

# **Review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Tower Hamlets (March 2023)**

**Review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Tower Hamlets (March 2023)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Tower Hamlets</b>
<b>Version number</b>	7
<b>Status</b>	Final Version 17 May 2024
<b>Author</b>	Una Bedford, Senior Strategy & Policy Officer and Duncan Jones, National Management Trainee
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Karen Swift – Director of Housing & Regeneration
<b>Approved by</b>	TBC
<b>Scheduled review date</b>	TBC

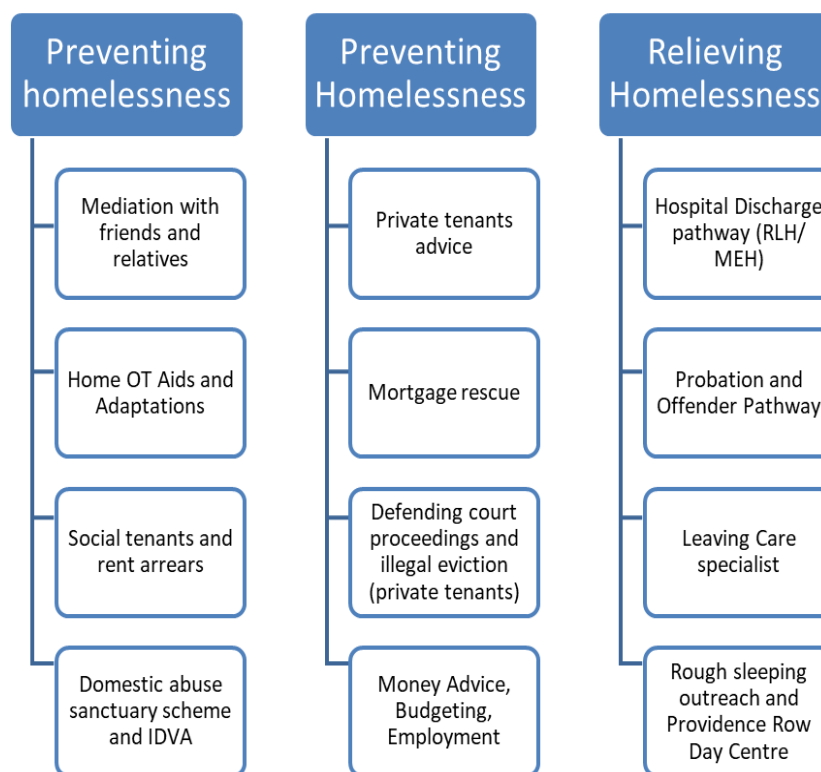
This review of homelessness and rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets establishes the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough, assesses its likely extent in the future, identifies what is currently being done, and by whom, and what level of resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness. This review looks back on data collated from 2018/2019 and provides a snapshot based on all available data at the time that the review was undertaken and completed in March 2023. It has since been amended to include DLUHC verified data up to the end of the financial year 2022/23 which had been unavailable at the time the review was completed. Data on the provision of Temporary Accommodation extends further out to the end of March 2024, to illustrate the high level of demand for Temporary Accommodation over the course of the last financial year.

The review provides our evidence base which has been used to formulate our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, taking into the administration’s priorities and the challenges which Tower Hamlets faces concerning homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough.

**1. Our current services**

The council’s Housing Options Service performs the strategic housing function of providing and commissioning advice and assistance to help people in housing need to find suitable accommodation. It is often the case that people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness approach the Housing Options Service directly. The Housing Options Service provides advice on a number of housing issues including tenancy problems, illegal eviction and housing benefit entitlement. Currently the Housing Options Service have an average of 90 appointments a day and deals with 1,000 phone calls a month from residents seeking early advice with officers undertaking assessments of whether a resident is homeless or faces becoming homeless in the next 56 days. On the council’s website, the team’s webpages provide information that covers a range of housing issues and provides details of Registered Providers (social Landlords) and private landlords who operate in the borough.

The chart below illustrates the services that the council’s Housing Options Service provides to prevent and relieve homelessness:



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Service managed demand reactively on first come, first served daily drop-in basis at Albert Jacob House. This led to lengthy waiting times and increased customer dissatisfaction. In March 2020, in response to government social distancing measures, Albert Jacob House closed to the public. The service transitioned to conducting interviews by telephone or via MS Teams and used email as a means of client contact with some face-to-face interviews.

The Service moved to Mulberry Place in June 2021 and in February 2023 moved into the new Residents Hub in the council’s new Town Hall. The new Town Hall is a more accessible place for residents to reach and has more inclusive facilities for residents – parent and child facilities, translation services, better signage and hearing facilities, and there has been colour and acoustic considerations for those with autism and dementia. The Residents Hub will also host and include specialist external partners – Tower Hamlets Homes, CAB and VCS to provide a more integrated approach to helping residents. Those who approach the council’s services when they reach crisis point will find that our partners who are based in the Town Hall will be able to assist residents and help them resolve any other issues that these specialists can assist with. The Residents Hub also has a ‘digital hub’ to help residents get set up, enabling them to access digital services.

Within the Housing Options Service there are specialised roles and functions, the graphic below shows how the Housing Option Service manages its core functions.

Homelessness and rough sleeping	Temporary Accommodation and Procurement	Housing Register and Allocations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Professionals (front of house team)</li> <li>• HOST Complex (vulnerable singles)</li> <li>• Housing Advice (private tenants)</li> <li>• Homelessness Intervention Prevention Project (HIPP) (social tenants in rent arrears)</li> <li>• Complex Assessment Team and Reviews</li> <li>• Street Population and Rough Sleeping Commissioner</li> <li>• Hostel Access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Bookings and Allocations Team</li> <li>• Housing Management</li> <li>• Tenancy Sustainment</li> <li>• Current and Former Rent Arrears team</li> <li>• Accommodation procurement (TA and PRS)</li> <li>• Beam (specialist employment service)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications and Administration</li> <li>• Advertising and Shortlisting</li> <li>• Assessment and Attainment Team</li> <li>• Occupational Therapist Team (housing needs medical assessment)</li> <li>• Members Enquiries and Complaints</li> <li>• Business Support (part of Resources Directorate)</li> <li>• Information Change Management (Part of ICT)</li> </ul>

The Housing Options Service offers housing advice to people who live in private sector accommodation in Tower Hamlets, which is free, confidential and independent. They support:

- tenants of a private landlord
- tenants of a housing association (also known as a registered provider or social landlord)
- homeowners (but not council leaseholder)

### Supporting individuals with Complex Needs

The Housing Options Service has a complex needs team who provide support and carry out homelessness needs assessments of people who are considered vulnerable. This includes young people in or leaving care, ex-offenders, those fleeing domestic abuse, those at risk of homelessness or homeless on hospital discharge and those who have substance misuse and mental health issues who may be homeless or rough sleeping.

### Supporting ex-offenders

The team works closely with the Ministry of Justice, the Probation Service and Public Health to support ex-offenders by ensuring that there is a pre-release plan in place (at least 12 weeks before) to accommodate ex-offenders who will become homeless on their release. People leaving prison with strong foundations in place are less likely to reoffend and more likely to make a positive contribution to society – a stable home, a steady job, and good health free from substance misuse are essential factors in achieving this.

The government’s Community Accommodation Service (CAS) and AFEO (Accommodation for Ex-Offenders) schemes build on this work – to help join up local authority and probation services, improve partnership, create better pathways and accommodation options.

Tower Hamlets has secured AFEO funding for the next 2 years (2023/24 and 2024/25) via a joint bid with the London Borough of Hackney to secure Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation for prison leavers, (for those who would not be deemed under homelessness legislation to have a priority need for temporary accommodation), and to fund support services to ensure tenancies are sustained. This

scheme will be delivered in collaboration with HMPPS partners and will improve duty to refer and joint working arrangements to achieve better outcomes for prison leavers. Under the AFEO scheme the council will provide:

- rent in advance for ex-offenders.
- support ex-offenders to get back to living independently in the community.
- help to prevent ex-offenders returning to criminal activities.

Within the community, Housing Options provides an outreach service that has two officers now in situ and working within the Probation Service in the borough. The officers deliver upstream homelessness prevention work.

### **Hospital Discharge support**

In addition, the team has developed a hospital pathway, which is recognised as a model of best practice by other local authorities, working closely with the Mile End and the Royal London Hospitals. There is a hospital coordinator in place who provides homelessness prevention and relief advice to those who are at risk of homelessness prior to their discharge from hospital.

Other outreach activities within the community include the provision of advice by having a case worker at Providence Row's Day centre for rough sleepers in the borough to provide homelessness and housing options advice.

