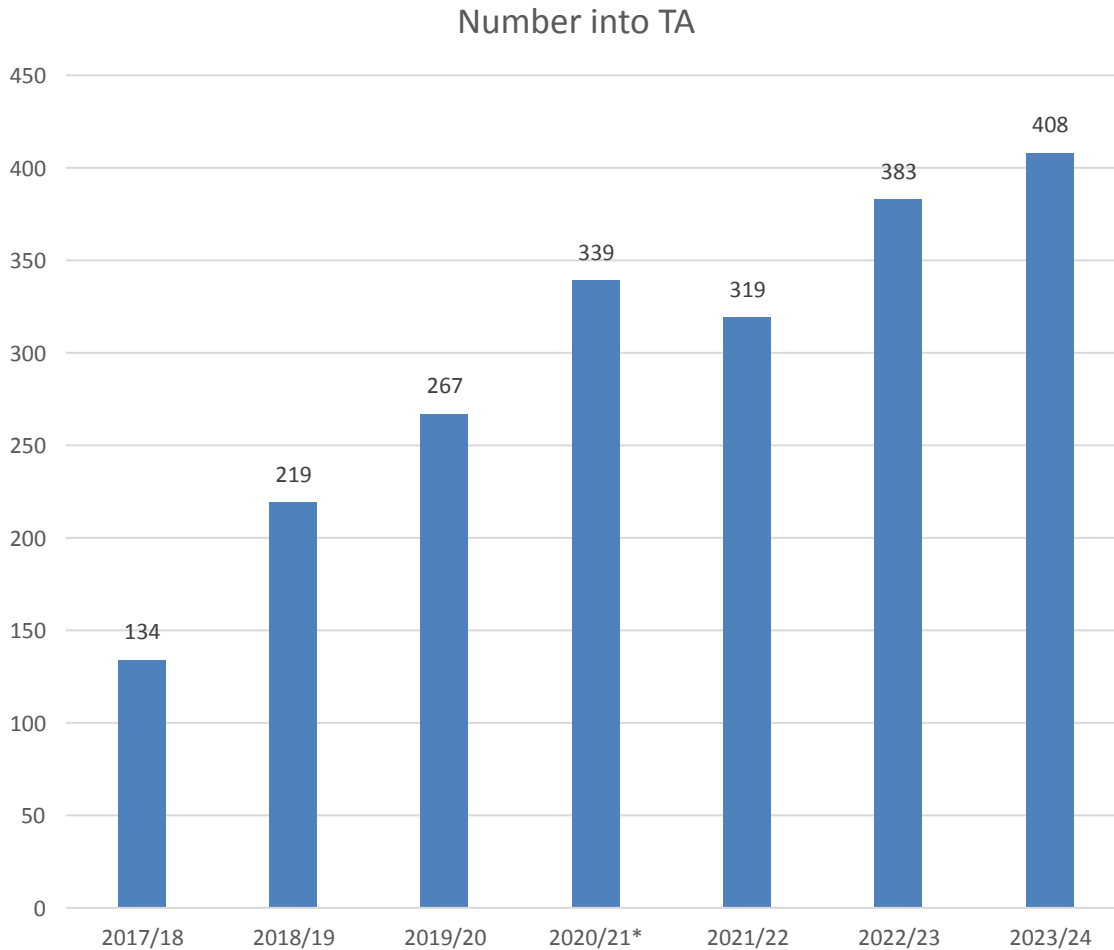
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In Welwyn Garden City:

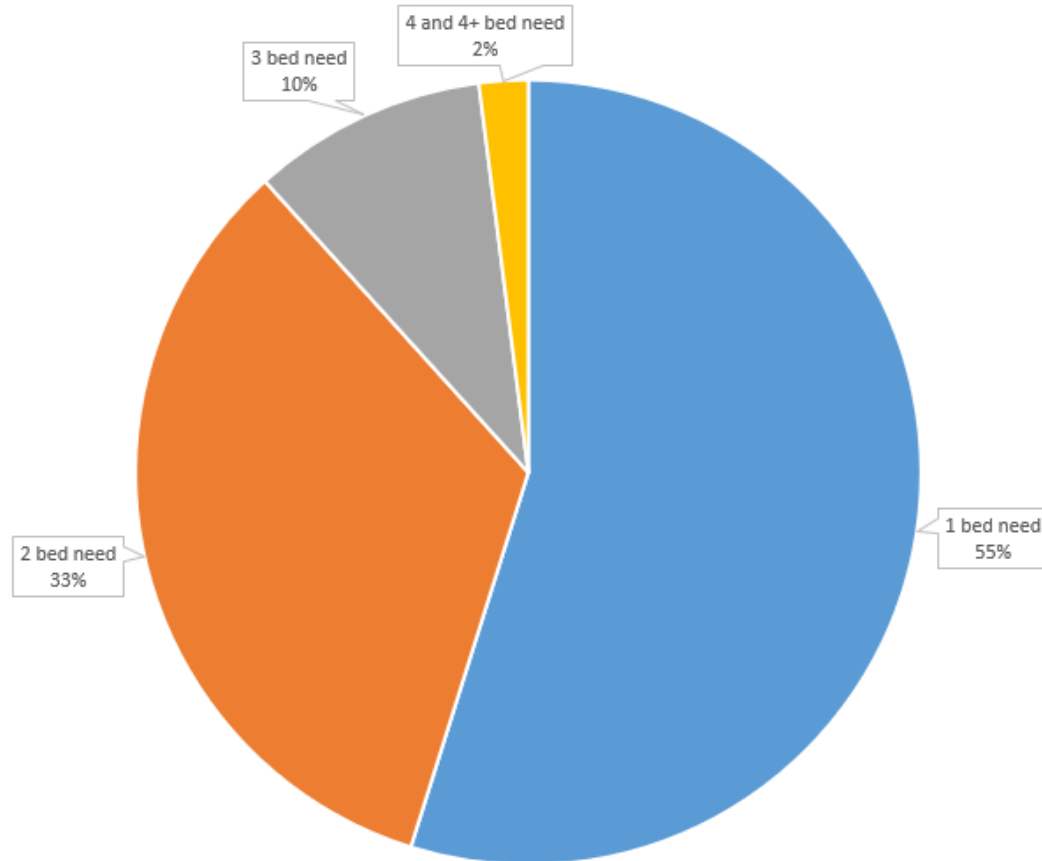
- Inspira House – 54 units across 2 floors, mix of studio and one bed flats
- Swallow End – 20 units across 3 floors, mostly one bed flats
- Howlands House – 23 units, of which only 11 are now in use, due to be redeveloped

Use of Temporary Accommodation



Year	Number into TA
2017/18	134
2018/19	219
2019/20	267
2020/21*	339
2021/22	319
2022/23	383
2023/24	408

% of Households in TA



Monitoring Performance

In order to ensure that standards are maintained, officers are required to meet the following Key performance indicators:

- Families are not to be accommodated in hotel accommodation for longer than six weeks
- Applicants are to have their case assessed within 14 days of being assigned an officer
- Applicants are to receive a Personalised Housing Plan within 7 days of their assessment

Rough Sleeping

We have partners that carry out work with rough sleepers; the charity Resolve.

They have reported an increase in the numbers that are rough sleeping and refusing to engage with the service, however there is an element of this that is seasonal.

They have also experienced difficulties in assisting people to move on to more settled accommodation, something we also experience.

Begging

- Many individuals that members of the public tell us about are not rough sleeping, but begging
- Many have accommodation available to them
- Housing Options and Anti-Social Behaviour team are working with Police to take enforcement action around begging
- When a genuine rough sleeping or homelessness need is identified, we will always try to help.

Main Challenges

- Finding local landlords and agents willing to work with the Council
- Resistance following a bad experience
- Lack of move on accommodation
- Expectations of payment; London boroughs paying incentives

Next Steps

- You can see from the data presented that the approaches for all areas and continuously increasing.
- As a result we are reviewing our rough sleeping and homelessness strategy and will bring this to CHP in due course.