

## **Health Improvement Board – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

### **Update report of Housing Support Advisory Group (HSAG) to HIB**

#### **1. Purpose**

1.1 To update the Board on the work of the Housing Support Advisory Group including

- Performance indicators update (4.1; 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6)
- Process for an independent review of the deaths of homeless or recently housed people
- Approach to county-wide transformation & future commissioning of service for rough sleepers and single homeless people

#### **2. Main Report – Performance Indicators Update**

2.1 This report relates to measures 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 of the HIB Performance Framework which relate specifically to housing data collected in respect of various statutory duties carried out by Housing Authorities in Oxfordshire during 2018-19.

2.2 There is a specific reason for the delay on reporting measures 4.4-4.6. In April 2018 a new statistical system, known as H-CLIC, was introduced to report data back to MHCLG in respect of statutory housing and homelessness data. This was a significant departure from previous methodologies and it has been reported by MHCLG that data quality issues have arisen from the change and in some cases local authorities have had their data imputed based on past trends. This is not the case for any of the Oxfordshire councils but MHCLG have suggested that caution should still be used if comparing the latest data with historic data.

2.3 HCLIC was aligned with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA). The pre-HRA 2017 homelessness legislation provided an important safety net for vulnerable households but it required housing authorities to intervene only at crisis point, often too late to prevent a homelessness crisis. The households who did not have a priority need (e.g. do not have children) often did not receive the support to secure accommodation.

2.4 The HRA 2017 is a seminal piece of legislation and the most significant change seen in the last 20 years. The aim of the HRA 2017 is to ensure that:

- Help is available to everyone who is at risk of homelessness
- Upstream prevention/intervention takes place to avoid crisis situations
- The local authorities work with people and in partnership with other agencies to find the best sustainable solutions
- There is less emphasis on priority and on intentionally homeless

2.5 The HRA builds further on the work of the national Trailblazer Programmes, with the work of the Oxfordshire Trailblazer, which focussed on cross-system upstream prevention work, having previously reported to this Board.

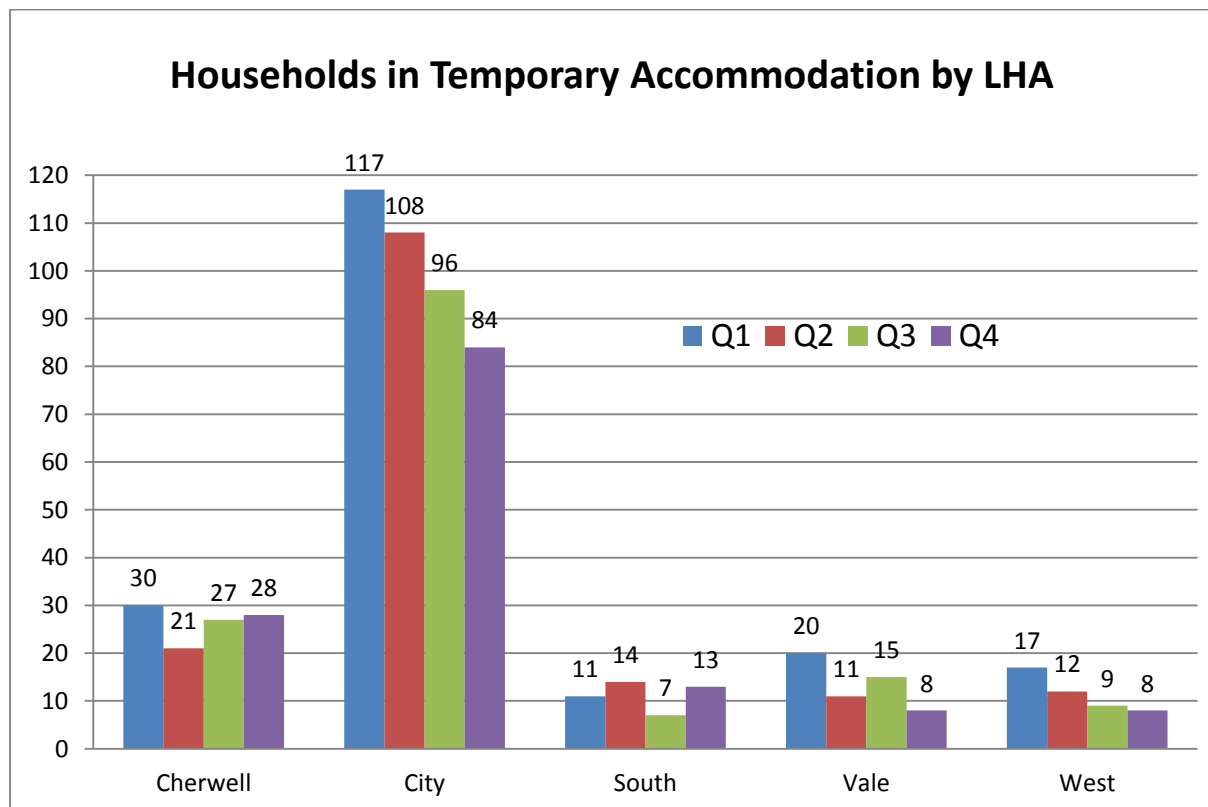
2.6 Whilst it is difficult to compare activity under the HRA to previous years' activity, the following data gives early indications that the Act is seeing an increase in prevention activity as would be expected and a consequent drop in the numbers in temporary accommodation.

