Item No: 13

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 25th November 2026**

Glasgow City Integration Joint Board

Report By: **Lynsey Smith, Assistant Chief Officer, Operations and Governance**

Contact: **Jim McBride, Head of Homelessness and Complex Needs**

Phone: **0141 420 5756**

Emergency Homeless Accommodation for Women and Children

Purpose of Report:	This report updates on the decision of the Public Engagement Committee (PEC) on 19th August 2026 to refer consideration of the petition entitled 'Create Emergency Homeless Accommodation for Women and Children' to the IJB. The paper also updates the IJB on the approach taken by the HSCP in relation to the provision of accommodation and support to women and children affected by homelessness; the strategic approach to the provision of homeless accommodation; and actions taken by the HSCP following consideration of the petition at the PEC.

Background/Engagement:	The petition, which called for safe, women-only emergency accommodation for women and children, was considered by the IJB Public Engagement Committee on 19 August 2026 and referred to the IJB for consideration. Following consideration at the PEC, Homelessness Services met with the petitioner to discuss the issues raised, the HSCP's current provision and wider work to strengthen accommodation and support for women, including a visit to the Chara Centre.

Governance Route:	The matters contained within this paper have been previously considered by the following group(s) as part of its development. HSCP Senior Management Team ☐

	Council Corporate Management Team ☐ Health Board Corporate Management Team ☐ Council Committee ☐ Update requested by IJB ☐ Other ☒ IJB Public Engagement Committee Not Applicable ☐

Recommendations:	The Integration Joint Board is asked to: a) Note the contents of this report, in particular the concerns raised in the petition; the existing accommodation and support provision for women; developments relating to safeguarding and the Domestic Abuse Strategy; and the further work undertaken to strengthen safeguarding for women; and b) Agree that, through delivery of the Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Strategy, the HSCP will continue to strengthen accommodation and support for households with children, vulnerable women and other vulnerable persons; prioritizing temporary furnished accommodation to minimize time spent in B&B accommodation; continued implementation of the Trauma Informed Practice Programme; and strengthened safeguarding and joint working arrangements.

Relevance to Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan:

The report is relevant to the IJB's strategic responsibilities for improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and ensuring that integrated services provide safe, person-centred and trauma-informed accommodation and support. It supports these priorities by considering the accommodation, safeguarding and support needs of women and children affected by homelessness. This is in line with Partnership Priority 3 – Supporting people in their communities and Partnership Priority 4 – Strengthening communities to reduce harm in particular.

Implications for Health and Social Care Partnership:

Reference to National Health & Wellbeing Outcome(s):	The report and the work to progress the IJB's Temporary Accommodation Strategy is relevant to the following National Health & Wellbeing Outcome: 3 - People who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected. 4 - Health and social care services are centred on helping to maintain or improve the quality of life of people who use those services.

	5 - Health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities. 7 - People who use health and social care services are safe from harm
Personnel:	There are no personnel implications.
Carers:	There are no direct implications for Carers.
Provider Organisations:	There are no direct implications for Provider Organisations.
Equalities:	An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out for the 10-year Temporary Accommodation Strategy. The assessment considers the potential impact of the Strategy on people with protected characteristics, including women and families affected by homelessness, and will be routinely reviewed through the Strategy's governance arrangements as implementation progresses. https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/publication/eqia-temporary-accommodation-strategy
Fairer Scotland Compliance:	N/A
Financial:	N/A
Legal:	N/A
Economic Impact:	N/A
Sustainability:	N/A
Sustainable Procurement and Article 19:	N/A
Risk Implications:	Any delay in delivering the Temporary Accommodation Strategy may limit progress in improving accommodation outcomes for homeless households and could affect the health and wellbeing of those involved, particularly women and children.
Implications for Glasgow City Council:	The report and petition highlight the particular needs and impact of homelessness on women and children and the need for the Council to continue work with wider partners to ensure that accommodation and safeguarding arrangements meet the needs of this vulnerable population.
Implications for NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde:	There are no specific implications for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde arising from this report; however, homelessness can contribute to poorer health outcomes

	and increased demand for health services, with associated cost pressures. A delay in implementing the Temporary Accommodation Strategy may therefore have an impact on NHSGG&C.

