

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021

DRAFT

FOREWORD

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We believe no one should have to sleep rough in 2021. But issues like the housing crisis, austerity and limited access to support mean many people still do. We are determined to break down these barriers and end rough sleeping in Hammersmith & Fulham.

H&F are already working hard to reduce rough sleeping to zero. In 2017 we established the Rough Sleeping Commission to work out how this could be done. This strategy is grounded in recommendations from the Rough Sleeping Commission's report, *Ending Rough Sleeping in Hammersmith & Fulham*.

We know that people with experience of homelessness can tell us how to improve our services. That's why the commission asked Groundswell (homelessness organisation) to carry out a peer-led research project. This project meant experiences of young people with a history of rough sleeping shaped the commission's work, which influenced this strategy.

We are working hard to prevent homelessness and improve the way we work with people at risk of homelessness. Residents care about these services, so we made sure our plans reflect your views from the *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation*.

Homelessness can be prevented, with the right support at the right time. Every contact counts. That's why we are putting the focus on working with residents to prevent homelessness before it happens.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we worked quickly to get "Everyone In" (Central Government's accommodation strategy) to help protect rough sleepers from the virus. 2020 was a stark reminder of the links between homelessness and ill health. Now, in 2021, we have a plan to capitalise on the lessons learned, prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in H&F for good.

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INTRODUCTION

The national context in this strategy does not make easy reading.

In most of the UK, homelessness has been on the rise for years, and so has the use of temporary accommodation.

Reasons for this rise in homelessness include:

- High demand for housing, leading to high house prices and private rents
- Bigger gaps between rents and what people can afford to pay
- A shortage of social housing
- Increasing household bills
- Welfare benefit cuts and reform
- Cuts in funding for statutory and voluntary support services

Against the national context, we are on a mission to prevent homelessness end rough sleeping in H&F for good.

There are several ways of counting the number of rough sleepers.

1. The annual data capturing every rough sleeper in London (CHAIN). In 2019-20, there were 8,855 rough sleepers in London. There were 266 individual rough sleepers in H&F; H&F was 17th out of 33 London boroughs.
2. Every year on the same night in November, all councils carry out a snapshot count or estimate of rough sleepers. **In 2019 H&F recorded the lowest number of rough sleepers in the annual count** and in 2020¹ only 3 councils recorded fewer rough sleepers than H&F.

Annual Street Count Data in H&F

| 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|------|------|------|
| 12 | 2 | 4 |

We have also stopped the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation for families. These successes have only been possible by working together with communities and partners. This five-year strategy sets out our ambitious commitments and the steps we will take to continue to fight the long-term housing challenges facing our borough, London and the United Kingdom.

This plan shows how we are creating a strong framework of early intervention and prevention, and better co-ordinated emergency responses; ensuring access to housing options and supporting those who are in housing need.

Residents' views are important to us. In our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Consultation, we asked what kinds of support we should provide more of, and what we should do differently to end rough sleeping. Residents' responses are addressed throughout the strategy.

1. [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020)

Together, we will better prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.

THE H&F VISION & OBJECTIVES

People love living in Hammersmith & Fulham. It's diverse, connected, on the up and could be better still. In our part of this busy city, residents deserve a place that is safe, clean and green.

In Hammersmith & Fulham, we have compassion. We believe our residents should feel secure in their homes and on the streets. They should have high quality services they can rely on.

The area is changing, and some are worried about growing unfairness, being left behind, and the future of local services. This threatens what we want for the future.

We believe in doing things with residents, not to them, that's why we are working to build a culture of co-production.

We'll manage our finances responsibly and relentlessly challenge unfairness, waste and old-fashioned thinking in how we work.

We're a compassionate council and are not afraid to take on the powerful to get results. We're making H&F the best place to do business in Europe. We support entrepreneurs and start-ups and generate opportunity and shared prosperity.

