

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	Update of Improvement Plan for Housing Demand and Temporary Accommodation
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Stedmond – Lead Member for Housing
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Pat Hayes – Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lisa Keating – Director of Housing
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
Appendices	Appendix 1 - Summary of SIP Appendix 2 – Homeless & TA Road Map Appendix 3 – Detailed SIP

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Housing Demand (Homeless) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) Service Improvement Plan (SIP). Summary at Appendix 1
- 1.2 The report updates on the issues previously reported to Scrutiny Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025 relating to historical backlog & under performance of case management, Information Technology (IT) systems & data that is not automatically integrated, the continued demand for TA within Slough, ongoing challenges with resources and the subsequent budget pressures this puts the Council under.
- 1.3 The report also updates Scrutiny Committee on the current financial position, specifically highlighting continued budget pressure created by subsidy loss. This is the difference between the cost of TA and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate which is the amount that can be reclaimed from central government.

### 2. Recommendation/s/request for direction from the committee

**What is being sought from CISC - refer to relevant sections in 3.5**

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Acknowledge responses to actions raised at the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 Scrutiny Committee meeting,
2. Acknowledge the progress made in delivering the Service Improvement Plan specifically the items listed in section 3.5 below,

3. Note that while the £15m current budget pressure associated with Housing Benefit (TA) subsidy loss had not been adequately provided for in previous budgets exercise, this has now been addressed in the draft 2026/27 budgets presented to cabinet in December 2025.
4. Support the Housing department and other Slough Borough Council (SBC) teams in dealing with ongoing challenges faced with recovering the business-as-usual position and delivering the 5-year plan.

### **Commissioners review**

*There is more to be done to embed and improve joint working, shared purpose and mutual accountability between services working to support homeless people and who are involved in delivery of this Plan. In addition, improved prioritisation of projects within the Plan, with clearer targets and trajectories to track progress, would enable a greater sense of where most effort and resource investment needs to be made in order to make most impact.*

*The Improvement Action Plan is yet to dovetail with, and support delivery of, both the developing Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy as they are not completed to date. This would ensure all housing-related challenges are addressed comprehensively and collaboratively, which is not the case currently. It remains essential, given the changing and sometimes volatile nature of the operating environment, that the plan undergoes ongoing review. This needs to be based on analysis of data, trends, evidence and good practice from elsewhere and lessons learnt. Increasingly, policy drivers nationally will have an as yet to be fully felt impact and a careful eye needs to be kept on this for making the most of the opportunities whilst also managing any risks. A review of the programme governance arrangements is encouraged in order that those involved can be satisfied that all these points can be accounted for going forward, as well being able to show appropriate corporate oversight and grip.*

### 3. Report

#### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1** The Housing Demand (Homelessness and Rough Sleeping) and Temporary Accommodation and Allocations teams continue to work through challenges highlighted in the Autumn of 2024 project room. Broadly, these are the historical backlog & under performance of case management, Information Technology (IT) systems & data that is not automatically integrated, the continued demand for TA within Slough, ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention of permanent resources and the subsequent budget pressures this puts the Council under.
- 3.1.2** Working alongside other Council departments, including Digital Data & Technology (DDaT), Finance and Benefits, further progress has been made since 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 Scrutiny Committee. This includes embedding the service improvement plan, improving clarity on the financial position, recruiting and retaining interim resources to deal with the substantial backlog of homeless cases and reporting and securing additional grant funding from MHCLG.
- 3.1.3** Challenges remain; primarily the lack of integrated systems. Four systems, identified as being critical to efficient service delivery, continue with little or no integration.

#### 3.2 Background

- 3.2.1** A large-scale recovery and improvement project was started in October 2024 in response to an emerging budget pressure in the Homelessness and TA service area.
- 3.2.2** Between January 2025 and December 2025 the recovery effort has focussed on recruiting interim staff to deal with backlog cases, identifying and clarifying ICT requirements, updating the accuracy of data, increasing the level of early intervention and prevention, reducing the cost of TA units, formalising agreements with providers of TA, inspecting properties for safety and creating a strategy and plan for reducing the number of households in TA.
- 3.2.3** In parallel, a Service Improvement Plan has been developed that has specific and targeted activities relating to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, TA and Allocations as well as cross-Departmental Projects e.g. ICT and property acquisition activity.

#### 3.3 Body of report

- 3.3.1** In response to the actions from 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 Scrutiny Committee Meeting, officers have undertaken the following:
- **Action** - *'A roadmap to explain what happens to residents in the process from the moment they arrived at the Council with the belongings to them getting placed in temporary and then permanent accommodation'*.
    - **Update** - See Appendix 2
  - **Action** - *'A proper update on James Elliman Homes (JEH). Was this company sustainable? Was this still the solution to the problem'*.
    - **Update** – In December 2025 there was a governance update on companies and JEH specifically. Cabinet is expecting to receive a report on options in March 2026.

- **Action** - *'The Commissioners had commented that a solution was needed, either getting residents into an affordable, secure home with sufficient housing benefit or offering assistance and skills on getting a job to be able to afford the rent. What was being done.'*
  - **Update** – The five-year plan to discharge duty by finding households affordable secure permanent accommodation was set out in the 2025 Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet papers. It involves gradually reducing households in TA from around 1,300 to 900 over a 5-year period. This involves recruiting and deploying a 'move on team', partnering with up to four 'move on providers' and working with SBC Property Colleagues to acquire additional homes to be held within the HRA.
  - Our early intervention plan is also set out in those papers. This involves the recruitment of early intervention officers specialising in tenancy sustainment, enhancing skills and job finding as well as partnering with landlords to identify private rented options for homeless households that would prevent them moving into TA. Our strategy is to reduce those the Council accepts a full duty on to 150 per year or less.
  - Since Autumn 2025, external top up funding of £426k has been secured from MHCLG. This will be used to support our plan for early intervention activity and move-ons, particularly for those living in B&B type accommodation.
  - This additional funding will help secure six additional early intervention officers and six additional TA move-on officers.
  - Also, just over £250k of S106 money has been allocated to mobilise and establish the move on team, expand move-on options including on-boarding re-location partners, conduct suitability assessments, work with households in TA to access employment and accommodation inside and outside of the borough which forms part of our move on plans to get residents into affordable, secure homes with sufficient income from employment and or including welfare benefits. We have secured one partnership to date with Homefinder and are in discussion with three other move-on providers.
  - Finally, the Team has now re-established informal links all other registered providers operating in SBC (15 organisations). The team is now in the process of setting up a Registered Provider (RP) Forum and re-negotiating nominations agreements with RP's.

