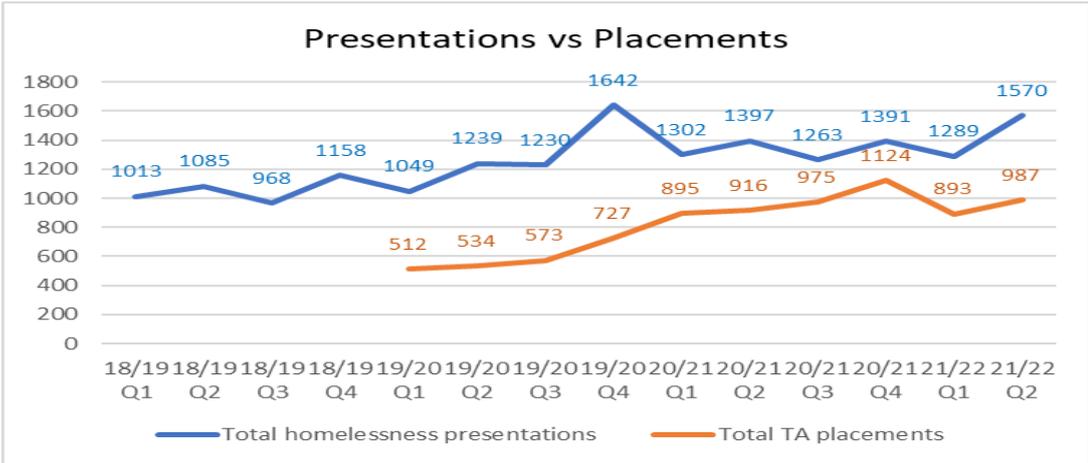


Decision Pathway – Report

PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 03 March 2022

TITLE	Homelessness Prevention Grant 22/23																																															
Ward(s)	City wide																																															
Author: Paul Sylvester	Job title: Head of Housing Options																																															
Cabinet lead: Cllr Tom Renhard	Executive Director lead: Stephen Peacock																																															
Proposal origin: BCC Staff																																																
Decision maker: Cabinet Member																																																
Decision forum: Cabinet																																																
Purpose of Report:																																																
To approve the spend of Bristol’s Homelessness Prevention Grant 22/23 allocation of £2,968,228 (including £56,050 funding regarding the Domestic Abuse Act 2021)																																																
Evidence Base:																																																
<h2>1. Homelessness in Bristol</h2> <p>Bristol has experienced rising rates of homelessness. In the last 2 years we have seen a 25% increase in households approaching Bristol City Council because of homelessness related issues. The number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) is 40% higher than before the pandemic, creating a £2.3m financial pressure.</p>																																																
 <table border="1"> <caption>Presentations vs Placements</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year/Quarter</th> <th>Total homelessness presentations</th> <th>Total TA placements</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>18/19 Q1</td><td>1013</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>18/19 Q2</td><td>1085</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>18/19 Q3</td><td>968</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>18/19 Q4</td><td>1158</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>19/20 Q1</td><td>1049</td><td>512</td></tr> <tr><td>19/20 Q2</td><td>1239</td><td>534</td></tr> <tr><td>19/20 Q3</td><td>1230</td><td>573</td></tr> <tr><td>19/20 Q4</td><td>1642</td><td>727</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21 Q1</td><td>1302</td><td>895</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21 Q2</td><td>1397</td><td>916</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21 Q3</td><td>1263</td><td>975</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21 Q4</td><td>1391</td><td>1124</td></tr> <tr><td>21/22 Q1</td><td>1289</td><td>893</td></tr> <tr><td>21/22 Q2</td><td>1570</td><td>987</td></tr> </tbody> </table>				Year/Quarter	Total homelessness presentations	Total TA placements	18/19 Q1	1013		18/19 Q2	1085		18/19 Q3	968		18/19 Q4	1158		19/20 Q1	1049	512	19/20 Q2	1239	534	19/20 Q3	1230	573	19/20 Q4	1642	727	20/21 Q1	1302	895	20/21 Q2	1397	916	20/21 Q3	1263	975	20/21 Q4	1391	1124	21/22 Q1	1289	893	21/22 Q2	1570	987
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<h2>2. Homelessness Prevention Grant</h2> <h3>2.1 Background</h3>																																																

