



<b>Subject:</b>	Update report on hostel accommodation in Belfast and the relationship to HMO licensing.
<b>Date:</b>	20 September 2023
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Kevin Bloomfield - NIHMO Manager
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Vivienne Donnelly - City Protection Manager Helen Morrissey - City Protection Manager

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	At its meeting of the 21 June 2023 whilst considering applications submitted by Queens Quarter Housing Limited for the granting of new HMO licences at Flats 1 & 2, 6 Sandhurst Road, Belfast, BT7 1PW this Committee agreed to defer consideration of the applications to enable officers to explore the strategic context of the issues which had been raised in relation to the applications, and the wider hostel accommodation in Belfast, and to present this information at a future meeting.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Committee is asked to note the content of this report regarding the need and dispersal of hostel accommodation in Belfast.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	The Housing Executive as the regional housing authority became responsible for addressing homelessness in Northern Ireland in 1989. In 2010 a legislative duty was placed on them to formulate and publish a strategy for homelessness.

## **Ending Homelessness Together – Homelessness Strategy 2022-27**

- 3.2 On 23rd March 2022 the Housing Executive published '[Ending Homelessness Together – Homelessness Strategy 2022-27](#)'. The vision of 'Ending Homelessness Together' reflects a continued need for the Housing Executive to work with its partners across the sector to address the varied and complex factors that lead to homelessness, many of which extend beyond the provision of accommodation.
- 3.3 In line with the Homelessness Strategy 2020 -27 the Housing Executive published a strategic action plan for temporary accommodation 2022 – 27 titled [Ending Homelessness Together - Homeless to Home](#)
- 3.4 The Housing Executive has published a [Belfast Local Services Directory](#) as part of the Ending Homelessness Together Strategy. The directory details Belfast based accommodation and related support services.
- 3.5 The action plan was developed in consultation with stakeholders with the goal of assessing how effectively the current temporary accommodation portfolio meets the needs of customers experiencing homelessness. The Housing Executive state that the needs of homeless customers have been changing; today's homelessness issues are much different to those of 10 years ago, with customers presenting with increasingly complex health and support needs.
- 3.6 The Housing Executive is responsible for delivering the statutory homeless accommodation duties which is provided to households who are legally homeless, until a more permanent housing solution can be secured. It is also provided to households whose homelessness application is undergoing assessment and who are believed to be homeless and in priority need.
- 3.7 The Housing Executive state that there are five main types of temporary accommodation in operation as detailed -
- Hostels**
- 3.8 Hostels in Northern Ireland come in a range of types and sizes with significant variation in the levels of support provided. They are funded by Supporting People and managed largely by voluntary sector providers.
- Single lets**
- 3.9 Single lets are furnished private sector dwellings managed by landlords or managing agents to accommodate homeless households on a temporary basis. Referrals are from the Housing Executive alone.
- Housing Executive temporary accommodation**
- 3.10 The Housing Executive provides some furnished temporary accommodation across Northern Ireland. These are a mix of dispersed properties, blocks of flats or terraces, and purpose-built hostels, mostly managed by the Housing Executive, with a small number managed by voluntary sector providers.
- Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME)**
- 3.11 This is a scheme of 118 units which are leased by the Housing Executive and where the provider is employed under a contract to act as the Housing Executive's managing agent and support provider. The service is jointly funded by homelessness and Supporting People. This

provision caters for customers with intensive support needs and high-risk behaviours. The Housing Executive have confirmed that Queens Quarter Housing Ltd is the sole provider of DIME accommodation in Belfast.

**Night Shelters**

3.12 Funded by Supporting People, these services are emergency crisis accommodation intended for short term use by those with no other accommodation options.

**Number of units**

3.13 The Housing Executive have advised that table 1 is the most up to date information as of the 21 July 2023 on the number of units across the five types of temporary accommodation referenced in the Strategic Action Plan for Temporary Accommodation 2022/27 -

**Table 1**

<i>Type of accommodation</i>	<i>No. of units</i>
<i>Hostels</i>	c. 1,447 units
<i>Single Lets</i>	c. 2,499 units
<i>Housing Executive Temporary Accommodation</i>	c. 302 units
<i>Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME)</i>	118 units
<i>Night Shelters</i>	31 units

3.14 **Appendix 1** provides details of the voluntary sector, NIHE hostels and DIME temporary accommodation bedspaces recorded by Belfast postcode district.

**Projected needs**

3.15 The action plan indicates that –

- a) demand for temporary accommodation will remain higher than pre-pandemic levels and will outstrip supply,
- b) single person households will remain the largest cohort presenting for temporary accommodation, and also with the greatest support needs,
- c) young people who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, will continue to need accommodation and support,
- d) Belfast and Derry/Londonderry will continue to have the highest gap between supply and demand,
- e) levels of support needs will continue to grow, particularly related to mental health and addictions,
- f) there will be increased demand from those losing private rented accommodation,
- g) it is anticipated that there will be increased demand from victims of domestic abuse.

	<p><b>Minimising the need for temporary accommodation</b></p> <p>3.16 The Strategic Action Plan indicates there are two main work strands to minimising the need for temporary accommodation; one is effective targeted homelessness prevention/tenancy sustainment, and the other is improved access to permanent housing supply to enable permanent rehousing at the earliest opportunity and minimise time spent in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>3.17 The Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation has noted that often the current homelessness response is crisis led, with a need to provide temporary accommodation. A systemic and cultural shift towards homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing is required. Ambitions to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation depend on the delivery of broader housing supply options. An adequate supply of social and affordable housing is fundamental to any long-term goal to end homelessness.</p> <p><b>Supporting people</b></p> <p>3.18 The Supporting People Programme helps people to live independently in the community. The Housing Executive administer the Programme in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department for Communities.</p> <p>3.19 Many different groups of people can benefit from housing related support through the Supporting People programme. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homeless people</li> <li>• people with a learning disability</li> <li>• people with poor mental health</li> <li>• older people</li> <li>• women at risk of domestic violence</li> <li>• young people leaving care</li> <li>• people with drug or alcohol use problems</li> <li>• offenders or people at risk of offending</li> </ul>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices:</b></p> <p><b>Appendix 1 –</b> Dispersal of temporary accommodation (excluding single lets and NIHE dispersed temporary accommodation) by Belfast postcode district.</p>