Direction Required to Council, Health Board or Both	
Direction to:	
1. No Direction Required	☒
2. Glasgow City Council	☐
3. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	☐
4. Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	☐

1. Purpose

1.1 This report updates on the decision of the Public Engagement Committee on 19th August 2026 to refer consideration of the petition entitled 'Create Emergency Homeless Accommodation for Women and Children' to the IJB.

1.2 The paper also updates the IJB on the approach taken by the HSCP in relation to the provision of accommodation and support to women and children affected by homelessness; the strategic approach to the provision of homeless accommodation; and actions taken by the HSCP following consideration of the petition at the PEC.

2. Background

2.1 The petition was considered by the IJB Public Engagement Committee on 19 August 2026 and referred to the IJB for consideration. The petition and the HSCP response considered by PEC are attached at Appendix 1 and 2.

2.2 The petition called for the creation of safe, women-only emergency homeless accommodation in Glasgow for women and children, as an alternative to unsuitable hotel and bed and breakfast placements. It highlighted safety concerns associated with mixed-gender accommodation and asked the HSCP to consider learning from women-only services operating in Northern Ireland.

2.3 Glasgow City Council and Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership face considerable challenges in responding to the scale and nature of the homelessness emergency across the city. Significant increases in demand for homelessness assistance have placed continued pressure on emergency and temporary accommodation provision resulting in an increased over reliance on hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation. It should be noted that the significant increase in the supply of emergency accommodation since June 2023 has averted a significant increase in rough sleeping in the city.

2.4 The HSCP recognises the limitations of bed and breakfast type accommodation, particularly for women and families, and has continued to work to increase the availability of more suitable alternatives. A key strength of our response has been the partnerships we have built across the HSCP and

with wider statutory and third-sector partners, recognising that no single service or organisation can effectively respond to the range of needs and circumstances experienced by women affected by homelessness.

2.5 The HSCP recognises that homelessness impacts women and men differently and that, for some women, homelessness is closely connected with domestic abuse, gender-based violence, exploitation, trauma and other forms of severe and multiple disadvantage. The HSCP has therefore worked with colleagues across the voluntary and statutory sectors to develop accommodation and support services that reflect the needs of women experiencing homelessness.

3. Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2025-2035

3.1 The Integration Joint Board approved the 10-year Temporary Accommodation Strategy, in May 2026. A key commitment within the Strategy is to end the routine use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households.

3.2 The Strategy was developed following extensive modelling of the projected supply of and demand for temporary and permanent housing for homeless households, supported by a review of the evidence and best practice in the provision of emergency and temporary accommodation. The HSCP has established a governance board to oversee its implementation.

3.3 Management information held by the HSCP indicates that, in 2025/26, women accounted for 23% of single-person homelessness applications with 1,378 homelessness applications made by single females compared to 4,622 applications made by single males. Single females are disproportionately less likely to reside in B&B/Hotel accommodation with only 13.4% of single residents in B&B being female (271) compared to 86.6% of single residents being male (1,758). Women are also shown to have shorter average stays across all forms of temporary accommodation. While the number of women in bed and breakfast accommodation has remained broadly stable during 2026, the number of families with children reduced from a peak of 122 in February 2026 to 82 by September 2026 - reduction of approximately 33%.

3.4 Work to achieve the implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy includes increasing homelessness prevention activity, increasing permanent lets secured from Registered Social Landlords for the resettlement of homeless households and progressing work to significantly increase the number of temporary furnished flats (TFFs) available through the private rented sector as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation. To achieve this aim, a private rented sector tender will be issued in November 2026 to seek potential contractors to provide an additional 1000 units of temporary furnished accommodation.

3.5 It is likely that new contractor(s) will be in place by April 2027 and work to incrementally increase the number of TFFs will begin at this point. This work is likely to improve accommodation provision for households that require temporary accommodation as well as generating cost reductions for the HSCP and City Council.