### **Hostel Pathway**

The Housing Options Service also facilitates a Hostel pathway to provide clients with mental health and substance misuse issues with support to enable clients to develop life skills for independent living and to enable them to move on. Placement in hostel accommodation is considered for those with an identified support need to ideally enable them to make a sustainable transition toward self-supported living. The council's Adult Social Services Integrated Commissioning Team commission these hostels and works closely with the Housing Options Service to provide support to people within this client group.

Hostels represent the largest proportion of commissioned accommodation provision for homeless individuals in Tower Hamlets and these services represent a major opportunity to improve the outcomes for clients who have mental health and substance misuse issues.

The council currently spends £3.12M per annum on accommodation-based services in the Hostels pathway. The Integrated Commissioning Team presently commission six hostel contracts in the borough, providing a total of 418 bed spaces. In addition to these six contracts, the Greater London Authority funds one further hostel in the borough – East London Apartments. This is comprised of 31 bedspaces at an annual cost of £570,750.00. Housing also provides a 35-unit service for rough sleepers Luke House which is funded through the government's allocation to Tower Hamlets via the Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund.

In addition, there is accommodation for more than 200 single individuals in non-commissioned specialist hostels for seafarers/veterans, funded by local charities and separate from the local authority services.

### **Provision for clients fleeing Domestic Abuse**

The Housing Options Service supports those fleeing domestic abuse within the council's specialised hostel provision and ensures that clients are referred to and able to access appropriate and suitable hostel provision within the borough.

Since 2018, the council has received funding from the government to recruit a Housing Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) and Housing Domestic Abuse caseworker to be co-located with the Housing Options Service. However, because of the pandemic, the co-location has not been possible but funding for these posts ends this year.

The Housing Options Service works alongside the council's Community Safety team who commission the borough's IDVA service (who provide advice and ensure emotional and practical advice for survivors of domestic abuse) and monitor outcomes. During quarters 1-3 of 2022/23, there has been 217 positive housing outcomes for these clients which have included accessing crisis accommodation, finding suitable social or other housing options, the perpetrator being removed from the survivor property and Sanctuary.

Prior to the pandemic, a Community Safety officer was co-located once a week within the Housing Options Service to support Officers and raise awareness of domestic abuse.

In addition, the council is progressing and working towards the Domestic Abuse and Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation process.

The Community Safety team have provided extensive training and awareness raising on issues related to violence against women and girls and domestic abuse to the Housing Options team and to registered providers of social housing who operate within the borough.

Over the course of the last 5 years, the council has maintained funding for 34 beds via 2 Refuges, which is significantly higher than most other boroughs. The council's Commissioning Team also funds a specific hostel provision for single women with complex needs. While this specialist hostel provision is not solely for those fleeing domestic abuse, many of these clients will have experienced some form of violence against women and girls.

The Domestic Abuse protocol for all council services has also been reviewed and updated linking into recent legislation and housing duties for the local authority relating to those who flee Domestic Abuse. The council's Common Housing Register Allocations Scheme has also been updated to reference and set out the council's statutory duties with regard to those fleeing domestic abuse.

### **Support for young people under 18 years of age**

The council also has specialised hostel provision for young people - "The Crash Pad" where a young person can be placed for up to 48 hours when a relationship breaks down at home, allowing colleagues in Children's Services to assess the young person's needs and next steps. This feeds into the council's approach and Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

### **Assistance for clients with additional support needs**

The Housing Options Service has, alongside the council's Public Health team, commissioned an officer to work specifically with rough sleepers who have substance misuse issues. The officer works with the Pathway team to support the client and to enable the client to access rehabilitation services and working with the client to enable them to acquire the life skills and confidence to live independently within the community.

## 2. Current Housing Provision in Tower Hamlets<sup>i</sup>

There has been a significant increase in the total dwellings in the borough between 2018 and 2022 (**Table 1**). The private sector has seen the largest growth with the number of people residing in privately owned accommodation increasing. In contrast, the number of local authority owned dwellings has risen but at a much smaller rate. In 2022, 68.04% of dwellings were in the private sector, 8.35% were dwellings owned by the local authority and 23.6% were with PRPs.

**Table 1 – Number of dwellings by type in Tower Hamlets**

Number of dwellings, on the 1 April each year					
	Local Authority (incl. owned by other LAs)	Private Registered Provider	Other public sector <sup>2</sup>	Private sector (P)1	Total (P)1
2023	11475	33108	0	Data not available	Data not available
2022	11,586	32734	0	94356	138676
2021	11633	32556	0	85162	129351
2020	11477	32421	0	82205	126103
2019	11476	32023	0	78040	121539
2018	11568	31712	0	76735	120015

There has been an increase in the number of vacant social housing dwellings over the past five years, among social housing homes owned by private registered providers (see Table 2). Vacant dwellings owned by the council did increase between 2018 and 2020, which then declined in 2021 and 2022 only to increase again in 2023. A large number of properties being left vacant is an inefficient use of space and supporting private registered providers to bring these properties back in use should be considered to increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough.

**Table 2 - Vacant Dwellings within Tower Hamlets**

	All vacant Dwellings	All long term vacant	Local authority vacant dwellings	PRP vacant dwellings	PRP general needs and not available to let vacant
2018	1,832	634	47	330	149
2019	3,308	984	67	544	251
2020	3,566	1,035	164	447	201
2021	3,325	550	163	472	246
2022	4,527	1,510	108	629	399
2023	2,661	1491	162	670	476

### 3. Lettings demand and turnover over the last 5 years <sup>ii</sup>

The number of residents on the council and its Registered Provider partners' Common Housing Register (social housing waiting list) has grown year on year since 2018/19. This is a trend which is set to continue as the private rental market recovers from COVID-19 and continues to remain increasingly unaffordable – further exacerbated by the ongoing cost of living crisis. This trend has been driven primarily by those looking for 3 bedrooms and 1-bedroom properties.

**Table 3 – Number of people on Common Housing Register by bedrooms needed.**

	April 2018	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023
1 bedroom	7,580	7,938	8,185	8,734	9,031	10,444
2 bedrooms	4,447	4,613	4,587	4,800	4,909	5,355
3 bedrooms	5,176	5,652	5,700	6,008	6,301	6,892
4 bedrooms	1,440	1,467	1,451	1,451	1,441	1,507
5 bedrooms +	165	156	150	159	158	141
<b>Total Demand</b>	<b>18,808</b>	<b>19,826</b>	<b>20,073</b>	<b>21,152</b>	<b>21,840</b>	<b>24,399</b>

Demand has grown over the course of the last six full financial years for 1-bedroom properties, mirroring that increasingly more single young people cannot afford to rent in the private rent sector and similarly reflecting the number of people who have been asked to move out because their family or friends are no longer willing to accommodate them.

Over the course of the last five years, demand has risen for 2- and 3-bedroom properties while demand for 4 and 5+ bedrooms is not as great and has decreased slightly.

**Table 4: Average waiting times in years by banding and bedrooms rehoused to (based on actual lets from 1 April 2022 -31 March 2023)**

Bedrooms rehoused to	Bedsit	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms	5+ bedrooms
<b>Band 1</b>	2	3	4	6	8	10
<b>Band 2</b>	5	5	6	11	13	<b>No Lets</b>
<b>Band 3</b>	11	6	6	2*(*based on 3 actual lets)	<b>No lets</b>	<b>No Lets</b>

*(Note, current our banding system reflects priority need as of 31 March 2023 at the time of undertaking this review. The definitions for each band are as follows:*

- **Band 1** – Applicants considered to have a high priority housing need – there are 2 groups of applicants within this band, those in Group A are typically within facing a housing emergency, and or have a medical or disability need for a ground floor or wheelchair accessible property (category A & B), priority decants or persons currently under-occupying their social housing property. Those applicants placed in



*Group B will be accorded this status based on priority medical or priority social needs, decants, other priority target groups and armed forces personnel in urgent housing need.*

- **Band 2** – Applicants also in priority need. This banding is also split into 2 groups. Group A includes overcrowded or homeless applicants, while Group B includes applicants with a housing need without a local connection.
- **Band 3** – Applicants/households without priority need.)

Applicants on the council and its partners’ Common Housing Register who are placed in Band 1 currently have the shortest wait for a bedsit or a one-bedroom property of two years, while those in Band 2 are waiting 5 years respectively for a bedsit or a one-bedroom property. Applicants in Band 3 (without priority need) will be waiting 11 or 6 years respectively for a bedsit or a one-bedroom property. The statistics for 2022/23 show that those with the shortest waiting times are those in Band 1.

