

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

DRAFT – NOVEMBER 2018

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

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## Our priorities and actions

### Preventing

**We want to stop people from becoming homeless.**

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that information on housing options is easily accessible
- Supporting residents facing eviction so that they can remain in their existing homes
- Using data analysis to target our interventions at resident groups at highest risk of homelessness.

### Supporting

**We will support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness, helping them to recover and regain their independence.**

We will achieve this by:

- Providing rough sleepers with a “route off the street”
- Accessing affordable accommodation in Camden or as close as possible
- Where appropriate, supporting recovery and independence through a personalised psychologically and trauma-informed approach
- Working in partnership with Housing Associations, voluntary and community partners to make the best use of resources

### Tackling the root causes of homelessness

**We will address the long-term root causes of homelessness in Camden.**

We will achieve this by:

- Building, planning and enabling others to build more
- Working with landlords to find more homes
- Regulating the private rented sector
- Using our existing social housing assets more effectively
- Removing barriers to employment through training and education

### Campaigning

**We will use our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, instability and homelessness.**

We will achieve this by:

- Urging Government for further freedom and funding to be able to build more
- Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector
- Pressing for changes in the welfare system

## **Foreword by Councillor Apak**

*To be added after consultation.*

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# 1. LEADING THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

## 1.1. Camden 2025

We have engaged with our communities to develop our vision for Camden in 2025 and our residents shared their concerns about housing and homelessness and the current housing crisis in London.

The London housing crisis threatens Camden's social mix. It has already forced residents to move out of Camden to areas that are affordable to them while others who have remained are deliberately overcrowding themselves to be able to stay. Some are also living in substandard rented accommodation rather than complaining for fear of retaliation, eviction and displacement. This threat is a call to action to everyone with the power to make a difference, however small. Camden 2025 and our Camden Plan inspire a new way of working, where Camden's people, the council and others come together to work differently to develop new solutions.

We are continuously analysing and reviewing homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough<sup>i</sup>. We are now working with our communities and our partners to find long-term solutions to the housing crisis:

### **In 2025, everyone in Camden should have a place they call home**

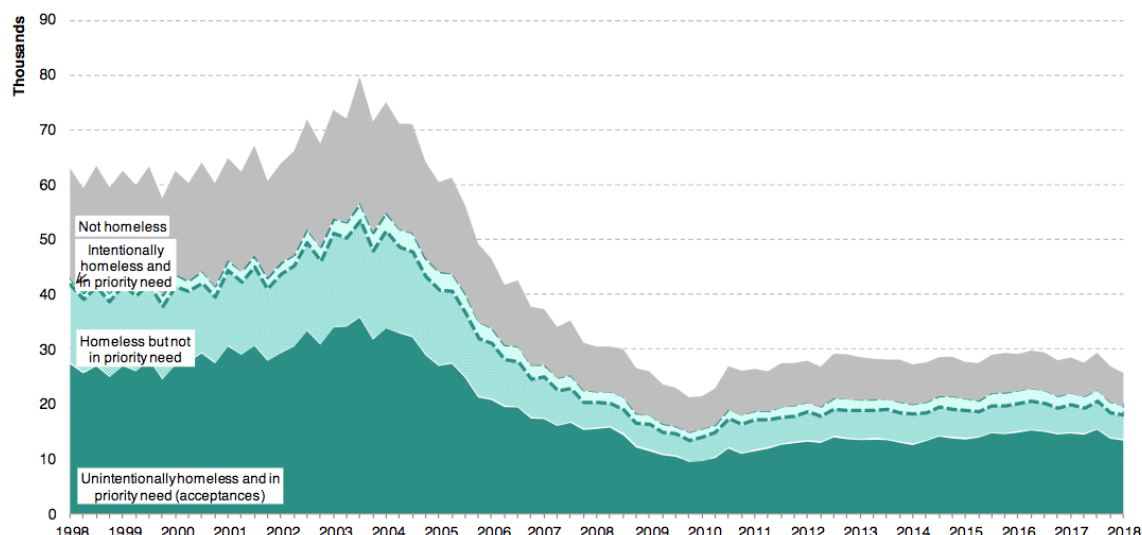
As a local authority we will:

- Build as many genuinely affordable homes as we can as quickly as we can, and help others to do so as well. We will build more affordable homes than we have done in a generation.
- Make sure that everyone has a sustainable roof over their head or is on a pathway to achieving this, minimising homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Strive to make homes in Camden safe, well-managed and well-maintained, and make sure that people's homes meet their needs. We will play an active role in shaping a private rented sector that works.
- Do all we can to help young people who have grown up here, or who have strong connections to the Borough, to build their adult lives here.
- Support people living to live fulfilling, connected and healthy lives, tackling social isolation and unemployment head-on.
- Focus on building communities that are mixed, with well-designed homes and infrastructure that encourage integration, cohesion and active lifestyles.

Camden has long been leading the way nationally in the fight against homelessness and rough sleeping and we will continue our efforts to make sure that everyone has a place they can call home: **Camden as a local authority is committed to using all its resources and creativity to make the experience of homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. We are determined to enable everyone to access a stable, secure and decent home.**

## 1.2. The national context

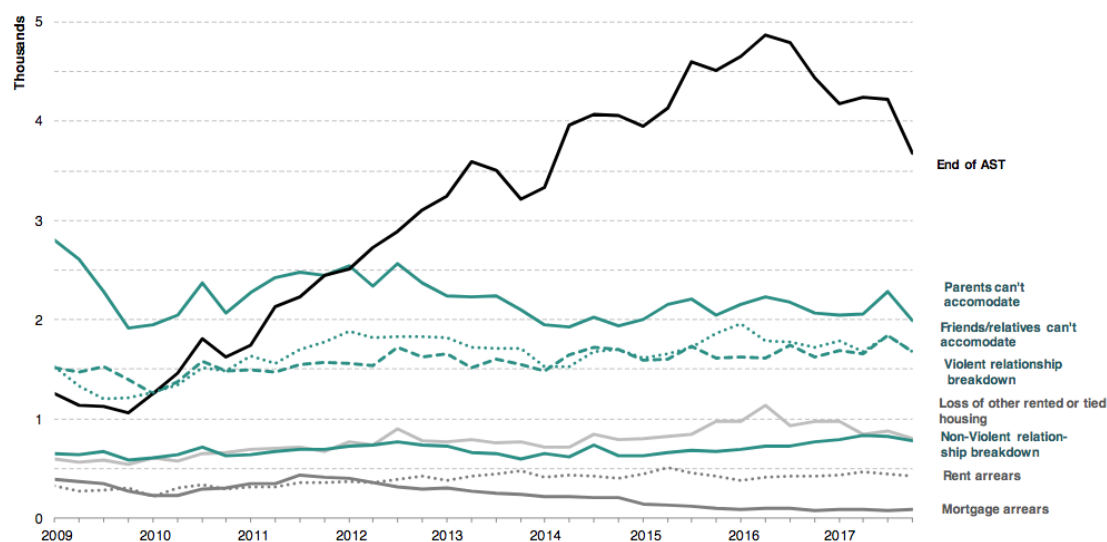
The challenge of preventing homelessness is nationwide, with particular issues seen in all major cities and in particular in London. Whilst Homelessness has declined nationally from a peak in 2003/4, the numbers of households housed in temporary accommodation have slowly increased since 2011:



Source: MHLCG Statutory homelessness prevention and relief Q1 2018

This increase can mostly be attributed to austerity and welfare benefit reforms since 2010.<sup>ii</sup> The ending of private sector tenancies has become the main single cause of homelessness in England, as the following table shows, and Government welfare reforms have contributed to making tenancies for claimants less affordable.

### Causes of homelessness 2009-2017



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Data Bulletin

### 1.3. Camden's current approach

The council has relied on the following policies and strategies<sup>iii</sup>:

- **Camden's Housing Allocation Scheme** (2016 – updated in 2018) sets out who can apply for social housing in the borough (Council housing and housing association homes) and how we use social housing to help those most in need. The Scheme prioritises households at risk of homelessness who work with us to have their homelessness prevented. The Scheme also prioritises overcrowded households with children and those with a connection to Camden. Since a change in 2016 the Scheme has had a considerable impact and has helped to reduce the number of severely overcrowded households with children waiting for housing by 35% in two years (666 children in total).<sup>iv</sup>
- **Camden's Homelessness Accommodation Strategy<sup>v</sup>** was published in 2016 to set out the Council's approach to preventing homelessness by providing sustainable housing options (e.g. through suitable private rented sector (PRS) accommodation), reducing the use of temporary accommodation, and prioritising the Council's resources to tackle homelessness in the context of housing unaffordability. The new strategy will replace the Accommodation Strategy. The associated Placement Policy has been updated to align with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act (see *Assisting homeless households to find affordable accommodation: A policy document* in Appendix A).
- **Camden's Routes Off the Streets Strategy<sup>vi</sup>** was published in April 2017 as a response to a sudden and significant increase in rough sleeping in the Borough. The strategy makes sure that all rough sleepers in the borough can access a service offer which means they no longer have to sleep rough and can start rebuilding their lives away from the street. The strategy provides the framework for the delivery of street population services in the Borough, identifies interdependencies and builds new partnerships to increase the impact, scope and quality of the services the Council is able to offer. It has been updated to align with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 (see *Routes off the street (RTS) rough sleeping strategy: addendum november 2018* in Appendix B).

### 1.4. Our track record

We have a strong track record of working with residents and partners in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. We place a strong focus on personalised and holistic approaches to homelessness prevention and support, for example through our 'Adult Pathway'<sup>vii</sup> provision to support vulnerable homeless people in hostels to prepare for move on accommodation.

As a result of Camden's prevention and support services, there are relatively few homeless households living temporary accommodation in Camden in comparison to other London boroughs. Numbers have even fallen in recent years as more effective use of the private rented sector and work with private landlords has helped to support more households at risk of homelessness into sustainable tenancies. In 2017 Camden prevented 479 cases of homelessness. Of these, Camden supported 141 households

to remain in their existing accommodation, and 338 households to access alternative accommodation.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Camden's track record tackling homelessness and rough sleeping**

- Camden has so far built more than 700 new homes through our Community Investment Programme, including 268 Council homes.<sup>1</sup> In 2017/18, we built 115 Council homes, more than the 44 we lost through Right-to-Buy.<sup>1</sup> We are committed to building 815 more Council homes over the next 7 years.
- In addition in 2017/18 the council built 62 properties to let at Camden Living rent with three-year tenancies to middle-income households.
- In 2017 Camden prevented 479 cases of homelessness. Of these, 141 households were supported to remain in their existing accommodation, and 338 households to access alternative accommodation, including in the private rented sector.
- The council's Floating Support Service worked with 1,486 residents in 2017. Of these, 105 were supported to undertake adaptations to their home to allow them to remain in their existing accommodation and 85 were supported to access private or social rented accommodation
- Since 2010, Camden has reduced its use of temporary accommodation by over 30 per cent. In 2017 no households with dependent children were accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels.
- Camden's Adult Pathway provides 643 beds across 16 services for single homeless people with support needs, rough sleepers, people with substance misuse and/or mental health issues, offenders, and women escaping domestic violence and abuse.
- Each year, Camden's Adult Pathway enables around 200 single homeless people with support needs to move on to independent accommodation.
- Camden's innovative Housing First pilot successfully found tenancies for 12 homeless people with support needs and we will be extending this to 44 placements in 2019/20 in October 2018.
- In 2018 Camden was awarded £870,000 from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative to expand its outreach, reconnection and safeguarding work, the largest single allocation of any of the 83 boroughs which bid for funding.
- Camden works successfully with partners, such as the NHS, Camden's CCG, New Horizon, St Mungo's, housing associations, etc. in and outside the borough and has a strong level of provision of homeless community, voluntary and third sector services.
- Camden has commissioned a very complex needs (VCN) service to deliver wraparound support in a psychologically informed environment (PIE) for multiply excluded, high level, complex needs individuals.

Camden is one of the least affordable places in the UK to rent or own a home. Despite this, we have been able to reduce the use of temporary accommodation since 2005 when Camden accepted 1,148 households as homeless and had 2,172 households in temporary accommodation.<sup>ix</sup> In 2004 the Government set a national target to reduce the total number of people in temporary accommodation to 2,000 by 2010<sup>x</sup>. By 2010 Camden had exceeded the target and reduced the number housed to 676. Other councils followed before seeing increases again in recent years. In Camden, since 2010, we have reduced our use of temporary accommodation by over 30 per cent.<sup>xi</sup>



Each year, over 1,000 households approach the council as they are at risk of becoming homeless and we prevent around 500 households from becoming or being homeless every year.<sup>xii</sup> Less than 500 households currently live in temporary accommodation, including 632 dependent children.<sup>xiii</sup> A further 643 single people live in our supported hostels and we help more than 150 households find their own accommodation in the private sector each year.<sup>xiv</sup> No households with dependent children are housed in shared bed and breakfast hotel accommodation and this has been the case for a long time.<sup>xv</sup>

There has been a significant increase in recent months in the numbers of people sleeping rough in Camden. In the September 2018 street count, there were 126 rough sleepers in Camden, an increase from 77 in July 2017 and 4 in November 2013. This is thought to be due to a combination of austerity measures and migration. About 50% of the rough sleepers in Camden are non-UK nationals, many of whom do not have recourse to public funds. Another 35% are people with little or no local connection with Camden in the UK. The council's hostel pathway service provides accommodation for those with a local connection to Camden.

## **1.5. The challenges ahead**

Having the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation in inner London means that the Council's services are often cited as examples of best practice nationally, but significant challenges remain from:

- The housing crisis
- Fewer social homes
- The benefit and welfare reforms
- New burdens from changes in legislation expanding the role of local authorities in preventing homelessness

### **1.5.1. The housing crisis**

Camden's position in the heart of a global city with thriving economic, social and cultural communities means that it is an attractive place to live and the housing market is highly competitive. The London housing market is broken and property prices continue to rise increasing pressure for our residents in home ownership and the private and social rented sectors.<sup>xvi</sup>

In December 2017, the average house price in Camden was £819,339 – 3.4 times the average price for England & Wales and 1.7 times the average price for London. The average price for a flat or maisonette in Camden, which make up the bulk of the housing stock, was £740,526.<sup>xvii</sup> Those in the private rented sector in Camden also face some of the highest rents in the country, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> highest for median monthly rent (£1,820), after Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and the City.<sup>xviii</sup>

Around 32,700 households in Camden are private rented sector tenants and currently, around 10 per cent of these households claim housing benefit (3,690 households as of May 2018<sup>xix</sup>). This underscores that the significant majority of the private rented sector is unaffordable to low-income households.<sup>xx</sup>

Since the Brexit referendum, price increases in the London property market have slowed down, particularly in central London. We do not however expect this to significantly improve affordability in Camden. Uncertainty in the housing and employment market in the medium term has reduced new housing starts in Camden by 53% between 2016/17 and 2017/18.<sup>xxi</sup> This trend is expected to continue, particularly around homes bought for private rented sale -“buy to let”. A shortage of private rented sector property is expected which could result in a 15% increase in rents over the next five years.<sup>xxii</sup> This means that residents would find it more challenging to get into and remain in the private rented sector in Camden. The Council will also find it more difficult to access sufficient PRS accommodation in the Borough, which means that the number of households offered PRS accommodation outside of Camden is likely to increase.

### 1.5.2. Fewer social homes

At the same time, since 1981, 1.9 million council homes<sup>xxiii</sup> in England have been sold under Right-to-Buy, with the number of homes owned by local authorities declining from 5.1 million in 1980 to 1.6 million in 2017.<sup>xxiv</sup> Social housing lost through Right-to-Buy has largely not been replaced and many Right-to-Buy units are now in use in the private sector, much above the rent of social housing tenancies. Often Councils have little option but to rent back old stock, as private rented sector units, at these higher rents in order to meet their statutory duties.<sup>xxv</sup> These increased rental costs are usually met by a combination of housing benefits (which have been reduced and capped), local housing allowances (which have been frozen) or discretionary housing payments, which impact on local authority finances.

Camden welcomes the recent announcement in October 2018 that Government intends to lift the borrowing cap for local authorities so that councils can build more new social housing homes. Camden has actively and successfully campaigned alongside the Local Government Association and other local authorities to achieve this and it is a significant step forward. However, the risk remains that new council homes will be built using public funds, only to be sold off at discount through Right-to-Buy a few years later. Unless the Right to Buy legislation is reformed - or abolished -, there will continue to be an ever decreasing supply of affordable housing stock and housing shortage will remain problematic.

The number of social housing lettings in England has continued to decrease – local authority landlords made 112,600 lettings in 2016/17, decreasing by 7 per cent on previous year and from 326,000 in 2000/1.<sup>xxvi</sup>

### 1.5.3. The benefit and welfare reforms

Austerity measures combined with welfare and benefit reforms, have had a negative impact on our communities and all forms of homelessness have increased in the UK in recent years. National economic and social policy will continue to have a significant impact on the levels of homelessness expected over the next five years:

- **Universal Credit** is replacing income support, employment support allowance, income-based job-seekers allowance, housing benefit and tax credits. Camden's full benefit receipt cohort started to transition to universal credit in June 2018, with all residents completing this transition by 2023. It is estimated that in Camden 5,089 households (5% of all households) will be worse off under

universal credit, with 2,648 significantly worse off. The cost of transitional protection required to stabilise households moving onto universal credit is estimated to be £7.6m over the four-year period. 1,425 households due to be transitioned to universal credit are already in arrears, with £1,300 the average arrears level.<sup>xxvii</sup>

- **Council Tax benefit** was replaced with local rebate schemes and local authorities have the discretion to provide help for working age people. Funding for local authorities to deliver these benefits has been cut by 10 per cent.
- **Single person private renters** under the age of 35, are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate for local housing allowance. This means that they receive housing benefit at the rate for a single room in a shared house, even if they are living on their own.
- **The benefit cap** was set for all benefits excluding childcare costs, discretionary housing payments, one-off payments such as the social fund and free school meals. In Greater London, the benefit cap is currently at £442.31 per week (£23,000 a year) for a couple, or £296.35 per week (£15,410 a year) if single and no children.
- **The spare room subsidy tax** was introduced as a housing benefit restriction on social housing tenants based on family bed need. This means that benefits will not be paid on rooms regarded as additional - this is known as the 'bedroom tax'.
- **A benefit freeze** was introduced in 2016 on the level of benefits and tax credit amounts until 2020 (including universal credit and those benefits being transitioned to universal credit). This has had a significant impact. Since 2010 housing benefit levels have not risen in line with private rents and the freeze means that most private rented sector tenants reliant on local housing allowance will have an ongoing and increasing shortfall in their housing costs, an issue particularly acute in central London. The monthly shortfall is £612 for a two-bed home in Camden.<sup>xxviii</sup> The shortfall in housing benefit increases the chances of households being evicted from the private rented sector and becoming homeless, as they are much more likely to enter arrears.

## 1.6. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

National governments have increasingly turned to Councils to prevent, reduce and relieve homelessness.<sup>xxix</sup> The latest piece of legislation in this regard, (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) places a duty on local authorities to provide anyone at risk of being homeless (within a 56-day period) with advice and support.

Prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, on average Camden received around 110-120 homelessness applications each year – this number of applications was much lower than the London average and for comparable neighbouring authorities.<sup>xxx</sup> This was largely because of the effectiveness of Camden's early prevention approach and our ability to find suitable private sector accommodation.

In 2017/18 Camden Council received approximately 1,200 requests for assistance because a household was threatened with homelessness.<sup>xxxi</sup> In some instances, the households were referred elsewhere or provided with information and advice. The Council actively case worked 483 households (308 families and 175 singles).<sup>xxxii</sup> The Council prevented homelessness for 71% of the families and 88% of the single people

– this included assisting 116 families and 11 single people to remain in their existing homes, and providing suitable alternative accommodation to 103 families and 143 single people. The remainder were supported with temporary accommodation.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

As these figures show, the number of requests for assistance has significantly increased in Camden, placing increasing pressure on services.

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## 2. OUR PRIORITIES TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Camden builds on our existing successful strategies and policies. The new strategy consolidates their approaches and refreshes the policy framework in which they are delivered, to respond to the challenges we may face over the next five years.

We have completed a comprehensive review of the resources available to the Council and its partners to address homelessness, understand future needs and develop our priorities for action. These priorities are:

1. Use prevention as the main principle of our homelessness system, making good quality housing advice available to everyone
2. Provide a full wraparound support to those experiencing crisis, providing them with psychologically informed recovery services that help them achieve and maintain stable housing
3. Understand the root causes of homelessness and deliver creative solutions including building new homes and maximising the supply of affordable housing in Camden
4. Use our voice as a civic leader to advocate for a national response to the challenge of chronic housing shortage and instability

### 2.1. Priority 1 – Preventing

<b>We want to stop people from becoming homeless</b>
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#### 2.1.1. We are seeking to:

- Increase the number of cases of homelessness successfully prevented
- Encourage interventions from public sector partners, community and voluntary sector organisations who are able to effectively advise households at risk of homelessness to the Council
- Work with residents, building on their own skills and strengths to develop their resilience and self-sufficiency in the long-term
- Move away from the need to use ongoing financial support to prevent homelessness by proving affordable sustainable housing options
- Improve the Council's data and understanding of homelessness and how it is affecting particular groups including rough sleepers, young people, LGBT people, women, and develop targeted action

**2.1.2. We will achieve this by:**

<b>Ensuring that information is easily accessible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign Camden's online homelessness webpage</li> <li>• Make tenancy education available to all residents, regardless of tenure.</li> <li>• Publicise and promote the Council's prevention services more effectively in an accessible format and encourage residents to contact us early and before a crisis.</li> <li>• Work with our public sector and community sector partners to develop a shared approach to signposting, referrals and homelessness triage.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing residents' strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a strengths-based model to intervene and prevent homelessness based on a personalised approach focusing on social networks, education, employment, skills and training to improve life outcomes.</li> <li>• Use all levers to maintain people in their current homes, with discretionary housing payments being a last resort with an identified review and end date.</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewing the needs of our residents to improve services and target vulnerable groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and strengthen data collection to inform new service improvements.</li> <li>• Develop our own research and insight into the triggers of homelessness, including areas where we do not currently have data to direct policy and resources (e.g. around LGBT homelessness and rough sleeper deaths)</li> <li>• Use the data we have to proactively identify households at risk of homelessness in the future – e.g. households who are transitioning to universal credit, young people in overcrowded social housing, etc.</li> <li>• Work with at-risk groups to provide them with access to tailored support early, such as BME, those who have experienced domestic or sexualised abuse or violence, people who have experienced slavery or trafficking, LGBT, young people, travellers, people leaving prison, etc.</li> </ul>

**2.1.3. Why these actions?****2.1.3.1. Ensuring that information is easily accessible**

Prevention starts with information. Some households are aware of local authority statutory duties to intervene at the point of homelessness but fewer at-risk households are aware of the services the Council could provide to prevent homelessness. They are therefore unlikely to approach the Council before they are at or very near the point of crisis. We will provide accessible information and use a 'no wrong door' policy for housing advice in collaboration with our partners in the borough.

**Good practice example - Floating Support**

The Council invests heavily in wider services to provide people with information, advice and expertise if they are threatened with eviction or requiring support to



maintain a tenancy. Camden's specialist Floating Support Team worked with 1,486 residents in 2017 (including through casework and surgeries). Of these, a number of residents were supported to access private rented sector accommodation and a social rented home (85 total). A further 105 residents were supported to undertake adaptations to their home to allow them to remain in their existing accommodation.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Families typically receive this wraparound financial advice and housing support for up to two years, however this can be extended based on need. As a result of this, tenancy sustainment is high, with Camden achieving over 81% sustainment for those households placed in 2016.<sup>xxxv</sup>

### **2.1.3.2. Developing residents' strengths**

Camden has a strong track record of homelessness prevention at the front line, achieving a prevention rate of 71% for families and 88% of single households in 2017/18.<sup>xxxvi</sup> This includes non-housing based interventions, such as mediation – both with families and between landlords and tenants – to allow people to remain in their current accommodation. It also includes alternative interventions such as home adaptations that allow families to improve the accessibility of their current home, or partially address the impact of overcrowding.

### **Good practice example - Camden Family Group Conferencing**

Camden started using Family Group Conferencing (FGC) in 2001 but has recently expanded its use significantly. It is a key tool within the Camden Model of Social Work. FGC is a meeting in which a client and their network are stimulated to find solutions to an identified problem. The family group conference collectively develops a joint plan to address this using the strengths and resources available collectively through the public sector, community organisations and the social networks.

A family group conference might bring together a resident, their family, friends, colleagues and neighbours in an environment in which all participants are able to share their ideas for possible solutions to an identified problem, including threats of eviction, supporting safeguarding processes, planning discharge from hospital and support planning for long-term conditions.

Camden uses FGC in particular around children where there is a safeguarding issue and a question as to whether to take the child into care. Camden has very low numbers of children entering care, which has reduced 35 per cent since 2013 against a prevailing upward trend for England as a whole. An assessment of 1000 FGCs between 2013 and 2017 shows that in 63 per cent of FGC respite care was offered to a family, and a care option for the child offered in 39 per cent. Since 2013, these cases show a 96% success rate in protecting children and improving outcomes after six months.

Camden now also uses FGC with vulnerable adults to promote independence and meet unmet need within the family and community. In some cases this includes addressing homelessness. Family group conferences have significant beneficial effects. They help improving life satisfaction, decreasing the mental distress associated with major life changes or trauma, reducing anxiety and depression,

increasing emotional social support and increasing the social resources available to individuals to address complex issues.

The Council makes significant financial interventions in the local housing market to help households remain in their homes and continue to live in Camden – most significantly through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Council Tax Reduction support. National Government increased the amount of funding for local authorities to distribute as DHPs between 2010 and 2017 to offset the impact of the local housing allowance freeze, the benefit cap and the bedroom tax. The average DHP award per household is £454 per month. Camden receives grant centrally from the Department for Work and Pensions to administer DHP. In 2017/18 the Council's grant was just over £1m, however this has been cut by £114,000 to £886,380 for 2018/19.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The Council is awaiting further information on the award for 2019/20.

There are currently 909 households affected by the bedroom tax, with 155 households experiencing a 25% reduction in their housing benefit for having a property with two bedrooms or more than they need.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Camden is currently helping these households avoid financial distress or crisis through downsizing or DHPs.

In Camden there are 3,401 households affected by welfare reform, and within this group, we estimate that there are 1,361 households who do not receive DHP and currently experience a shortfall between their income and expected costs. We will intervene with these households in advance of housing crisis, to provide advice to enable them to maximise their income before they approach the Council for financial support. Of the households receiving DHP, 82.4 per cent are not in work and 18.8 per cent have high barriers to work.<sup>xxxix</sup> We will help these households access decent work and achieve financial and housing stability.

### **2.1.3.3. Improve services and target vulnerable groups**

We can make further use of council data to identify groups likely to be at risk of homelessness.

Two-fifths of young people (16 to 25 year olds) have stayed with friends on floors or sofas for at least one night, while one-tenth of young people experienced this form of 'hidden homelessness' for more than a month.<sup>xl</sup> However, only 1 in 5 young people present to a local authority about their homelessness.<sup>xli</sup>

An analysis by Camden's Public Health team indicates that some groups in the borough have more chances of becoming homeless than others:

- Being from a black ethnic group puts you at 6.7 times greater odds of applying for statutory homelessness compared to a white ethnic group. The odds are 3.3 times greater for other ethnic groups.
- Being a woman puts you at 3.4 times greater odds of applying for statutory homelessness compared to a man.
- Being in the age group 16-24 puts you at greater odds of applying for statutory homelessness compared to the age categories between 45-74.

Overall, residents from black ethnic groups in Camden may be being disproportionately affected by the factors that lead to homelessness (mental health, physical disability, inaccessible housing market, etc.).



We have data on other groups that could be targeted. 27 people seen rough sleeping in the borough in 2016/17 had experience of serving in the armed forces, of whom 17 were UK nationals.<sup>xlii</sup> 11% of those seen on the streets had experience of being in care, and 28% have had experience of being in prison.<sup>xliii</sup> But we do not have yet comprehensive data on homelessness among LGBT residents in Camden. The Albert Kennedy Trust estimates that around 24 per cent of homeless young people identify as LGBT and 77 per cent of them believe coming out to their parents was the main cause of their homelessness.<sup>xliv</sup>

Residents from the least deprived wards in Camden are more likely to apply for, and be accepted as, statutorily homeless than residents from the most deprived wards in Camden such as St Pancras and Somers Town, Kilburn and Gospel Oak.<sup>xlv</sup> This could be due to high costs in the private rented sector and/or pockets of deprivation in the least deprived wards of Camden.

We are already targeting specific groups, for example young people. In 2016 Camden implemented a protocol operating across the Council's services setting an expectation as to the support that would be made available for 16 and 17 year olds who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is based on the statutory guidance *Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds*.<sup>xlvi</sup> The protocol was updated in 2018 to reflect government changes.

Where a young person aged 16 and 17 presents to us as homeless or at risk of homelessness, our first duty is to support families to stay together. We will work with the young person and their parents and family to help them improve family relationships and resolve conflicts so the young person can remain at home or identify a suitable alternative carer within the young person's extended family or friends.

We also work with New Horizon Youth Centre where support is given to 16-21 year olds, from hot food, showers and laundry to finding them accommodation, training and employment.

One potential growth area for the Council is young adults (over 18s) who entered temporary accommodation or a social rented tenancy as a child and have grown up in the Borough and remained in their parental homes due to housing unaffordability. These young people often have a strong local connection, both statutory and emotional, to Camden. They may be living in overcrowded homes with their families and their families may eventually be no longer able to house them. In addition, non-dependent deductions under universal credit will mean that households with adult children remaining at home will have their benefits reduced by £70.06 per month<sup>xlvii</sup> – Camden estimates that there are some 3,800 households in this position in the Borough.

There is also an established community of travellers in Camden that has lived in the borough for over twenty years and we recognise that this community has longstanding connections with local social networks and services. The Council will protect the sites we provide them from change to alternative uses, unless they are replaced by equivalent or improved sites, plots and/or pitches in suitable locations, or are

demonstrably no longer needed. The Council will also seek to plan for the existing and future accommodation needs of Camden's established traveller community.

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## 2.2. Priority 2 - Supporting

**We will support to those experiencing crisis, providing them with personalised independence and recovery services.**

### 2.2.1. We are seeking to:

- Ensure that anyone at crisis point is able to access support, advice, advocacy and accommodation as quickly as possible
- Continue to reduce the number of new households going into temporary accommodation by accessing sufficient affordable private rented sector accommodation
- Reduce the numbers of individuals and households who are in temporary accommodation
- Improve specialist services for rough sleepers who experience multiple disadvantages
- Improve coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to:
  - Recognise the impacts of recurring instances of homelessness (including trauma) and act to prevent these where possible
  - Make our temporary accommodation and homelessness services a safe and supportive environment for all, particularly those fleeing domestic violence
  - Reduce social isolation and help develop resilient community support networks
  - Help homeless households to make their own informed decisions about their housing options

### 2.2.2. We will achieve this by:

<b>Tackling rough sleeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the implementation of Routes off the Street including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure the right advice, appropriate options and signposting are provided to rough sleepers when they contact the Council.</li> <li>○ Plan and deliver improved support to reduce rough sleepers using the funding awarded to Camden by central Government to expand services.</li> <li>○ Integrate our street presence and police resources under an assertive 'hotspot' approach.</li> <li>○ Work more consistently with our neighbouring boroughs to tackle cross-border activity, prevent displacement and share information.</li> <li>○ Work at a borough level with charities and voluntary and community sector partners to develop new offers which help the most vulnerable and hardest to reach, especially female rough sleepers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Accessing the right accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access sufficient affordable private rented sector accommodation to be able to offer an alternative to temporary accommodation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the effective implementation of a Housing First model for our hostel residents.</li> <li>• Continue to help people access affordable accommodation as close to Camden as practically possible.</li> <li>• Review accommodation and health support for people with high level mental health or challenging behaviours who can experience recurring homelessness e.g. those who have not been diagnosed, both in temporary accommodation and adult pathway hostels.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting recovery and independence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake independent research with homeless households to understand their priorities for housing and what support they require.</li> <li>• Take a psychologically and trauma-informed approach to the delivery of homelessness services</li> <li>• Develop a personalised move-on plan for every household that has been in temporary accommodation since before 2016.</li> <li>• For those with complex needs (including those in hostels and sleeping on the streets), develop services that are comprehensive and multi-agency, taking an individually-tailored pathway to secure housing.</li> <li>• Work with the Council's employment and skills, adult learning and benefits advice team to create a bespoke approach to getting people with complex needs into work or pathways to employment, focusing in the first instance on those in temporary accommodation.</li> </ul>
<b>Working with strategic partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with partners across the borough to support homeless people and make the best use of our resources and strengths.</li> <li>• Explore the opportunities to use different types of procurement to improve the delivery of a range of homeless services including people with complex needs.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for housing associations and strategic partners to offer private rented accommodation to homelessness prevention cases.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.3. Why these actions?

Unfortunately, homelessness cannot always be prevented. Consistent with our wider approach to delivering care to all residents outlined in our adult social care strategy 'Supporting People, Connected Communities', the Council is committed to enabling all homeless residents to access the care that they need, to be independent, to have more choice and control, and be central to any decisions being made about their care.

#### 2.2.3.1. Tackling rough sleeping

Camden's pioneering approach to rough sleeping saw significant reductions in the numbers of rough sleepers from 2000 to 2010. However, numbers have increased

since then and new rough sleepers continue to arrive in the borough from parts of the UK and other countries. The average age of a rough sleeper at death was 43, nearly half the UK life expectancy.<sup>xlviii</sup> Camden currently has the third highest number of rough sleepers of any local authority area in the UK (as of November 2017 national count).<sup>xlix</sup>

Only around 15% of rough sleepers in Camden have an established connection to the borough.<sup>1</sup> Access to local services for the majority of those presenting in the borough is therefore limited. Evidence shows that for a large number of those seen sleeping rough for the first time in Camden, they were most recently accommodated in the private rented sector.

We rely on information from the public in order to find rough sleepers. The Camden Safer Streets Team is an outreach service that goes out onto the streets of the borough seven days a week and offers advice and support to rough sleepers and those involved in street activity. They help them find accommodation, access the services available to them and move away from anti-social street activity. They work with people who are rough sleeping, anyone who uses drugs or drinks alcohol on the streets, people who beg for money and people involved in street-based prostitution.

### **Good practice example - Camden Housing First**

In 2011 Camden introduced a Camden Housing First pilot – the first of its kind in England. The model targeted individuals with complex needs who had been in the Council's adult hostel pathway for at least three years and identified as not able to live independently and not 'housing ready' for at least three years. For example, people who had become 'stuck' in the Pathway staircase and had no clear route to moving on were targeted. These usually had extremely high rates of problematic drug use, mental health problems and poor physical health.

The Housing First model uses scattered ordinary private rented accommodation and a mobile team of specialist support workers to provide intensive case management. The housing was usually small one-bedroom or studio flats.

The outcomes of the pilot were independently reviewed by York University who found that of the original 13 placements, only one tenancy failed. There was clear evidence that the pilot was delivering housing sustainment for chronically homeless people who had never or only rarely lived independently. The tenancies were directly held by the individuals, and there was improved engagement with mental and physical health services. There was also a reduction in anti-social behaviour amongst the Housing First cohort.

The model was slightly cheaper than the approximate average cost of funding support for the same number of hostel beds for the same amount of time and delivered better outcomes in terms of tenancy sustainment and health.

The Council's current Housing First service is provided by St Mungo's and delivers housing and tailored support to a complex cohort of 30 individuals with multiple needs and a rough sleeping history. The service works with individuals over a longer term (2 to 3 years minimum) towards an objective of independent living and due to the intensive case-work model this entails, is operating at full capacity. Funding awarded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to the

Council in June 2018 has enabled us to increase the capacity of Camden Housing First by 14 beds.

The Council also works with other services to reconnect rough sleepers to their home area or country where they have more access to state and social support. Reconnection destinations could be another London borough or an area elsewhere in the UK, or another country. In 2016/17 33% of reconnections were to destinations outside of the UK.<sup>li</sup>

In December 2017, Camden piloted a new approach to outreach working with the street population based on multi-agency hotspot teams made up of outreach workers, community presence officers, and police officers. In April 2018, the Council invested £540,000 to support this work, which has allowed us to better-understand the needs of rough sleepers and to ensure that we have the right support and services in place to enable them to stay off the streets. Our evidence shows that our Hotspot teams are making a real difference, with 70% of new rough sleepers diverted into services and reconnected to their homes, preventing them becoming part of the long-term street population.

In recognition of its success in this area, in June 2018, the Council was awarded £870,000 from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative to expand its outreach, reconnection and safeguarding work, the largest single allocation of any of the 83 boroughs which bid for funding. .<sup>lii</sup> A Cross Council Street Population Working Group, a group of local partners from the public and voluntary and community sectors, are now delivering the new and expanded resources.

Additionally, Camden recently commissioned a very complex needs (VCN) service bringing together a range of existing contracts into a single configuration within a psychologically informed environment (PIE) to focus on delivering wraparound support for multiply excluded, high level, complex needs individuals. There is a psychologist on the staff team who provide standalone support to 18 beds with 24/6 cover. The Council remodelled the building to create a PIE environment with a view to becoming a centre of excellence recognising the complex interaction of trauma, exclusion and mental health that cause individuals to have higher needs.

#### **2.2.3.2. Accessing the right accommodation**

To identify housing that it is stable, decent, affordable, accessible, and as close to Camden as possible, the Council needs to be able to approach private sector landlords with a compelling offer. The Council also needs resources to address rent shortfalls where households have a need to remain in their current home or in Camden. As budgets are cut, the Council's ability to find suitable accommodation locally will become more and more challenging. Although the Council will continue to seek to place people in or as close to Camden as practically possible, it is envisaged that due to a lack of affordable housing supply, placements will increasingly have to be made out of borough as is currently the situation, and in some cases out of London.

Camden is helping residents access the right accommodation. Strong tenancy sustainment statistics demonstrate the strength and appropriateness of the Council's approach of assisting people to find private rented accommodation. 81 per cent of households supported to find accommodation in the private rented sector in 2016



remain in these homes in 2018, with the largest reason for leaving the tenancy being accessing a social rented home through choice-based lettings.<sup>liii</sup>

Camden has a relatively high proportion of households remaining in temporary accommodation for over five years. Camden has a higher proportion of households who have lived in temporary accommodation for longer periods than the London average. 39% of Camden's households are 'long stayers' who have been in temporary accommodation for 5+ years (192) (though this has reduced from 45% (230) in September 2014). Around 70 households have been in temporary accommodation for ten years or more, and 110 for between 5 and 10 years.<sup>liv</sup> Temporary accommodation is not an effective replacement or alternative to a social or private rented tenancy. In some cases, it is more expensive to the household than those options. Research is being conducted into the priorities for residents, including those in temporary accommodation, for their short term and long term housing, such that we can develop a flexible offer to all households that meet their needs within Camden's available resources.

Across both temporary accommodation and private rented sector offers Camden is continuing to place a high proportion of households in Camden or in neighbouring boroughs. In 2017/18, of 170 total placements, Camden placed 64 households (49 families and 15 singles) in the PRS in Camden, with a further 105 out of borough in London, and only 1 household was offered and accepted a placement outside of London. This is a significant achievement considering the continuing escalating market rent levels and will be a challenge to maintain in the next five years.

#### **2.2.3.3. Supporting recovery and independence**

For residents supported to find accommodation in the private rented sector, the start of their tenancy includes a period of floating support to help them settle, access broader income maximisation and be referred into wider services.

For some households, homelessness cannot be entirely prevented or addressed through the provision of accommodation. Many will require a range of support services to sustain tenancies, recover from traumatic experiences including domestic violence, address financial hardship, access therapeutic mental and physical health care, ensure they are obtaining the correct benefits and welfare support and help engage with training, skills and employment provision. Therefore, within a complex system of support, with generalist and specialist services available for homeless and rough sleepers, advocacy and casework support will be important, particularly for those who might have difficulty engaging with mainstream services. Camden has a number of key advocacy and support organisations working to support vulnerable individuals and households, including our Camden Advice Partners and Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC).

More broadly, we want to encourage a strengths-based approach to housing support in temporary accommodation and to households in the private rented sector at risk of homelessness – providing the structures and skills to enable resident independence in the long-term. 55 per cent of families living in temporary accommodation were working.<sup>lv</sup> .

Camden has high quality psychologically informed crisis intervention and support services for vulnerable households, including floating support and Camden Safety Net (domestic violence) services. There is, in particular, an ongoing need to coordinate support around the person, rather than viewing separate needs through separate professional lenses. Camden is already pioneering the development of psychologically informed service environments and strength-based approaches across its Adult Pathway. This now includes a specialist complex needs service with a psychologist within the staff team.

### **Good practice example – Camden's Adult Pathway**

Camden provides housing for single homeless vulnerable adults through its Adult Pathway. Camden is a borough with a historically high level of hostel and supported housing provision – we provide 643 beds across 16 services for single homeless people with support needs, rough sleepers, people with substance misuse and/or mental health issues, offenders, and women escaping domestic violence and abuse. The services are delivered by housing associations, voluntary organisations and the Council itself. Each resident has a dedicated key worker supporting them through the four stages of accommodation – assessment, specialist, support and move-on.

Each year, Adult Pathway services enable around 200 single homeless people with support needs to move on to independent accommodation and these services have been an essential part of the Council's homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategies for over 10 years. As well as accommodation, Pathway services provide support that is tailored to meet the individual and increasingly complex needs of residents, who are helped to progress towards independence by engaging with the services relevant to their needs and take up opportunities or pathways to employment, training and education.

Targeted support is also provided at the point of homelessness. For example, Camden has a women-only hostel and works with partners to support homeless women. Camden's street based outreach service refer homeless women to the Green Room, a pan-London service funded by Government and provided by St Mungo's in Westminster. Camden also supports the WiSER project, again funded by Government, which is a partnership of charities specialising in working with women and girls experiencing violence and abuse and severe and multiple disadvantage. Typically the women they work with will have been excluded from mainstream services and are challenging to engage. The aim is to provide assertive outreach to 20 women across four boroughs, including Camden, in a gender and trauma informed way.

Camden was also involved in the Women's Safe Space, a project initiated in 2015 to help women exit street prostitution, based on high level support delivered from a cluster of seven beds at the St Mungo's Endell Street hostel. St Mungo's have developed the model away from a stand-alone service to support women with multiple disadvantage in any hostel.

Women at the Well is a third sector self-referral drop-in service based at King's Cross, dedicated to supporting vulnerable women whose lives are affected by or at risk of being affected by prostitution. It provides specialist support to women seeking to exit prostitution such as outreach, signposting and advocacy services with independent sexual violence advisers. Most women who use the service have multiple and complex



needs including; cyclical drug and alcohol abuse, mental health support needs, rough sleeping, are involved in street based prostitution, trafficking or modern slavery, experience of domestic abuse, sexualised violence and exploitation, women who have experienced problems with the criminal justice system, and women who have no recourse to public funds. It offers hot meals, showers, laundry facilities, arts and crafts activities, health and wellbeing treatments, and supports access to training and employment. The charity works closely with Camden's Adult Pathway and homelessness services.

As part of a cross-Council review of domestic violence support, partners in the community and voluntary sector stated that housing and accommodation concerns are one of the major challenges for victims as they seek safety. Safe refuge accommodation is becoming more difficult to access due to overstretched refuge providers, and this challenge is more pressing for migrant women and women with insecure immigration status or no recourse to public funds.

Camden's Safety Net service provides support services for anyone experiencing domestic violence in Camden. In 2016/17 Camden Support Net undertook 66 referrals to the Safe Homes Programme which helps people experiencing domestic violence to remain in their home with enhanced safety and safeguarding measures. This reduced to 31 referrals in 2017/18. Camden Safety Net commission 25 refuge spaces in Camden and outside the Borough and these spaces are fully occupied.

#### **2.2.3.4. Working in partnership**

Housing associations play a significant role in addressing homelessness by making nominations to vacant properties available to the council and providing hostel accommodation and services as part of the Council's Adult Pathway.

Camden has joint and integrated commissioning arrangements with NHS services. We have also established the Homeless Health and Care Network to have oversight of all the work being undertaken in this area. Camden and Islington's Clinical Strategy 2016-21 promotes health and wellbeing by considering mind, body, family, friends, community and environment. It is recognised that housing is an important part of environment and impacts on both mental and physical health. The strategy also seeks to tackle substance misuse and mental health issues – which are common to many people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Camden has a range of vibrant community, voluntary and third sector services, providing support to homeless households including both those in temporary accommodation and rough sleepers and those experiencing housing instability:

- Camden Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) offering primary health care sessions at day centres and hostels throughout Camden. It provides assistance to people sleeping out or living in temporary accommodation, including asylum seekers and refugees;
- Groundswell Homeless Peer Advocacy focusing on physical and mental health issues;
- Focus Mental health outreach and care coordination service to support street homeless people and those in hostels;
- Spectrum Specialist Day Service, a day centre for single homeless people;

- SHP Recovery Service for those with experience of substance misuse;
- Fulfilling Lives in Camden and Islington, to support those with complex needs;
- Barka UK to work on reconnection with Eastern European rough sleepers;
- Doorstep Homeless Families Project targeting families with children;
- London Irish Centre providing care and community support to the Irish community;
- The London Pathway providing an integrated health service for rough sleepers at UCL Hospital;
- Holy Cross Centre Trust, a day centre for vulnerable and marginalised adults, including refugees and asylum-seekers.

Camden has a strong track record in supporting people to leave acute hospital care into their homes or an appropriate residential placement. For homeless residents, Camden works closely with the largest hospitals in Camden – University College Hospital (UCH) and the Royal Free. Camden's Hostel Pathway has a number of dedicated hospital discharge beds as part of its complex needs care, and attends pathway discharge meetings with University College Hospital. Camden also supports a dedicated post providing outreach within St Pancras and Highgate Hospital Mental Health Units to support people transitioning out of in-patient mental health care.

There is not a prison within Camden borough, although HMP Pentonville is in neighbouring Islington. The prison employs two full-time "no fixed address" workers to support prisoners approaching release who would not have a home to return to. They also employ one specialist staff member to support anyone who has a tenancy sustainment issue whilst they are in prison. Data shows that Camden received 59 housing needs<sup>vi</sup> enquiries regarding offenders in 2016/17 and these were referred into the Council's housing advice and pathways teams. The Council has good relationships with the resettlement staff.

Camden also works with Job Centre Plus centres, through a trailblazer project supporting people to access housing advice alongside employment support. This includes taking referrals directly as part of employment coaching to holding weekly outreach services with housing options services.

## 2.3. Priority 3 – Tackling the root causes of homelessness

**We will address the long-term root causes of homelessness in Camden.**

### 2.3.1. We are seeking to:

- Increase the supply of social and Camden Living rent homes in the Borough
- Increase the supply of private rented sector homes at rents at or below the local housing allowance level
- Play an active role in shaping a private rented sector in Camden that works for tenants, landlords and for the community
- Help homeless or homeless-threatened residents to work (or develop in their current roles through training and skills), to access decent work that helps them remain or access affordable accommodation in the long-term

### 2.3.2. We will achieve this by:

<b>Building, planning and enabling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to maximise the amount of genuinely affordable housing in the Borough through working with developers and through our Community Investment Programme.</li> <li>• Explore the use of prudential borrowing to build new social housing.</li> <li>• Continue to invest in our hostels and to improve the quality and support in our Council-owned and commissioned temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• Expand the Council's Camden Living rent offer.</li> <li>• Encourage Local Lettings Plans on new developments to include the allocation of social housing to homeless households.</li> </ul>
<b>Working with landlords</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with private sector landlords and owners to bring empty homes back into use</li> <li>• Explore the potential of using Compulsory Purchase Orders to buy long term empty homes.</li> <li>• Encourage more landlords to make affordable accommodation available to households in receipt of benefits including through advice and support.</li> <li>• Encourage landlords to increase length of tenure to provide stability and security to tenants.</li> </ul>
<b>Improving the private rented sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to renew and continue the Council's Additional Licensing scheme.</li> <li>• Continue to work with representative groups and structures that allow tenants and landlords to voice their concerns and provide a key communication channel for the Council e.g. the Camden Landlord Forum or the Camden Federation of Private Tenants</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with government and other organisations to get a fit for purpose and reliable public dataset on private rents and annual rent</li> </ul>

	uplifts, to seek to influence national future rent policies.
<b>Using our existing social housing assets more effectively</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve void turnaround times in the Council's housing stock.</li> <li>• Continue engagement with tenants under-occupying Council homes, to ensure that we are making the most effective use of our housing stock to address overcrowding.</li> <li>• Engage with residents about their housing aspirations and what support the Council could provide to assist people that may want to move on.</li> </ul>
<b>Removing barriers to employment through training and education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop our employment, education and skills offer, focusing on our tenants, hostel residents and individuals with multiple barriers to getting a job</li> <li>• Support homeless households in work to access skills and training that might help them develop or increase their income.</li> <li>• Continue to intervene in the local labour market and use our relationships to ensure jobs are accessible to local residents and are paid at least the London Living Wage.</li> </ul>
<b>Driving innovation and best practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners across the homelessness and rough sleeping sector in Camden to develop new and innovative approaches to addressing complex issues</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities to bid for funding to trial innovative approaches.</li> <li>• Assess options for providing management and lettings function to empty home owners.</li> <li>• Continue piloting and refining the psychologically informed environment approach to supporting people with complex needs.</li> </ul>

### 2.3.3. Why these actions?

Using the levers at the council's disposal, we are seeking to address the lack of affordable housing and a market-driven private rented sector.

#### 2.3.3.1. Building, planning and enabling

Camden, as part of the development of the Local Plan, and in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, has objectively assessed housing need and found that between now and 2031 Camden will need an additional 16,800 new homes of which 10,200 should be affordable.<sup>lvii</sup>

There is very high demand for social housing in Camden but limited affordable supply. The council has 5,700 households waiting for council homes. The demand is highest in absolute terms for 1 and 2 bed homes but the demand for 3 and 4 bed homes is proportionally more challenging<sup>lviii</sup>. Demand for genuinely affordable housing outstrips supply in both the social housing and private rented sectors.

The Council is seeking to deliver new Council homes as part of its Community Investment Programme (CIP) and in 2017/18 for the first time in a decade built more new Council homes than were lost through Right-to-Buy – Camden built 115 Council homes and lost 44 through Right-to-Buy.<sup>lix</sup>

### **Good practice example – Camden’s Community Investment Programme**

Camden needs more homes and these need to be genuinely affordable, safe, secure, and flexible. Camden Council has long recognised the key role it can play in the lives of its residents by providing safe, secure, affordable housing. The Camden Council of the 1960s and 1970s bought significant amounts of housing in the Borough. It also was recognising that care in the design of homes supports the dignity and quality of life of residents and built nationally and internationally recognised social housing such as the Alexandra and Ainsworth Estates.

In 2011 Camden began building new Council homes as part of the Community Investment Programme, alongside investing in schools, community centres and leisure and sports facilities. In recent years, Camden has received less than 2 per cent of its capital budget from Government, meaning that in order to fund the building of new social rent homes, the Council has built homes for sale. To date, Camden has built 702 homes as part of the CIP, including 268 Council homes.

As part of the CIP, we have also built and refurbished some of the Council’s temporary accommodation provision. The Council is committed to developing a temporary accommodation provision that is tailored and responsive to the needs of homeless individuals and families. We will continue to assess how we use our assets and funding to improve and build our own new temporary accommodation.

The Council has also built Camden Living rent and intermediate rent homes that are let to middle-income households earning between £30,000 to 40,000. These are high quality new homes where the Council is providing longer term tenancies (3 years) to provide security and stability to families. The Council has also refurbished one of the Council’s largest hostels to provide modern studio units and improved training and learning facilities.

#### **2.3.3.2. Working with landlords**

The total number of homes in Camden in 2011 was 99,127.<sup>lx</sup> 95 per cent of these recorded at least one usual resident – meaning there were at the time an estimated 4957 empty homes in the Borough. In 2017 approximately 950 homes had been empty for longer than six months and some had fallen into disrepair. Of these, despite concerted efforts, only 7 were grant funded and used as part of the private rented sector to house families and single adults in housing need.<sup>lxi</sup> Over the last five years, Camden has brought 447 properties back into use. Where possible, they have been used as accommodation for homeless families. Over 80 previously homeless families are housed in once empty properties that have been made available through Camden Council’s intervention. This area will remain a priority over the next 5 years.<sup>lxii</sup>

We also need to work with landlords to encourage them to provide affordable, secure and safe accommodation to homeless residents. Research from the National Landlords Association’s Quarterly Landlord Panel in 2017 found that just two in 10 landlords say they are willing to let to tenants in receipt of housing benefit or universal



credit.<sup>lxiii</sup> The NLA research also found that the proportion of landlords who said they were willing to let a property to housing benefit claimants had fallen to just 20%, down from 34% at the start of 2013. There are a series of regulatory elements of welfare benefit reform which have had the unintended consequence of reducing landlords' willingness to rent to benefit recipients, exacerbating an already challenging system for accessing private sector tenancies.<sup>lxiv</sup> Landlords should be willing to consider letting to any household, regardless of where rent is coming from.

The Council has significantly increased communications and activity to promote its offer to landlords, who offer their housing to homeless families. Websites such as RightMove and Zoopla are monitored for available properties and agents and landlords called proactively. The Council also regularly exhibits at property auctions to target landlords. The self-help PRS scheme provides a range of materials for applicants sourcing their own accommodation including information for prospective landlords.

#### **2.3.3.3. Regulating the private rented sector**

We also believe in the regulation of the private rented sector to fight homelessness. We have been campaigning for longer-term tenancies in the social and private rented sectors and already provide longer term tenancies – 3 years – through Camden Living to ensure security and stability to families.

Camden has also expanded its licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's) in December 2015 to cover all accommodation with three or more people forming more than one household. The process for obtaining a HMO licence includes an inspection by the Council to ensure that the property meets set standards (size, facilities and maximum occupancy). This helps tackle homelessness as we know that such a scheme improves conditions without the tenant having to ask for the improvements. PRS tenants can be afraid of 'retaliatory evictions' if requests for repairs or improved standards are made, but with our scheme, improvement is not reactive to complaints and becomes part of the natural cycle of our work to improve the PRS.<sup>lxv</sup>

#### **2.3.3.4. Using our existing social housing assets more effectively**

In 2016, Camden revised its social housing allocation policy with the priority of maintaining its diverse and mixed communities. Those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are given preference and in 2016/17, 27% of Camden social housing lettings were to households that were at risk of homelessness.

#### **2.3.3.5. Removing barriers to employment through training and education**

2.2 per cent of economically active Camden residents of working age have no qualifications and 16.7 per cent have no or low-level qualifications, significantly disadvantaging them in the London labour market.<sup>lxvi</sup> We will work with our partners to remove barriers to employment that homeless residents encounter and help homeless residents or those at risk of becoming homeless to get decent jobs and access the skills and training that will help them increase their income.

## 2.4. Priority 4 – Campaigning

**We will use our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, instability and homelessness.**

### 2.4.1. We are seeking to:

- Champion the role of local authorities in delivering a functional housing market including access to direct funding for housebuilding
- Advocate for an affordable stable and secure private rented sector that provides high-quality long-term housing as an option for households of all incomes
- Ensure that private rented sector landlords do not discriminate against households on benefits
- Ensure that welfare benefits reflect the true cost of living, and do not exacerbate exclusion or multi-generational poverty and instability

### 2.4.2. We will achieve this by:

<b>Building and enabling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to seek additional funding and financing flexibilities to allow the Council to build new social rented homes.</li> <li>• Work with developers and providers to achieve objectives set out in the Camden Local Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press for the creation of longer tenancies in the private rented sector so that tenants have more stability and security.</li> <li>• Challenge the persistent discrimination against housing benefit claimants by landlords within the private rented sector, calling for Government to restrict tenancy refusals on the basis of rent source.</li> <li>• Promote regulation of the short-term lettings sector which is removing homes from the affordable housing market.</li> <li>• Continue to campaign to achieve rent certainty in the private rented sector, including against the use of Section 21 eviction notices.</li> </ul>
<b>Influencing national policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby Government for a fair and equitable approach to local housing allowance now and following the end of the rent freeze in 2020.</li> <li>• Urge Government to slow the pace of implementation of universal credit, and for key changes to its approach including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make housing element payments to landlords opt out, instead of opt in</li> <li>○ Improve processing times so that universal credit recipients receive the correct payments during the first assessment period and a more efficient system for escalating issues</li> <li>○ End the restriction on the child element of universal credit to the first two children only</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Government to ensure that those with no recourse to public funds are able to access the support and advocacy they need.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the Local Government Association, London Councils and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce and simplify the additional administrative burden on local authorities created by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Code of Guidance.</li> <li>• Lobby in the medium term for councils to keep 100% of Right to Buy receipts so they have the freedom and flexibility to use them in a way that best meets local needs, with no time limits for spend, no conditions to return receipts to the Treasury and no financial restrictions on combining receipts with additional funding.</li> </ul>
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### 2.4.3. Why these actions?

Significant change needs to occur to ensure that no individual or household has to experience homelessness, and to enable all local authorities to deliver services that relieve homelessness in both the short and the long term.

Government has acknowledged the scale of the homelessness challenge in England and the need for concerted and coordinated action to tackle this. However, the approach continues to be targeting homelessness as an acute, rather than a chronic, issue. We need a national preventative intervention and Camden, as a local authority both at the forefront of the challenge, and innovation, is seeking to lead a national debate about the structural issues that have both increased the number of households that are homeless and made it more challenging to help them back on their feet. We are seeking to positively influence the national debate and national action to improve the lives of households in Camden and across the country.

#### 2.4.3.1. Building and enabling

We also need sufficient funding and financing flexibilities to allow us to build new social rented homes and we have already shown in previous sections how we have had to find innovative ways to build more, with a small proportion of this housing allocated to homeless people. It is a significant step forward that the Government has announced its intention to lift the borrowing cap on local authorities however, this alone will not address the long-term social housing shortage.

#### 2.4.3.2. Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector

We also want a more accessible and affordable private rented sector. Longer term tenancies for example could provide better security for tenants and help reduce homelessness, as we know that eviction from the PRS increases significantly the chances of becoming homeless. In Camden, we are already working to encourage longer tenancies where we help residents find private rented property. The Council's own housing company, Camden Living, offers three year tenancies which are genuinely affordable. We also believe that regulation of the short-term lettings sector



is needed. Rooms and homes are removed from the affordable housing market to be let with a premium to tourists and workers in search of a short-term accommodation in central London.

We will urge Government to consider legislating to require longer tenancies in the private rented sector to bring us into alignment with many other European countries, with no break clause which diminishes security of tenure further. We will join callings to scrap the so-called ‘no fault’ evictions in order to give renters greater power and security.<sup>lxvii</sup>

#### **2.4.3.3. Influencing national policy**

Welfare benefit reform has had a strong and negative impact in Camden. As more families transition to universal credit, this will only continue. It is concerning that welfare benefit reform has significantly impacted families and particularly larger family households. We are looking to have a constructive dialogue with Government about the implementation of universal credit to mitigate its effects, and ensure that it does not make households more vulnerable and more dependent on support from the state in different ways.

The Homelessness Reduction Act has created an additional administrative and financial burden and we will work in partnership with the Local Government Association, London Councils and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce and simplify the different process and procedures we now have to follow.

Right to Buy reduces genuinely affordable social housing supply for those most in need. Currently local authorities cannot replace housing which is lost on a like for like basis. Less housing has resulted in longer waiting times for many people who are vulnerable and on low incomes. Scotland and Wales have already abolished Right to Buy for these reasons. Legislative changes to Right to Buy would take time and so in the medium term, Camden will seek permission to retain 100% of Right to Buy receipts so the receipts can be used in a way that best meets local needs with no time limits, financial constraints or conditions to return money to the Treasury. Currently, if money is not spent within 3 years it must all be returned to the Treasury with interest.

Finally, about 50% of the rough sleepers contacted in Camden are non-UK nationals, many of whom do not have recourse to public funds. The majority of these non-UK nationals cannot be placed in our Hostel Pathway due to limitations on housing benefit claims. A number of the UK and Irish nationals sleeping rough in Camden will also not be eligible for assistance from Camden as their local connection is to another local authority. Individuals without a local connection to Camden are offered a reconnection service to their local authority. This is usually offered through the ‘No Second Night Out’ (NSNO) provision which acts as a triage service for identified rough sleepers. Reconnection is refused in the vast majority of cases. For example of the 43 European nationals that Camden have placed in NSNO since January 2014, only 8 accepted reconnection to their home countries. Of the 120 reconnections offered in 2015, only 10 have been successful.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Camden has an action plan to accompany the strategy which will be updated annually and monitored quarterly.

<sup>i</sup> There are different types of homelessness with rough sleeping being the most visible form of it. It is crucial to understand these so that tailored prevention and support can continue to be provided:

- The **legal definition** of homeless refers to those who do not have accommodation that they are entitled to occupy which is accessible and physically available to them, or they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to occupy this accommodation.
- **Rough sleeping/street homeless** refers to people who can be seen sleeping or bedded down in the open air such as doorways, parks, cars, bus shelters, derelict boats, sheds/garages, buildings or other places not designed for habitation.
- **Hidden homeless** refers to those staying temporarily with family and friends, sofa surfing or, living in unsuitable housing such as squats.
- **Non-statutory/non-priority homeless** refers to single homeless or childless couples not in priority need for assistance from a local authority. This group is often included within the term 'hidden homeless'.
- **Statutory homeless** refers to those who have made a homelessness application to a local authority and have been assessed as homeless and in priority need and accepted as eligible for local authority assistance.

To qualify for the **main housing duty**, one has to meet 5 criteria: to be legally homeless; to meet immigration and residence conditions; assessed as having a priority need; to be unintentionally homeless; and to have lived in Camden for 6 of the preceding 12 months or 3 of the preceding 5 years. To be in **priority need**, one must meet one of the following criteria: to have dependent children living with them under 16 years or under 19 years in full time education; to be pregnant, to be aged 16 or 17 years who will be referred to Social Services; to be care leavers aged 18-20 years; to be vulnerable due to old age, physical or learning disabilities, mental health problems, fleeing domestic violence, time spent in care, prison or the armed forces, or emergency due to fire or flood.

Homelessness affects a wide variety of people, but some are more vulnerable to homelessness. Those more at risk are:

- Leaving home for the first time or leaving care;
- Pregnant with nowhere to stay when the baby comes;
- Struggling to live on benefits or a low income;
- Coming from abroad without the right to claim benefits;
- Leaving prison;
- Asylum seekers or refugees.

Local authorities have up to 56 days to prevent someone from losing their home as homeless if they are threatened with homelessness. For example, the Council must take action if a landlord has secured a bailiff warrant to evict someone from a rented property. The Council has a duty to help different people in different ways – some people are owed a duty for the Council to find them housing, other people are owed advice and housing options support.

<sup>ii</sup> For a helpful summary see: Crisis, *The homelessness monitor: England 2018* (2018).

<sup>iii</sup> In compliance with :

- Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018
- The Localism Act 2011 and Supplementary guidance
- Supplementary guidance on homelessness 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012
- Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006
- The Children's Act 2004 (section 11)

<sup>iv</sup> LB Camden, Camden Homelessness Data Review (2018).

<sup>v</sup> LB Camden, *Homelessness Accommodation Strategy 2016-2019* (2016)

(<http://pdfs.local.gov.uk/CASE%20STUDIES/Camden/Camden%20Homelessness%20Accommodation%20Strategy.pdf>).

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- vi LB Camden, *Routes Off The Street Strategy* (2017) (<http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s57664/13%20Tackling%20Rough%20Sleeping%20in%20Camden.pdf>).
- vii LB Camden, *Hostels Pathway* (<http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/housing/general-housing-information/supporting-people/pathways/hostels-pathway.en>).
- viii LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).
- ix LGA, *Council innovation and learning in housing our homeless households* (2017), pg. 69. ([https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.12%20HOUSING%20AND%20HOMELESSNESS\\_v08\\_4.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.12%20HOUSING%20AND%20HOMELESSNESS_v08_4.pdf))
- x Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All – A Five Year Plan* (2005) (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120920061353/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/homes-for-all.pdf>)
- xi LGA, *Council innovation and learning in housing our homeless households*.
- xii LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv Ibid.
- xv Ibid.
- xvi GLA, *Housing in London: 2018: The evidence base for the Mayor's Housing Strategy* (2018) (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/housing-london>)
- xvii Land Registry in the period 1 Jan-08 to 31 Dec-17. © Crown copyright 2018.
- xviii LB Camden Strategy & Change Service, *Camden Profile July 2018* (2018).
- xix Department for Work and Pensions, *Housing Benefit caseload statistics* (2018).
- xx For a helpful summary see: LB Camden, *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* (2016).
- xxi LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).
- xxii Ibid.
- xxiii MHCLG, *Table 671: Social Housing Sales: Annual Right to Buy Sales for England: 1980-81 to 2016-17*.
- xxiv MHCLG, *Table 104 Dwelling stock: by tenure, England (historical series)*.
- xxv Inside Housing, *Councils spend millions using Right to Buy flats* (27 April 2018).
- xxvi MHCLG, *Social Housing Lettings: April 2016 to March 2017, England*.
- xxvii Ibid.
- xxviii "Briefing: Local Housing Allowance Freeze", Shelter, 2018 ([https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/briefing\\_who\\_is\\_affected\\_by\\_the\\_lha\\_freeze](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/policy_library_folder/briefing_who_is_affected_by_the_lha_freeze)).
- xxix The main pieces of legislation outlining Camden's statutory responsibilities are:
- **The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977** requires local authorities to prevent homelessness and respond to it by assisting people under imminent threat of homelessness (and classed as "in priority need");
  - **Part VII of the Housing Act 1996** as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duties owed by local housing authorities to someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
  - **The Homelessness Act 2002** places a specific requirement for local authorities to produce and implement a Homelessness Strategy;
  - **The Localism Act 2011** enables Councils to discharge their duty permanently by making use of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.
- xxx MHCLG, *Homelessness Provision, Borough (2004/05 to 2016/17)* (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/homelessness>)
- xxxi LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- xxxii Ibid.
- xxxiii Ibid.
- xxxiv LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- xxxv Ibid.
- xxxvi Ibid.
- xxxvii LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- xxxviii Ibid.
- xxxix Ibid.
- xl BBC/ ComRes, *How long have young people sofa surfed for?* (21 December 2017)
- xli London Assembly Housing Committee, *"Hidden Homelessness"*, September 2017
- xlii Ex-armed forces are exempted from residency criteria in the Allocation Scheme.

- <sup>xliii</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- <sup>xliiv</sup> <https://www.akt.org.uk/>
- <sup>xlv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> MHCLG/ Dept. for Education, *Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds* (2018)
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Shelter, *Housing costs contributions: non-dependant deductions*.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/11/deaths-of-uk-homeless-people-more-than-double-in-five-years>
- <sup>lix</sup> MHCLG, *Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2017, England*.
- <sup>i</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).
- <sup>ii</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- <sup>iii</sup> LB Camden, *Camden secures £870k to tackle rough sleeping* (22 June 2018)
- <sup>iiii</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- <sup>lv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>lv</sup> Shelter, *In work, but out of a home* (2018)
- <sup>lvi</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018)
- <sup>lvii</sup> LB Camden, *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* (2016)
- <sup>lviii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>lix</sup> For more information on the Community Investment Programme visit: <https://cip.camden.gov.uk/>
- <sup>lx</sup> ONS, *Census table KS401* (2011). Dwelling' defined as a unit of accommodation in which all rooms - including the kitchen, bathroom and toilet - are behind a door that only that household can use.
- <sup>lxi</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).
- <sup>lxii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> National Landlords Association, *Two in ten landlords willing to house Universal Credit tenants* (18 October 2017).
- <sup>lxiv</sup> For more information on welfare reforms and PRS see: House of Commons Library, *Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?* (2018).
- <sup>lxv</sup> For discussion of retaliatory actions by landlords see: Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee, *Private Rented Sector: Fourth Report of the Session 2017-2019* (2018).
- <sup>lxvi</sup> ONS Annual Population Survey Q4 2016.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> <https://www.landlordtoday.co.uk/breaking-news/2018/10/croydon-becomes-first-council-to-support-campaign-to-scrap-section-21>.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> LB Camden, *Camden Homelessness Data Review* (2018).

## **Assisting homeless households to find affordable accommodation: A policy document**

This policy accompanies the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and both should be read together. For some groups of homeless households there are also protocols, such as that relating to households with children who are found to be intentionally homeless or are otherwise not owed a homelessness duty from Camden.

The council currently procures accommodation to meet a range of housing needs:

- Temporary accommodation for eligible and homeless households owed the relief or main homeless duty or those waiting for a homelessness decision;
- Accommodation in the private rented sector to prevent homelessness;
- Accommodation in the private rented sector to discharge the Council's duty under the Localism Act 2011; and
- Accommodation in supported housing.

This policy relates to accommodation procured by the Council for households owed accommodation duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

### **Allocation of Social Housing Tenancies**

The Council's allocations scheme sets out the priorities for allocating social housing in Camden. Social housing tenancies are not routinely used to house homeless households, either temporarily or permanently, as the demand for social housing tenancies far outstrips supply in Camden. The allocations scheme grants priority to families engaging with the Council to prevent or relieve their homelessness and awards a further 100 points to households where homelessness has been prevented or relieved for a period of six months.

The Floating Support Service works with families in temporary accommodation and assisted bidding is offered where appropriate to ensure that all that are eligible are able to access the council's housing allocation scheme.

### **Priorities for private sector accommodation**

When procuring accommodation in the private sector, priority will generally be given to homelessness prevention or relief cases in line with the Council's priorities to work with households to prevent main duty statutory homelessness. The homelessness prevention approach is aimed at reducing the need to place households in temporary accommodation and instead moving them on to settled and sustainable accommodation to meet their housing need. The approach means that families should spend little or no time in temporary accommodation and will not face repeated moves and the disruptions that that involves. It also minimises the amount of temporary accommodation the Council has to provide, which is costly and secures long term, sustainable private rented accommodation.

The private rented scheme is usually available to eligible households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, likely to be in priority need and with a local connection to

Camden. A supportive assessment process is applied to ensure applicants will be able to sustain a tenancy and households are required to attend a “good tenant’s training session”.

The offer of private rented properties can be extended to applicants threatened with homelessness prior to 56 days as a voluntary option. Where they have refused a maximum of three reasonable offers (although one offer within Camden borough may be considered sufficient), they will not be eligible for homelessness prevention points.

For applicants owed the statutory prevention or relief duty and assessed as being able to sustain a tenancy, a maximum of three reasonable offers will be made where timescales allow this. If a household is actively engaging with the Council but a choice of suitable offers has not been available but is expected to be, we will jointly agree with the applicant whether to extend the relief casework period to enable up to three reasonable offers.

If this does not occur, it is likely a final suitable offer will be notified in writing and duty will be discharged, whether accepted or refused, in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. An acceptance of any reasonable offer will end any statutory duty owed. Where a household applies as homeless (after the Council adopted the power held in the Localism Act 2011 to end the main duty with an offer of a suitable private sector tenancy) then the main housing duty, if accepted, will usually be ended with one private rented suitable offer (the “PRSO”). We will generally look to offer private rented sector (PRS) supply to prevention or relief cases ahead of discharge cases but a decision will be made on a case by case basis, with the priority being to ensure a successful letting.

For people who applied before February 2013 the main duty cannot be ended due to a refusal of a suitable private rented offer and can only be ended by the acceptance of a qualifying offer.

### **Accommodation Standards**

All accommodation must comply with basic minimum standards:

- Physical standards - Checks will be completed to ensure that electrical and gas equipment is safe and a fire risk assessment will be carried out. Properties will have an Energy Performance Certificate and a valid Gas Safety Certificate. Where feasible, properties will be pre-inspected to ensure they meet minimum standards and are safe
- Good management and the role of the landlord - Landlords will be expected to demonstrate that they are a ‘fit and proper landlord’ (for example through membership of a landlord accreditation scheme) and provide a written tenancy agreement.

When deciding if a property is suitable for a particular household, we will complete a suitability assessment, adhering to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, and the following factors will be taken into consideration.

- Affordability - Where a household is claiming housing benefit, we look for properties that meet a household’s bed need that are in areas where the LHA

rent is affordable. In the current climate of rising rents and caps on benefits, such properties are likely to be out of borough, and increasingly out of London, particularly for larger properties. We will consider a household's income and their ability to meet any shortfall between the housing benefit paid and the rent. In some cases, such as when they are housed temporarily, households may be eligible for a discretionary housing payment (DHP). However, DHP will only be considered as a short-term 'stop-gap' and not as a long-term solution for housing affordability. Ensuring that accommodation is affordable is central to the success and sustainability of our strategy.

- Location - Where accommodation is procured outside of Camden, we will consider the distance of the property from Camden and how the location of the property affects family members. This includes, as far as possible, the impact of location on the factors listed below. Where we make placements outside of the borough, we will notify the host local authority as required by the Housing Act.
- Services, amenities and transport - We will consider the proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to local services, amenities and transport.
- Employment - The type and hours of employment will be taken into consideration alongside the cost and ease of any potential commute. The possibility of taking up new employment will also be considered.
- Children - In accordance with section 11 of the Children Act 2004, we will consider the needs of any children in the household and how to safeguard and promote those needs.
- Education - The age and stage of education of children will be taken into account, including any public examinations the children will be taking. The cost (particularly for over 16s where travel costs will be incurred), ease and distance of any potential commute to existing schools will be considered along with the possibility of relocating to schools closer to the property offered. Support provided to any children with special educational needs will also be taken into consideration. Children of primary school age may need to move to schools closer to their new home.
- Childcare and other caring responsibilities - Existing childcare arrangements are considered as well as any other caring responsibilities, including the nature of the care provided, and the feasibility of maintaining these or making other arrangements.
- Medical and health issues - Any medical or health needs will be taken into account, including any current ongoing treatment and support and the possibility of transferring to new healthcare providers closer to the property. Where a household needs accessible accommodation, this will be taken into account.
- Family and community support. As far as possible, family support and community links will be taken into consideration. Where there is social worker involvement with a family, they will be involved in any discussions about moving the family to alternative accommodation to ensure their needs can be met.

Families prioritised as 'in need' include:

- Households where children are at risk or may be significantly disadvantaged, including households giving or receiving care, care leavers, children on the Child Protection Register, children at a significant educational milestone.
- Households with at least one family member who has a severe disability or significant health condition – for example:

- A person with severe and enduring mental health problems who is receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare (provided by local community health services) and has an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact on their ability to engage with treatment or care plans.
- A person suffering from a life threatening illness or a severe disability receiving regular (at least fortnightly) treatment under the care of a hospital in the borough.
- A person in receipt of a significant care package (provided or sponsored by the Director of Adult Social Care) which cannot be transferred.
- Households where there is a risk to be managed – for example, those with a history of anti-social behaviour, prolific and persistent offenders, those housed through Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA), etc.

Households with children known to Family Services and Social Work as Children in Need who accept housing out of borough will be transferred to the appropriate newborough support service. The new local authority's children service will be notified by Camden and a period of joint working will ensure the needs and welfare of the children are safeguarded.

Although our search for accommodation always starts in Camden, for most families it is unlikely that accommodation will be in Camden due to limited availability and affordability. Whenever possible, suitable accommodation will be sought in areas easily accessible to Camden.

### **Bedroom need in PRS accommodation**

The following household members are expected to share a bedroom:

- Adult couples;
- Two children aged under 16 of the same sex; and □ Two children aged under 10 regardless of sex.

The following household members are entitled to their own room:

- A single adult (aged 16 or over) ;
- A child that would normally share but shared bedrooms are already taken, for example if the household has three children and two already share; and □ Children who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition.

We will offer couples and lone parents with a single child of less than 3 years at the start of the placement a one-bedroom property where the overall size of the accommodation is sufficient for the needs of one or two adults and one child.

### **How PRS accommodation will be allocated**

When a property is made available, suitable applicants will be identified. Allocating accommodation procured in the private sector is often time-critical as landlords want to minimise lost rents due to void periods and we need to limit the risk of the property being let elsewhere. Due to the short time frames involved in the allocation of private sector



properties, potential applicants will be contacted directly by the Council to arrange a viewing. Where an applicant cannot be contacted another potential applicant will be contacted.

Where accommodation is for a homelessness prevention or relief case, up to three households may be selected to attend a viewing. For discharge of duty cases, only one applicant will usually view the property.

The final decision to accept or reject a household will usually rest with the landlord. If the landlord refuses a nominated household, the offer will be withdrawn and a further offer will be made when a suitable property becomes available.

If an applicant working with the Council to prevent or relieve their homelessness refuses a maximum of three suitable private sector offers or time scales are exhausted, a final reasonable and suitable offer will be made which could result in a final discharge of duty. If an applicant refuses the discharge of duty offer, this can result in the Council ending its homelessness duty to that applicant.

When making a discharge of duty offer, a snapshot of approved and available accommodation will be taken from the Housing Needs Group or equivalent database. Once both the applicant and landlord accept, an assured short-hold tenancy with a minimum fixed term of 12 months will be given.

### **How temporary accommodation is allocated**

Based on data since April 2013 we can anticipate needing to place around 70 households into temporary accommodation (TA) per year. We can also anticipate needing to transfer around 130 placed households from one TA placement to another, for reasons such as household composition changes, changing medical needs, risk of violence and so on. These numbers can change significantly as demand is difficult to predict.

Temporary accommodation is usually allocated on the day the family will need it. The same factors in deciding what accommodation will be offered will be taken into account as is the case for procuring privately rented accommodation, though we secure our supply through different procurement methods.

Due to affordability the Council's main source of in-borough temporary accommodation is our hostel stock. Where a Camden hostel is not suitable due to the household size or medical circumstances, or a hostel would be suitable but is not available, nightly paid "annexe" accommodation will be procured. Once accommodation has been identified, the household will be given an offer letter and a note of their responsibilities whilst living in the temporary accommodation. In placing households in annexe accommodation the Council will take account, as is reasonably practical, of the placement grid (A-D) below in deciding which families to select for accommodation in, or at various distances from, Camden.

If annexe accommodation is found, the applicant will meet the provider at the property and they will be shown the utility meters, etc. These properties will be furnished with a cooker, fridge, table and chairs, sofa and beds. For hostel accommodation, the family

will be sent to the hostel and where they will complete the necessary paperwork with the Customer Services Officer.

### **Prioritising households awaiting a discharge of duty for available PRS properties**

The decision about which household to make an offer of private rented accommodation to, as discharge of the homelessness duty, will take into account a range of circumstances, which will depend on the individual circumstances of the applicant, including:

- The cost of any existing temporary accommodation to the Council;
- The suitability of the applicant's current temporary accommodation, including affordability;
- The likely availability of alternative social housing; and
- The time in temporary accommodation (with those who have been in TA longer taking priority).

### **Priority for housing locally**

All properties will be zoned as follows:

- Zone A1 – located in the London Borough of Camden
- Zone A2 – located in a nearby London borough (e.g. Brent, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Newham, Southwark, Westminster, Waltham Forest)
- Zone B – located in another London borough
- Zone C – located near to London (within 50 miles, including the Home Counties) □

Zone D- located beyond Zone C

Applicants will be individually assessed prior to any offer to determine the type and location of accommodation that should be offered. The needs of the household will be recorded in full along with any action to mitigate disruption. A snap shot of available properties will be taken from the Housing Needs Database of properties (HNG) or equivalent.

Although our search for available accommodation will always start within Camden borough, households that have a relatively low level of need are more likely to be offered accommodation in zones B, C and D. However, even if a household is considered to have a lower level of need, they could be allocated available units in Zone A1, A2 or Zone B if these units are available and not suitable for higher priority households.

Before an offer of PRSO accommodation is made, an affordability assessment will be carried out to ensure that the offer is suitable for the household. This will take into account local LHA levels and the applicant's current and likely future circumstances. Households in receipt of welfare benefits may be subject to restrictions on the amount of benefit they can receive, which may affect their ability to pay rent. Offers of accommodation in Camden or nearby boroughs are subject to suitable accommodation

## APPENDIX A

being available and the applicant being able to afford accommodation in these areas. The placement summary grid below is for guidance to help officers decide on whether a property is suitable for an individual household. It will also depend on the availability of property. The individual circumstances of each household will be taken into account when determining the suitability of a property.

**Placement Summary Grid:**

Property Zone	Household Description
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households with at least one child registered on the Child Protection Register in Camden.</li> <li>Households where Camden's Social Services have serious concerns about one or more children and are working intensively with the household.</li> <li>Households with one child (or more) who has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which could not be provided by another local authority or where the move would be seriously detrimental to the child's wellbeing.</li> <li>Households with an applicant who has severe and enduring mental health problems who is receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by local community health services and has an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact on their ability to engage with treatment and care plans.</li> <li>Households where at least one member is in receipt of a significant care package provided or sponsored by Camden's Social Services which cannot be transferred.</li> <li>Households where there is a risk to be managed such as those with a history of anti-social behaviour, prolific and persistent offenders and those housed through MAPPA and other projects.</li> </ul>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households with one child (or more) in secondary school in their final year of Key Stage 4 (generally Year 11).</li> <li>Households where at least one member is suffering from a life threatening illness, or is severely disabled and is receiving regular (at least fortnightly) treatment at a hospital in Camden.</li> <li>Care leavers moving on in accordance with the Council's pathway plan.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is in permanent and settled employment in or near to Camden and this employment will be lost should the member be unable to commute to their place of work.</li> <li>Households receiving care, which would be disrupted or cease if the registered care provider is unable to commute to fulfil their caring duties.</li> <li>Households where a member of the household is caring for another person in the borough who falls into one of the following categories and they would be unable to commute to meet their caring duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 75 years old and living alone, or with no other member of the household under 75 years of age, or</li> <li>In receipt of the medium or higher rate of the care component or the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or War Disablement pension.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household with one or more child in secondary school or further education college in Camden or neighbouring borough (other than those in the final year of Key stage 4 - see Group A above). This group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance of the school or college.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is in permanent and settled employment and this employment will be lost should the member be unable to commute to their place of work. This group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance of their workplace.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is receiving medical treatment that can only be provided by a specific medical facility: this group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance to the medical facility.</li> </ul>
C	<input type="checkbox"/> Households not falling within A and B above where one person (or more) has a need to be within reasonable commuting distance to London.
D	<input type="checkbox"/> All other homeless households will be offered private rented sector accommodation wherever the borough is able to procure it.

In the event of multiple households having equal priority for a particular property the urgency of the family's need to move, including the suitability, continued availability of and length of time spent in their temporary accommodation will be taken into consideration. In the case of homelessness prevention into PRSO, those households where placement prevents the need for temporary accommodation will be prioritised. It is forecast that placements into private rented tenancies may be made by in each zone in the following proportions, though this data must be treated with caution as this will depend on the outcome of many factors that will affect supply and demand:

Zone	Placement %
Zone A 1	5
Zone A2	40
Zone B	40
Zone C	10-15
Zone D	0-5

## Communication

Households approaching the Council due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness are informed, in writing, of the options available to them. The Council encourages families threatened with homelessness to work with the Council early to prevent their homelessness.

Households are informed of any housing duty owed to them and any decision to house them in temporary accommodation in writing. An offer of PRS or temporary accommodation will include a copy of the households 'Suitability and Disruption form'. This form considers the individual circumstances of the household in relation to the property being offered to them and any necessary mitigation to its suitability.

## **Reviews**

Applicants placed in temporary accommodation pursuant to the main housing duty have a right of review in relation to suitability under Section 202 of the Act.

Applicants can also request a review within 21 days of receiving their offer of private rented sector accommodation which has been assessed as suitable by the local authority under Housing Act 1996 Part VII. The review will be carried out by an officer who has not been involved in the original decision who is senior in grade to the decision-making officer.

## **Keeping this policy under review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

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## **ROUTES OFF THE STREET (RTS) ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY: ADDENDUM NOVEMBER 2018**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In April 2017 the Council's Routes off The Street (RTS) rough sleeping strategy was endorsed by cabinet, introducing new approaches to tackle the long term and complex issue of rough sleeping in Camden.

RTS provides the framework for the delivery of Street Population Services in Camden; identifies inter-dependencies and builds new partnerships to increase the impact, scope and quality of the services the Council is able to offer rough sleepers. RTS covers a number of important themes including:

- Working at a borough level with voluntary and community sector (VCS) agencies to develop new offers which help the most vulnerable and the hardest to reach.
- Working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) so that effective pan London services and resources are developed and new resources are available to Camden's street based services.
- Integrating specialist outreach, street presence and police resources to tackle entrenched street activity at hotspots across the Borough.
- Working more consistently with our neighbouring boroughs to tackle cross border activity, prevent displacement and share information more effectively.

In August 2018 the Government launched the **National Rough Sleeping Strategy**, setting the framework to half rough sleeping in the UK by 2022 and ending it altogether by 2027. The Government's strategy asks for closer alignment of local authority homelessness and rough sleeping strategies along with some additional measures to be included in local borough strategies and action plans.

### **CHANGES TO BE INCLUDED IN RTS TO ALIGN WITH THE NATIONAL ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY:**

The following summary highlights the changes being made to our working practices in order to align with the National Strategy. These changes to RTS will be implemented by the close of the 2018 – 2019 Financial Year:

1. RTS strategy to be incorporated into Camden's Homelessness Strategy which will be rebadged as the Camden Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 -2024.
2. We will work with Safeguarding Adult Partnership Boards to ensure that Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR) are considered when a person who sleeps rough dies or is seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected and there is concern that partner agencies could have worked more effectively to protect the adult. The intention is that lessons



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learned from the reviews will inform improvements in local systems and services.

3. The Council will publish an annual rough sleeping action plan on its public website. The purpose of the measure will be to demonstrate how the Council is adapting and improving services to tackle the changing patterns and impacts of rough sleeping in the Borough. The plan will be updated yearly and will be an important tool for informing our communities on developments and progress. The first action plan will be published in the final quarter of 2018/2019 and include the following:

- Working with other organisations in the Borough to create a centralised process for collating data on rough sleeper deaths.
- Outlining how the Council is using new funds and resources available from the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative and Cold weather Fund.
- Measuring the right things, ensuring we have an accurate and consistent picture of who is engaged in street activity and ensuring we empower front line staff to use data to make decisions.
- Reviewing identified groups that are particularly vulnerable, enabling services to be tailored appropriately according to different types of need.
- Providing an update on our partnership work to tackle entrenched street activity hotspots in the Borough impacting on our residents and businesses.
- Highlighting our intention to continue to fund and develop the Hotspot approach in 2019/2020, based on what we have learned this year. This iterative approach will include a revised Camden Town Hotspot Team designed to tackle day time street activity linked to substance misuse and crime.
- Encouraging our communities to volunteer, report issues to us and work with us to understand the impact of rough sleeping on our communities and businesses.
- Building new partnerships with our neighbouring boroughs to tackle cross border activity and prevent displacement of rough sleepers in central London.

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- Working with our strategic partners to help address the pan London issue of Roma rough sleeping and improve the service offers available to this cohort in Camden.