The Homelessness Prevention Grant was created in 20/21 by combining two government grants, the Flexible Homelessness Support grant and the Homelessness Reduction (New Burdens) grant, both of which have been in place since 2017. The grant is automatically allocated to Local Authorities every year, no bidding is required.

The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness.

Whilst the grant has been allocated on an annual basis, it is a key part of the government support to Local Authorities in tackling homelessness. The government is keen to maximise the benefits that a multi-year spending review period brings. In 2022 they plan to review the Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation methodology, with the aim of better aligning grant determinations to performance and delivery outcomes. They will consult on any proposals, and we have requested to be involved in this work.

The Flexible Homelessness Support grant was introduced on 1 April 2017. It replaced the Department for Work and Pensions' temporary accommodation management fee which provided local authorities with additional funding for TA based on a fixed rate per unit of TA. The funding is allocated according to a formula which reflects relative homeless pressures, while at the same time aiming to protect local authorities that have high levels of Temporary Accommodation.

The Homelessness Reduction (New Burdens) grant was created in 17/18. The grant aims to meet the new burdens costs associated with the additional duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force on 3/4/18.

Further information on how the grant is calculated can be found at [Homelessness Prevention Grant 2022 to 2023: technical note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/103444/Homelessness_Prevention_Grant_2022_to_2023_technical_note.pdf)

2.2 Allocation for 22/23 and Government expectations

Aside from the additional £56,050 funding for new duties in the domestic abuse act, the 22/23 allocation of £2,912,288 is the same amount as the 21/22 allocation. All local authorities have received the same funding for 22/23 as in 21/22.

The additional £56,050 has been included to meet the new duties following the expansion of priority need to those who are homeless because of domestic abuse, which came into force in July 2021 following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Bristol continues to receive the fifth highest allocation of funding outside of London, after Birmingham, Manchester, Luton and Brighton.

The full list of awards can be found at [Homelessness Prevention Grant 2022 to 2023 allocations.ods \(live.com\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/media/2022/07/homelessness-prevention-grant-2022-to-2023-allocations-ods-live-com)

DLUCH expect local authorities to use it to deliver the following priorities:

- To fully comply with our duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act and thereby contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention.
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory 6-week limit.

3. Planned expenditure

The prevention grant interventions align with services funded by BCC and through other grant funding like the rough sleeping initiative (RSI). The prevention grant is used to:

- Pay for additional resources to work with an increasing number of households that are homeless and to carry out the enhanced duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with the aim of preventing homelessness and reducing TA.
- Pay for initiatives that increase access to affordable housing.
- Pay for alternative, higher quality and cost-effective supported housing.
- Directly cover some costs of TA (Housing Benefit subsidy loss).

Prevention Grant 22/23 – high level

	Spend
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	£000's
Contribution to Housing Benefit subsidy loss	1,300.0
Employee Costs	1,073
Accessing Private rented accommodation	233.6
Additional family supported housing - support costs	142.0
Call centre (Homelessness Prevention Team)	113.4
Real Lettings	20.0
Roof over my head contribution	15.0
Home finder (nationwide social housing letting service - annual fee)	15.0
Total cost	2,912.3

3.1 Contribution to Housing Benefit subsidy loss

Housing Benefit subsidy loss has risen to over £6m p/a due to the increase of households in TA.

Whilst there are longer term plans to change the provision of TA using different models that don't attract the same level of subsidy loss, it is necessary to use £1.3m of grant to cover expenditure over budget.