3.3.2 At the Scrutiny Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 the overarching Homelessness and TA objectives were presented. These are to Improve the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Temporary Accommodation, and Housing Allocation Services into a modern, effective, compliant, value for money and people-focused service, that delivers the right support at the right time.

3.3.3 During that meeting, Committee members were provided with details of the emergency situation the Council had found itself in late 2024/early 2025. The team provided an update on the firefighting activity that had taken place as well as the activities planned to bring the service back to a stable footing. At the meeting, Committee members asked for regular updates on what actions were being taken to deliver the outcomes.

3.3.4 Over the last three months the team has worked collaboratively across the Council to deliver the agreed outcomes against specific targets.

- **Update on service demand and early intervention**

Our objective over the next 2-3 years is to ensure that a maximum of 150 households per year are accepted as main duty. Our primary too to achieve this is to prevent homeless via early intervention with households at risk of homelessness.

Between October 2025 and January 2026 there was an average of 44 new approaches per week of households threatened with or homelessness. This is slightly below the average of 45 in the previous quarter. On average, 10% of households that present as homeless end up with a duty accepted. This means they will go into TA.

Since October 2025 the service has shifted decisively to an early intervention model, with stronger triage. Since the Early Intervention initiative went live in October 2025 there has been a clear step change: Between January 2024 and September 2024 the Housing Demand Team business as usual (BAU) team prevented 18 homelessness cases, around two per month. In comparison, between October 2025 and December 2025, 27 homeless preventions were recorded, an average of 9 per month with an approximate four-and-a-half-fold increase in Private Rental Sector (PRS) based prevention and sustainment.

A dedicated PRS procurement function, using targeted incentives, has delivered around £1.3m in savings and cost avoidance by preventing or shortening placements in expensive TA, and on this trajectory PRS-based preventions alone are running at 100 per year; when combined with other prevention routes this places the service on a credible path to achieving around 150 homelessness preventions by April 2026.

- **Update on backlog of cases being assessed**

A key element of the Service Improvement Plan has been addressing the historic backlog of cases at the approach/assessment stage, which initially stood at 941 households. The total now stands at 585, with the most intensively managed cohort reduced to around 430 open approaches, a reduction of roughly half. This has significantly lowered both operational and compliance risk.

Simultaneously, weekly section 184 decisions (the formal written notification from SBC to a person seeking help with homelessness, detailing its decision on what duties (if any) it owes them under the Housing Act 1996) across prevention, relief, main duty, and case closures has increased.

The number of long-running relief cases has started to fall, with households in relief for over 56 days reducing from 549 to around 505. Dedicated officers continue to systematically progress older and TA-linked cases, applying the 14day engagement policy and utilising PRS and studio offers where appropriate. This focus ensures more households reach clear statutory outcomes on time, with far fewer remaining “stuck” in the system.

However, strategic risk remains high, as internal analysis suggests 80–90% of households that move beyond 56 days in relief go on to full duty and typically require support for 4–5 years, generally in TA. This risk is being mitigated in three ways. The Early Intervention team will reduce the number of households requiring assessment in the first place. The backlog team will clear the backlog by August 2026 which will allow us to understand the true risk. Finally, the BAU team must commit to assessing cases within the 56 day limit.

- **Update on Housing Demand business as usual (BAU) processes**

Core Housing Demand processes are being redesigned with the corporate Transformation Team to improve the end-to-end customer journey and create a more stable business-as-usual model.

The focus is on making sure “homeless today” and other high-risk cases are identified and prioritised at first contact, that other households receive clear, consistent housing options advice, and that hand-offs between Housing Demand, the Early Intervention team, TA and other services are well defined and efficient. This includes moving away from manual trackers and non-automated dashboards, which present control and assurance risks, towards a more standardised, data-led operating model; early process-mapping work is already giving a clearer view of demand, flow and performance.

This is helping to embed early intervention as part of core BAU rather than a time-limited project, supporting a shift from crisis-driven to more planned and proactive working

- **Update on additional grant funding**

An in-year £195k top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (part of the £467k total additional grant) is being used as targeted investment to embed a more sustainable operating model, rather than for isolated one-off projects. The funding has been directed to:

- Strengthening front-door Housing Options and Early Intervention capacity.
- Expanding community-based outreach work.
- Supporting the PRS procurement specialism.

These measures directly underpin the increased prevention caseload, growth in PRS placements,

- **Update on Rough Sleepers**

Rough sleeping remains a significant strategic risk, with verified numbers rising from 13 in October to 32 in December. Around 80% of those were verified as having no recourse to public funds which severely limits housing options and makes cases complex and resource intensive.

Rough Sleeping Average Count-year on year seasonal comparison.

	2023	2024	2025
<b>Spring</b>	21	25	29
<b>Summer</b>	24	25	23
<b>Autumn</b>	30	41	31
<b>Winter</b>	34	29	35

In response, the Council is strengthening the rough sleeping and single homelessness pathway through recruitment to four specialist posts: two Rough Sleeping Navigators, an Immigration Support Worker and a Hostel Support Worker. This will enhance outreach, navigation, immigration advice and day-to-day support in hostel settings.

Despite service pressures, the rough sleeping team is performing strongly, with robust move-on performance from the verified cohort, supported by assertive outreach, a clearer pathway into the single homelessness service and close

partnership working with commissioned providers, faith and voluntary groups, health, substance misuse and criminal justice services.

Rough sleeping move on data

KPI Area	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 YTD
Rough sleepers placed in Off The Street Accommodation - total at month end	78	51	4	35	43	33	67
Rough sleepers placed in Off the Street Accommodation - new cases placed	-	-	-	68	84	173	82
Rough sleepers placed in Medium- or long-term accommodation	46	42	64	34	49	65	35

- **Key Housing Demand (Homelessness) performance**

The following performance indicators are examples of the significant improvements made by the Homelessness team.

	October 2025	January 2026	Variance
<b>Cases registered as In Approach</b>	926	484	-442
<b>Cases registered as In Relief</b>	700	624	-76
<b>Cases registered as being Main Duty Accepted</b>	1,037	1,174	+137

In addition:

- Between October 2025 and January 2026, 1,078 cases were closed, an average of 63 / week
- 38 homeless preventions between October 2025 and December 2026 which equates to TA cost avoidance of approximately £3.8m.

