

DRAFT Housing Improvement Plan

LBC

January 2022

LBC DRAFT HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The ARK investigation in spring 2021 into living conditions at 1-87 Regina Road, South Norwood discovered a wide range of problems across the Council's housing service.
- 1.2. In response, we have produced the Croydon Housing Improvement Plan to set out a clear set of objectives and actions that will address these problems and improve services across the new Housing Directorate. The Housing Improvement Plan addresses the seven recommendations for improvement listed in the ARK investigation:
 1. Establish clear governance arrangements to provide strategic leadership to the service.
 2. Undertake a forward-looking skills gap analysis.
 3. Implement a development programme to ensure all staff consistently demonstrate the attitudinal and behavioural competences need to support the Council's values and shape its culture.
 4. Strengthen the Council's capacity, competence and commitment to tenant involvement through training and development of staff and councillors.
 5. Develop 'business intelligence' systems that allow the Council to collect and share real-time information on asset condition and performance (including from the contractor).
 6. Conduct a fundamental review of performance management arrangements.
 7. Make improvements to complaints handling in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- 1.3. The Housing Improvement Plan sits alongside the Council-wide, three-year Croydon Renewal Plan which was adopted by Cabinet in December 2020. The timescales provided in the Housing Improvement Plan are predicated on the completion of the Council's recruitment plans in February.
- 1.4. The Housing Improvement Plan is fundamentally about people. We will improve the skills, knowledge, outlook, attitudes, responses and behaviours of our staff and housing teams. This will mean our residents experience better services, more respect, care, empathy and understanding.
- 1.5. The development and implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan will be overseen by the independently chaired Housing Improvement Board. Members of the Board include both existing Council tenants, including a representative from Regina Road, and representatives from the Local Government Association and London Councils. The Board will scrutinise and challenge the plans and performance of the Council's housing service in relation to landlord services with a particular focus on understanding tenants'

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experience and assessing whether commitments and plans are translated into completed actions.

- 1.6. The Housing Improvement Plan will address the seven recommendations made in ARK Consultancy's Investigation into Regina Road. The full recommendations are available here <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/London%20Borough%20of%20Croydon%20independent%20housing%20investigation.pdf>

2. Workstreams

- 2.1. **Vision & Strategy for the Housing Service:** develop a common vision and strategy for the housing service, with clear governance arrangements and a set of policies and service standards to ensure high quality, joined-up delivery.
- 2.2. **Performance & Complaints:** develop and embed a performance management framework across the housing service, with robust assurance arrangements covering data quality and outcomes delivered, improved complaints handling and analysis, and use results to drive and maintain service improvement.
- 2.3. **Resident Engagement:** strengthen the Council's capacity, competence, and commitment to tenant involvement through staff training and development, reviewing existing structures so that they are 'fit-for-purpose' and ensure that residents are fully engaged with and help to shape the improvement of the housing service.
- 2.4. **Compliance & Safety:** ensure that council stock is fully compliant with all relevant safety regulations and is safe for all residents whatever their individual need.
- 2.5. **Robust Contract Management:** improve quality, value for money and resident satisfaction with the repairs service through effective use of performance data in management of the contract.
- 2.6. **Business Intelligence, Asset Management & Investment Planning:** develop business systems that enable collection and sharing of real-time information on asset condition and performance, in order to improve the management of repairs and drive better investment decisions. Utilising all available data to develop a cost-effective plan for improving the housing stock to ensure homes are decent, warm and safe.