3.6 Within the wider temporary accommodation system, the HSCP has access to over 2,400 temporary furnished properties which can be used to accommodate homeless households with a strong focus on accommodating women and families with children. Because of the understanding of the impact on women and families of being accommodated in bed and breakfast type accommodation, the HSCP prioritises women with children and families for access to Temporary Furnished Accommodation.

3.7 Alongside the wider accommodation system, the HSCP commissions or directly provides dedicated women-only supported accommodation for women with support needs. 82 bed spaces across four supported accommodation services specifically for women are currently available, alongside directly provided and commissioned specialist services including Martha's Mammies and Tomorrow's Women.

3.8 Overall, the current approach to the provision of temporary accommodation, comprises women-only supported accommodation, gender-sensitive practice, gender-specific support services, and prioritised access to Temporary Furnished Accommodation for women and families.

4. Domestic Abuse, Gender-based Violence and Trauma

4.1. It is well understood that there is a clear link between domestic abuse, gender-based violence and trauma. As a result, the HSCP has undertaken a number of workstreams to enhance supports to women affected by gender-based violence.

4.2. Assessment and intake arrangements for people experiencing domestic abuse have been revised within Homelessness Services, enhanced advice and information has been introduced, and priority has been given to moving families with children who have left abusive relationships on from hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation. Staff have also undertaken ‘SafeLives’ and other tailored domestic abuse training.

4.3. Homelessness Services have also worked with accommodation providers on safeguarding policies and engaged with the Violence Against Women Partnership to consider actions to minimise risks to women accommodated in bed and breakfast-type accommodation. This work has been supported by investment in an HSCP wide Trauma Informed Practice Development Programme informed by a gendered analysis of trauma and homelessness.

4.4. Work is also ongoing with the HSCP’s Alcohol and Drug Recovery Services (ADRS) to improve the operational links between ADRS and Homelessness Services. This work, whilst targeted at the general homeless population, will benefit women affected by homelessness with addiction issues.

5. Safeguarding Women within Emergency Accommodation

5.1 The HSCP recognises the particular challenges associated with accommodating women and families in bed and breakfast accommodation. In March 2024, the HSCP examined the safeguarding arrangements for women

and families placed in this type of accommodation and subsequently identified a set of measures to strengthen placement oversight and safeguarding.

5.2 These arrangements include a Homelessness Management Women and Family Accommodation Oversight Meeting, a gender- and family-sensitive approach to the use of particular bed and breakfast establishments, guidance for staff on the allocation of emergency accommodation, guidance to Social Care staff in relation to gender-based violence, and guidance to hotel establishments on reporting gender-based violence incidents and safeguarding relating to women. This has been further influenced by the HSCP revised Domestic Abuse Strategy and associated workstreams. These oversight arrangements have contributed to both a significant reduction in the length of time families with children spend in bed and breakfast accommodation and a reduction in the number of families accommodated there at any one time.

5.3 These measures sit alongside a needs assessment, welfare and safeguarding visits, ongoing care management oversight and referral to specialist services where concerns are identified. Accommodation arrangements can also be reviewed where risks or concerns emerge.

6. Actions Following the IJB Public Engagement Committee (PEC)

6.1 Following consideration of the petition by the IJB PEC on 19th August 2026, Homelessness Services undertook a further assessment of the accommodation and support provided to women placed in bed and breakfast type accommodation. Consequently, single women are now being prioritised for move-on from this type of accommodation. Discussions have also commenced with Wayfinder Housing Support providers to ensure that single women in bed and breakfast accommodation have access to a dedicated housing support worker. In addition, guidance for hoteliers and Social Care staff on safeguarding, sexual harassment and violence has been reissued.

6.2 Work has also taken place with the leads for the Temporary Accommodation Strategy to ensure that, as the strategy is implemented, the needs of women are reflected in service developments and that the strategy EQIA is routinely reviewed as workstreams are taken forward.

6.3 Officers from Homelessness Services met with the petitioner to discuss the petition, the HSCP's response to women affected by homelessness and the wider approach to supporting vulnerable women. As part of the meeting, the petitioner was shown around the Chara Centre, a purpose-built accommodation and support service for 27 single women. The discussion also provided an opportunity to outline the challenges faced by the service in developing building-based supported accommodation within the current financial and operational environment. The meeting enabled a fuller discussion of the issues raised in the petition and the work being undertaken to strengthen accommodation and support for women experiencing homelessness.