We are a different kind of council – pioneering and relentlessly searching for better answers. We'll keep listening, working with residents and finding creative ways to take us forward.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the health risks associated with rough sleeping. We are now more determined than ever to end rough sleeping in H&F for good.

H&F'S PRIORITIES

- Building shared prosperity
- Creating a compassionate council
- Doing things with residents, not to them
- Being ruthlessly financially efficient
- Taking pride in Hammersmith & Fulham
- Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency

OUR BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

Creating a compassionate council

- **Adult mental health:** We'll develop an effective approach to mental health, working across partner agencies such as the police and non-governmental organisations.
- **Meeting immediate needs:** We'll connect residents with services like foodbanks and money advice
- **Keeping families in the borough:** We'll join up housing, health, social services and education so that no-one is forced to live outside the borough.
- **Joined-up services:** We'll help families earlier and better by joining up our services within the council and with other governmental and non-governmental organisations.
- **Family Support:** Our Family Support organisation will ensure families can access joined-up support and those requiring more help can be identified and supported from the earliest opportunity.
- **Care leavers' hub:** We'll create a hub for our care leavers.
- **Mental health forum:** We'll set up a forum to develop strategies to improve child and adolescent mental health services.
- **Carers:** We'll aim to help carers have financial security, care services which are there when they need them, an NHS which supports them, the ability to combine work and care if they choose to, and better information and advice to prepare and make choices about caring.

Doing things with residents not to them

- **Co-production with disabled people:** We'll put disabled people at the heart of decision-making in H&F. Co-production will lie at the heart of how we operate in future - nothing about disabled people without disabled people.
- **Community engagement:** We'll develop new ways of engaging and working with residents.
- **Resident-led commissions:** We'll work with existing resident-led commissions and set up new commissions.

Being ruthlessly financially efficient

- **Protecting vulnerable residents:** We'll make sure future government cuts are not passed on to vulnerable residents in the form of reduced services.
- **Ethical debt collection:** We will not use bailiffs to collect council tax debt from residents, instead using an ethical approach that is more effective and supports families put their finances in order.
- **Council reform:** We'll reform the way we work with third sector partners to tackle problems intrinsic to our society.
- **Public services reform:** We'll find new, innovative ways of delivering local services with other local organisations.

Taking pride in Hammersmith & Fulham

- **Greenest borough:** We will make our borough the greenest borough in Britain.
- **Youth Services:** We'll set-up mini projects/resources for targeted groups of disengaged or alienated young people. And we'll develop access to opportunities for all, across the borough outside of the school curriculum.
- **Victims of crime:** We'll provide better processes to support residents who have put up with anti-social behaviour and drug dealing in their neighbourhood. We'll support the work of 'victim support' and crime prevention measures.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2021

We are determined to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping; this is our plan to do that.

Informed by H&F's corporate vision and business plan, this strategy sets out our approach to preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in the borough.

This strategy builds on the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026, providing a focused action plan to meet its fifth strategic objective; 'Prevent Homelessness and End Rough Sleeping' - adding detail to the broader Housing Strategy.

Independent and thorough research has given us a fuller understanding of why homelessness happens in our borough. Residents' views have strengthened our plans.

The Rough Sleeping Commission's report 'Ending Rough Sleeping in Hammersmith and Fulham' highlights how a complex mix of factors can affect lives in our borough. The report presents the commission's findings alongside key local and national context information, and gives recommendations which helped form our strategy action plan.

Building on the **Housing Strategy Consultation (2019)**, we also carried out a specific **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation**, to ensure our plans reflect the views and experiences of residents and partners. We also gained invaluable insight from residents with experience of homelessness.

Though there are high levels of rough sleeping in H&F, we are working towards finding a quick and safe route off the street for all rough sleepers.

We also know that disabled people are disproportionately affected by homelessness, with over half of rough sleepers experiencing mental health issues that need support. To support rough sleepers properly, we need to understand and help remove all the barriers they face.

We are ambitious in our aims and follow through.

This can be seen through our implementation of our previous Homelessness Prevention strategy, whose legacy is the removal of bed and breakfast use as temporary accommodation for families, as this type of accommodation is expensive and unsuitable. .

Our determined commitment to the 2016 strategy's five key objectives has helped us succeed. Those priorities were: shaping services around early intervention/prevention and a case management approach; mitigating the effects of welfare reform; improving customer experience and making every contact count; delivering a range of affordable housing solutions, and; working with landlords to improve private sector rented housing.

Since 2016, we have updated how we work in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ('HRA').

We now:

Fulfil the new duties on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to a broader range of residents; including single people. .

We ensure we carry out the set of specific duties on housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness. This strategy also has a greater emphasis on partnership working in response to the Act.

This strategy is about rallying together with our partners around five refreshed objectives:

- End rough sleeping in Hammersmith & Fulham for good
- Working with a range of third sector partners and other public bodies to maximise early intervention and homelessness prevention;
- Delivering the right housing solutions
- Improving resident experience and making every contact count
- Delivering safe housing solutions that supports vulnerable residents in housing need.

Together, we will better prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.

OUR MISSION TO END ROUGH SLEEPING

We are on a mission to end rough sleeping. We plan to make sure no one is having to sleep rough in Hammersmith and Fulham by 2022.

OUTCOME FROM THE ROUGH SLEEPING COMMISSION

Motivated by our mission to end rough sleeping and the key priority of doing things with residents, not to them,

In 2017 H&F established an independent commission to understand how to end rough sleeping in Hammersmith and Fulham.

It was chaired by Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of the national homelessness charity Crisis. Membership included local homelessness organisations and over one hundred homeless people contributed their views.

The H&F Rough Sleeping Commission set out to:

1. Review and identify areas of good practice in services provided to rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping in London, the UK and internationally.
2. Review the current H&F service against available good practice and identify gaps in what we currently provide.
3. Make recommendations for changes to services, to improve how we help people that are rough sleeping in H&F, to support those at risk of rough sleeping, and to reduce the number of rough sleepers down to zero.

The Commission has proved invaluable in driving shared learning and strategic alignment across the borough's agencies.

Four key lessons from the commission:

- No one wanted to sleep rough;
- Only two people out of the 108 homeless people interviewed wanted to live in a Hostel;
- The current level of support provided, despite the resourcing, is not meeting need;
- The benefits system is perpetuating homelessness

The commission also made six recommendations on how we should tackle rough sleeping. These six recommendations are all now part of this strategy:

- **A more tailored and personalised approach** with a strong emphasis on developing services around the needs of rough sleepers. This should be accompanied by a tailored wrap around package of personalised support dependent on the level of need.
- **A better co-ordinated emergency response** to ensure that no one is forced to sleep rough. The commission recommends the provision of a 'crash pad' for people who face barriers to accessing hostels and to extend the commission of the street legal service for people with no recourse to public funds.
- **Stronger focus on prevention** with all organisations and services that come into contact with someone who might be at risk of rough sleeping playing their part in working in a coordinated and joined up way to ensure that people do not sleep rough. Preventing homelessness is the most effective way of ending homelessness, whilst being the most cost-effective intervention.
- **Move from a hostel by default to a housing by default model** to ensure that people can access settled accommodation as rapidly as possible and move on from homelessness.
- **Strategy to mitigate against the effects of welfare reform** including the implementation of Universal Credit, such as the 6-week waiting period and Direct Payments. For the Council to collaborate with other local authorities and work with the Greater London Authority (GLA) in lobbying national government.
- **Adequate supply of secure, accessible and affordable housing** for rough sleepers or people at immediate risk of rough sleeping. The commission recommends that the Council procure more properties in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) to be made available through the Social Lettings Agency (SLA) and ring fence a proportion of social housing.