- **Update on TA backlog incl. Housing Benefit (HB) and Rent Arrears**

The TA Legacy backlog has reduced from 545 to 6 remaining cases. To mitigate against any new backlog of HB, licence agreements and creation of NEC rent accounts not being completed and processed, a sign-up tracker was established. The TA and HB Teams access the tracker daily and it enables any delay in TA or

HB to be updated live. If there are any exceptions such as IT issues, these are also recorded to enable exception reporting to be extracted and communicated at the Tuesday TA/HB meetings for urgent action.

There is also a new shorter HB form for TA to expedite processing of HB forms.

In addition to this, the work commissioned by PWC, resulted in 1107 cases requiring reconciliation and updates of which 91 remain and will be concluded by end of February 2026.

As a consequence of a large number of backlog cases being added to the system, there has been an increase in rent arrears. Arrears associated with live cases stand at £7.8m while former tenant arrears stand at £7.5m. Colleagues in SBC Finance continue to pro-actively chase these arrears.

The project to address the backlog of housing benefit claims is progressing well. In March 2025, 547 legacy cases were identified as not having been assessed for HB. As of January 2026, all cases have been reviewed with only 186 cases not in receipt of benefit yet. Overall, though, 394 live homeless cases are still not in receipt of HB. Colleagues in SBC Benefits continue to chase residents for information that will enable payment to be made.

- **Key Income Recovery and Benefits performance**

Income recovery and housing benefits are integral to the overall recovery plan. Key performance to note is:

	<b>October 2025</b>	<b>January 2026</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Current Tenant Arrears</b>	£8.55m	£6.99m	-£1.56m
<b>Former Tenant Arrears</b>	£5.66m	£7.9m	+£2.24m
<b>Backlog HB Claims Outstanding</b>	287	180	-107

In addition:

- The value of Housing Benefit reclaimed from backlog cases increased by £1.75m between October 2025 and January 2026.

- **Update on TA Processes and Procedures**

The team has implemented a range of new process and procedures to strengthen the governance around the allocation of TA properties to homeless families. These are:

- Defined target nightly rates for each property size with clear escalation and sign-off procedure if a TA unit exceeds the target rate via a TA Spend Control sheet which only the head of service or Director can sign-off.
- A TA sign-up tracker which ensures that all steps in setting up a homeless household in TA are completed. This includes licence to occupy agreement, property safety information, housing benefit form, setting up

tenancy and charges correctly on the NEC ICT system, updating the Jigsaw case management system. **Note** – all of this is a manual exercise.

- Fit & Proper test for TA providers
- New property inspection process to ensure properties are compliant with statutory health and safety obligations.
- A new process that ensures the TA booking form created by housing demand (homeless) officers is signed by the TA Manager.
- New Invoicing and Schedule Requirements for all TA Providers

- **Update on TA acquisition and transition away from nightly let**

Work is well underway to transition away from expensive nightly let accommodation. Decant projects have been completed with two TA providers and the team is currently working on other nightly let properties as part of this transition.

The introduction of a TA Spend Control approval form has also enabled a reduction in the cost of nightly let as part of a phased approach to reduce cost and then cease use. We are currently negotiating moving to Private Sector Leases (PSLs) with two Providers who have expressed their interest in converting their nightly let properties to PSLs.

- **Update on B&B**

Bed and Breakfast Elimination Plan (as agreed with MHCLG and aligned to the national plan to end homelessness) enabled the reduction of families over 6 weeks in bed and breakfast from 12 to 0. Our drive to stop using B&B (only by exception) is part of our overall strategy to move to short & long term leased accommodation and to increase the Councils ownership of accommodation. This will increase the availability of TA to our TA officers. The overall number of households in B&B has reduced from 148 to 116 since October 2025.

There has also been an injection of additional Homelessness Prevention Grant funding of £150,000 to further reduce households in B&B and shared accommodation of which there are over 100 that this funding will be used to visit and move on.

- **Update on Compliance (property safety)**

Following the initial project to secure compliance documents for all TA properties from managing agents and landlords, we implemented a rolling programme of compliance checks. Providers who failed to meet requirements within the agreed timeframe were exited (two Providers), and three families moved to safe, compliant accommodation.

SBC now operates to a higher compliance standard, which will be strengthened further through the introduction of a Dynamic Purchasing System mandating full compliance before accepting any units.

- **Update Move on Strategy**

Our target over the next five years is to reduce the number of households in TA to 900 by 2030/31 by discharging our duty to house a household. To do this, we must move families out of TA into affordable permanent accommodation.

Relocation providers have been onboarded to support the Move-On strategy. A Housing Open Day was held on 22 January 2026 which saw over 250 homeless

households receive housing options advice. We have a pipeline of properties that will provide 632 units of accommodation at various stages for purchase or lease, intended to discharge our homelessness duties or provide temporary accommodation. Delivery dates range as early as March 2026 through to 2031. There has been an additional £81,000 of external funding via the Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) that will be utilised to expand resources, support families and children in TA, accelerate move-on options, and recruitment is underway.

- **Key TA performance**

The following performance indicators are examples of the significant improvements made by the TA team.

	<b>October 2025</b>	<b>January 2026</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Households in B&amp;B</b>	148	117	-31
<b>Families in B&amp;B &gt;6 weeks</b>	7	0	-7
<b>Backlog TA cases with no HB application</b>	545	0	-545

In addition:

- The transfer of 54 households to cheaper TA has generated £699k of cashable savings between May 2025 and January 2026.
- 66 households have been decanted from TA provider Galaxy to cheaper, safer accommodation since October 2025.

- **Update on Data and ICT**

*System Integration*

The lack of integration between the systems used to support TA and homelessness – and in particular the lack of integration between Jigsaw (the homelessness application) and NEC Housing – has been a known gap for over a year. Various attempts to secure resource for this project in early 2025 did not proceed. The PwC review conducted in Summer/Autumn 2025 underlined its significance and recommended that the business case for system integration or consolidation be assessed.

Minimal progress has been made partly because there have been no additional resources available in year for the work and partly because we have discovered that MRI (the Jigsaw supplier) does not provide an interface into Jigsaw that would permit the required integration.

Two strands of activity are progressing in parallel. Since autumn 2025, DDaT has been exploring whether an interim integration is possible. After requirements analysis, MRI advised it would only support an interface if there were a clear commercial case. No reusable solutions were found from other Councils, and one Council reported it was not achievable. The team is now testing robotic process automation as a workaround, but this is also technically very difficult. Testing continues and further support is being sought from MRI.