Applicants in Band 2 face a longer wait for a property of all bedroom sizes with 11 years and up to 13 years for a 3 or 4-bedroom property, in 22/23 no lets were available for a 5+ bedroom property.

Applicants in Band 3, (those without priority need), face the longest waiting times and in 2022/23 no lets of 4 or 5+bedrooms were made to this cohort of applicants.

This shows that there is more movement within the social housing stock for bedsits and one-bedroom properties than there is for larger family-sized accommodation. It further supports the view that more work needs to be done to support those social housing tenants who are under-occupying a property to move into more suitably sized accommodation. Further, when considering the waiting times of those in Band 3 (without any priority housing need) given the length of time that this cohort remain on the Common Housing Register (CHR), it does question whether applicants are proactively bidding on properties, given that Bands 1 and 2 have ‘shorter waiting’ times. Often applicants will apply to join the common housing register and will fail to actively bid, remaining in situ on the CHR. Consideration should be given to actively reviewing applicants in all bands within the CHR to ensure that they remain engaged with and are still seeking social housing.

#### 4. Local statistics on the prevalence of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the Borough<sup>ii</sup>

**Table 5 – Homelessness approaches for advice and assistance**

Homelessness Approaches & Outcomes	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of homeless applications where homelessness was successfully prevented	127	296	382	508	254
Number of homeless applications where homelessness was successfully relieved	92	151	490	418	199
Number of homeless applications where the Council accepted a full homeless duty	2359	2032	1935	1831	2272
Number presenting at prevention stage	1370	1116	760	936	1879
Number presenting at relief stage	989	919	1180	895	1237

In 2018/19 and 2019/20, there was a clear majority of prevention duties owed over relief duties however, in 2020/21, there were more people presenting at the relief stage than at the prevention stage. Demand rose significantly last year – Total households assessed as owed a duty rose by 381 (20%) during 2022/23 compared with the previous financial year. This is highest since 2018/19, showing a post-Covid increase. Tower Hamlets has very much remained consistent with the trend identified across other London Boroughs where the pandemic led to a shift in the patterns of homelessness assessments by local authorities, with fewer households requiring support to prevent them becoming homeless and more who had already become homeless needing help to secure accommodation.

### Homelessness Applications by Household composition

**Table 6 – Homelessness applications by household composition**

Household Type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Single Person households (prevention)	1000	640	477	577	643
Single Person households (relief)	821	695	982	715	949
Single persons with dependent children or pregnant (prevention)	140	194	117	169	143
Single persons with dependent children or pregnant (relief)	83	141	101	117	164
Couples with dependent children (prevention)	139	180	101	144	183
Couples with dependent children (relief)	55	51	63	75	91
Couples/households with non-dependent adult children/other (prevention)	70	75	53	77	70
Couples/households with non-dependent adult children/other (relief)	26	26	32	33	35

The most frequent cohort of applicants who have been assessed as owed a duty in the borough, (either at the relief or prevention duty), are single person households without dependent children. This could be due to having only a single income to pay rent whereas a couple who work may be able to combine their income. Single persons with dependent children and couples with dependent children are owed prevention duties in similar numbers however, there are far more single persons with dependent children owed a relief duty than couples with dependent children owed a relief duty. This data suggests that housing advice on how to access help earlier would be beneficial for single people. The type of households assessed as being owed a duty the least often (either the relief or prevention duty) are couples/ households with non-dependent adult children.

**Table 7 - Reasons for Homelessness (prevention stage) <sup>xxii</sup>**

Reason for loss of last settled accommodation for households owed a prevention duty	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/2022		2022/23	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Family and Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate</b>	470	34.3%	382	34.2%	355	46.7%	388	39.7%	392	37.7%
<b>End of Private Rented Tenancy (AST)</b>	145	10.6%	157	14.1%	60	7.9%	145	14.8%	303	29.2%
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	100	7.3%	65	5.8%	55	7.2%	62	6.3%	56	5.4%
<b>Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner</b>	85	6.2%	72	6.5%	33	4.3%	30	3.1%	33	3.2%
<b>End of social rented tenancy</b>	25	1.8%	14	1.3%	54	7.1%	240	24.5%	153	14.7%
<b>Eviction from supported housing</b>	16	1.2%	8	0.7%	3	0.4%	25	2.5%	20	1.9%
<b>End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold</b>	18	1.3%	12	1.1%	13	1.7%	25	2.5%	12	1.2%
<b>Other violence or harassment</b>	23	1.7%	9	0.8%	7	0.9%	18	1.8%	20	1.9%
<b>Left institution with no accommodation available</b>	5	0.4%	5	0.5%	4	0.5%	13	1.3%	10	1%
<b>Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support</b>	4	0.3%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	10	1%	21	2%
<b>Other reasons (not known)</b>	479	35.0%	392	35.1%	174	22.9%	22	2.2%	19	1.8%

‘Family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate’ is the highest cause of homelessness in prevention and relief, but this is a broad category with many different meanings attached to it. To get a better understanding of this high percentage of homeless individuals resource needs to be put towards breaking down this statistic.

Similarly, the ‘Other unknown’ reason, also makes up a large number of homelessness presentations. When combined with the reason for loss of last settled accommodation, ‘Family and Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate’, accounts for 70% of the prevention duty caseload and indicates that this considerable gap in data needs to be addressed. Other Local Authorities have removed the ‘Other unknown’ field in their data recording IT systems to ensure that the full the reasons for approaches and why approaches are made are captured – providing clearer indication of the reasons why applicants present in the first instance.

**Table 8 – Reasons for homelessness (relief)**

Reason for loss of last settled accommodation for households owed a relief duty	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/2022		2022/23	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Family and Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate</b>	306	31.3%	286	31.3%	484	41.2%	395	41.2%	489	39.5%
<b>End of Private Rented Tenancy (AST)</b>	50	5.1%	41	4.5%	39	3.3%	65	6.8%	112	9%
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	142	14.5%	142	15.6%	127	10.8%	134	14.0%	213	17.2%
<b>Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner</b>	56	5.7%	62	6.8%	55	4.7%	62	6.5%	64	5.2%
<b>End of social rented tenancy</b>	32	3.3%	21	2.3%	29	2.5%	22	2.3%	34	2.7%
<b>Eviction from supported housing</b>	16	1.6%	49	5.4%	56	4.8%	65	6.8%	70	5.6%
<b>End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold</b>	9	0.9%	7	0.8%	17	1.5%	32	3.3%	48	3.9%
<b>Other violence or harassment</b>	38	3.9%	24	2.6%	33	2.8%	60	6.3%	58	4.7%

<b>Left institution with no accommodation available</b>	21	2.2%	27	3.0%	83	7.1%	62	6.5%	52	4.2%
<b>Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support</b>	3	0.3%	7	0.8%	0	0.0%	19	2.0%	51	4.1%
<b>Other reasons (not known)</b>	306	31.3%	247	27.1%	253	21.5%	43	4.5%	48	3.9%

When assisting homeless households, local authorities record the reason that the household became homeless. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), this information is also recorded for all households who are owed a new prevention or relief duty.

Since 2018/19, there has been an increase in the total percentage of duties owed under both the prevention and relief duties to an applicant because their family/friends are no longer willing to accommodate them. A similar trend can be seen where the ending of private rent sector tenancy is the reason for homelessness. These trends have been accompanied by large decreases in the percentage of homeless duties caused by an unidentified other cause since 2018/19 therefore, we may have just become better in recent years at identifying and keeping track of reasons for homelessness duties.

Tower Hamlets reflects the picture across all 33 London Boroughs, where the most recorded reason, (apart from the 'unknown or other reasons' category), for becoming homeless are 'Family and friends being no longer willing to accommodate the household' and 'the end of a private sector Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)'. It is worth noting that family and friends being no longer willing to accommodate is an extremely broad description and could cover anything from the family no longer being able to financially support someone in their home to the family discriminating against someone for their sexuality or gender identity.

The introduction of a ban on evictions at the onset of the pandemic led to a sharp fall in the proportion of households who became homeless due to the end of an AST, but the lifting of the eviction bans and the rise in rents has seen this figure rise again. At the same time, the proportion of households becoming homeless due to family and friends being no longer willing to accommodate them has fallen after rising during the pandemic.

### **Age of the main applicant**

In 2022/23<sup>iv</sup>, 41% of homelessness applicants were under the age of 35. In terms of the composition of the households owed a prevention duty, the most prevalent cohorts of applicants are single males and single mothers with dependent children. Similarly, the household composition of those owed a relief duty, single male applicants were by far the highest percentage with single female applicants as the second highest percentage group.

