

Lettings Review

Scrutiny

January 2020



Purpose

To provide:-

- Background to the review of the lettings scheme for social housing in Bristol
 - Drivers for changing the current scheme
 - Scope of the review and what we expect it to deliver
 - Timeline for the review
 - Update on work completed to date
 - Opportunities for feedback on the review and approach taken
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Background

Current lettings system in place since 2015:-

- Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system in operation in common with most local authorities
 - Applications are made to join HomeChoice Bristol (HCB) and placed in band according to housing need (1 being highest, 4 being lowest)
 - An ‘open register’ (i.e. allows anyone to join even if no defined housing need)
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Background

- Offers choice to applicants through a process of bidding (usually online)
 - The property is usually let to the bidding person who been registered in the highest band for the longest period
 - Over 30% of properties are let outside of the HCB scheme (direct offers)
 - Scheme covers council properties and most Housing Associations in Bristol
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Background

The register and lettings:-

- 12,181 applicants on the HCB register at the end of 2018/19
 - Increase of 4% on 2017/18
 - 1,805 lettings in the same period
 - Decrease of 10 lettings on previous year
 - Split between lettings was 77.8% BCC/22.2% Registered Providers
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Background

Applicants and lettings by band:-

Band	Applicants	Percentage	Lettings	Percentage	Average wait (days)
1	371	3.0	197	10.9	203
2	1,550	12.7	1,088	60.3	491
3	4,130	33.9	338	18.7	649
4	6,130	50.4	182	10.1	1,097

Households in band four which were housed usually direct offer, landlord's own lets or housing for older people

Background

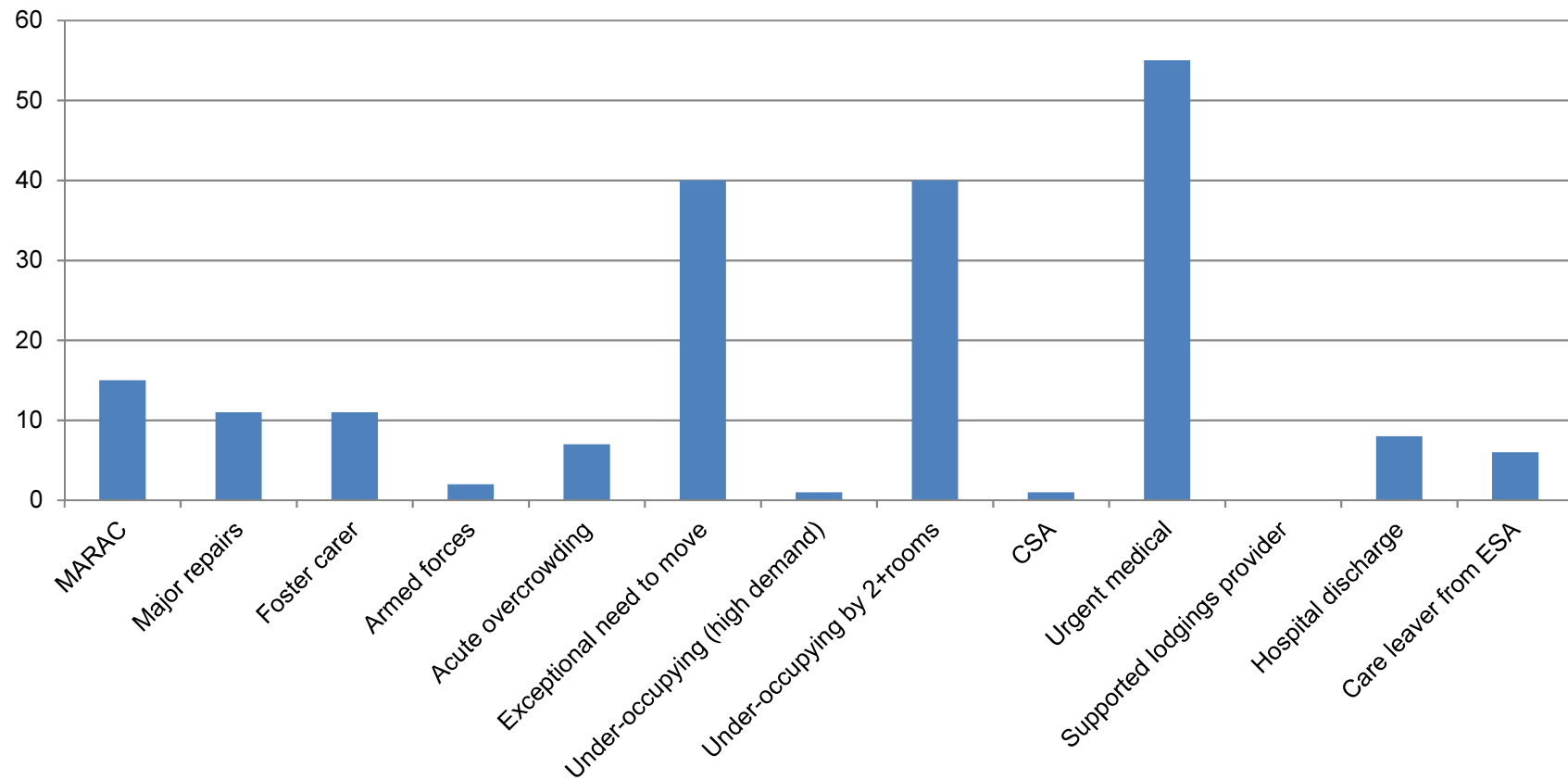
Reason for banding (one)	Applicants
Under-occupying by 2+ rooms	200
Urgent medical need	106
Exceptional need	18