3.2 Employee costs

Additional posts have been created over the last 5 years. All posts are on permanent contracts except for the Project Manager which is provided by the Project Management Office. There is a high turnover within these posts, which means that we can respond to any potential reduction in grant funding by holding vacancies.

Posts	FTE No.	Grade	Total cost	Inflated 21/22 2%	Inflated 22/23 2%
Various	25.5	BG9 – BG13	£1,031,329	£ 1,051,955	£1,072,994

Activities

- Support clients in TA to improve move on and reduce the length of time in TA by removing barriers for example arrears and other debts
- Work with specific client groups - prison leavers, hospital discharge and early intervention on family exclusion
- Additional resource to manage the increase in homelessness presentations
- Co-ordinate an increase in supported housing placements, effective prioritisation of clients out of TA and rough sleeping
- Manage increase in Housing Register applications, effective prioritisation of urgent cases to avoid homelessness
- Provide welfare benefits and related housing/homelessness advice to people at risk of homelessness and the agencies working with them to prevent homelessness and/or enable move on to sustainable housing.
- Provide expert welfare benefits advice to people at risk of homelessness and the agencies working with them, including representation at social security tribunals and the delivery of a range of welfare benefits training packages for BCC staff and partner agencies.
- Increase the supply of affordable move on accommodation for single homeless clients
- Manage the Home Choice review through to implementation
- Respond to an increase in statutory reviews
- Ensure staff are fully equipped and trained in the requirements of the HRA and fully compliant with the legislation.

3.3 Accessing Private Rented accommodation

There isn't enough social housing to meet the needs of households that are homeless. The number of social housing lettings per

year has reduced by 50% in the last decade. The private rented sector accounts for over 30% of properties in Bristol. The market is very buoyant with only 1-2% of properties let at or below the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Prevention grant funding is used to support households in moving into an affordable private rented tenancy. This can be through support with rent in advance or deposits or one-off incentive payments to private landlords to keep rents at the LHA and affordable. Any payments to landlords are made on the condition that:

- Landlord will issue a minimum of a 12-month Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- The tenancy is affordable and sustainable
- Confirmation that the property is in good condition
- The landlord is a 'fit and proper person'. Checks are made with the Private Housing Service

3.4 Additional family supported housing - support costs

Family supported housing managed by Registered Providers attracts no Housing Benefit subsidy loss. The only costs to BCC are those of commissioning support. Support costs are approximately £3k per unit per year, compared to the average net family TA cost of £10k per year.

£142k p/a of prevention grant pays for support to 51 units of accommodation. This was approved at Cabinet on 5/2/19.

Further to this Cabinet approved, on 2/11/21, the addition of up to a further 100 properties to the Family Supported Accommodation Framework. The funding for the support will come from the Prevention grant on a spend to save basis, reducing the subsidy loss.

3.5 Call centre (Homelessness Prevention Team)

The Customer Service Centre has handled homelessness related telephone enquiries since November 2019. The charge pays for 3FTE Customer Advisors and part of a Team Leader. The move has improved our call handling response and customer experience as well as freeing up Housing Advisor time to focus on homelessness prevention.

3.6 Real Lettings

In 2015 Bristol City Council entered a property acquisition scheme with Resonance, a social investor. We now have nomination rights to 99 properties (held by the fund) at LHA, which are managed by local organisation Delivering Health and Independence (DHI). The properties are medium term move on accommodation and DHI provide support to move on to other private rented accommodation, as well as housing management.

Part of the agreement was that BCC would pay a £2,750 placement fee for every successful nomination. This is the only cost to BCC and is far cheaper than a TA placement.

3.7 Roof over my head contribution

Roof over my head is a tenancy preparedness course for clients who are homeless, many in TA. It provides clients with the knowledge and skills needed to manage and sustain a tenancy. Approximately 200 learners a year complete the course. The course is managed and co-ordinated by colleagues in employment and skills who make good use of drawing down government funding to support course delivery. The £15k contribution from Housing Options helps to bridge the gap between the costs of the course and available government funding.

