

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 June 2025

Medway's Children and Families placed in Temporary Accommodation

Report from: Adam Bryan, Director of Place

Author: Becs Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer

Summary

This report provides the members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on Medway's children and families placed in interim temporary accommodation under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996, during the relief duty while homeless enquiries are undertaken or temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless under the main duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.

The report highlights the actions to support these families placed in interim and temporary accommodation and the action being taken to move families into settled accommodation.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The report falls within the Council's One Medway Council Plan strategic priorities with specific reference to **Priority 5 – Living in good quality and affordable homes.**

2.2. The provision of housing advice and homelessness services are a statutory requirement for local authorities, this includes the provision of interim and temporary accommodation. [Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017].

2.3. Other guidance and legislation that is taken into consideration when providing temporary accommodation beside the provision noted in 2.2 includes:

- Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

- Localism Act 2011
 - Section 11, Children Act 2004
 - Section 23 and 42 Care Act 2014
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - Equality Act 2010
- 2.4. A key strategic document is the [Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030](#) was agreed by Cabinet on 17 December 2024 and details the planned response in meeting the needs of Medway's residents with regards to homelessness, in all forms.
- 2.5. Prior to the review of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping strategy, a review of the Council's Housing Strategy was undertaken which resulted in the adoption of [Housing Strategy to 2030](#) in March 2024.
- 2.6. The synergy within this document, the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the One Medway Council Plan Priority 5 is to support supply, quality, participation and independence when delivering and meeting housing demand.
- ### 3. Background
- 3.1. Interim and temporary accommodation is a form of housing assistance that local authorities in England may provide to homeless households who are eligible for assistance, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless.
- 3.2. The provision of temporary accommodation is governed by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 3.3. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly changed the way in which homelessness approaches are managed, the Act enhanced the need for early intervention to prevent, (moving from 28 days to 56 days prior to risk of homelessness) rather than relieving homelessness, which is where a household becomes homeless and requires the use of interim temporary accommodation.
- 3.4. Temporary accommodation will continue to be provided if a full housing duty is owed until permanent housing is found.
- 3.5. Access to good quality accommodation is becoming harder throughout the UK. Local Authorities are struggling to secure access to sufficient temporary accommodation, and Medway is no different. Post pandemic, the number of available properties has reduced, and this is continuing still. Many private sector landlords are leaving the market due to an increase in the cost of mortgages. Alongside this, many landlords are increasingly selective about who they want as tenants, which puts additional pressure onto Medway

Council's Housing Options Team when attempting to procure accommodation for homeless households.

- 3.6 An additional barrier in sourcing properties to use as temporary accommodation is the pressure from other Local Authorities (LA) using Medway as a cheaper location than their own.
- 3.7 When LAs place households in temporary accommodation in another borough [known as out of borough placements], they are required to issue a Section 208 [Housing Act 1996] notification to the receiving borough. Placements from other boroughs into the area dilute the availability of properties for Medway Council. Landlords report that other boroughs are offering to pay more for the placements than Medway.

4. Advice and analysis

Current Position – households in interim or temporary accommodation with a dependent child.

The figures provided throughout the report are correct as of 22 May 2025.

- 4.1. There are 482 households in interim or temporary accommodation who have at least one dependent child. These households make up approximately 79% of all households in temporary accommodation, this is above the national average which stood at 63.3% as of 31 December 2024.
- 4.2. Of the households with at least one dependent child, 83% of the households have been placed in Medway with the remaining households being placed out of borough. All bar one household are residing in Kent local authorities.
- 4.3. There are 999 dependent children residing in temporary accommodation with 84% of children residing in Medway (835 children). The average number of children residing in temporary accommodation per household is 2.07, there are 23 households with more than 5 dependent children.
- 4.4. The average stay for a household with dependent children in temporary accommodation is 1 year and 11 days.
- 4.5. There are 407 households (84.4%) with dependent children in temporary accommodation that have a **main duty owed**, this means that the local authority has a duty to find settled accommodation [for a minimum of 6 months]
- 4.6. There are no households with dependent children currently residing in B&B accommodation, the council have not had any remain in B&B for more than 6 weeks in the last 15 months.