With regards to age of the main applicants assessed as owed a duty, the highest percentage group was 25–34-year-olds (35%), 35–44-year-olds (23%) and those aged 18-24 years old (16%) being the

next highest represented age groups. In 2022/23, we did not assess any applicants ages 16-17 years as owed a prevention or relief duty by the council. In total, working age applicants between the ages of 18-64 years old represent the biggest cohort of applicants. Applicants of Pension Age 65+ represent only 4% of those assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty.

Relationship breakdown between young people and their family, or their primary caregivers has consistently emerged as a leading cause of youth homelessness. Pressures including financial hardship, housing, and the job market can contribute to family tensions and can lead to conflict with the breakdown of family relationships.

Welfare benefit changes as introduced within Universal Credit and the wider welfare reforms can also explain the increase in young homeless people, in addition to the increased lack of available affordable housing in the private rented sector. Administrative changes and delays under Universal Credit, including delayed payments, housing costs paid direct to claimant, monthly payments in arrears, removal of automatic entitlement to housing costs for 18–21-year-olds, have negatively affected young people’s access to housing. Sanctions including the capping of local housing allowance to shared accommodation rate, benefit cap, abolition of the spare room subsidy (i.e. bedroom tax) and non-dependent deductions influence young people’s housing options. In turn, these affect a young person’s ability to access and sustain accommodation.

Other contributing factors that may affect people under the age of 35 include mental and physical ill health or substance misuse which can mean that they chose or are asked to leave home. Experience of domestic abuse and violence or neglect may also contribute to young people leaving their family home.

**Table 9 – Yearly percentages of support needs of those owed either a relief or prevention duty.**

Support Needs:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1 Q2 and Q4	2022/23
History of mental health problems	21.2%	23.1%	25.4%	19.3%	19%
Physical ill health and disability	15.1%	19.0%	20.4%	13.7%	15.5%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	9.9%	9.4%	9.3%	7.1%	7.3%
Offending history	7.5%	10.2%	15.8%	10.8%	9.5%
History of repeat homelessness	8.2%	8.8%	9.7%	8.5%	7.1%
Drug dependency needs	7.5%	9.5%	14.5%	10.4%	8.8%
History of rough sleeping	9.4%	11.3%	15.3%	8.5%	7.7%
Alcohol dependency needs	4.4%	6.6%	6.8%	4.4%	4.9%
Learning disability	2.5%	4.2%	4.6%	3.8%	3.6%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	5.6%	3.5%	3.9%	2.2%	0.9%
Access to education, employment or training	6.7%	5.1%	7.4%	4.2%	2.8%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	3.0%	3.3%	4.0%	3.2%	3.0%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	3.0%	3.2%	3.7%	3.0%	3.2%
Old age	1.1%	1.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.9%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	1.3%	1.5%	1.9%	1.5%	2.2%

Care leaver aged 18-20 years	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%
Young person aged 16-17 years	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	2.2%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%
Former asylum seeker	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	1.0%	1.6%
Served in HM Forces	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.3%

Table 9 shows the percentage of people owed a duty according to their support needs. Applicants with a history of mental health needs are the largest group within this cohort. This highlights the need for more bespoke trauma informed support for these clients.

Physical ill health and disability is the next highest support need represented and this prevalence may be due to the difficulties that this client group face in obtaining stable employment. This suggests that there is a real need to provide these clients with additional support to find and maintain employment and consideration may need to be given to review the provision of supported housing in the borough.

Drug dependency affects 1 in 10 homeless people owed a duty emphasising the need for continued joint work with the appropriate health care services. Many of those owed a duty have a history of offending and to combat this the council should look at expanding the work we already do in partnership with prisons in the area and supporting those ex-offenders to gain the skills necessary to live independently without risk of reoffending.

### Ethnicity of main applicant

**Table 10 – Yearly data on ethnicity of those owed homeless duties in Tower Hamlets**

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1 Q2 & Q4	2022/23
White	Total	443	322	351	274	509
		19%	16%	18%	18.00%	22%
	White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	330	244	276	216	296
		14%	12%	14%	14.00%	13%
	White: Irish	9	5	5	3	7
		0%	0%	0%	0.00%	0%
	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0	0	2	4
		0%	0%	0%	0.00%	0%
Any other White ethnic group	104	73	70	53	202	
	4%	4%	4%	3.33%	9%	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Total	375	283	233	199	318
		16%	14%	12%	13.33%	14%
	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: African	248	199	139	125	189
		11%	10%	7%	8.33%	8%
	83	54	65	58	75	

	<b>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: Caribbean</b>	4%	3%	3%	3.67%	3%
	<b>Any other Black / African / Caribbean background</b>	44	30	29	16	54
		2%	1%	1%	1.00%	2%
<b>Asian / Asian British</b>	<b>Total</b>	917	869	779	616	1020
		39%	43%	40%	40.33%	45%
	<b>Asian / Asian British: Pakistani</b>	26	25	18	13	80
		1%	1%	1%	0.67%	4%
	<b>Asian / Asian British: Indian</b>	25	11	16	18	20
		1%	1%	1%	1.00%	1%
	<b>Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi</b>	797	788	711	556	870
		34%	39%	37%	36.67%	38%
	<b>Asian / Asian British: Chinese</b>	14	8	7	5	5
		1%	0%	0%	0.33%	0%
	<b>Any other Asian background</b>	55	37	27	24	45
		2%	2%	1%	1.33%	2%
<b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups</b>	<b>Total</b>	85	91	85	59	160
		4%	4%	4%	3.67%	7%
	<b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean</b>	40	46	30	26	65
		2%	2%	2%	1.67%	3%
	<b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African</b>	18	29	27	5	65
		1%	1%	1%	0.33%	3%
	<b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian</b>	13	6	7	15	9
		1%	0%	0%	1.00%	0%
	<b>Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background</b>	14	10	21	13	21
		1%	0%	1%	1.00%	1%
<b>Total</b>		85	68	69	53	114
		4%	3%	4%	3.33%	5%



Other ethnic group	Other ethnic group: Arab	16	13	13	13	37
		1%	1%	1%	1.00%	2%
	Any other ethnic group	69	55	56	40	77
		3%	3%	3%	3.00%	3%
Not Known		453	402	423	308	157
		19%	20%	22%	20.33%	7%

Table 10 shows yearly data on either prevention or relief duties owed by ethnicity. The most common group owed a duty across all years are the Asian/Asian British community. More specifically it is the Bengali population which is owed the highest percentage of duties. This is in line with the demographics of the borough (according to the Census 2021) and when compared to the general population of Tower Hamlets applicants in from the Asian/Asian British community are neither significantly over nor under-represented. The second most represented community owed either a prevention or relief duty are those who identify as White with the most common sub-group of this being White: English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish/British. Again, the percentages are like that of their representation amongst the general population of Tower Hamlets (according to the 2021 census figures).

When comparing this Table 10 (owed a homelessness duty) to graph 9 (on rough sleepers by ethnicity), there is a stark contrast between the two. In particular when looking at the two main ethnic groups in the borough.

This table shows that significantly that there are more Bangladeshi applicants to White British applicants (who are owed homelessness duties. However, graph 10 (Rough sleeping by nationality) shows that a significant percentage rough sleepers in the borough identify as White British in comparison to those who identify as Bangladeshi.

The reasons for these contrasts should be explored further as this may indicate that there are barriers to the service or conversely, it may identify where exceptionally good practice has been exemplified.

## 2. Use of Temporary Accommodation<sup>v</sup>

Local housing authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996). Households may be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they may spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.

Most applicants placed by the council in temporary accommodation are either awaiting the outcome of a homeless application under section 188 of the 1996 Act, (an interim duty to accommodate), or are waiting for an offer of suitable accommodation. The Table below illustrates the total number of households who the council placed in TA from September 2021 to December 2023.

**Table 11: Total number of households who the council placed in Temporary Accommodation (September 2022 – December 2023)**

September 2021	December 2021	March 2022	June 2022	September 2022	December 2022	March 2023	June 2023	September 2023	December 2023

2548	2531	2527	2547	2584	2617	2567	2645	2858	2832
------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

The lack of available social housing and PRS accommodation has led to councils being forced to use Bed & Breakfast and commercial hotels. Table 12 shows how the number of families placed in Bed and Breakfast Hotels this has steadily increased since June 2022 in Tower Hamlets. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation was historically a last resort, but the severe lack of suitable housing means that the council has no choice and is forced more and more to use this as a housing solution.