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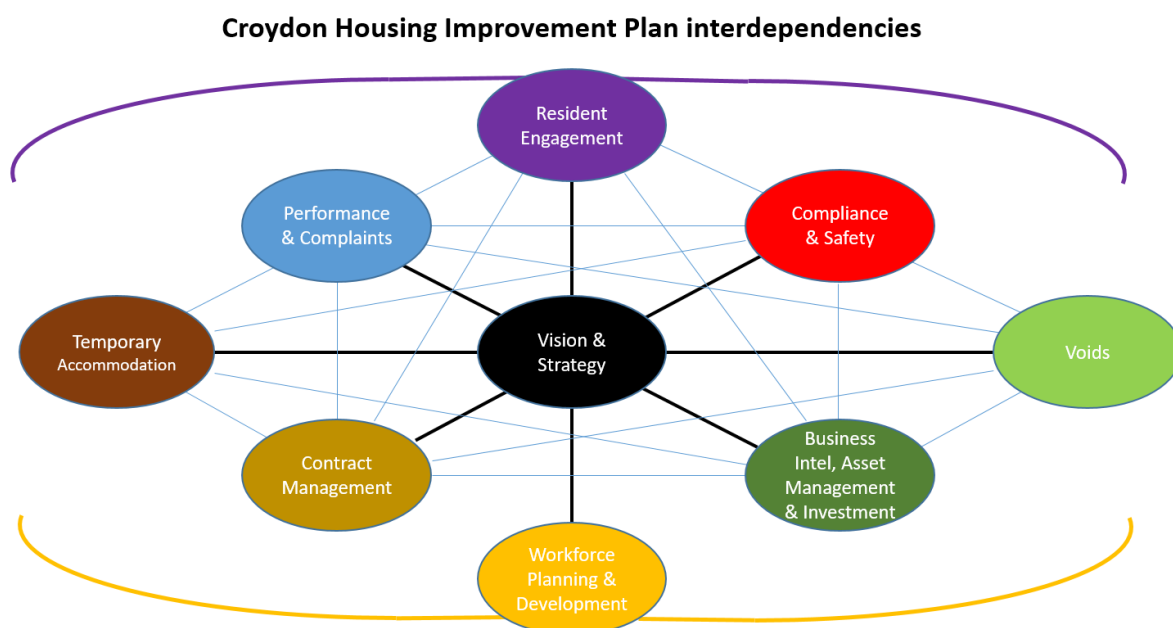
2.7. **Workforce Planning:** develop and implement a plan to equip staff with the necessary skills to support the Council's values and deliver a resident-focussed service with a safety-first culture.

2.8. **Voids:** streamline the voids management process and review the utilisation of sheltered housing in order to make better use of the housing stock.

2.9. **Temporary accommodation:** review the procurement and use of temporary accommodation and develop a strategy to reduce homelessness demand, use temporary accommodation more efficiently, and improve the quality and reduce the cost of units procured.

3. Interdependencies

3.1. It is important to recognise that these nine workstreams will only be effective in improving the housing service by working together as a coherent, integrated set of processes and people working across the housing directorate as one team. The diagram below provides a visual illustration of how the workstreams relate to and depend on each other for success.



3.2. Vision and Strategy sits at the centre, providing clear direction, co-ordination and good governance across all the workstreams. Resident engagement is at the top, symbolising the primacy of tenants as the people our services are provided for and impact directly on. Resident engagement overarches all of our improvement work and needs to influence and guide all our activities. Workforce planning and development is at the bottom as the bedrock underpinning all of our improvement plans. Although we also need to improve systems and processes, it is clear that the behaviour and attitude of

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staff is the key rebuilding trust and confidence in housing services.

- 3.3. The Corporate Director of Housing leads a regular officer working group to ensure progress is being made with all nine workstreams and relationships between them are well integrated and mutually supportive.