Current position – care leavers/young people in interim or temporary accommodation.

- 4.7. There are currently less than 5 care leavers in interim or temporary accommodation. These households make up approximately less than 0.5% of all households in temporary accommodation.
- 4.8. Each care leaver is assessed to ensure any temporary accommodation is safe and suitable for them to occupy and where possible are placed in Medway.
- 4.9. There are no care leavers residing in B&B accommodation.

Actions being taken to prevent and reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation

Prevention – households with dependent children

- 4.10. Since July 2024, the housing options team have had an additional five housing options officers to support the prevention of homelessness. The team were set an objective to prevent an additional 25 households from homelessness per month. The team secured a further 299 preventions compared to 2023/24.
- 4.11. Refresher training has been provided to both adult and social care workers to provide support with identifying households who maybe a risk of homelessness.
- 4.12. Engaging with Policy in Practice and their Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data analytics software to support early intervention.

Move-on from temporary accommodation – households with dependent children

- 4.13. While there has been a significant increase in the number of households requiring temporary accommodation over the last 5 years, the most pressing issue is the move on to settled accommodation. Over the last few years there has been an on-going reliance and in many cases an expectation that requiring the assistance from the Council for housing will result in either a council or a housing association (registered provider) property.
- 4.14. While this is one pathway out of temporary accommodation, the reality is that there are over 3000 households on the council's waiting list, and approximately 700 lets per year across the whole of Medway's social housing properties.