6.4 The HSCP has also established a multi-agency working group with Police Scotland and Wayfinder Housing Support providers to examine opportunities to further enhance safeguarding support to women resident within bed and breakfast accommodation.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Integration Joint Board is asked to:

a) Note the contents of this report, in particular the concerns raised in the petition; the existing accommodation and support provision for women; developments relating to safeguarding and the Domestic Abuse Strategy; and the further work undertaken to strengthen safeguarding for women; and
b) Agree that, through delivery of the Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Strategy, the HSCP will continue to strengthen accommodation and support for households with children, vulnerable women and other vulnerable persons; prioritising temporary furnished accommodation to minimise time spent in B&B accommodation; continued implementation of the Trauma Informed Practice Programme; and strengthened safeguarding and joint working arrangements.

RECEIVED 0 1 MAY 2026

Glasgow City IJB Integration Joint Board

Appendix 1

Glasgow City Integration Joint Board Petitions form

Please refer to the Guidance on Submission of Public Petitions before filling in this form. If you need more information or advice, please contact the Senior Officer (Governance Support), whose contact details are provided in the guidance document.

Details of Principal Petitioner

Please enter the name of the person raising the petition. You must include a name and contact address, and it is also helpful if you include a telephone number and email address.

Name: LAURA JONES

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Title of Petition

CREATE EMERGENCY HOMELESS ACCOMODATION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Please write in no more than 250 words:

- The purpose of your petition; and,
- The result you wish to achieve from your petition

See next page.

We, the undersigned, urgently petition Glasgow City Council for improved provision of women-only emergency homeless accommodation and safe accommodation for families with children.

The latest official homelessness statistics for Glasgow revealed that ~~428~~ 456 women and ~~108~~ 122 families with children are currently housed in unsuitable hotel/BnB temporary accommodation. The specific vulnerabilities of women—fleeing domestic abuse, violence, and exploitation—are not being adequately met by current mixed-sex provision. This failure is recognised by organisations such as Shelter and Engender, and by the Scottish government.

We demand the establishment of more dedicated, safe, women-only accommodation facilities. These must provide a sanctuary from the trauma and danger that many homeless women face, including those with children. The insecurity of unsuitable temporary accommodation has a devastating impact on family stability and child development.

Furthermore, this accommodation must be more than just a roof. It is imperative that wrap-around care and services are integrated, including dedicated support for mental health, trauma counselling, substance misuse, and pathways to secure permanent housing. Specialist staff trained in handling domestic abuse and violence against women are essential.

Glasgow must lead in protecting its most vulnerable. We call on you to act now to invest in and commission safe, dignified, and comprehensive emergency accommodation that truly meets the needs of homeless women and children. Their safety and futures depend on it.

Action taken, if any, to resolve issues before submitting the petition

Please enter below details of any individuals or organisations approached. You should attach copies of correspondence, including any responses. This information will be made available to the Public Engagement Committee before it considers the petition.

Petition previously sent to Glasgow City Council public petitions but I was advised to send it to IJB

I have met in person on this issue: Cllr Martha Wardrop, Cllr Dan Hutcheson, Cllr Seonad Hoy.

I have also contacted the Housing Regulator, who met with me, Mairi McAllen's team on 2 occasions because it is a national issue, and visited women's homeless accomodation in Belfast

I also put in a petition to the Parliament's public petitions committee closed in December.

Appearance before Committee

The Chair of the Public Engagement Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the committee to speak in support of their petition.

Please indicate whether you would like to make a brief statement (no more than 10 minutes) to the committee when it is considering your petition

*I **do** wish ~~to~~ make a statement to the committee

~~*I **do not** wish to make a statement to the committee~~

*delete as appropriate

Signature of Principal Petitioner

When you are satisfied the petition meets all the conditions outlined in the Guidance on Submission of Petitions, the principal petitioner must sign and date the form in the box below. For petitions submitted by email, a digital signature will be accepted.

Signature..... ..... **Date**..29/4/26.....

Print name in BLOCK CAPITALS..LAURA JONES.....