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Workstream	Vision & Strategy				
Description	Develop a common vision and strategy for the housing service, with clear governance arrangements and a set of policies and service standards to ensure high quality, joined-up delivery.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- VS 1	One	Establish Housing Improvement Plan Working Group	Oct-21	Oct-21	Complete
HIP- VS 2	One	Production of monthly highlight reports on each work-stream capturing risks and issues.	Nov-21	Nov-21	Complete
HIP- VS 3	One	Establish clear governance arrangements to provide strategic leadership for the housing service:	Jan-22	Feb-22	In progress
HIP- VS 4	One	Establish a Housing Improvement Board, with the power to oversee the development and implementation of an improvement plan.	Dec-21	Dec-21	Complete
HIP- VS 5	One	Develop a long term vision and strategy for the service utilising up to date data on Housing need across the borough.	Oct-21	Jun-22	In progress
HIP- VS 6	One	Develop a Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy	Nov-21	Jul-22	In progress

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HIP- VS 7	One	Re-structure the housing service to provide a more resident-focussed, performance oriented service with resident engagement and estate improvement as key priorities. Creation of Housing directorate, divided into two divisions	May-21	Jul-21	Complete
HIP- VS 8	One	Establish a team focused on development and delivery on an effective housing strategy, policy and performance management to drive service delivery to meet the needs of residents.	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- VS 9	One	Review and revise 30-year HRA Business Plan	May-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- VS 10	One	Audit of HRA recharges	Jan-22	Jan-22	In progress
HIP- VS 11	One	Review of HRA recharges and tenant service charges to establish greater transparency	Summer 2022	Summer 2022	Not started

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Workstream	Performance & Complaints				
Description	Develop and embed a performance management framework across the housing service, with robust assurance arrangements covering data quality and outcomes delivered, improved complaints handling and analysis, and use results to drive and maintain service improvement.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- PERF 1	Seven	Establish a suite of KPIs for reporting internally and to CMT / Cabinet	May-21	Oct-21	Complete
HIP- PERF 2	Seven	Implement a system of data-review to challenge and test data accuracy and relevance	Apr-22	Oct-22	Not started
HIP- PERF 3	Seven	Establish a list of key policy and procedure documents and timetable for review	May-22	Dec-22	Not started
HIP- PERF 4	Seven	Ensure that equality diversity and inclusion considerations are embedded in policies, procedures and service standards and included in performance reports to key stakeholders.	Aug-21	Annual Review	In progress

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HIP- PERF 5	Seven	<p>Support for vulnerable tenants</p> <p>- Ensure effective procedures are in place to support vulnerable tenants to live independently e.g. liaising with other council departments and external agencies on their behalf where necessary.</p>	May-22	Oct-22	Not started
HIP- PERF 6	Seven	<p>Review and streamline customer facing processes used by tenants and leaseholders for reporting issues, ensuring their needs are prioritised and responses to enquiries are professional, timely and sensitive to the needs of Croydon's diverse communities.</p>	Feb-22	Dec-22	Not started
HIP- PERF 7	Seven	<p>Review and streamline the complaints process to achieve a simple, clear and easily accessible route for raising concerns and getting them resolved within set timescales in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.</p>	Sep-21	Apr-22	In progress

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HIP- PERF 8	Seven	Undertake regular analysis of complaints and use the insight gained to drive service improvements and publicise the improvements made.	Sep-21	Apr-22	In progress
HIP- PERF 9	Seven	Ombudsman Service - Present full and final self-assessment to elected members, and publish this on the council's website by 31 August 2021.	Aug-20	Jul-21	Complete
HIP- PERF 10	Seven	Map enquiry routes for casework, enquiries and complaints, including escalation process, in order to clarify for Councillors and MPs, how to escalate urgent housing casework.	TBC	TBC	Not started
HIP- PERF 11	Seven	Develop a plan / programme for reviewing and updating key documents such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRA Business Plan • Stock condition Survey • TA / EA operating policies • Housing waiting list • Allocation policy • Residency policy 	Feb-22	May-22	Not started