Secondly, a long-term, stable, supplier-supported solution is needed, which will likely require investment in MRI and / or advanced automation. Funding has been requested through the TA and Homeless transformation proposal now being considered by Cabinet. However, this solution will be dependent on the NEC market test outcome and is unlikely to be in place within the next 12 months.

#### *Housing Management System (NEC Housing)*

The contract for NEC Housing expires in February 2027. A soft market test is underway to establish whether there is a definitive case to retain NEC Housing or whether a full competition is merited, this is due to concluded Q1 2026 / 27. Improvement and further development of it is being limited to critical changes until a decision is made.

We have commissioned an external review of the implementation of NEC Housing to support us to evaluate further Improvements in Q4 25/26 relating to Digital, Data, and NEC which can be incorporated into a separate, coordinated improvement plan that supports the wider changes and service improvements required across Housing, Finance, and Strategy, Change and Resident Engagement.

#### *Other developments relating to data and ICT*

A comprehensive review of reporting requirements has been undertaken, and requirements are with colleagues from DDaT to implement via a 'Power BI Dashboard Phase 2'. These will be implemented incrementally, in priority order, over the next quarter, and some immediate high priority issues have already been resolved.

A project to procure and implement a Choice Based Lettings solution has been started. However, and partly because of DDaT resource constraints, the procurement has only been formally launched in January, pushing go-live until at least June 2026.

No progress has been made on implementing the Private Sector Leasing Module partly because there was no in-year funding allocated to it and partly because it represents additional investment in NEC Housing, so is dependent on the soft market test.

In summary, the ongoing challenges associated with IT systems and data, as set out above, continue to impede quick progress to a BAU situation.

### **3.4 Summary of main findings / report by exception**

- 3.4.1 Demand for homeless services and placements into TA remains consistently high with 50 households presenting as homeless / potentially homeless / week.
- 3.4.2 The backlog of cases being assessed that are over 56 days remains over 500 with 80%-90% of these already in or likely to move into TA.
- 3.4.3 The reduction of cases waiting to be assessed and cases where no Housing Benefit is being received is progressing slowly and there is still a significant number of cases (over 320) not in receipt of benefit. This is due to large numbers of very old and, in some instances, very complex cases.
- 3.4.4 The Council is still in a recovery phase and has not yet reached a business-as-usual situation. This is likely to continue until integration between systems has been resolved and officers, particularly those in TA team are able to move from temporary to permanent contracts.

- 3.4.5 The early intervention team is having a significant impact on preventing households from going into TA. Preventions are up to nine / month. We estimate that this has generated cost avoidance of approximately £3.8m.
- 3.4.6 The creation of a dedicated compliance team and the introduction of robust checks and balances has improved the safety of residents living in TA
- 3.4.7 Efforts to improve data quality and reporting has helped in relation to helping secure additional grant. We are now able to report to senior officers, Cabinet, Scrutiny, MHCLG much more clearly. As a direct result of this, over £400k of additional grant support has been secured from MHCLG. Officers are committed to further improvements in data accuracy which in time will provide even further transparency to all stakeholders.
- 3.4.8 The B&B elimination plan, endorsed by MHCLG is taking effect and while there are families in B&B there are no families in B&B longer than 6 weeks. Our action plan described above aims to keep this at 0 unless there is an emergency situation.
- 3.4.9 Current and former tenant arrears is virtually £15m with former tenant arrears increasing week on week. Officers are seeking additional interim staff to deal with this and an external third party has been commissioned to chase former tenant arrears where the tenant owes £5k or more.

### **3.5 Detail/elaboration of what you are seeking from the committee**

**3.5.1** Scrutiny Committee is asked to acknowledge the progress made in delivering the SIP specifically:

- Success of early intervention team in preventing households entering TA, generating cost avoidance of c. £3.8m.
- Success in compliance has been achieved by the TA Team completing a mini project to secure all compliance documents from our TA Providers. These documents included up to date certificates for Electric, Gas Safety and Fire & Risk to ensure the condition of the properties were legally compliant and in good condition. There is now a rolling programme of compliance checks and where TA Providers have not engaged or provided the documents, the team have ended the arrangement with the Provider and moved households onto alternative accommodation. We have also issued a 'Fit and Proper' requirement to our Providers as a dual aspect of compliance not just with a focus on the property.
- Success in TA cost reduction (incl. B&B) has been achieved through a range of activities. These are set out below:
  1. TA Transfers, this involved moving households in TA to cheaper accommodation achieving £699,000 savings.
  2. Renegotiating the nightly rates that the Council is charged to a reduced rate with the highest costing unit being in excess of £340/ night reduced to £180 / night and further reductions to £80 / night. This initiative has now become business as usual as part of our plan to reduce TA costs.
  3. Reconciliation of invoicing for the provision of TA has achieved over £200,000 savings including a one-off clawback of £25,000.

4. Bed and Breakfast Elimination Plan enabled the reduction of families over 6 weeks in bed and breakfast from 12 to 0. TA costs the Council £2,300 per week by reducing this to 0 has contributed to the TA cost reduction.
- Success with new grant – £426k additional grant funding following pro-active work with MHCLG. More detailed and regular reporting has enabled the Council to be more open and transparent clearly sharing information with MHCLG on our historical backlog, ongoing demand and ICT and data challenges.
  - Success with LAHF4 - Slough Borough Council have been awarded just over £10m for 4 years as part of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) which is a capital grant programme enabling local authorities in England to acquire or refurbish properties for new housing.

This programme is now approaching Year 4, hence LAHF 4 and focuses on reducing homelessness by improving temporary accommodation for families and supporting resettlement for households under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). A secondary aim is to boost long-term affordable housing supply by repurposing these properties for general needs once initial requirements are met.

To achieve final approval of the award from MHCLG, the Council had to submit a validation form. This was reviewed and approved by the Director of Financial Management and the Finance Director and submitted on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025. If successful, the Council can increase its housing supply by 50 – 100 units. This means that 50-100 households in TA would be able to move to permanent accommodation i.e. the Council discharges its duty to house the household. On average, each TA household costs the Council £26,400 / year so if we can discharge duty on 50 the Council would save £1.32m.

The Council will be advised of the outcome i.e. whether our submission has been approved or not to utilise the LAHF 4 funding on or around 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026.