## Measure 4.1 – Temporary Accommodation

2.7 The graphic below illustrates the numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation for each quarter of 2018-19, based on a snap shot count at the end of each quarter.

2.7 Between Q1 and Q4 there has been a reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation from 195 to 141. Most of this reduction can be attributed to Oxford City, but Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire have also seen sizeable reductions. The numbers for Cherwell and South Oxfordshire have remained relatively static.

2.8 In Cherwell there was an initial increase following the introduction of HRA. This then reduced in Q2 but the numbers have increased again in Q3 and Q4. Cherwell have indicated that this is because they have decided to utilise the capacity they have in their temporary accommodation (as a result of declining placements under statutory duties) to provide extended placements for those households that would not normally be accommodated to further increase their prevention activity.



2.9 At Oxford City Council numbers in temporary accommodation have declined but as anticipated, applicants remain longer in our temporary accommodation under the new duties. The most significant change within temporary accommodation has been a shift towards supporting more single people, often with multiple complex issues, e.g. poor mental health, high risk and substance misuse. In 2017-18 the City Council placed 35 singles and 119 families in temporary accommodation. In 2018-19 this was 53 singles and 102 families.

2.10 The downward trend for Oxfordshire largely bucks the trends that have been experienced across the rest of the country. At the end of Q3 MHCLG reported that when compared with the same period for the previous year the rest of England (excluding London)

had seen a 9.1% increase in households accommodated in temporary accommodation. In London there was a 3.1% increase.

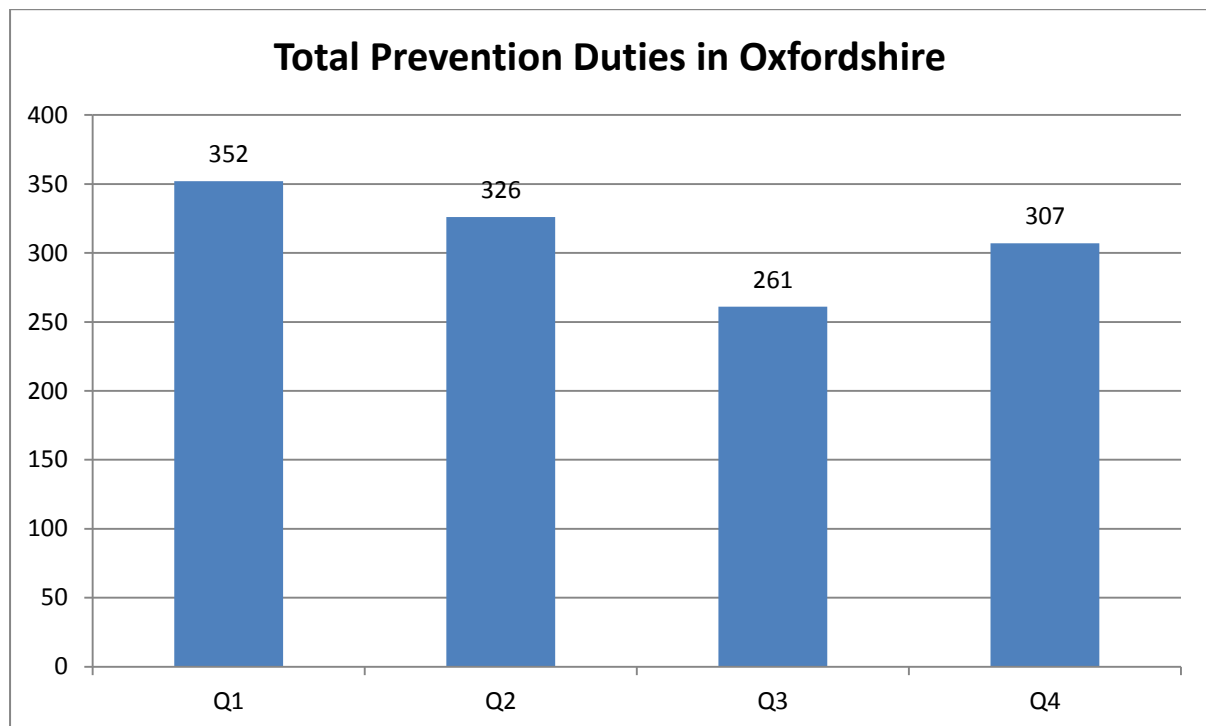
(Note – The full national figures for 2018-19 are yet to be reported)