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Workstream	Resident Engagement				
Description	Strengthen the Council's capacity, competence, and commitment to tenant involvement through staff training and development, reviewing existing structures so that they are 'fit-for-purpose' and ensure residents are fully engaged with and help to shape the improvement of the housing service.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- RE1	Four	Ensure that each tenant has access to information regarding their tenancy including their tenancy status, rights and responsibilities, contact details for their tenancy officer, how to access the responsive repairs service and other relevant matters.	Feb-22	Jul-22	Not started
HIP- RE2	Four	Review existing resident participation structures, having regard to good practice in other local authorities and registered providers and the views of Croydon council tenants, to ensure they are 'fit-for-purpose' and that tenants voices are heard.	Jan-22	Oct-22	Not started
HIP- RE3	Four	Develop a Communication and Engagement Plan to ensure that all stakeholders are updated on progress and have the opportunity to engage.	Jan-22	May-22	In progress

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HIP- RE4	Three Four	Develop Learning and Development Interventions to strengthen the capacity and competence of staff to ensure meaningful resident involvement.	Nov-21	May-22	In progress
HIP- RE5	Four	Improve engagement with Regina Road residents.	Aug-21	Jan-22	In progress
HIP- RE6	Three Four	Resident engagement training for all housing staff	Apr-22	Sep-22	Not started
HIP- RE7	Four	Training programme developed for engaged residents	Jan-22	Aug-22	In progress
HIP- RE8	Four	Engagement roadshows	Jun-21	Nov-21	Complete
HIP- RE9	Four	Revised tenant handbook/web-pages/social media	Feb-22	Jul-22	Not started
HIP- RE10	Four	Ensure we meet all future legislative and regulative requirements in relation to resident engagement (The Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper)	Jun-21	TBC	In progress
HIP- RE11	Four	Regular reporting of resident feedback to residents' groups, officers and councillors	Dec-21	Feb-22	In progress

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Workstream	Compliance & Safety				
Description	Ensure that Council stock is fully compliant with all relevant safety regulations and is safe for all residents whatever their individual need.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- COMP 1		Resource the compliance function by completing recruitment to "Compliance Manager" post	May-21	Aug-21	Complete
HIP- COMP 2		Resource the compliance function by completing recruitment to Senior Fire Safety Compliance Surveyor	May-21	Feb-22	In progress
HIP- COMP 3		Analyse feedback/results of random tests of homes to provide assurance, or to inform the need for further compliance audits and take appropriate action to address issues identified.	Apr-21	Apr-23	In progress
HIP- COMP 4		Engage with key stakeholders e.g. London Fire Brigade and residents to review robustness and update evacuation plans for council blocks to secure the safety of all occupants at all times, including those deemed to be vulnerable due to age, mobility, mental capacity or language issue.	Apr-21	Dec-24	In progress

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HIP- COMP 5		Introduce improvement measures to achieve 100% compliance on all gas safety matters	Apr-21	Apr-23	In progress
HIP- COMP 6		Ensure full compliance with water hygiene regulations	Oct-21	Dec-22	In progress
HIP- COMP 7		Ensure full compliance with electrical safety regulations	Aug-21	Jul-22	In progress
HIP- COMP 8		Ensure lift inspections are compliant with statutory inspection regime	Apr-21	Apr-21	Complete
HIP- COMP 9		Ensure full compliance with asbestos safety regulations	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- COMP 10	Six	Implement robust weekly reporting of compliance data to Director level	Aug-21	Aug-21	Complete
HIP- COMP 11		Commission independent auditors to provide verification of performance data and overall compliance levels.	Jan-22	Apr-23	Not started
HIP- COMP 12		Understand resources required to address Building Safety Bill responsibilities	Nov-21	Jun-22	In progress
HIP- COMP 13		Full compliance with Building Safety Bill	Jun-22	TBC	Not started
HIP- COMP 14		Design and deliver full cladding inspections and relevant remediation.	Jan-22	Jan-24	In progress