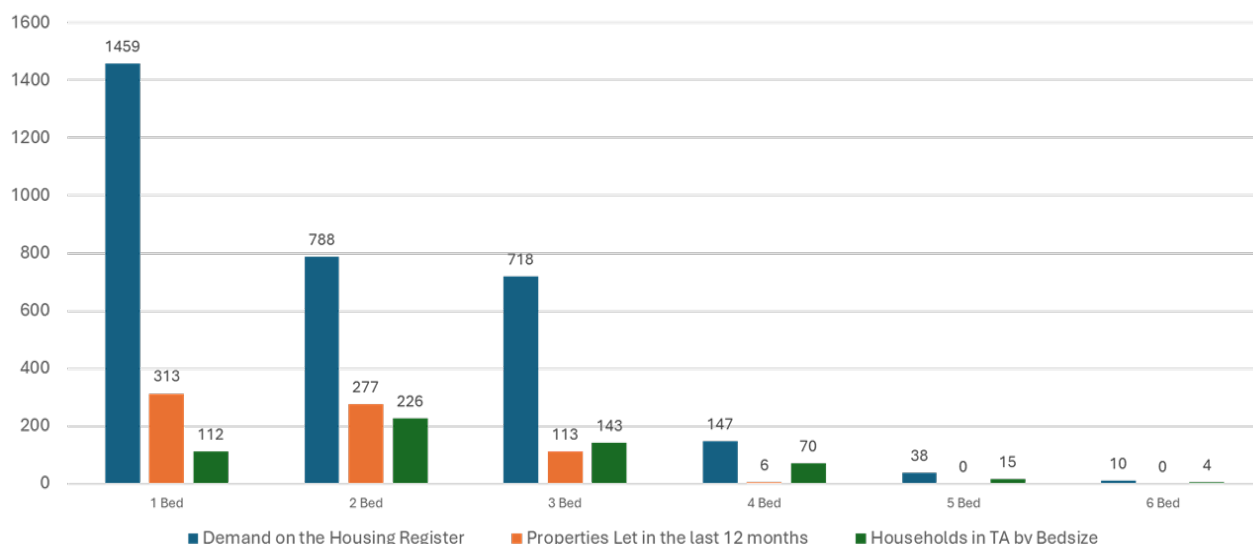


Table 1. Number of lets via Kent Homechoice 2024/25

- 4.15. A new move-on team has been created within the housing options team, the team comprises of housing options and re-housing officers to target specific cohorts of temporary accommodation, this includes long term households with dependent children. The move-on team will review each household, including housing need, affordability and suitability of the types of accommodation available, this includes offers into private rented accommodation.
- 4.16. The creation of a social lettings agency, in November 2024, One Medway Lettings (OML) was launched as an alternative to high street lettings agencies and rent 2 rent market (nightly paid temporary accommodation). OML offers guaranteed rent up to a period of 5 years, once a property is on-boarded the team will work with the move-on team to identify a household in temporary accommodation to be offer a new settled tenancy.
- 4.17. To date 11 properties have been on-boarded and all have been let to households with at least one dependent child. The households that have been moved into a OML property has included two of our largest households. These families are now able to settle in their new homes while having access to the OML team and the Welfare Benefits Team.

Prevention – care leavers & young people

- 4.18. The Council have developed a Joint Housing Assessment (JHA) to support the prevention of homelessness, this assessment considers the young person's housing and support needs.
- 4.19. Housing and Children's social care have jointly developed and delivered training on the Medway JHA process with the aim to provide social workers and housing options officers with an overview of the main housing duties owed to 16/17-year-olds and an understanding of the joint working protocol.
- 4.20. The training session considers what legislation informs best practice, a run through from start to finish of the JHA in practical terms, and outlines all options for homeless people who are aged 16-17. The three face to face

sessions delivered in November 2024 enabled housing and social care staff to build professional relationships and ensured that most staff who would be carrying out a JHA have received the training. The training is now being delivered once per quarter to encompass any new starters, or for those who missed the initial training. The training will be updated based on findings and feedback of how JHA meetings are carried out in the future.

- 4.21. A specialist housing advisor placed within the 16+ service has supported improved working with early intervention, supporting advocacy on behalf of the young people to reduce the need for temporary accommodation or ensuring that any move-on accommodation is affordable and suitable for their needs. This has supported an increase in satisfaction with quality of accommodation available.
- 4.22. A joint meeting between housing options and the young people's service has been in place to support the prevention of homelessness and joint working on complex cases. These meetings have proven to be invaluable as the number of care leavers requiring temporary accommodation since June 2023 (when the new ICT system HUUME was implemented) has been 53 (42 Medway care leavers, 5 Kent care leavers and 6 care leavers from other LAs) which has now been significantly reduced to 1 long term case and 2 cases that have been in temporary accommodation for less than 6 months.
- 4.23. These meetings are currently being reviewed and revamped to ensure positive partnerships and outcomes for our young people.
- 4.24. Positive partnership arrangements with the 16+ service and the HRA Development Team, has supported the early identification of suitable offers of accommodation. This has included the provision of four new one-bedroom properties in Hoo as part of West Kent Housing Associations (WKHA) new build provision.
- 4.25. On-going accommodation identification via Local Lettings Plan (LLP) including the new draft plan for Truro Manor, Britton Farm, Jefferey Street, which is due for completion this summer for the HRA. The LLP has identified 4 x 1-bedroom flats for care leavers. LLPs are developed for all new social/affordable rental homes in Medway which supports the identified need for care leaver accommodation.
- 4.26. New accommodation provision, the Sunrise Foyer in Luton, opened in December, this provision has been a joint project between housing, Ministry of Homes Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and MHS Homes, that has seen an unusable former sheltered housing scheme, to be remodelled and refurbished into a 30-bed space young person's scheme. The scheme is for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Move on from temporary accommodation – care leavers & young people

- 4.27. There are a number of pathways for move-on from temporary accommodation, this includes supported housing, either via the two foyers in

Medway, in-house supported accommodation, via Kent Homechoice into a social housing property or into the private rented sector.

- 4.28. Most care leavers are housed in a form of support accommodation or via Kent Homechoice.