Dear Lauren McNamara,

I am writing to urge the Scottish Government to address the housing emergency by adopting and funding emergency homeless accommodation for women, modelled on the proven success of The Welcome Centre in Belfast.

The current reliance on unsuitable and isolating hotel and B&B placements for women facing homelessness is both a poor short-term solution and a costly long-term strategy. These placements often lack crucial, targeted support, leaving vulnerable women at risk and unable to break the cycle of homelessness.

The Welcome Centre in Belfast offers a transformative alternative. As a purpose-built, women-only facility, it provides not just a safe room, but integrated support including psychological services, life skills training, and dedicated help with securing permanent housing. This holistic, trauma-informed approach stabilises lives and creates a clear pathway out of homelessness.

Although moving to this model requires initial capital and revenue funding, it reduces long-term costs to the NHS, justice system, and social services by addressing the root causes of homelessness, rather than merely managing its symptoms.

The Welcome Organisation, funded by the Housing Executive of Northern Ireland which is part of the Department of Communities headed by the Minister of Communities, is a clear template for successful women-only accommodation in Scotland.

The Welcome Organisation have two projects that provide women-only homeless accommodation.

Glenview, a "crash" facility which currently provides emergency homeless accommodation for women who have complex needs and have been homeless on the streets of Belfast. It has recently been expanded from 10 places to 28 places for women.

The Glenview facility is located within a large building within the grounds of a large hospital in Belfast. It has 28 en-suite bedrooms. On each floor, there is a communal kitchen and living room for residents. There is also a needle exchange.

The current funding of Glenview was currently £300,000 per year for 10 women and would rise to £800,000 per year to support 28 women. This is all grant-funded through the Supporting People Programme.

Catherine House, named after a homeless woman who died on the streets of Belfast, is run by a team of female workers headed by Ms J Girvan. Women may reside at this

facility for up to two years. The approach is person centred: the woman each receive a personal support plan and take part in activities such as counselling for addiction and mental health and courses to build up their independent living skills and boost their confidence and mental wellbeing. Other informal social activities take place involving volunteers.

These women are further along on their homeless journey and will reach a stage where they can secure permanent homes. The facility has had a high rate of success. I had the opportunity to speak to service users, who told me Catherine House had saved their lives. It is important to note that all men are barred from these protected spaces for women.

We met with Susan Duncan (Head of Operations at Glenview) and Colin McCloy (Homeless Project Team Manager) and Sheenaz Ahmadnia (Project Officer) of the Housing Executive of Northern Ireland.

Colin McCloy stated that the costs of supported women-only homeless accommodation were the same as placing women in "non-standard" (hotel and b&b) accommodation in Belfast; it is therefore more cost effective to operate a preventative model of women-only accommodation with wrap-around support for women in terms of starting to help them deal with their complex needs, including addiction, mental health, and domestic violence of all forms.

To understand the operational and financial benefits firsthand, I strongly recommend that you or the Housing Minister speak directly with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Colin McClay can provide invaluable insight into how this model improves outcomes and delivers better value for public money.

By investing in specialist, supported women-only accommodation, we can provide safety and dignity for vulnerable women while building a more efficient and compassionate system. I implore you to explore this effective solution.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Jones

Scottish Tenants Organisation

Under considerationPE2147: Create more women-only homeless accommodation that protects and meets the specific needs of women

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform homeless services in Scotland and ensure services protect women from sexual assault and exploitation by increasing funding and supporting the creation of more women-only homeless accommodation.

Background information

Increasing numbers of women are placed in unsuitable hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation, where there is a ratio of 14 men to 1 woman.

There is a clear lack of safeguarding in emergency temporary accommodation in general, but very little attention has been paid to the specific challenges faced by women who are stuck in the homeless system. **Women are particularly at risk in mixed-sex emergency accommodation, and the hotels are notorious, with increased reports of rapes and sexual assaults**.

We need secure women-only halfway accommodation that meets the specific needs of women with the objective of rapidly placing them in permanent social housing.

As part of the Glasgow Times "End the Homeless Hotel Shame" campaign, and with official figures suggesting that the number of families living in homeless hotels and B&Bs quadrupled in 2024, we support calls for more emphasis to be placed on the affordable housing supply budget.