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Workstream	Robust Contract Management				
Description	Improve quality, value for money and resident satisfaction with the repairs service through the effective use of performance data in management of the contract.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- CM 2		Review Strategic Management for all six main contracts	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- CM 3		Re-establish core and contract management meetings, and updated governance/training.	Dec-21	Jun-22	In progress
HIP- CM 4		Establish Contracts Hub to oversee management of all main contracts	Jan-22	Jun-22	In progress
HIP- CM 5	Three	Working with the Regulator for Social Housing, respond effectively to the breach of Home Standard and Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard by completing the voluntary undertaking and regular monitoring.	May-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- CM 6		Develop a responsive repairs improvement plan that addresses the performance of our responsive repairs contractor, the issues raised in the ARK Independent Investigation, and supports the outcomes we need to deliver as part of the voluntary undertaking with the Regulator for Social Housing.	Sep-21	Mar-22	In progress

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HIP- CM 7		Work in partnership with key stakeholders e.g. tenants and contractor(s) to review the operation of responsive repairs and other key contracts to assess their effectiveness in meeting needs, including of people belonging to protected groups and develop and implement solutions to address any deficiencies.	Jan-22	Dec-22	In progress
HIP- CM 8		Improve communication about social value benefits provided by the responsive repairs contract, including apprenticeships and other opportunities	Mar-22	Sep-22	Not started

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Workstream	Business Intelligence, Asset Management & Investment Planning				
Description	Develop business systems that enable collection and sharing of real-time information on asset condition and performance, in order to improve the management of repairs and drive better investment decisions. Utilising all available data to develop a cost-effective plan for improving the housing stock to ensure homes are decent, warm and safe.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- INTEL 1	Five	Agree 2022/2023 Capital Programme	May-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 2	Five	5-year HRA Capital Programme draft to be completed.	May-21	Dec-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 3	Five	New housing IT system to 'go live'	May-21	May-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 4	Five	Establish a team focussed on improving investment planning for council housing stock. Functions to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing stock condition survey • Harnessing data and intelligence to understand stock performance • Ensuring all investment decisions represent value for money 	May-21	May-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 5	Five	Develop a robust short-term investment programme that includes work to address the issues highlighted in ARK's report.	May-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 6	Five	Assess, plan and coordinate resolution of the root causes of problems at 1-87 Regina Road	TBC	TBC	Not started
HIP- INTEL 7	Five	Bring forward the replacement of the roof of 1-87 Regina Road and consider the installation of a mechanical ventilation system	TBC	TBC	Not started

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HIP- INTEL 8	Five	Undertake detailed surveys at an initial five blocks including three in Regina Road, which will inform future investment priorities in those homes.	Jul-21	Dec-21	Complete
HIP- INTEL 9	Five	Carry out precautionary check and proactively survey all 26 council-owned tower blocks and develop clear investment plans for their future.	Jul-21	Jan-22	Completed
HIP- INTEL 10	Five	Plan further follow-on inspections and surveys across the council's housing schemes in accordance with a proactive approach to future planned stock investment.	May-22	Oct-22	Not started
HIP- INTEL 11	Five	Draw intelligence and data together to give a holistic view of asset performance and inform strategic decision making or budget setting; Take account of high levels of responsive repairs in order to make proactive investment decisions.	Jan-22	Dec-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 12	Five	Audit the accuracy of all key data on stock condition (ref. Decent Homes Standard) and landlord health and safety responsibilities (stock condition surveys will start to address this)	Jan-22	Dec-22	In progress
HIP- INTEL 13	Five	Develop 'business intelligence' systems to collect and share real-time information on asset condition and performance.	Jan-22	Dec-22	In progress