Reason for banding (two)	Applicants
Homelessness	426
Domestic Violence	393
Other Harassment (significant risk)	278

Reason for banding (three)	Applicants
Overcrowding	2,341
Medical/welfare	842
Other Harassment	341

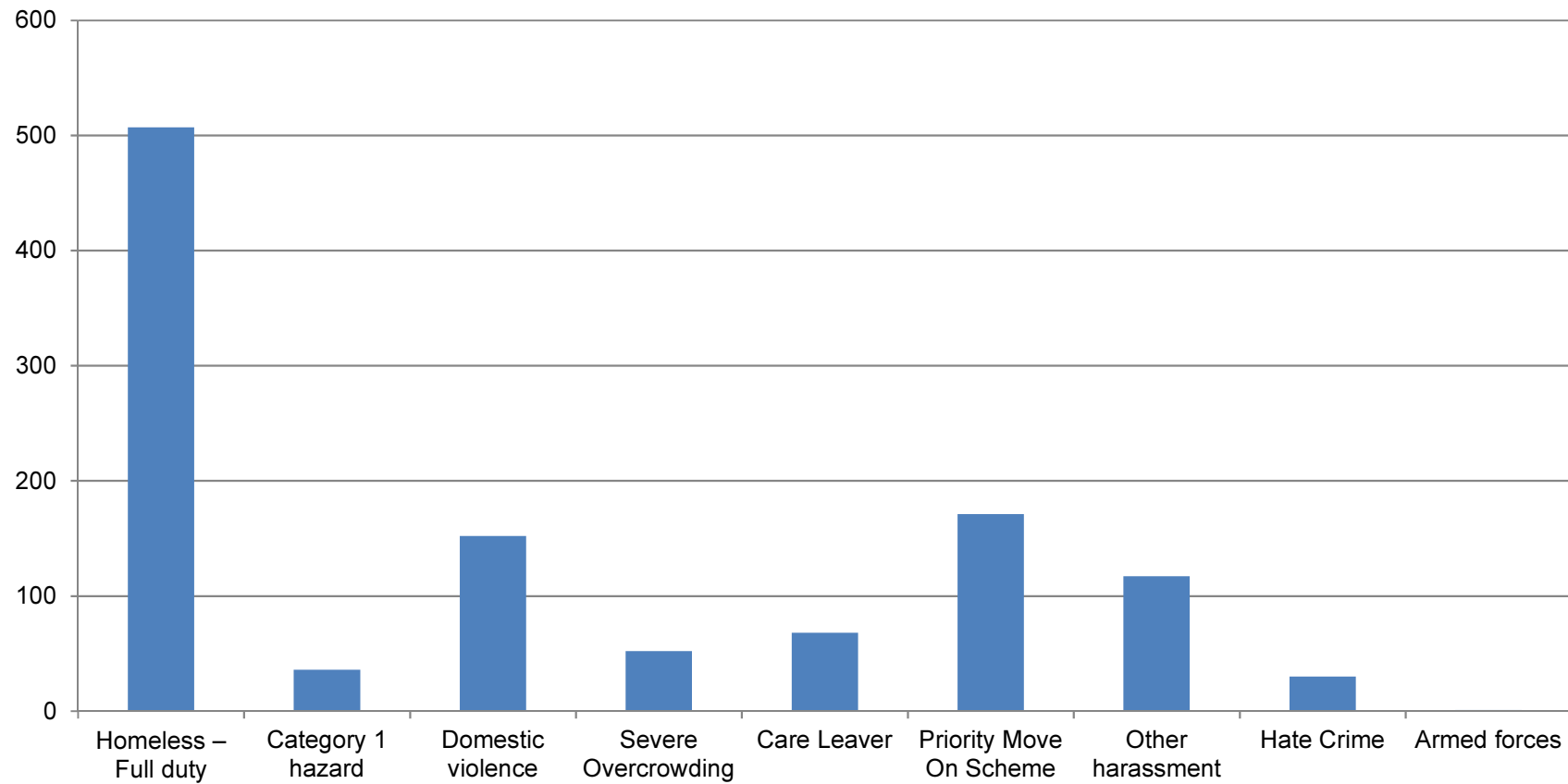
Background

Lettings – Band one



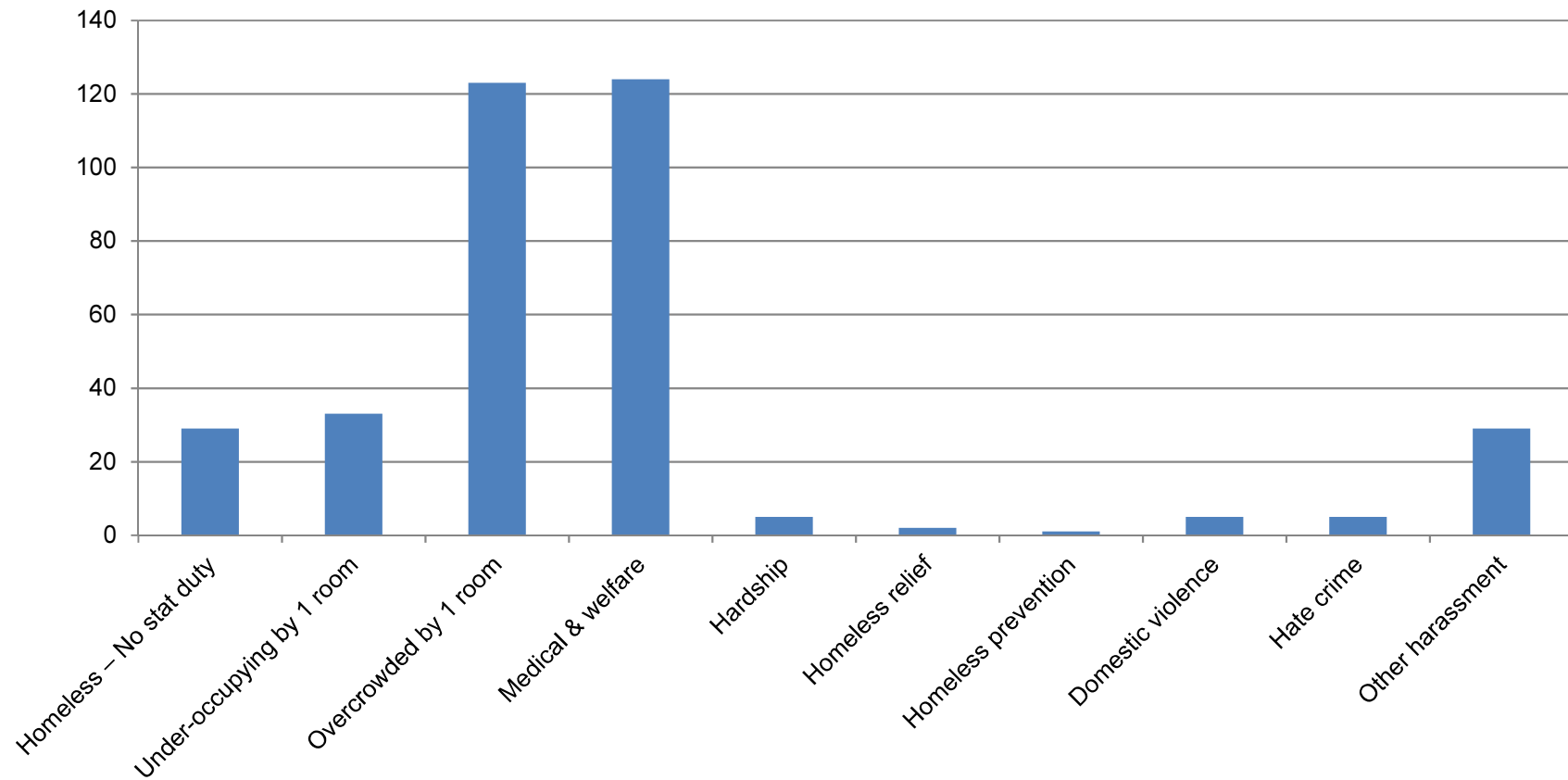
Background

Lettings – Band two



Background

Lettings – Band three



Drivers for change

Current issues with HCB scheme:-

- Does not support mixed and balanced communities, often concentrating high levels of need in some areas
 - Households in bands three and four receive few offers
 - Does not make best use of currently adapted homes
 - Increasing demand and associated administrative burden on scheme
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Drivers for change

Local research and engagement identifies:-

- Unrealistic expectation of likelihood of being housed and time taken
 - Over half of those on the register are unlikely to be housed through HCB
 - Impact of high concentrations of vulnerable households in certain areas
 - Suggestion that alternative and more managed ways of letting should be investigated