Other considerations

4.29. Supported Housing Improvement Plan [SHIP]

- 4.29.1. This programme ensures both quality and value for money for both Medway Council and residents of supported accommodation, by visiting properties and carrying out audits of the service provision. Where there are issues in the quality of support or accommodation, this is raised with the supported housing provider and actions are created collaboratively to make improvements to the service.

- 4.29.2. Since the project started in 2023, the SHIP team have visited over 300 residents and assessed the quality of supported accommodation. SHIP has also worked closely with new service opening in the Medway area to ensure appropriate processes and safeguarding is in place, and support providers to create these where they are missing.

- 4.29.3. While CYP have their own commissioned support accommodation, young people may access non-commissioned services, and the SHIP team provide reassurance around quality and condition.

4.29.4. Intentionally homeless [negative homelessness outcome] households with dependent children

- 4.29.5. There are currently 23 intentionally homeless households in temporary accommodation, these households have been in placements up to 5 years. These cases are complex in their nature and are discussed via the Corporate Housing Finance Panel.

- 4.29.6. Further work is being undertaken by Children's services and Housing to ensure appropriate case management and support into alternative accommodation. This cohort of temporary accommodation remain a financial pressure for Housing, which is why continuing cross directorate work is required.

4.30. Corporate Housing Finance Panel

- 4.30.1 This panel consists of representatives from Adult and Children's services and Housing to discuss complex cases such as intentionally homeless or no recourse to public funds. This panel allows for a cross directorate skilled panel to consider effective outcomes for complex and challenging cases while reducing the financial pressure for the Council.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community. Using the following table this section should therefore consider any significant risks arising from your report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Cost of nightly paid accommodation	Landlords or managing agents increase nightly costs.	Implementation of a tender framework to procure nightly paid accommodation	BII
Availability of good quality affordable private rented accommodation	Loss of accommodation to alternative private rental models. Implementation of the Renters Rights Bill	Central government lobbying. One Medway Lettings Bi-annual Landlord Forums A specialist move-on team	BIII
Decrease in prevention of homelessness of households with children	Reduction in the number of households having their homelessness prevented	Opening of the Front Door at Kingsley House (Q2) Training session for Duty to Refer organisations	BIII
Quality of available TA	Poor quality TA	Proactive visiting programme of all placements. TA Acquisition Programme Use of HRA and corporate properties.	CII
Availability of good quality, affordable supported housing	Availability of supported housing	Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) Review of move-on pathways from support housing Provision needs now and, in the future,	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

6. Climate change implications

- 6.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019 and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 6.2. A Climate Change action plan has been developed (www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan), the action plan is shaped by 11 priority areas including Priority 5 – Building retrofit programme and Priority 3 – Planning and development.
- 6.3. Under the £42million TA acquisition programme, all street properties are required to have a minimum of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C and all new build acquisitions require a minimum of an EPC rating of B.
- 6.4. All Housing Revenue Account (HRA) new build developments are built to a minimum of EPC B, with Phase 5 (Aburound House) having photovoltaic panels (PV) to support the communal area electrical use. Phase 5 (Lennoxwood) the individual houses (19) will have PV fitted to support the household's electrical consumption and reduce the cost of the annual electricity bill.
- 6.5. Under the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1, the HRA are retrofitting 108 council homes using the "fabric first" method to support the climate change agenda.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The overall Strategic Housing budget for 2025/26 is £11.01m, within this the budget for Homelessness is £4.6m.
- 7.2. All financial implications including risks have been agreed for 2025/26 by Full Council on 27 February 2025 and included in the Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan 2025/26.
- 7.3. All reference to HRA properties or projects are reflected in the HRA 30 Year Business Plan considered and approved at Full Council on 27 February 2025.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1. There is a legal requirement to provide interim and temporary accommodation under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996, during the relief duty while homelessness enquiries are undertaken or temporary accommodation

placements for households accepted as homeless under the main duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.

Lead officer contact

Becs Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer, rebecca.wilcox@medway.gov.uk .

Appendices

None

Background papers

[Housing Strategy to 2030](#)

[Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to 2030](#)