**Table 12: families in Bed and Breakfast hotels (including shared annexes and commercial hotels)**

September 2021	December 2021	March 2022	June 2022	September 2022	December 2022	March 2023	June 2023	September 2023	December 2023
22	5	5	22	54	65	138	201	252	235

Post-Covid, there was an increase in family homelessness as restrictions on evictions ended. Coupled with the cost of living crisis, this has reduced the ability of many households to afford the rents being demanded in the private rented sector. Increasing mortgage and operating costs, as well as anxiety around regulatory changes and the Renters' Reform Bill has also seen an increasing number of landlords decide to leave the market which has diminished the supply. A survey by the London School of Economics (July 2023) found that 40% of landlords who had let to tenants with lower incomes had reduced their exposure in the last two years<sup>vi</sup>.

The survey was part of the same research piece commissioned by London Councils and conducted in partnership with the estate agent Savills and the London School of Economics. This found that there has been a 41% decline in the number of properties in London available for private rent since the covid pandemic. In London, there has also been a dramatic 781% increase in homeless families placed in bed and breakfast accommodation beyond the legal six-week limit. This means 1,287 London families were stuck in unsuitable B&B accommodation in April 2023 compared to 146 in April 2022. Table 13 below shows how this has impacted in Tower Hamlets from September 2021 – December 2023.

**Table 13: Total families in Bed and Breakfast hotels (including shared annexes) for longer than 6 weeks**

September 2021	December 2021	March 2022	June 2022	September 2022	December 2022	March 2023	June 2023	September 2023	December 2023
0	0	0	0	22	28	59	101	175	235

The rising demand for support has come with soaring costs for councils, particularly in London where the demand for suitable accommodation outstrips supply. This explains why we are seeing more and more families staying longer than the 6 weeks statutory limit permitted to accommodate households in Bed Breakfast and commercial (hotel) accommodation. Families are accommodated in B&Bs for longer periods because there are no other options available to the council to fulfil its housing duty, and officers work hard to find more suitable accommodation as quickly as possible.

The council's ability to secure private rented housing through lease agreements with private landlords to limit the use of unsuitable B&B-type temporary accommodation is hampered by restrictions on help with rent payments through Housing Benefit and the housing cost element of Universal Credit, meaning landlords can secure higher returns from letting on the open market to non-claimants. The

affordability of PRS Accommodation has decreased since the Coalition government’s welfare reforms from 2011 reducing local housing allowance (LHA) rates to 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rents and with subsequent LHA freezes reducing the rents payable by households reliant on benefits relative to market rents much further. While the government has increased LHA by 16 percentage points to keep up with the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of local market rents from April 2024, the government needs to maintain that link beyond 2024 and review the relationship between LHA and the benefits cap. One in seven private renters in London rely on Housing Benefit<sup>vii</sup> and more than 38% of Universal Credit recipients work in London.

With regard to private rented accommodation for discharge of duty, prior to 2022 there was a steady supply of in-borough private rented accommodation available, but this has significantly reduced. The council has therefore had to increasingly resort to using out of borough provision, as Table 14 shows.

**Table 14: PRS accommodation placements in and out of borough (2020/21 – 23/24)**

New private rented lets	In-borough	Outside of Borough
<b>2020/21</b>	175	271
<b>2021/22</b>	194	306
<b>2022/23</b>	53	225
<b>2023/24</b>	31	211

Tower Hamlets alongside other London local authorities are increasingly placing people in Temporary Accommodation (TA) outside of their areas due to several key reasons:

1. **The high cost of housing:** The cost of housing in London is significantly higher than in many other parts of the country. The council struggles to find affordable accommodation within our own borough forcing us to place residents in accommodation outside of the borough.
2. **The shortage of local accommodation:** There is a severe shortage of available and suitable temporary accommodation within Tower Hamlets and within many London boroughs. The high demand for housing and limited supply means that we often cannot meet the needs of all those requiring temporary accommodation within our own boundaries.
3. **Budget constraints:** Tower Hamlets and all local authorities face significant budgetary pressures and must manage our resources effectively. Placing people in TA outside of London can be more cost-effective due to lower rental prices, helping the council to stretch its budget further.
4. **Welfare Reforms and Benefit Caps:** Changes to welfare policies, including the introduction of benefit caps, have made it harder for families to afford accommodation in high-rent areas like London. By placing people in less expensive areas, local authorities can ensure that housing benefit covers the cost of rent.
5. **Increased Demand for Services:** London, and Tower Hamlets in particular, faces higher levels of homelessness and demand for housing services than many other parts of England. This

increased demand puts additional pressure on the availability of temporary accommodation, necessitating the use of accommodation outside the local area.

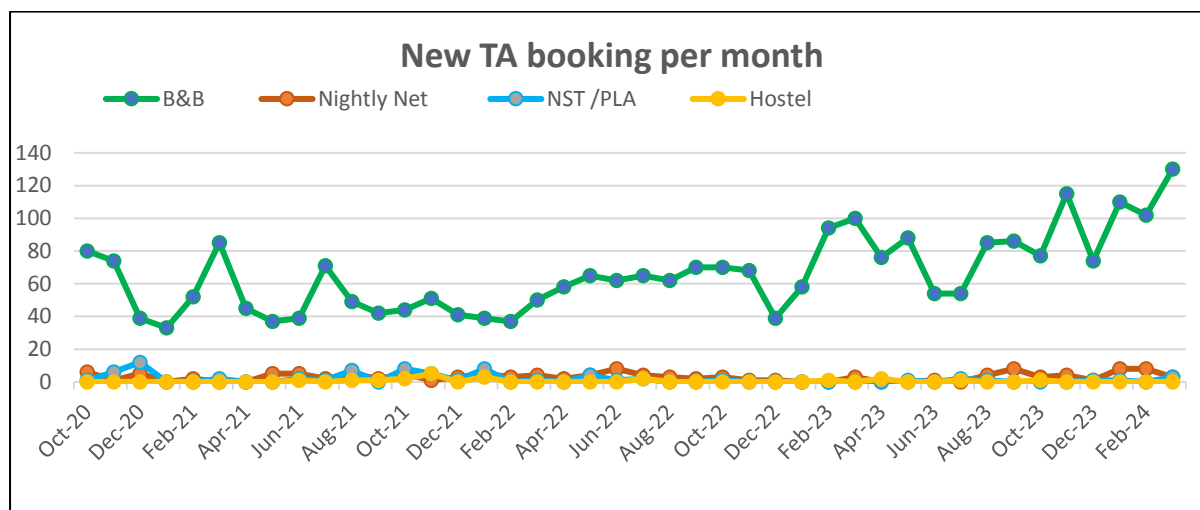
6. **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** While local authorities have a duty to house homeless individuals and families, there is some flexibility in how and where this duty is fulfilled. Authorities can place people in accommodation outside their areas if it meets their needs and if no suitable local accommodation is available.
7. **Quality and Availability of Housing:** In some cases, temporary accommodation outside of London may offer better quality accommodation than what is available locally. This can be an important consideration for officers aiming to provide safe and adequate housing for vulnerable individuals and families.

These factors combine to create the situation where placing people in temporary accommodation outside of their local area has become a necessary strategy for many London local authorities. However, this practice can lead to additional challenges, such as disruptions to schooling, employment, and access to support networks for those affected.

The council’s criteria for prioritising in-borough placements includes consideration of specialist medical treatment, specialist schooling and GCSE exams, and social services safeguarding, and is set out within Council’s ‘Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy<sup>viii</sup>’ (Approved by Cabinet in October 2021). Note, the council intends to publish a revision of this policy - subject to Cabinet approval in Summer 2024.

Affordability and availability of temporary accommodation hampers the council’s ability to place households in local accommodation – we can only place people in the accommodation that is available on the day.

**Graph 1<sup>ix</sup> – Monthly number of new TA bookings by TA type (October 2020 – February 2024)**



Graph 1 shows the number of new Temporary Accommodation bookings by type in the months between October 2020 to February 2024. The majority of new Temporary Accommodation bookings are placements in B&B accommodation. Hostels, Nightly and NST/PLA are at a similar level with regards to new bookings for TA. B&B bookings for TA over this period has shown that there is a certain level of instability across the months with various peaks and troughs within this period. The high number of new bookings for B&Bs is due to a high turnover of people in this type of Temporary Accommodation.