#### Measure 4.4 - Prevention Duties

2.11 Prevention duties include any activities aimed at preventing a household threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This would involve activities to enable an applicant to stay in their current home or find alternative accommodation in order to prevent them becoming homeless. The duty last for 56 days but may be extended if the local authority is continuing with efforts to prevent homelessness.

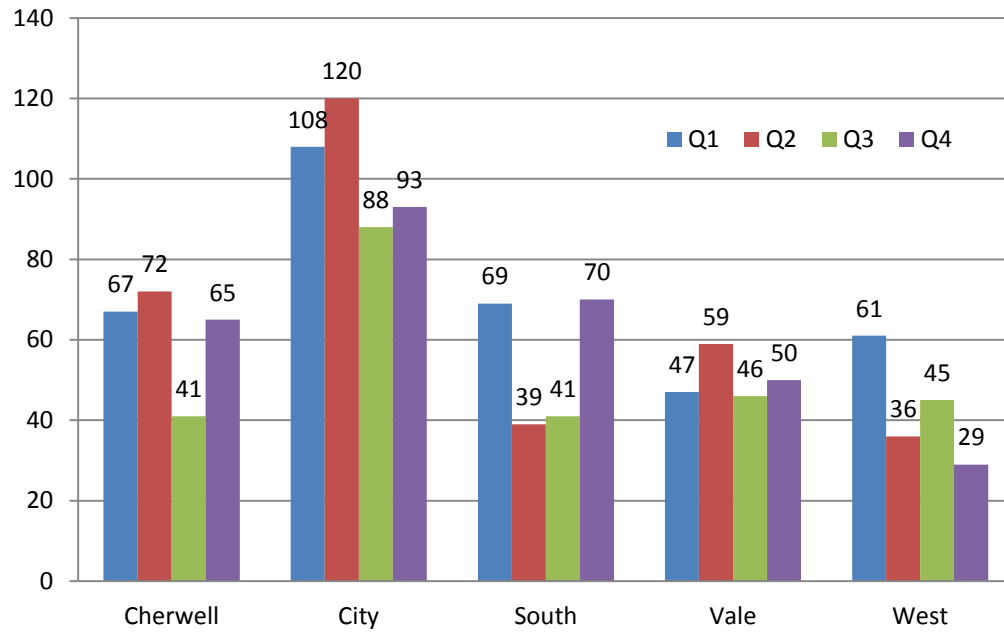
2.12 In total there were 1,246 prevention duties undertaken across the County in 2018-19. There is no emerging trend across the County with the overall numbers demonstrated in the following graph.

2.13 In Q2 and Q3 there were successive reductions in the number of people receiving prevention duties in the county but this has subsequently increased in Q4.