- 3.5.2** Acknowledge that the £15m budget pressure, associated with subsidy loss, was not factored into the budget. The expected subsidy loss of £21m is a more realistic starting point for the 2025/26 financial year, instead of the budgeted figure of £6.53m. Subject to approval through the budget setting process, the intention is to rectify this for 2026/27. The inadequacy of the budget in this respect contributes £15m to the overspend for 2025/26.

The table below shows that between 2022/23 and 2024/25, subsidy loss was an average of 57.6% against TA spend. In 2025/26, subsidy loss was predicted to be 66% against the budgeted £31.2m of TA spend. As such the budgeted subsidy loss required for the 2025/26 budget is £20.6m not the £6.5m stated. The forecast of £15.047m deficit, reported at Quarter 2 has remained stable since that point and will next be formally reported at Quarter 3.

Description	2025/26 Annual Budget - Revised	2025/26 Forecast @P6	2025/26 Variance from revised Budget	Revised Forecast Risk
TA Households with Rent Accounts	1,300	1,300	0	
	£000	£000	£000	
TA Accommodation costs	£31,200	£34,841	£3,641	

Allowance for duplicate charges			£0	
<b>Total Accommodation costs</b>	<b>£31,200</b>	<b>£34,841</b>	<b>£3,641</b>	
Average costs per month	£2,600	£2,903	<b>£303</b>	
Average costs per HH per month	<b>£2.000</b>	<b>£2.233</b>	<b>£0</b>	
<b>TA Rental Income charged</b>	<b>-£30,420</b>	<b>-£34,061</b>	<b>-£3,641</b>	<b>£3,543</b>
Provision for bad debt				
Adjustment for NEC duplicated rents				
<b>Total Rental Income</b>	<b>-£30,420</b>	<b>-£34,061</b>	<b>-£3,641</b>	
Average rent charged per month	-£2,535	-£2,838	<b>-£916</b>	
Average rent charged per HH per month	-£1.950	-£2.183	<b>-£1</b>	
<b>Variance</b>	<b>£780</b>	<b>£780</b>	<b>£0</b>	
Expenditure & Income Gap	<b>£780</b>	<b>£780</b>	<b>£0</b>	
Current Tenants		£8,559		
Former Tenants		£5,668		
Rent credits		-£635		
<b>Total Arrears (net)</b>		<b>£13,592</b>	<b>£0</b>	
Total HB Expenditure - Non-HRA 25/26	£9,899	£32,698	£22,799	
Total HB Expenditure - Non-HRA PY			£0	
<b>Total HB Expenditure - Non-HRA</b>	<b>£9,899</b>	<b>£32,698</b>	<b>£22,799</b>	
<b>Total Subsidy Recovered - Non-HRA</b>	<b>-£3,365</b>	<b>-£11,117</b>	<b>-£7,752</b>	
<b>Total HB Subsidy loss (£)</b>	<b>£6,534</b>	<b>£21,581</b>	<b>£15,047</b>	
Total HB Subsidy loss (%)	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>		
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£7,314</b>	<b>£22,361</b>	<b>£15,047</b>	<b>£3,543</b>

**3.5.3** Support the Housing department and other SBC teams in dealing with ongoing challenges faced with recovering the business-as-usual position and delivering the 5 year plan, specifically:

- Acknowledge that, as reported by MHCLG and detailed in the October 2025 Scrutiny Committee Paper, the Council is starting from a very challenging position compared to other Boroughs and that full recovery will take 5 years as a minimum.
- Supporting business cases for increased ICT and Data resources
- Additional resources that will enable detailed financial monitoring including daily calculation of Subsidy loss -
- Procurement and acquisition of leased TA – particularly with families moving out of Borough
- Policy and strategy development and speedy deployment
- Continue to lobby central government for review of LHA subsidy rates.
- Support the Housing Director with her proposed new structure and the drive to transition from interim resources to permanent resources, as well as business cases for additional early intervention and compliance resource.

## 4. Implications

### Financial implications

The budget requirement of the actions outlined in this updated report, to improve the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Temporary Accommodation, and Housing Allocation services have been costed and reflected in the draft 2026/27 budgets considered by cabinet in December 2026. A net additional budget of £486k is to be provided to further support the Services plus £15m for HB TA subsidy loss arising from the current TA accommodation spend. A total of £15.533m.

Service Description	2025/26			2026/27		
	Amended Budget	Budget Forecast @ Q2	Budget Variance @ Q2	Original Base Budget	Proposed Budget Pressure (net)	Proposed Revised Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
TA Accommodation costs	31,200	34,841	3,641	31,200	2,302	33,502
TA Rental Income	-30,420	-34,061	-3,641	-30,420	-2,302	-32,722
TA/Allocations	339	723	384	339	0	339
Housing Demand & RSI	-103	-49	55	-103	486	383
<b>Total TA &amp; Homelessness</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>1,454</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>1,502</b>
HBTA Subsidy Loss	6,534	21,581	15,047	6,534	15,047	21,581

In addition, the proposed HRA 30year Business Plan to be considered by cabinet in February includes provision for £5m each year for 30 years for new affordable housing. In the current year an additional £426k Homelessness Prevention Grant has been received and being applied towards specific service improvement initiatives.

While initiatives are being implemented to reduce the average TA accommodation costs by moving clients from expensive to more affordable accommodation as well as reducing number of households in B&B, the number of new demand appear to be outstripping the number of clients move out of TA. As a result, there is a risk that the current year forecast spend may well exceed the £34.841m reported above resulting in additional budget requirement next year. The forecast remains under review.

### Legal implications

Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 the Council has duties in relation to the provision of advice and assistance for prevention of and support to those who are at risk of or find themselves homeless. A statutory code of guidance for homelessness has been published. This requires the Council to have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness in the local area. The strategy must be reviewed at least every 5 years. This strategy must set out the Council's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so. Any accommodation provided in furtherance of homelessness duty must be suitable, regardless of whether this is provided from the Council's own

housing stock or via a third-party landlord. An applicant has a right of review and a right of appeal in relation to key decisions made in relation to duties under the Housing Act 1996 and associated legislation.

