

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29

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# Why do we need a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy?



- **Legal duty** to carry out a **review of homelessness** and rough sleeping in the borough and **publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** at least every 5 years (Homelessness Act 2002).
- A Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is **the council's only statutory housing strategy**.
- The council's most recent strategy **expired** in December 2023.
- The council's **Strategic Plan** identifies our ambition 'Everyone in Tower Hamlets lives in a good quality home that they can afford' under Priority 2: Homes for the future
- The strategy is aligned with the **transformation** of the Housing Option service and relevant policies (e.g. placement policy).



# Findings of the review of the last 5 years



- **Rising demand** for homelessness support and social housing.
- A significant number of people being **asked to leave by family and friends**.
- Many households being threatened with homelessness when their **private sector tenancy ends**.
- A considerable proportion of people approach the service **at crisis point**, rather than at an earlier stage. At an earlier stage, they can access support through a range of effective customer channels.
- Managing and **meeting demand for good quality temporary accommodation** within the borough despite the increasing costs.
- **Ensuring move-on from temporary accommodation** is made at the earliest opportunity to affordable, sustainable, and suitable accommodation.
- Ensuring support is available **for vulnerable individuals and households**.



# Statutory consultation responses



- Successful consultation exercise (4 March-26 April 2024) – **359 responses** in total
  - 226 completed the response through ‘Let’s talk’, the council’s consultation platform
  - 133 responded by completing a paper copy

## Consultation responses to other London boroughs’ Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies

| Borough        | Number of responses | Consultation period         |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Barnet         | 16                  | 16 April – 16 June 2023     |
| City of London | 34                  | 12 Dec 2022 – 12 March 2023 |
| Croydon        | 188                 | 6 Oct – 15 Dec 2023         |



# Homelessness Data from 2022-23



## Approaches and applicants

- 1,879 (60%) people approached the council for homelessness assistance **at the prevention stage** and 1,237 (40%) **at the relief stage**.
- In 2022-23, approaches **at the prevention stage increased by 100%** compared to the previous year; those **at the relief stage increased by 38%**.
- The most common reason for approaches was **family and friends no longer being willing to or able to accommodate them** (28% of all approaches).
- The second common reason was **the end of PRS tenancy** (15%).
- 19% of all applicants had support needs for **mental health**, followed by **physical ill health and disability** and an offending history.
- **Single person households** make the greatest number of approaches for assistance.

- 45% of all applicants were **Asian/British** who owed a housing duty. 37% were from **the Bangladeshi community**.
- 41% of those owed either a prevention or relief housing duty were **under 35 years old**.

## Temporary accommodation

- By the end of 2022/23, 2,567 households were living in **temporary accommodation**, 81% of which included **children**.
- 41.5% of temporary accommodation placements in 2021/22 were **out of the borough**.
- In January 2023, 904 households had been living in temporary accommodation **for 1-2 years**; 755 households for **between 3 and 5 years**.

## Rough sleepers

- 28% of people sleeping rough identified as **White British**.
- 58% of rough sleepers have a **combination of support needs** such as **mental health, drug and alcohol abuse**.

From the 2022-23 data, unless specified.



# External and operational factors



## Legal requirements

- **Legal duty to house homeless households** (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). As a result, the number of applicants has increased.

## External context

- **Rising rents and housing costs** along with the recent **cost-of-living crisis** and **inflation**
- Post-pandemic **resurgence in demand for PRS accommodation**
- **Contraction in the PRS accommodation supply** partly because of small buy-to-let land landlords' withdrawal from the market
- **Increasing demand for temporary accommodation**

## Operational challenges

- **A lack of affordable accommodation in PRS** and difficulty in moving people onto settled sustainable accommodation. The gap between LHA rates and rent has widened.
- **The council compete against a Home Office contractor**, who find properties to house asylum seekers. The Home Office can pay higher rents and incentive payments.
- More households being housed in **B&B**, mainly outside of the borough, **for longer** due to the shortage of affordable properties
- There are **fewer prevention options**. More applicants presenting at crisis, leading to **more reliance on temporary accommodation**
- **Future government funding** for rough sleeping remains **uncertain**.