- Created byLaura Jones on behalf of the Scottish Tenants Organisation
- Considered from24 February 2025
- Petitions can collect signatures until the petition has been closed

Sign this petition

736 signatures

Hi Mark,

Thank you for supporting the petition demanding women-only emergency accommodation.

The Change.org petition I set up to raise awareness of the issue now has nearly 30,000 signatures. I think that shows the strength of feeling about this.

https://www.change.org/p/provide-women-only-emergency-temporary-accommodation-women-out-of-homeless-hotels

Here is a list of the other MSPs the STO has met with who have given their support:

Ash Regan

Annie Wells

Miles Briggs

Alex Cole Hamilton

I am contacting anyone I can who can help to push this, but I may need advice and guidance going forward.

Martha Wardrop of the Green Party raised the issue of women's safety in the hotels with Glasgow City Council back in April 2024 but was shot down by Cllr Alan Casey and has, to my knowledge, not raised it since. She told us on two occasions that would support the call for single-sex emergency accomodation. I have just requested another meeting with her to ask for her support.

Since we last spoke, the number of women and children in substandard hotel/bnb accommodation has risen steadily to record rates. The figures in Glasgow dipped slightly (from 383 women to 303) after the introduction of the Simon Community Connect Hub, which helps women to navigate the homeless system. The latest figures, however, show the numbers have risen sharply again, confirming our concerns that

such projects amount to sticking a plaster on a wound. We urgently need secure, single-sex halfway accommodation that meets the specific needs of women and their children with the aim of rapid rehousing.

The number of (mostly young) people staying in hotels continues to rise. The conditions in the hotels are hugely detrimental to anyone's mental and physical wellbeing.

The ratio of men to women is roughly 14:1. Despite this, roughly 25% of the deaths in hotels have been women, which means that the death rate among women is significantly higher. I believe that this is because women self-exclude from homeless services to a huge extent out of fear and that, at the point that women enter emergency accommodation, they have already reached breaking point. At their most vulnerable, they are being placed in an unspeakably dangerous and damaging environment.

I am currently working with a few journalists and trying to collect as much evidence in the form of testimonies from women who have experience of staying in the hotels.

I will continue to update you about the campaign.

If you would like any further information, I can be contacted at any time.

Thank you!

All the best,

Laura Jones

Scottish Tenants Organisation

Hi Laura, thanks for your email and it was good to meet you the other week at the SHARE event.

I'm on leave from tonight for a week but I have copied my colleague John Jellema into this email and if you could let John know possible dates after the 21st October we can try and find a suitable time to meet either in person or via Teams depending on what suits you best? Either fine for us.

Your colleague, Sean Clerkin also phoned me last week and he was going to send me possible dates for a meeting to discuss similar issues. You can let me know if it suits you to both meet us at the same time or if you would prefer a separate meeting.

Regards

Helen

Helen Shaw
Director of Regulation

Scottish Housing Regulator

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07557 481085

helen.shaw@shr.gov.scot

www.housingregulator.gov.scot

Appendix 2

Introduction

This paper provides the IJB Public Engagement Committee (PEC) with a briefing on the approach taken by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to meeting the accommodation needs of women affected by homelessness. The paper also sets out factors that informed the HSCP's decision not to designate specific bed and breakfast establishments for the sole use of women and families with children.

Background

IJB PEC Members will be aware that in May 2026 the IJB agreed a 10-year Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Strategy. A key element of the Strategy is a commitment to end the routine use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the provision of emergency accommodation for homeless households. A number of workstreams are being progressed in order to make progress with reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The HSCP is taking forward actions to:

- Increase prevention of homelessness activity;
- Increase the number of permanent lets secured for the resettlement of homeless households from the city's Registered Social Landlord's (RSL);
- Work is at an advanced stage on a tender to significantly increase the number of temporary furnished flats through the Private Rented Sector as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation.