The Council may, but does not have to, utilise its own housing stock as temporary accommodation. Accommodation offered under Part 7 of the Housing Act are offered on a non-secure tenancy or licence depending on the nature of the accommodation and tenants are not eligible for the right to buy. The Council has various powers to acquire land, and when acquired in its capacity as local housing authority, the most appropriate power is s.9 and s.17 of the Housing Act 1985. Expenditure and income relating to property provided under this part to the Housing Act 1985 must be accounted for in a ring-fenced account known as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA (Exclusion of Leases) Direction 1997 excludes from the HRA leases of up to 10 years for dwellings taken out by authorities for the purpose of housing homeless households. Properties should only be acquired and accounted for within the HRA if they are financially viable for the HRA based on its approved business plan. The Council's HRA Business Plan is being presented to Cabinet and Full Council in February and does reference grant and capital available to acquire properties for TA. As some leasehold property may be acquired on a higher annual rent than that which will be recouped via use and occupation charges, the Council may not always be able to justify using HRA funds. As an alternative the Council could use its power under the Local Government Act 1972 to acquire land and account for this in the General Fund.

The Council must comply with the Rent Standard and Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. This applies to low-cost accommodation owned by local authorities and registered providers. This requires rent to be set as social rent or affordable rent (if agreed by the Secretary of State, Homes England or GLA or otherwise permitted in accordance with the Policy Statement).

There are some exemptions from the policy statement including property used for temporary accommodation let under licence and held outside the HRA on a lease of no more than 2 years and fewer than 30 years. The draft Policy Statement from 1 April 2026 provides more flexibility on social landlords, including local authorities, to charge affordable rent as an alternative to social rents. This permits affordable rent (80% of market rent) to be charged provided that the properties have not been converted from housing let on a social rent basis. If this power is brought into force it provides more affordable opportunities for the Council to acquire properties on a freehold or long lease basis for use as temporary accommodation within the HRA.

The Council may borrow for the purpose of acquiring housing property to fulfil its local housing authority duties. There is no HRA debt cap, however any borrowing must be in accordance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. Where the Council pools its debt, the HRA is charged with interest on a consolidated rate of interest basis to reflect overall interest cost incurred by the Council.

## **Equalities**

The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations across protected groups. Homelessness and TA could comprise all

equality groups and some groups will be over-represented such as women, some ethnic groups, disabled people, young people and care leavers. The improvement will positively impact all equality groups but will particularly impact those more likely to find themselves homeless. Locally, the proposed plan particularly supports residents with disproportionate needs, including disabled people, women (especially those affected by domestic abuse or pregnancy), young people and care leavers, ethnic minorities, migrants with insecure status, rough sleepers, older people, and those facing language, literacy, or digital barriers.

The plan is expected to have a positive equality impact. Early Intervention staffing will improve access and reduce crisis placements. Targeted financial tools and tailored pathways for rough sleepers will help reduce health and safeguarding inequalities. Digital and assisted-digital options, alongside staff training and quality assurance, aim to reduce unequal outcomes.

Slough recognises care leavers and care experience people as a protected characteristic, which means we need to consider policies for supporting this group. The protected characteristics of care leavers and care experienced will be addressed in this plan as it will have implications around how housing is offered to young people e.g. they are exempt from intentionally homeless status.

Some risks remain, such as private sector incentives favouring easier-to-let cases, digital exclusion, and inconsistent 'No recourse to public funds (NRPF)' decisions made by central government (the Home Office). These are addressed through ring-fenced support, inclusive service design, legal oversight, and equality-led placement protocols. Monitoring includes live Equality Impact Assessments, monthly data by characteristic, and outcome reviews. Governance is maintained through quarterly equality reviews and escalation to Scrutiny if gaps persist.

Overall, the plan is assessed to have a positive impact on equality, with earlier support, safer pathways, and reduced harm, provided mitigations are applied effectively.

The implementation of the service improvement plan will positively impact on residents with protected characteristics by offering safer, more stable temporary accommodation as well as pathways into permanent accommodation that is fit for purpose and aligned to their need.

**Corporate Parenting** - The TA & Homelessness SIP supports our Corporate Parenting responsibilities, aligning with Priority 2 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024–2027: ensuring looked-after children and care-experienced young people have stable homes and the right support. Through homelessness prevention pathways, development of a Joint Housing Protocol for 16–25-year-olds, use of the Housing Allocations Policy to prioritise care leavers for affordable housing and active participation in key forums such as the Slough Improvement Board, Corporate Parenting Panel, and Housing Operational meetings, we strengthen collaboration and continuously improve outcomes as Corporate Parents.

The number of children and young people requiring services provided by the homelessness and TA function is increasing i.e. the 16 – 25 threshold group as well as care leavers. The number of HRA homes available to allocate to these groups remains very low and in direct competition with families in TA whom the Council also has a requirement to move into permanent accommodation. It is likely that more ‘out of Borough’ solutions will be required in the future.

## Risk management implications

A summary of the risks has been set out below with the current risk rating as of January 2026. The risk rating considers 3 months of mitigation actions. Please note that as this is the first time we have shown the table with a Red, Amber, green (RAG) rating we will only be able to show progress at the next Scrutiny Meeting. The overall ownership of risk sits with the Director of Housing and the Director of Finnane (for revenues and benefits risks). The Corporate Risk Dashboard, which contains a specific risk relating to Homelessness and TA is reviewed on a quarterly basis with the Interim Risk Manager. These are set out in the table below:

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions	Jan 2025 Update	RAG (as of January 2026)
A	Surge in demand (e.g. economic shock, policy change, major landlord exit)	Delays at triage/assessment; higher use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) including nightly-paid; additional General Fund pressure; poorer resident outcomes.	<b>Business continuity</b> surge plan; cross-cover and agency pool; overtime clinics; protected triage/duty lanes; early-warning dashboard (presentations, eviction notices); rapid re-prioritisation of caseload.	Renter’s rights act could lead to a surge in approaches. Early intervention team is playing critical role in mitigating the risk	Amber
B	Recruitment & retention of skilled officers	Reduced prevention throughput; growth in backlog; inconsistent decisions; greater reliance on agency; risk to statutory timescales (HRA 2017). No reduction in costs, lack of compliancy information, on-going data reconciliation issues.	Extend successful fixed-term posts subject to performance and funding. All posts to be advertised as with Temp to perm opportunity	Interim staff recruitment has been ongoing for the last 18 months as we have accessed grant funding. Retention in the last 6 months has improved but remains high risk as Temp to Perm activity stopped while SBC deals with financial pressures and a wider Housing restructure will take place in Q4 25/26.	Red
C	Limited access to the private rented sector (PRS) - impact of Renters Reform Act.	Fewer preventions/increased need for TA placements	Targeted incentives funded by HPG (deposit, rent in advance, capped uplift up to 18%); dedicated Landlord Liaison and forum; quick payments where criteria met; PRS portal/comms packs. Support from NRLA (National Residential Landlords Association)	The Early intervention team has increased access to PRS solutions in the last period with over 20 new properties identified as being suitable.	Amber
D	Grant volatility	Loss of funding for prevention posts and	<b>Exit strategy</b> for grant-funded roles;	Grant is still volatile, but SBC has benefited from an upturn in grant	Amber

	(HPG / RSAP)	landlord incentives; reversal of progress; TA spend rises; programme slippage.	evidence cost-avoidance to support base-budget bids; monthly finance reviews and early escalation to Members/Section 151 as needed.	allocation in past period. Not guaranteed going forward though.	
E	Systems & data delays (case management, reporting)	Manual workarounds; slower decisions; risk benefits realisation deferred.	<b>Interim fixes</b> (standard templates, trackers); backlog data cleanse; named project initial version of portal/uploads while full system is delivered.	Manual workarounds and excel trackers still in place	
F	Rough sleeping winter pressures & institutional discharge (hospital/prison)	RS surge; SWEP pressure; safeguarding and public health risks; emergency spend; reputational risk.	Pre-agreed SWEP rota/capacity; No Second <b>Night Out (NSNO)</b> buffer beds; hospital discharge and probation pre-release protocols	Rough sleeping team performing well and pre-agreed SWEP rota in place	
G	Un-successful acquisition of affordable TA.	Cost (spend) of TA remains high at £34m with subsidy loss at £22m	Current BAU and backlog teams working through re-negotiation of current placements and step-down (transfer) project.	Team is progressing steadily through backlog to re-negotiate nightly rate accommodation. Forecast spend remains £34m and subsidy loss remains at just under £22m.	
H	Un-successful acquisition of permanent move on accommodation	Cost (spend) of TA remains high at £34m with subsidy loss at £22m	Investment in Acquisition team. Identify spend to save funding to acquire minimum 100 empty affordable homes. Improve relationships with local registered providers to discharge duty to.	Working with 4 providers of move-on accommodation.	
I	Actions by other Local Authorities	Available TA homes in Slough are occupied by TA households from other Local Authorities.	Early engagement with TA providers and commitment to leasing arrangements that protect the commercial position of both parties.	Continues to be a significant risk with little ability to mitigate.	
J	Subsidy fixed at 90% 2011 LHA Rates for private sector tenancies used as temporary accommodation	Subsidy loss continues to increase from current £22m.	Commitment to reduce cost of TA units i.e. target the actual LHA rate	Continues to be a significant risk with little ability to mitigate.	
K	Income collection does not equal rent charges from provider	Current budget pressure forecast of £780k increases because income collected does not meet costs charged.	Dedicated backlog and BAU teams to ensure tenancy and rent accounts are created for all new cases and that Housing Benefit is claimed accordingly.	Detailed tracking in place but remains a risk as backlog cases still be worked through by income recovery and benefits team.	
L	Failure to implement up to date,	If the council does not have up to date statutory plans it	The issue is on the TA and Housing Demand improvement plan and	External support procured. Re-draft of policies has started. The	

	compliant policy, strategy and plans.	increases legal risks on any challenge.	the Landlord Services service improvement plan. The Director of housing will procure external support to consult on and draft an integrated suite of policy and strategy	main strategy that requires review is the housing strategy.	
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### **Environmental implications**

4.8 There are no known environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Partnership Implications**

4.9 The Service Improvement Plan recommends widening both formal and informal partnering. The 'one Council' approach currently adopted should continue and strengthen. Additional partnerships with the commercial and voluntary sectors are welcomed, in particular those with education, training, health and wellbeing providers as well as providers of TA and permanent accommodation

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Summary of SIP

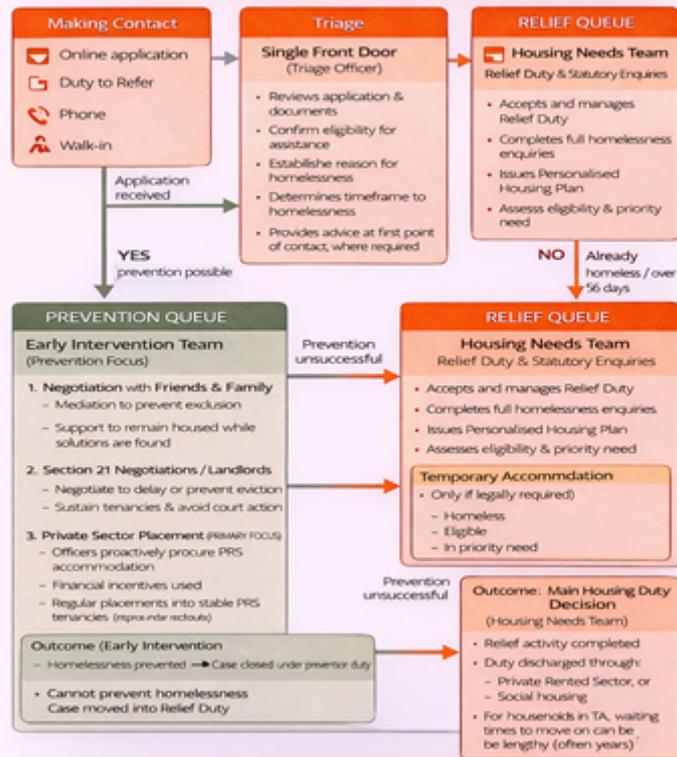
TA & Allocations Improvements									
Improvement Ref.	Sub-project	Owner	Total actions	Not started	Part-Complete Actions	Complete Actions	Overdue Actions	RAG	
1	Legacy / Backlog Work	Janet Weekes	4		3	1	2	Green	
2	Reduction of TA Units	Janet Weekes	5		5			Green	
3	Reduction of TA Costs	Janet Weekes	4		4		3	Yellow	
4	Compliant and Fit for Purpose Units	Janet Weekes	3		1	2		Green	
5	Increasing Housing Supply	Janet Weekes	5		3	2	1	Yellow	
6	Allocations	Janet Weekes	3		3		1	Yellow	
7	ICT & Data	Janet Weekes & Martin Chalmers	3	1	2		1	Red	
8	Recruitment & Retention of Staff	Janet Weekes	2		2		1	Red	
9	Prevention and Detection of Fraud	Janet Weekes	2		2		1	Green	
<b>Total TA &amp; Allocations - 9</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>		
Rough Sleeping and Housing Demand Actions									
Improvement Ref.	Sub-project	Owner	Total actions	Not started	Part-Complete Actions	Complete Actions	Overdue Actions	RAG	
1	Backlog Work	Fola Akinsowon	2		2		1	Yellow	
2	Early Intervention	Fola Akinsowon	10		5	5	1	Green	
3	Rough Sleeping	Fola Akinsowon	4		4		4	Yellow	
4	Improved Case Management	Fola Akinsowon	3		1	2		Green	
5	Improved Communication	Fola Akinsowon	1		1			Green	
6	ICT & Data	Fola & Martin Chalmers	4	2	2			Red	
7	The Fair Funding Review - simplifying homeless, rough sleeping and DA grant allocation	Fola Akinsowon	1			1		Blue	
<b>Total Rough Sleeping &amp; Housing Demand - 7</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>		
Wider Projects									
Improvement Ref.	Sub-project	Owner	Total actions	Not started	Part-Complete Actions	Complete Actions	Overdue Actions	RAG	
1	PWC Recommendations	Lisa Keating & Martin Chalmers	6		5	1	2	Red	
2	Policies Strategies and Procedures	Lisa Keating	17	8	9			Yellow	
3	Joint Working and Multi-Agency Work	Janet Weekes & Fola Akinsowon	1			1		Blue	
4	Renters rights Act	Janet Weekes & Fola Akinsowon	2		2			Green	
5	Subsidy Loss, Income Recovery and Bad Debt Provision	Andy Jeffs & Mark	4		4		2	Yellow	
<b>Total Rough Sleeping, Housing Demand &amp; Wider Projects - 5</b>			<b>30</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>TOTAL SERVICE ACTIONS - 21</b>			<b>86</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>		
	<b>Actions</b>		<b>Sep-25</b>	<b>Oct-25</b>	<b>Nov-25</b>	<b>Dec-25</b>	<b>Jan-26</b>	<b>Feb-26</b>	<b>Mar-26</b>
	<b>Overall rating</b>								
	<b>Reason</b>		9 of 18 projects are behind or at risk	10 of 18 projects are behind or at risk	15 of 19 projects are behind or at risk	15 of 21 projects are behind or at risk	11 of 21 projects are behind or at risk. ICT and recruitment of resources are main risks to success.		