**Table 15– Quarterly and monthly new TA bookings by TA type and household type<sup>x</sup>**

Quarter	B&B	Nightly Net	NST /PLA	Hostels	TOTAL	Singles	Families
Q3 Oct - Dec 2020	193	12	19	0	224		
Q4 Jan - Mar 2021	170	2	0	0	174	100	74
Q1 Apr - June 2021	121	2	1	1	134	69	65
Q2 Jul - Sep 2021	162	8	2	2	181	87	94
Q3 Oct - Dec 2021	136	14	7	7	166	76	90
Q4 Jan - Mar 2022	126	12	9	3	150	78	72
Q1 Apr - June 2022	185	14	5	0	204	104	100
Q2 Jul - Sep 2022	197	9	2	2	210	91	119
Q3 Oct - Dec 2022	177	5	1	0	183	86	97
Q4 Jan - Mar 2023	252	3	0	1	256	118	138
Q1 Apr - June 2023	218	1	1	2	222	114	108
Q2 Jul - Sep 2023	225	12	3	1	237	95	146
Q3 Oct - Dec 2023	266	8	1	1	276	136	140
Q4 Jan - Mar 2024	342	19	4	0	365	181	184

Table 15 shows new temporary accommodation bookings by type on a quarterly basis. We have seen an increase in Temporary Accommodation bookings which is mostly led by families and an increased reliance on B&B accommodation for this TA. Families have gone from being in the minority of new Temporary Accommodation bookings to the majority. New Temporary Accommodation placements across all household types has increased rapidly by the end of 2023/24.

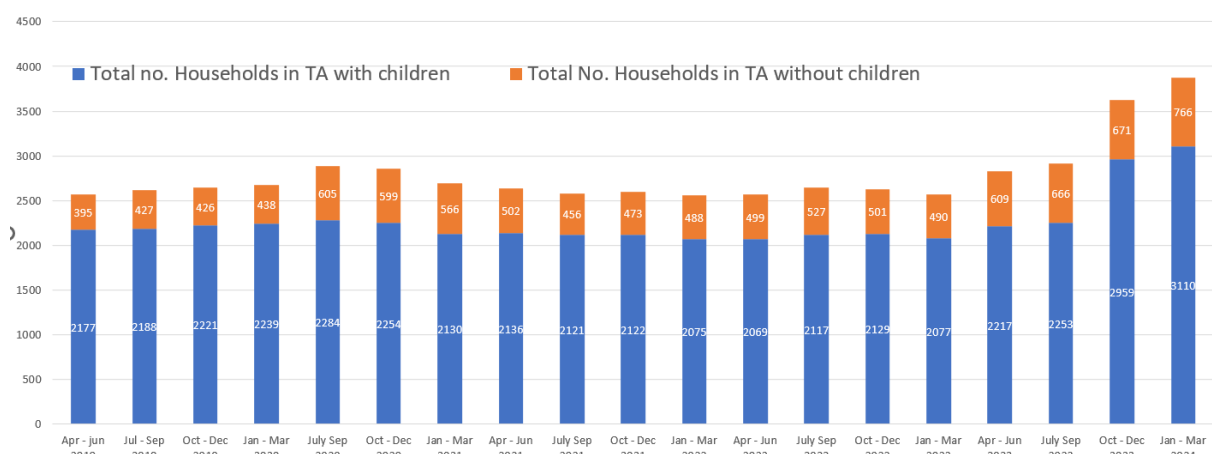
The rise in families in Temporary Accommodation (TA) compared to single people can be attributed to several interrelated factors:

1. **Housing Shortage and Affordability Crisis:** There is a significant shortage of affordable housing in London. This impacts families more severely because they require larger homes, which are both less available and more expensive. As rents in the Private Rented Sector have risen and affordable housing diminishes, families are more likely to be unable to secure stable housing, leading to an increased reliance on TA.
2. **Welfare Reforms and Benefit Caps:** Changes in welfare policies, such as the benefit cap and reductions in housing benefits, have disproportionately affected larger households. These reforms reduce the financial support available to families, making it more difficult for them to afford private rental housing, pushing them into homelessness.

3. **Evictions and Family Dynamics:** Families are at a higher risk of eviction due to financial instability. Additionally, family breakdowns or domestic violence can force families to seek emergency accommodation. Single individuals, on the other hand, may have more flexibility in finding temporary living arrangements with friends or relatives.
4. **Priority Need for Housing:** Due to the recognised vulnerability of children and the legal obligation to ensure they have a safe place to live, families are more likely to be placed in Temporary Accommodation compared to single individuals who might not meet the same level of priority need.

These factors together create a situation where families are more frequently found in temporary accommodation than single individuals.

**Graph 2 – Monthly number of households in Temporary Accommodation with and without children**



Graph 2 illustrates the total number of households in Temporary Accommodation over various quarterly periods from April-June 2019 to January-March 2024. The total number of households in temporary accommodation has generally increased over this period. With a noticeable upward trend, particularly from mid-2022 onwards, with a significant rise in the number of households in temporary accommodation by January-March 2024. Households with children consistently form the largest cohort of those placed in temporary accommodation throughout the entire period.

The number of households with children shows a gradual increase with some fluctuations but a significant rise can be seen from July-September 2023 onwards. By January-March 2024, the number of households with children in TA reaches 3,110, marking the highest point on the graph.

Households without children are a smaller proportion compared to those with children, while there are fluctuations in the number of households without children in temporary accommodation but a clear upward trend is visible from mid-2023 onwards. The sharpest increase can be seen between July-September 2023 and January-March 2024, with the number reaching 766 in the latter period, also the highest point on the graph for this category.

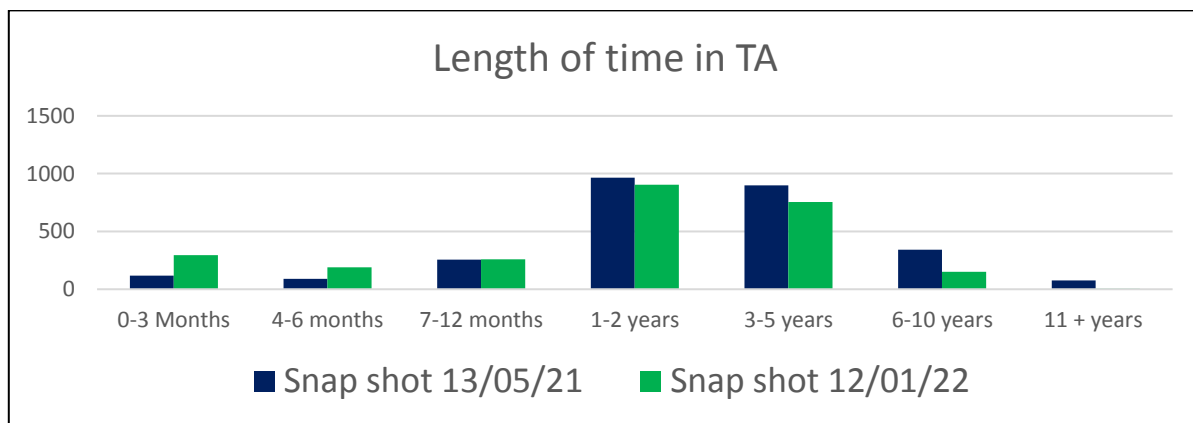
The data shows seasonal variations and periodic increases in the number of households in TA, but the overall trajectory indicates that the need for Temporary Accommodation will continue to grow.

The increase in households without children is particularly notable in the last two periods (October-December 2023 and January-March 2024).

Since the last version of the council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was produced the demand for Temporary accommodation has increased. Most notably, there has been a sharp rise in the latter periods. With the highest impact on families with children. Families with children consistently make up the majority of those in temporary accommodation, reflecting the greater housing challenges faced by larger households.

The most significant increases for both categories occur in the last two quarters shown, indicates a worsening housing situation driving more households into temporary accommodation.

**Graph 3 – Length of time spent in Temporary Accommodation**



Graph 3 shows the length of time spent by households in Temporary Accommodation in two snapshots. The most common time periods for a household to spend in temporary accommodation remains 1-2 years and 3-5 years, this is far longer than what would be ideal. Time periods such as these are a particular cause for concern when considering the amount of these households that have dependent children.

On 1 April 2017, the removal of the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee Subsidy from Housing Benefit subsidy saw an additional financial burden transferred from central government to local government budgets. To assist with this, from 2017, the loss of this subsidy was replaced by the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (now called Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG)). However, there is no guarantee that this annual grant will be continued indefinitely (currently under review) and DLUHC now also expect it to be used to deliver homelessness preventions options.

### 3. Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and is incredibly traumatic for those who experience it. Many rough sleepers have significant support needs, such as substance misuse, which can inhibit their ability to improve their situation without focused professional help. People who rough sleep often experience barriers in accessing both health and care services and experience poor health outcomes in comparison to the rest of society. The average age of death of men is 47 years old and even lower for homeless women at 43.