The HSCP is conscious of the gendered nature of homelessness and how the distinct needs of women impact on their experience of homelessness services. As a result, the HSCP has continuously worked with colleagues across the voluntary and statutory sector to ensure there is a wide range of accommodation and support services that reflect the needs of women experiencing homelessness. This provision includes:

- Women-only supported accommodation
- Integrated gender sensitive practices
- Gender specific support services (e.g. Martha's Mammies)
- Prioritisation of allocation of Temporary Furnished Accommodation to Women and Families.
- Beyond the provision of single supported accommodation, the service has access to over 2,400 temporary furnished properties that we use to accommodate women.

Due to the unsuitability of bed and breakfast type establishments to accommodate women and children, the HSCP has long worked to minimise its use. However, due to the significant increase in demand for homelessness assistance since July 2023, the HSCP has increased use of this type of accommodation to provide emergency accommodation at the point of initial presentation. **Table 1** provides an overview of the increase in homeless applications between May 2023 and May 2024.

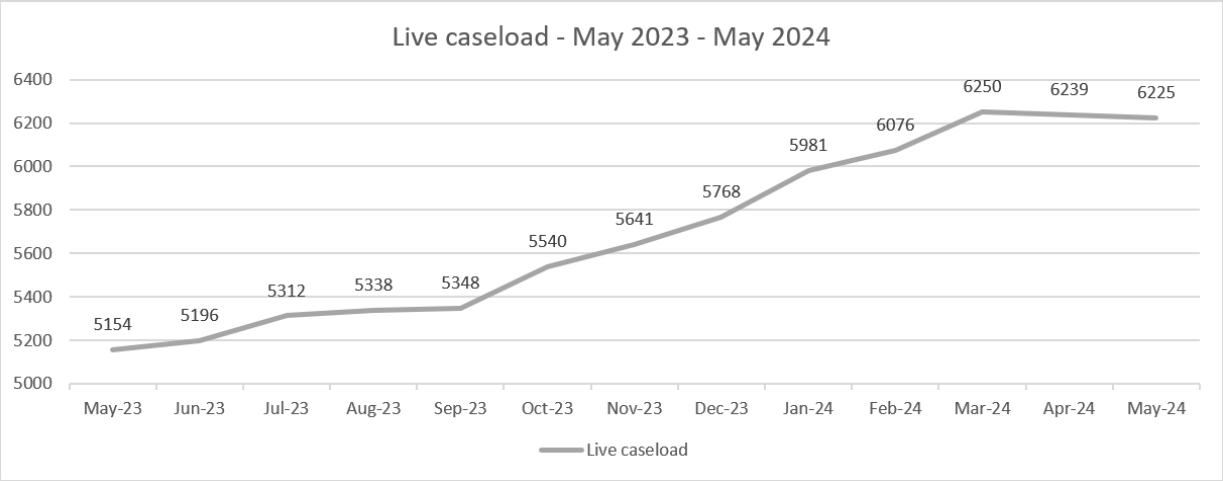
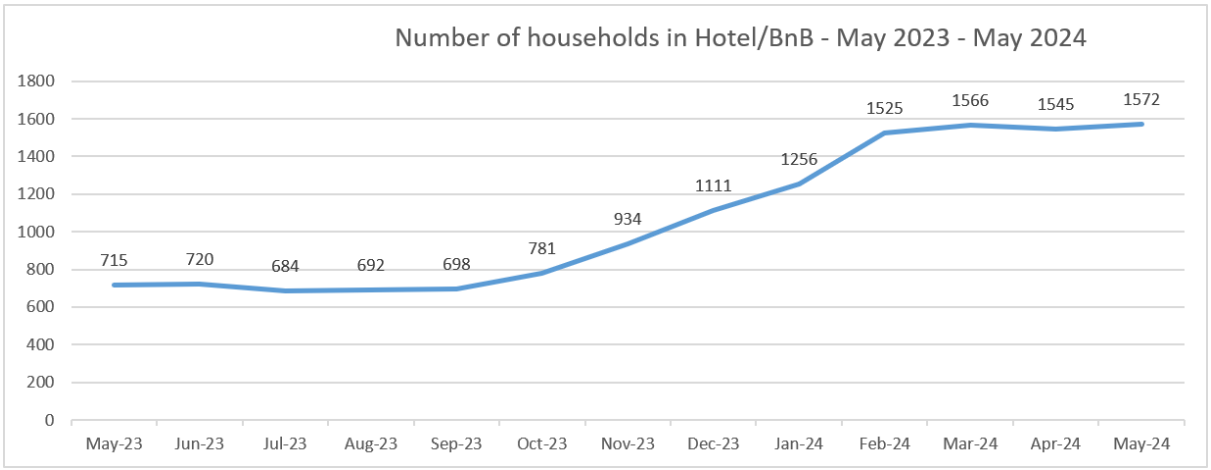