## Appendix 2 – Homeless & TA Road Map

### Step 1 – Homelessness or risk of homelessness.

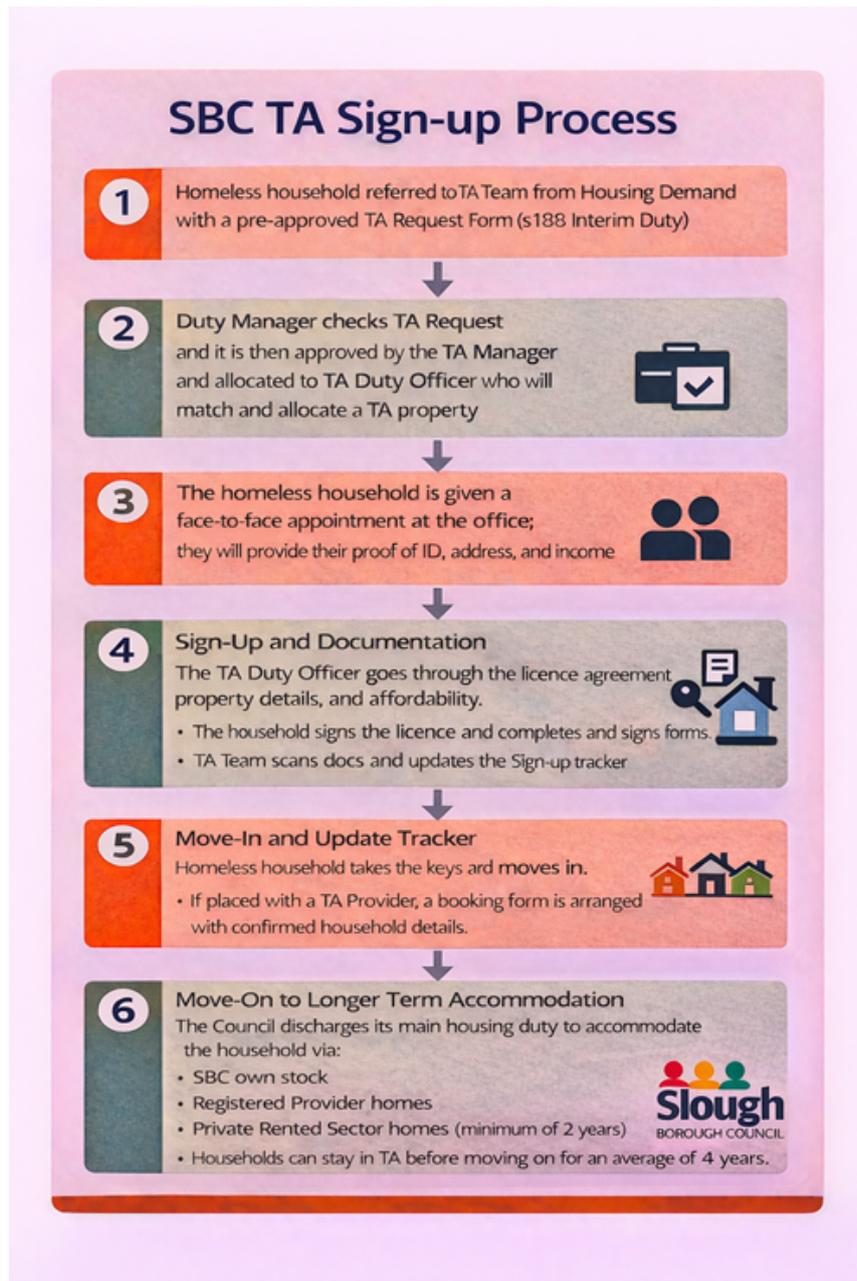
## Customer Journey – Homelessness (Prevention-First Model)

The goal of the homelessness service is to prevent homelessness, depending on the client's circumstances we assess every case as follows:



Goal: Prevent homelessness to reduce reliance on Temporary Accommodation

## Step 2 – Customer Journey – Temporary Accommodation



**Appendix 3 – Detailed SIP**

Attached separately.