The incidence of rough sleeping was reduced during the COVID-19 lockdowns as a result of the ‘Everyone In’ scheme. Post ‘Everyone In’/pandemic, rough sleeping has risen in London and is likely to continue to rise throughout the United Kingdom as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis. The CHAIN reports provide valuable insights into the profiles of rough sleepers at local authority level.

The CHAIN report breaks down rough sleepers into three groups Flow, (people not previously seen rough sleeping), Returner, (people who had been seen rough sleeping but not in the prior financial

year, and Stock, (people who had been seen rough sleeping in the year prior). The data for all these groups in the past five financial years is shown in Table 14.

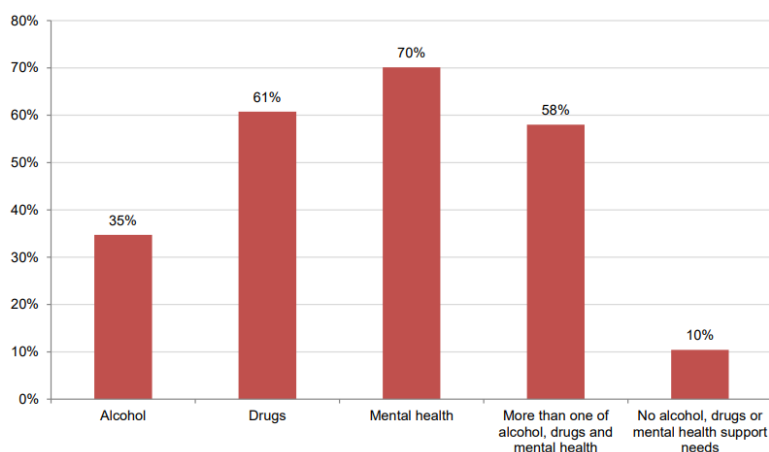
**Table 16 – number of rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets (flow, stock, and returner model)<sup>xi</sup>**

Rough sleepers	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Total</b>	316	459	400	297	460
<b>Flow (identified)</b>	154	223	202	120	209
<b>Flow (unidentified)</b>	12	34	16	11	63
<b>Returner</b>	52	77	54	56	73
<b>Stock</b>	98	125	128	110	115

In the two financial years up to and including 2020/21, there had been a significant decrease in the prevalence of rough sleeping in the borough. The main driver of these decreases appears to be from the flow cohort, whereas stock and returner appeared more resistant. This may be due to a considerable number of rough sleepers within the ‘stock’ and ‘returner’ cohorts experiencing multiple disadvantage and multiple exclusion from other services which have impacted trust and relationships with support services. It is likely that people can become entrenched in the conditions that led them to rough sleeping in the first place and will struggle to break the cycle of rough sleeping if they are not provided with personalised and trauma-informed support.

However, the data for the last full financial year (2022/23), shows that the number of rough sleepers among the flow cohort is increasing - a markedly different trend which reflects the waning effects of ‘Everyone In’ and the continued and multiplying impact of the cost-of-living crisis. As the cost-of-living crisis continues this trend is likely to continue and worsen over the next few years.

**Graph 4: People seen rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets by support needs (2022/23)**

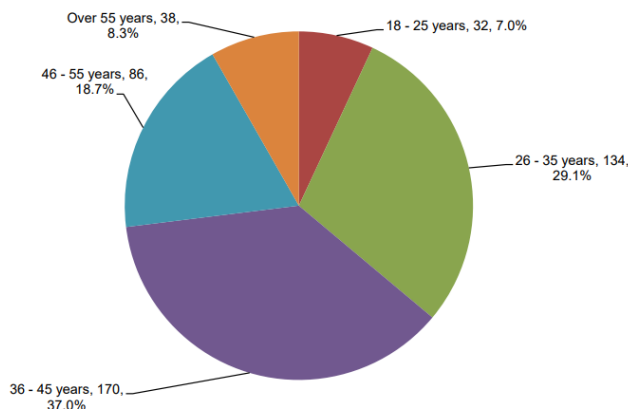


Of those known to be rough sleeping in the borough, only 10% have no support needs while 58% have a combination of support needs such as mental health, drug and alcohol abuse. This is the picture provided by the most recent annual CHAIN report (2022-23), but the percentages are remarkably similar across all years and quarters showing these issues to be consistent across time periods. The need for mental health and addiction support is therefore clear. However, there are complex challenges to ensuring service provision meets the needs of those who need such support. These



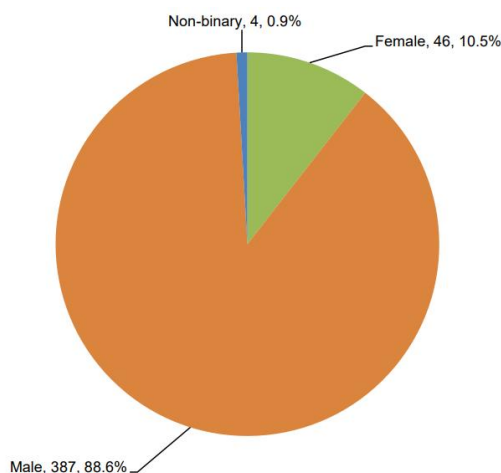
include ensuring services are trauma-informed, operating within outreach-based support models, and that commissioning approaches and projects align strategically and operationally.

**Graph 5 – People seen rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets by age (2022/23)**



Graph 5 shows the age ranges of rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets from CHAIN Annual report for Tower Hamlets (April 2022 – March 2023). The vast majority (73.1%) of rough sleepers are under 45 years of age with the 36-45 age range being the most prevalent age group (37%). The next highest age range is the 26–35-year-old group making up 29.1% of rough sleepers. The least common age group are those aged between 18–25-year-olds (7%).

**Graph 6 – Gender of rough sleepers 2022/23 in Tower Hamlets<sup>xii</sup>**



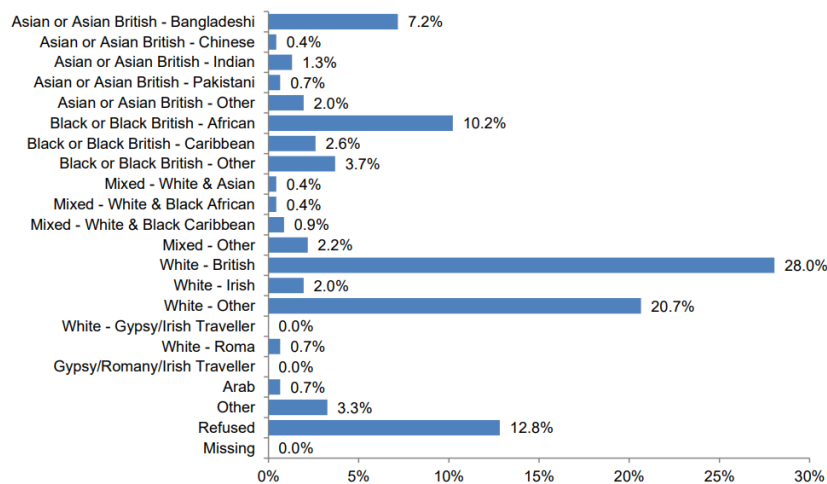
Base: 437 people seen rough sleeping whose gender was known. This excludes 23 people whose gender was not known.

Official data from the CHAIN Annual Report – Tower Hamlets April 2022 - March 2023 found only 10.5% of rough sleepers were female. While this gives the impression that women were by far in the minority of rough sleepers, there is increasing evidence that women are far more likely to be hidden homeless. This is due in part to women facing higher levels of violence when rough sleeping leading them to try and stay hidden finding different ways to seek shelter rather than bedding down on the street. Female rough sleeping is often transient, intermittent and hidden which means that they are often missed from official statistics and that can have a knock-on effect of excluding them from

accessing housing and support. More research is required to fully understand the extent to which hidden homelessness presents an issue in Tower hamlets and how it can be effectively combatted.

The Annual CHAIN report for Tower Hamlets (April 2022 – March 23) found that 0.9% of rough sleepers identified as non-binary. This again may be an underestimation of the true extent - as people who have non-traditional gender identities are also more likely to be hidden homeless.