# Our six priorities



- 1. Working with people earlier to prevent them from becoming homeless and to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation**
- 2. Provide good quality accommodation for people who are at risk of, or where they become, homeless**
- 3. Improve customer service and the individual's experience**
- 4. Making sure that people have access to the right support services**
- 5. To prevent rough sleeping but where it does occur, it's rare, brief and doesn't happen again**
- 6. Boost staff resilience and well-being**



# How we will deliver the priorities



## Priority 1: Working with people to prevent them becoming homeless and to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation.

We will:

1. Introduce new measures to increase the rates of homelessness prevention for PRS tenants
2. Increase the provision of upstream homelessness prevention advice
3. Work with social housing tenants and landlords to increase prevention of homelessness due to eviction from social tenancies
4. Support the prevention of Homelessness through our Allocations Scheme
5. Enable survivors of domestic abuse to stay in their own homes

## Priority 2: Provide good quality accommodation for people who are at risk of, or where they become, homeless

We will:

1. Work with landlords and accommodation suppliers to increase the supply of good quality homes
2. Increase 'Move on' of residents living in temporary accommodation into settled accommodation.
3. Repurpose or build new homes to increase the supply of temporary and long-term accommodation.
4. Increase the number of accessible and adapted homes.
5. Ensure our Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy remains fit for purpose.
6. Expand accommodation provision for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough





# How we will deliver the priorities



## Priority 3: Improve customer service and the individual's experience

We will:

1. Deliver high-quality homelessness advice across a variety of channels and formats.
2. Deliver a service which is accessible for all residents.
3. Improve the client experience of the homelessness process, delivering clear, empathetic and timely communication throughout.
4. Improve communication with residents living in temporary accommodation.
5. Increase the work we do with service users and people with lived experience.

## Priority 4: Making sure that people have access to the right support services

We will:

1. Deliver improved support and effective pathways for those fleeing domestic abuse.
2. Implement a multi-agency approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
3. Provide enhanced support to children and young people.
4. Work with partners to improve access to mental health and addiction support.
5. Review and improve our hospital discharge pathway.
6. Increase support for ex-offenders to aid their transition from custody to stable living conditions.
7. Assist our service users to access paid jobs.



# How we will deliver the priorities



**Priority 5: To prevent rough sleeping but where it does occur it's rare, brief and doesn't happen again**

We will:

1. Raise awareness of the causes and solutions to rough sleeping.
2. Develop innovative accommodation and support solutions for the most marginalised groups
3. Build new and strengthen existing partnerships with local partners the NFI subregion and the national Rough Sleeping Initiative
4. Ensure commissioning is data and evidence led as well as co-produced with those who have used rough sleeping services.
5. Develop a targeted prevention approach to target early interventions and reduce risk of rough sleeping
6. Improve access to and outcomes from health and social care services for people rough sleeping.

**Priority 6: Boost staff resilience and well-being**

We will:

1. Improve our learning and development offer for staff.
2. Enforce the council's customer code of conduct policy and protect staff from abuse.
3. Improve the working environment
4. Work with staff to design service improvements to improve wellbeing
5. Invest in our workforce to ensure that the service grows in response to the rising homelessness demand and implement measures to manage staff caseloads.
6. Put in place improved systems, tools and processes to help staff in their roles.



# Governance and monitoring our progress



- A delivery plan to deliver the priorities of the strategy has been drafted and attached to the draft strategy.
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategic Board, comprising of representatives from the council and external partners, will be established to oversee the delivery of the strategy by the Interim Director of Housing Options and Homelessness and the Head of Homelessness once the strategy has been approved by the Mayor in Cabinet
- The strategy has an inbuilt annual review period.
- A full EIA has been undertaken



# What does the EIA say?



- Sets out how homelessness and rough sleeping impacts on the protected characteristics.
- Overall, the priorities, and the actions to meet these which the Housing Options Service have set out, **will have a positive impact with no negative or adverse implications on any of the protected characteristics.**
- Both the strategy and delivery plan pick up on a key equality and diversity issue, i.e. the full nature and extent of female rough sleeping is often missed and under-represented within rough sleeping statistics.
- The Delivery Plan seeks to address this and under Priority 2, **the council working in partnership with Notting Hill Housing Group, via HAP funding, will deliver gender-informed 'housing first' provision of 24 homes for people excluded from other forms of support.**