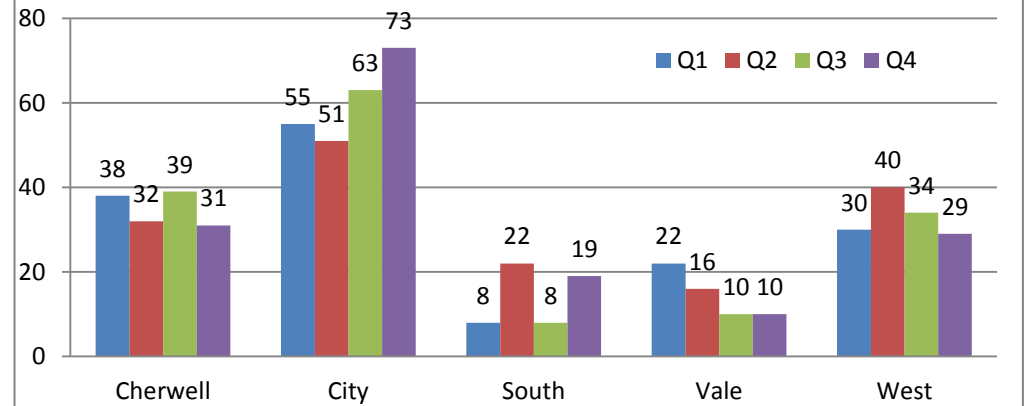


2.14 On the following page the graphic on the left hand side of the page illustrates the number of prevention duties that have been accepted, each quarter, by each District/City. Oxford City and West Oxfordshire have both experienced reductions in the number of prevention duties, Vale of White Horse and Cherwell have experienced broadly relatively static numbers and South Oxfordshire appear to have seen two peaks and troughs.

### Prevention Duties by LHA



### Relief Duties by LHA



#### Measure 4.5 – Relief Duties

2.15 Relief duties are owed to households that are already homeless and require help to secure settled accommodation. They duty last 56 days, and can only be extended by a local authority if the household would not be owed a main homelessness duty.

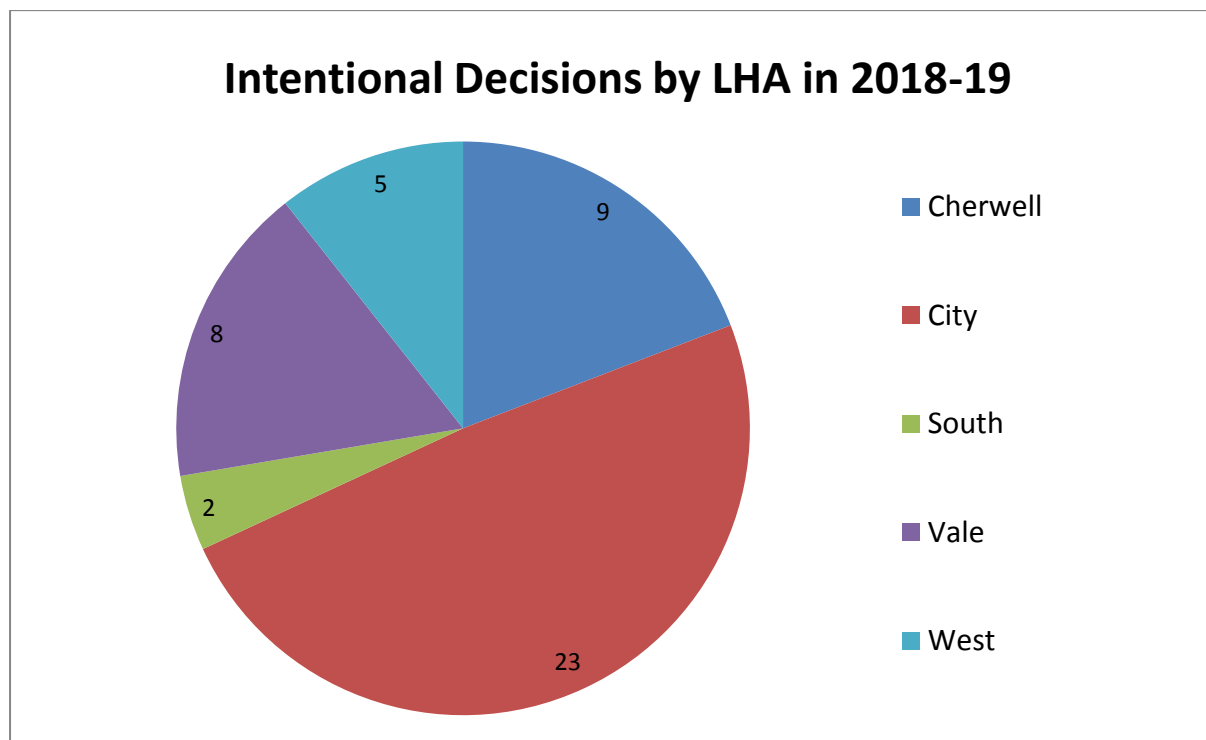
2.16 In total there have were 630 relief duties provided across Oxfordshire in 2018-19. This is almost exactly half the number of households benefitting from a prevention duty. In each quarter there has been a relatively consistent number of households receiving the duty, with a low of 153 and a high of 162.

2.17 The right hand graph illustrates the number of relief duties accepted each quarter by the local authorities. Oxford City has seen an increase since the introduction of HRA in the number of relief duties picked up each quarter. West Oxfordshire and Cherwell have experienced relatively static numbers, whereas Vale of White Horse has seen a steady decrease. South Oxfordshire has seen a cycle of peaks and troughs.

2.18 The two diagrams have been aligned to compare the levels of both prevention and relief across the whole of Oxfordshire. Both South Oxfordshire (79%/21%) and the Vale of White Horse (78%/22%) have seen a disproportionately low number of relief duties when compared to their prevention duties. Conversely West Oxfordshire has exhibited a disproportionately high level at 57%/43%. However, when assessing this against national data it would appear that the figures for West are more aligned with England as a whole. For example the nationwide proportions in Q2 were 56%/44% and Q3 they were 54%/46%.

#### Measure 4.6 – Intentionally Homeless

2.19 In 2018-19 there were 47 households considered to be eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless. The chart below indicates the split across the county. Oxford City accounts for virtually half of these decisions with 23 out of the 47 cases. Of those 23 cases, 17 related to families with dependent children.



### **3. Process for an independent review of deaths in the homeless pathway**

3.1 In February 2019, Oxford City Council asked the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) to consider undertaking an independent investigation into the deaths of five people who were sleeping rough or who had experienced homelessness but had available accommodation in supported housing when they died.

3.2 OCC asked OSAB to consider holding a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) in the first instance. Following an investigation into the five deaths OSAB's SAR subgroup concluded that the criteria for a SAR were not met either individually or collectively. The SAR subgroup saw no evidence that agencies failed to work together to safeguard the five people who died or that abuse or neglect was known or suspected before their deaths.

3.3 The SAR subgroup's findings were then discussed by the OSAB executive board in May, which accepted the subgroup's recommendation not to hold a SAR.

3.4 The OSAB executive board also accepted a recommendation to review the systems in place to help people experiencing homelessness or in supported accommodation but who may have unmet health, care and support needs. The executive board has commissioned an independent consultant to undertake this work, working closely with HSAG partner, with the aim of presenting its findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board, which has strategic responsibilities for commissioning health and social care services in Oxfordshire.

3.5 The Terms of Reference are currently being signed off by HSAG with the aim of holding a workshop in early Autumn, with the findings being reported back to HSAG initially in November 2019.

### **4. Approach to County-wide Transformation of Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Service**

4.1 In line with the national picture, rough sleeping in Oxfordshire is an increasing and visible issue to which we need to respond. The causes and nature are complex and continue to change over time and therefore there needs to be a strong commitment going forward to a county-wide review to help further develop understanding of the underlying causes and transform the approach to services.

4.2 Current contracts have been extended until March 2022 to allow this work to take place over the next 2 years. Its ambition is to transform the approach to all rough sleeping and single homelessness services in the County (not only those in the pooled budget) and will in the first instance produce a countywide strategy to provide a coherent, long term approach. This work will be led by a county-wide strategic post holder, following a successful funding bid to MHCLG by Cherwell District Council on behalf of the JMG partnership.

4.3 The programme of work will include:

- an evidence based, needs analysis of current and future needs including the views of a broad range of stakeholders and the people with lived experience of homelessness in the area
- The scoping of alternative operational models including detailed financial and transitional considerations
- Development of a county-wide strategy and subsequent commissioning strategy which will lead to the commissioning of new services by April 2022.

4.4 The long lead in time allows for complete tendering processes which could, in the case of significant transformation, take up to 12 months from initiation.

4.5 This approach will also significantly improve our ability to bid as a County for future longer-term MHCLG funding, should it become available.