Table 2 provides an overview of the increase in the number of households in bed and breakfast between May 2023 and May 2024. It is important to note that the increase in bed and breakfast use for accommodating homeless households has continued to increase.



In response to the increase in demand for emergency and temporary accommodation, the HSCP is taking a number of actions to increase the supply of alternatives to bed and breakfast type accommodation. However, given the extent of the increased demand for emergency accommodation from homeless households it is likely that the HSCP will continue to have a reliance on bed and breakfast type accommodation for an extended period. Subsequently, in March 2024 the HSCP examined the safeguarding arrangements for women and families placed in bed and breakfast type accommodation.

Positives

Designating a specific bed and breakfast for the sole use of women and children could have a number of benefits in relation to the provision of support. These include:

- Concentrating single women in a single accommodation resource would allow the HSCP to target support to families within the service.
- Excluding single males from an establishment may improve the safety of the families and single women.
- Families may develop support networks that they may not otherwise be able to form due to isolation in other establishments.
- Consideration could be given to choosing an establishment located in a high amenity area with good public transport links.

Negatives

Alternatively designating a specific bed and breakfast that the HSCP currently procures for emergency accommodation for the sole use of homeless women could pose a number of risks in relation to the welfare of the families accommodated within the service. These include:

- Designating a single establishment may undermine the safety of residents if the function of the establishment became widely known and predatory individuals began to target the accommodation. Domestic abuse is a driver of homelessness and our attempts to improve supports to families and single women in bed and breakfast may undermine our work to protect families at risk of domestic abuse.
- Operating a dispersed model for placing families and women in bed and breakfast provides families with a degree of choice in relation to emergency accommodation placements. Concentrating provision within one establishment may undermine a family's ability to sustain social networks and links to nursery and school placements.
- Whilst women may develop positive social networks within a single sex environment the opposite may also be true where residents may develop relationships which may be exploitative and undermine their resilience and parenting skills, as placing households in one establishment based on the criteria of gender, within the context of significant pressures on placements, may mean that the Homelessness Service cannot adopt a more flexible approach to placements in order that vulnerable women and children are not placed with women with more chaotic lifestyles.

Having made the operational decision not to designate specific bed and breakfast type accommodation for women and children, the HSCP undertook a number of actions to improve placement oversight and safeguarding arrangements, these include:

- Homelessness Management Women and Family Accommodation Oversight Meeting.
- Gender and family sensitive approach to the use of particular bed and breakfast establishments.

- Guidance to staff in relation to the allocation of emergency accommodation.
- Guidance to Social Care staff in relation to gender based violence.
- Guidance to Hotel establishments in relation to the reporting gender-based violence incidents and safeguarding issues in relation to women service users.
- Investment in Trauma Informed Practice Development Programme informed by a gendered analysis of trauma and homelessness.

Summary

The HSCP has carefully considered whether specific bed and breakfast establishments should be designated exclusively for women and children experiencing homelessness. While this approach may appear to offer additional reassurance, the HSCP has concluded that a dispersed placement model provides greater flexibility, choice and safeguarding benefits. Designating a single establishment could unintentionally increase risks to residents by making accommodation locations more identifiable, reduce households' ability to remain connected to existing support networks, schools and local services, and limit the HSCP's capacity to respond effectively to changing levels of demand for emergency accommodation. For these reasons, the HSCP has focused on strengthening safeguarding arrangements and support provision across all accommodation settings rather than creating women and family only bed and breakfast establishments.

Recommendations

The IJB Public Engagement Committee is asked to:

a) Note the contents of this briefing report.