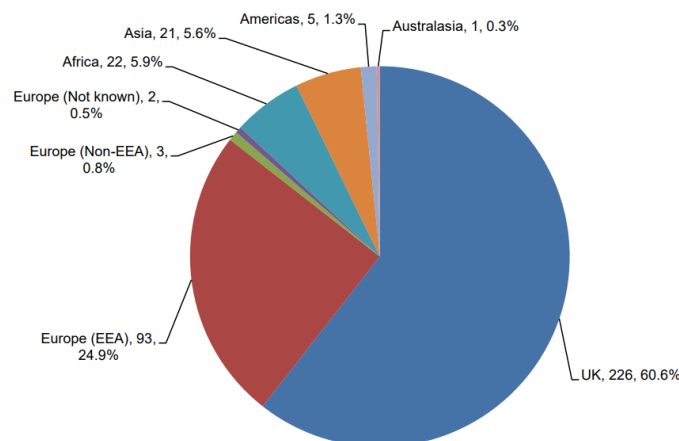
**Graph 7– People seen rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets by Ethnicity (2022/23)<sup>xiii</sup>**



Graph 7 breaks down the ethnicity of rough sleepers within the borough according to the most recent CHAIN Annual report (2022/23). The most represented ethnic group are those who identify as White British who, at 28% make a higher proportion of rough sleepers in the borough than they do statistically in the general population of Tower Hamlets (22.9% as of the 2021 census).

The next most represented ethnic group identified as White – Other, are also overrepresented in the proportion of rough sleepers - making up 20.7% of rough sleepers, but only 14.6% of the general population. Of the top four most represented ethnicities seen to be rough sleeping in the borough (according to the CHAIN Annual report), White – British, White – Other, Black or Black British – African, and Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi, the only ethnic group which is not overrepresented is Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi, who are actually underrepresented. It is worth noting however that a large proportion 12.8% refused to give their ethnicity meaning that the actual picture could be significantly different.

**Graph 8: People seen rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets by Nationality (2022/23)**



In terms of nationality, British nationals make up the majority of rough sleepers at 60.6% in Tower Hamlets. With European nationals being the next most represented group at 26.2%. London-specific data indicates that rough sleeping has risen since 2021, with around half of those sleeping on the streets being non-UK nationals, many of whom will have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) or other restricted eligibility for statutory support. In Tower Hamlets, data shows that 32% of the rough sleeping population were non-UK nationals. Locally, and within the context national migration policy, stakeholders report that there has been an increase in the number of people presenting homeless who have NRPF. This highlights the need to provide housing advice to new arrivals even when they have no recourse to public funds.

In Q2 2022/23, 56% of rough sleepers within the borough had experience of being in prison. Therefore, the continuation of focused and personalised support to potential rough sleepers before their release from prison and maintaining that continued support after release, is critical to preventing rough sleeping on their release from prison. The conditions that may lead to rough sleeping may also put some at an increased risk of committing crime or that their time in prison is not adequately preparing them for living independently outside of prison.

**Table 17 - Reason for leaving last settled accommodation - Tower Hamlets (2022/23)**

Reason for leaving last longer-term or settled base	No.	%
<b>Asked to leave or evicted</b>		
Asked to leave	10	17.9%
Evicted - arrears	3	5.4%
Evicted - end of tenancy agreement	1	1.8%
Evicted - ASB	0	0.0%
Evicted - other	5	8.9%
<i>Asked to leave or evicted subtotal</i>	<b>19</b>	<b>33.9%</b>
<b>Employment and education</b>		
Financial problems - loss of job	1	1.8%
Seeking work - from within UK	0	0.0%
Seeking work - from outside UK	1	1.8%
Study	0	0.0%
<i>Employment and education subtotal</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Relationships</b>		
Relationship breakdown	7	12.5%
Death of relative/friend	0	0.0%
Move nearer family/friends/community	0	0.0%
<i>Relationships subtotal</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
<b>Financial</b>		
Financial problems - debt	0	0.0%
Financial problems - housing benefit	0	0.0%
Financial problems - other	1	1.8%
<i>Financial subtotal</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>End of stay in short or medium-term accommodation</b>		
End of stay - asylum accommodation	0	0.0%
Evicted - given non priority decision	0	0.0%
End of stay - hostel	0	0.0%
End of stay - other	6	10.7%
<i>End of stay in short or medium-term accommodation subtotal</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Victim of violence, harassment or abuse</b>		
Harassment/abuse/violence	5	8.9%
Domestic violence - victim	1	1.8%
Tenancy hijack	0	0.0%
<i>Victim of violence, harassment or abuse subtotal</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>End of stay in institution</b>		
End of stay - prison	1	1.8%
End of stay - hospital	0	0.0%
<i>End of stay in institution subtotal</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>Housing conditions</b>		
Housing conditions	0	0.0%
<b>Perpetrator of violence, harassment or abuse</b>		
Domestic violence - perpetrator	0	0.0%
<b>Transient</b>		
Transient/travelling around	0	0.0%
<b>Other</b>		
Other	14	25.0%
<b>Not recorded</b>		
Not recorded	96	
<b>Total (excl. not recorded)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Total (incl. not recorded)</b>	<b>152</b>	

The most common reason that rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets left their last settled place of accommodation (according to 2022/23 CHAIN report) was because they were asked to leave or were evicted from their accommodation (33.9%). Being evicted can often prevent someone who is vulnerable and homeless from being housed by local authorities as they are deemed to have

intentionally made themselves homeless and are therefore not owed the main homelessness duty. This can leave them with few other alternatives other than to start sleeping rough.

The next main reason for leaving last settled accommodation is Relationships - arising from a relationship breakdown, death of a relative or friend bereavement can often precede other issues that lead to rough sleep including increased substance use, relationship breakdown and eviction), moving nearer to family/friends/community (12.5%). This evidences how mediation can be a useful tool in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping as part of upstream prevention by increasing efforts to reach people sofa surfing or nearing rough sleeping and providing preventative support.

The third most frequent reasons given were ‘End of stay in short/medium term accommodation’ and where the individual left because they were a victim of violence, harassment or abuse (10.7% respectively).

The CHAIN report also indicates that education and employment is significant reason for rough sleepers leaving their last settled accommodation. Education and skills are important as these can provide a route out of poverty and rough sleeping. Without education or training, it’s even harder to find sustainable employment. Without a permanent address, this can hinder employment opportunities so access and support into training and education are critical.

DLUHC compiles an annual rough sleeping snapshots to reveal the number of people sleeping rough on a given night. The Tower Hamlets Rough Sleeping Coordinator and Street Outreach Team complete street counts for the borough, followed by an estimation meeting to improve the overall accuracy of figures. These snapshots are broken down by local authority district area below in table 16 are the figures for Tower Hamlets and London between 2018 and 2022.

**Table 18– Rough sleeping annual snapshots for Tower Hamlets and London between 2018-2022<sup>xiv</sup>**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Number of rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets on a given night</b>	10	17	40	28	21
<b>Number of rough sleepers per 100,000 people in Tower Hamlets</b>	3.1	5.2	12	9	6.7
<b>Number of rough sleepers in London on a given night</b>	1283	1136	714	640	858
<b>Number of rough sleepers per 100,000 people in London</b>	14.4	12.7	7.9	7.3	9.8

The trends in rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets vary from London as a whole. In Tower Hamlets, the number of rough sleepers fell in 2020 possibly linked to the initiation of the ‘Everyone In’ scheme during the pandemic, however the number of rough sleepers remains appears to be on the increase again in the borough In 2022/23, the number of rough sleepers in the borough has risen again but it is not at the level that it was in 2018.

## References

---

- <sup>i</sup> Tables 1 & 2 – DLUHC Live tables on dwelling stock: [Live tables on dwelling stock \(including vacants\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>ii</sup> Tables 3 &4 – Demands and Lettings data provided by the council’s Housing Options Service.
- <sup>iii</sup> Tables 5 - 10 DLUHC Live homelessness tables: [Live tables on homelessness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>iv</sup> [Detailed LA 2022-23 Revised Nov 2023 .ods \(live.com\)](#) - A6: Age of main applicants assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty
- <sup>v</sup> Graphs 1-5 Monthly and quarterly Management Information data provided by the council’s Housing Options Service.
- <sup>vi</sup> [London Councils - Supply of PRS Accommodation - Summary Report \(3\).pdf](#)
- <sup>vii</sup> [Raise housing support to prevent 60,000 London renters becoming homeless, say boroughs | London Councils](#)
- <sup>viii</sup> Tower Hamlets Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy (October 2021): [mgConvert2PDF.aspx \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>ix</sup> Graphs 1-3 Data provided by the council’s Housing Options Service.
- <sup>x</sup> Table 11-15 Data provided by the council’s Housing Options Service.
- <sup>xi</sup> Table 16-17 Annual CHAIN report for Tower Hamlets 2022/23) [Rough sleeping in London \(CHAIN reports\) - London Datastore](#)
- <sup>xii</sup> Graphs 4-8 Annual CHAIN report for Tower Hamlets (2022/23): [Rough sleeping in London \(CHAIN reports\) - London Datastore](#)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Table 18: DLUHC Rough Sleeping Snapshot Autumn 2022: [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)