3.8 Home finder (nationwide social housing letting service - annual license fee)

Home finder is an on-line service that matches clients to low demand social housing in other parts of England, Wales and Scotland. Through this scheme we move approximately 8 households a year, which represents a saving compared to a placement in TA.

4. Domestic abuse new duties funding

Bristol have always taken a progressive approach to supporting clients who are homeless due to domestic abuse, agreeing priority need before legislation made it a legal requirement.

This funding, £56,050 per annum, will contribute 17% of the overall cost of our Respite Rooms provision. This service offers emergency accommodation and support for women who need more specialised, trauma and gender informed support than is available in our alternative homelessness pathway and for whom other refuge provision may not be appropriate.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That the decision maker:

1. Notes the Homelessness Prevention grant allocation 22/23 to the Council of £2,968,228 (including £56,050 funding regarding the Domestic Abuse Act 2021).
2. Authorises the Executive Director – Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery and Homes to spend the funding as outlined in the report, including procuring and awarding contracts (which may be over £500k) in line with the procurement routes and maximum budget envelopes set out in this report and noting the associated Legal commentary.
3. Authorises the Executive Director – Growth and Regeneration to invoke any subsequent extensions/variations specifically defined in the contract(s) being awarded, up to the maximum budget envelope outlined in this report.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

This proposal aligns directly with the Corporate Strategy priority to reduce and prevent homelessness and reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation

City Benefits:

Stable housing is intrinsically tied to how well people can focus on other needs or difficulties in their lives and participate within their communities. This proposal will have a positive impact on both the households who are supported and the communities they live in.

Consultation Details: N/A

Background Documents: N/A

Revenue Cost	£	Source of Revenue Funding	DLUHC Prevention grant
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice: This paper sets out overall the plan to use the Homelessness Prevention grant allocation 22/23. The grant will be used to support and manage homelessness pressures and those who are at risk of homelessness.

The Homelessness Prevention grant for 22/23 is £2.9m the same level as 21/22. The use of Homelessness Prevention grant is set in the body of the report (section 3), 45% of which is being proposed to fund subsidy loss.

This is the budget estimate, and any changes will be reported through monthly budget monitoring process.

Finance Business Partner: Aisha Bapu 17th January 2022

2. Legal Advice: The avenues outlined in the report for expenditure of this grant funding are all either compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (contracts) or are permitted under the subsidy control regime (grants). Ongoing legal support will be provided, as required, in relation to the expenditure of this grant.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, 14 January 2022

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity.

IT Team Leader: Gavin Arbuckle – Head of Service Improvement and Performance 3rd February 2022

4. HR Advice: The Prevention Grant funds a dedicated team to work with households that are homeless, and to carry out the

enhanced duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act. There is high turnover in these posts, and the recruitment difficulties were more acute when the posts were advertised as 12-month fixed term contracts. The posts are filled on permanent employment contracts, given the longevity of the programme and the entitlement in law for employees on fixed term contracts not to be treated less favourably. Should the grant allocation be reduced in the future there would be a potential impact on posts in the team, in which case the council would be liable for the cost of any redundancy payments. Due to the high turnover of staff in these roles the service has the flexibility to hold vacancies if 23/24 grant allocation is lower than this it is for this year.

HR Partner: Celia Williams 4th February 2022

EDM Sign-off	Stephen Peacock, Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	18th January 2022
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Tom Renhard, Cabinet member for Housing Delivery and Homes	17th January 2022
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	31st January 2022

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	YES
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal _ There are no environmental impacts linked to this report and as such a full Eco IA is not required. There may be effects with the increase in family supported accommodation, this was approved at Cabinet on 2/11/21 and will have an Eco IA linked to it. Nicola Hares Environmental Project Manager 4 th February 2022	NO
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	No
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO