

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 - Summary

DRAFT – NOVEMBER 2018

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

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.**

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

1.1. Priority 1 – Preventing

We want to stop people from becoming homeless

1.1.1. 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 providing 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

1.1.2. We will achieve this by:

<p>Ensuring that information is easily accessible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign Camden’s online homelessness webpage • Make tenancy education available to all residents, regardless of tenure. • 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. • Work with our public sector and community sector partners to develop a shared approach to signposting, referrals and homelessness triage.
<p>Developing residents’ strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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.
<p>Reviewing the needs of our residents to improve services and target vulnerable groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and strengthen data collection to inform new service improvements. • 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) • 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. • 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.

1.2. Priority 2 - Supporting

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

1.2.1. 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

1.2.2. We will achieve this by:

<p>Tackling rough sleeping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the implementation of Routes off the Street including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure the right advice, appropriate options and signposting are provided to rough sleepers when they contact the Council. ○ Plan and deliver improved support to reduce rough sleepers using the funding awarded to Camden by central Government to expand services. ○ Integrate our street presence and police resources under an assertive ‘hotspot’ approach. ○ Work more consistently with our neighbouring boroughs to tackle cross-border activity, prevent displacement and share information. ○ 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.
<p>Accessing the right accommodation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access sufficient affordable private rented sector accommodation to be able to offer an alternative to temporary accommodation. • Continue the effective implementation of a Housing First model for our hostel residents. • Continue to help people access affordable accommodation as close to Camden as practically possible. • 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.

<p>Supporting recovery and independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake independent research with homeless households to understand their priorities for housing and what support they require. • Take a psychologically and trauma-informed approach to the delivery of homelessness services • Develop a personalised move-on plan for every household that has been in temporary accommodation since before 2016. • 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. • 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.
<p>Working with strategic partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with partners across the borough to support homeless people and make the best use of our resources and strengths. • Explore the opportunities to use different types of procurement to improve the delivery of a range of homeless services including people with complex needs. • Explore opportunities for housing associations and strategic partners to offer private rented accommodation to homelessness prevention cases.

1.3. Priority 3 – Tackling the root causes of homelessness

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

1.3.1. 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

1.3.2. We will achieve this by:

<p>Building, planning and enabling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to maximise the amount of genuinely affordable housing in the Borough through working with developers and through our Community Investment Programme.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the use of prudential borrowing to build new social housing. • Continue to invest in our hostels and to improve the quality and support in our Council-owned and commissioned temporary accommodation. • Expand the Council’s Camden Living rent offer. • Encourage Local Lettings Plans on new developments to include the allocation of social housing to homeless households.
<p>Working with landlords</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private sector landlords and owners to bring empty homes back into use • Explore the potential of using Compulsory Purchase Orders to buy long term empty homes. • Encourage more landlords to make affordable accommodation available to households in receipt of benefits including through advice and support. • Encourage landlords to increase length of tenure to provide stability and security to tenants.
<p>Improving the private rented sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to renew and continue the Council’s Additional Licensing scheme. • 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 • Work collaboratively with government and other organisations to get a fit for purpose and reliable public dataset on private rents and annual rent uplifts, to seek to influence national future rent policies.
<p>Using our existing social housing assets more effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve void turnaround times in the Council’s housing stock. • 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. • Engage with residents about their housing aspirations and what support the Council could provide to assist people that may want to move on.
<p>Removing barriers to employment through training and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop our employment, education and skills offer, focusing on our tenants, hostel residents and individuals with multiple barriers to getting a job • Support homeless households in work to access skills and training that might help them develop or increase their income. • 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.

<p>Driving innovation and best practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners across the homelessness and rough sleeping sector in Camden to develop new and innovative approaches to addressing complex issues • Maximise opportunities to bid for funding to trial innovative approaches. • Assess options for providing management and lettings function to empty home owners. • Continue piloting and refining the psychologically informed environment approach to supporting people with complex needs.
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1.4. Priority 4 – Campaigning

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

1.4.1. 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

1.4.2. We will achieve this by:

<p>Building and enabling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek additional funding and financing flexibilities to allow the Council to build new social rented homes. • Work with developers and providers to achieve objectives set out in the Camden Local Plan.
<p>Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press for the creation of longer tenancies in the private rented sector so that tenants have more stability and security. • 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. • Promote regulation of the short-term lettings sector which is removing homes from the affordable housing market. • Continue to campaign to achieve rent certainty in the private rented sector, including against the use of Section 21 eviction notices.

Influencing national policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lobby Government for a fair and equitable approach to local housing allowance now and following the end of the rent freeze in 2020.• 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">○ Make housing element payments to landlords opt out, instead of opt in○ 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○ End the restriction on the child element of universal credit to the first two children only• Work with Government to ensure that those with no recourse to public funds are able to access the support and advocacy they need.• 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.• 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.
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