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Scope of review

Engagement with stakeholders across the city that addresses the following questions:-

- Who is social housing for and why?
 - How do we decide who lives where?
 - What impact do lettings decisions have on the community?
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Scope of review

Deliver a scheme that:-

- Supports more mixed, balanced and sustainable communities
 - Houses those in the greatest need
 - Is more efficient and user friendly for applicants, the council, housing associations and other partner organisations
 - Gives realistic expectations about being housed to those who apply to the scheme
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Timeline

Month	Phase
January 2020 to March 2020	Early engagement with stakeholders:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online, paper and Easy Read Surveys• Member sessions• Four community based events• One feedback events• One Registered Provider event• Attendance at existing meetings (including service user groups and area forums)• Staff meetings• Communities' Scrutiny• Advice sector event
April 2020 to May 2020	Development of options:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on feedback from early engagement
June 2020 to July 2020	Public consultation

Timeline

Month	Phase
August 2020 onwards	Implementation of chosen option (following decision pathway). Length dependent upon scale and complexity of changes required

Work to date

Evidence base developed:-

- Current nationwide issues with social housing lettings
 - Alternative approaches to social housing lettings
 - Review of previous findings from BCC roundtable events
 - Local issues identified from BCC workshop and local data
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Work to date

Early stakeholder engagement:-

- Steering group set up with external partners, along with internal project board
 - BCC workshop with housing staff
 - Development of engagement materials (survey, background information, publicity)
 - Development of engagement events with Locality
 - Member sessions
 - Staff meetings
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