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Workstream	Workforce Planning & Staff Development				
Description	Develop and implement a plan to equip staff with the necessary skills to support the Council's values and deliver a resident-focused service with a safety-first culture.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- WF 1	Three	Carry out a forward-looking skills gap analysis taking into consideration CIH Professional Standards and develop a plan to address areas of weakness.	Aug-21	Aug-22	In progress
HIP- WF 2	Three	Update the council's workforce plan to recruit, train and develop staff to fill any skills gaps.	Oct-21	Nov-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 3	Three	Coordinate, plan training interventions	Nov-21	Nov-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 4	Three	Rollout learning & development programme offer starting with priority programmes	Nov-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- WF 5	Three	Provide appropriate training to support all staff to challenge instances of outmoded attitudes, disrespect and lack of empathy.	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- WF 6	Three Four	Support staff to better understand the Staff Code of Conduct, commitment to Equality and Equality in Employment Policy and the importance of listening to tenants, treating them with respect and empathy and taking responsibility for ensuring tenants issues are satisfactorily	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress

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		actioned and resolved in a timely manner.			
HIP- WF 7	Three	Include a module in the council's cultural transformation programme on ensuring the council consistently deliver a tenant-focused service and has a 'safety first' culture.	Aug-21	Aug-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 8	Three	Housing staff survey GO LIVE	Sep-21	Oct-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 9	Three	Survey analysis, report back and priority action development agreed	Oct-21	Nov-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 10	Three	Design, Commission and Roll-out culture change interventions	Nov-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- WF 11	Three	Evaluation Report as appropriate on progress of rollout and uptake of the various programmes	Apr-22	May-22	Not started
HIP- WF 12	Three	Tenant & Leaseholder Workshop Facilitate workshop(s) with tenants and leaseholders to better understand what changes they wish to see in staffs attitude and approach when delivering housing services	Sep-21	Sep-21	Checking completion
HIP- WF 13	Three	Work in partnership with the council's contractors to ensure that contractor operatives consistently deliver a tenant-focused service and have a culture of 'safety first', respect and empathy for tenants.	Jan-22	Jun-22	In progress

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Workstream	Voids Management				
Description	Streamline the voids management process and review the utilisation of sheltered housing in order to make better use of the housing stock.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP- VOI 1		Review and streamline the voids management process in order to reduce/minimise turnaround time for void properties.	Aug-21	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- VOI 2		Consult with stakeholders on new process	Jan-22	Mar-22	In progress
HIP- VOI 3		Carry out an audit of allocations to flats in Regina Road (against the allocations policy) and establish whether a local lettings plan is required.	Sep-21	Dec-21	Complete
HIP- VOI 4		Identify overcrowded households at Regina Road and discuss options for moving to more suitable accommodation.	May-21	Jul-21	Complete
HIP- VOI 5		Review utilisation of sheltered housing and identify how the council can minimise voids by enabling more flexible use of this accommodation type.	Aug-21	Jul-22	In progress
HIP- VOI 6		Targets to be set for all aspects of void turnaround times.	Dec-21	Mar-22	In progress

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Workstream	Temporary Accommodation				
Description	Review the procurement and use of temporary accommodation and develop a strategy to reduce homelessness demand, use temporary accommodation more efficiently, and improve the quality and reduce the cost of the units procured.				
Action reference	ARK reference	Action	Start date	End date	Status
HIP-TA 1		Ensure our emergency and temporary accommodation is compliant with procurement and contracting legislation and internal regulations.	Feb-22	Sep-22	Not started
HIP-TA 2		Review our offer to emergency and temporary accommodation providers, and improve contract management.	Feb-22	Sep-22	Not started
HIP-TA 3		Review our offer to private sector landlords through a review of our private sector schemes.	Feb-22	Sep-22	Not started
HIP-TA 4		Review our minimum offer to homeless households and those at risk of homelessness in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Housing Act 2004.	Feb-22	May-22	Not started
HIP-TA 5		Improve our Prevention offer to increase the number of households where homelessness is prevented within 56 days.	Feb-22	May-22	Not started

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HIP-TA 6		Ensure appropriate allocation of DLUHC grant to achieve a reduction in temporary accommodation costs.	Feb-22	May-22	Not started
HIP-TA 7		Improve budget awareness amongst middle managers with regards to function and costs.	Feb-22	May-22	Not started