WHAT YOU SAID – THE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The work of the Rough Sleeping Commission, and the results of the Housing Strategy Consultation (2019), gave us a strong basis for our plan to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping. In 2021, we carried out a specific Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation, to hear your views in detail.

Residents and partners know best about the services they want and need. We asked residents and partner organisations to complete an online consultation, to help us understand what is needed to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in the borough.

Your answers have helped us make sure our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy matches your views and experiences.

We received responses from residents, third sector partners and registered providers with housing stock in H&F. By analysing those responses, we were able to identify key messages about homelessness and rough sleeping and consider your ideas and suggestions. We are committed to involving residents in matters that affect them. That's why we were keen to hear from residents who have experienced homelessness. 30% of respondents had experienced homelessness, or rough sleeping, or been at risk of homelessness.

KEY MESSAGES

Rough sleeping: work with people earlier before they become homeless

We asked you what we could do differently to end rough sleeping by 2027 (central government target). You identified homelessness prevention as the most important factor: 77% of respondents agreed we should work with people earlier before they become homeless. The second highest priority was to help people find affordable housing (76%), followed by working

better with other agencies or charities to help people get support (73%).

Support: assisting people fleeing domestic violence

We asked which kinds of support we should provide more of. You identified support for people fleeing domestic violence and abuse as the top priority (9%), closely followed by opportunities for work and training (7%) and support tackling rogue landlords (7%).

From your comments, we identified the following issues to consider:

- Access to information on the support available
- A holistic approach to support: access to mental health support and health care
- The community impact of homelessness
- A safe and supportive fresh start
- Finding and engaging with rough sleepers
- Meeting people's immediate needs: food, clothing
- Working closely with charities supporting rough sleepers
- Trust is important: providing trauma informed services
- Access to housing that is affordable and local

Speaking from experience

Themes from responses of residents who have experienced homelessness, or rough sleeping, or been at risk of homelessness, were:

- Some people were not aware of the support available
- Services for Rough Sleepers need to be more visible
- More affordable housing is needed

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW

These key messages, thinking points, and first-hand experiences are all addressed throughout this strategy.

COVID-19 AND ROUGH SLEEPING

The relationship between housing and public health is well known. The COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic has seen housing services across the country respond to the biggest health crisis that the UK has faced this century.

The pandemic posed dual challenges for housing: more residents needed our services, and service delivery had new limits due to lockdown and social distancing. So, we rose to these challenges by providing housing and support to more residents, while using new and innovative ways of working.

The government recognised that people sleeping rough would need more support to be kept safe from the virus, and asked Councils to bring 'Everyone In'. In London, 4,700 rough sleepers were placed in hotels.

COVID-19 in H&F

H&F worked quickly to offer all rough sleepers in the borough accommodation, including those who would not normally be eligible for housing support, such as people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Before the pandemic, rough sleeping in H&F was already on the rise, with numbers exceeding the national average. As discussed throughout this strategy, and the Homelessness and Rough

Sleeping Strategy, providing more and better services for rough sleepers was already high on our agenda. A service set up at the suggestion of the Commission, an emergency Crash Pad, could not be used in lockdown as they were not set up for social distancing. But we stepped up and found solutions, offering 360 people, including rough sleepers and people not normally eligible, accommodation, between March and November 2020.

What we've done

Out of necessity, we adapted our services to fit with lockdown rules and social distancing guidelines. This has meant using technical solutions to enable remote working for over 70% of our staff at a time; limiting unnecessary face-to-face interactions. We discovered we could provide high quality housing options and advice services in this new way. We will continue reviewing our service delivery to keep it accessible, while taking on board the benefits of agile working.

We did lots of things differently during the pandemic and lockdown, and adapted our services to meet needs. We are now planning how we will tackle specific issues that may arise following the pandemic, such as a potential increase in private sector evictions when the current eviction ban lifts.

Our response to COVID-19:

1. Adapting quickly to provide services online
2. Getting 'Everyone In' and supporting rough sleepers
4. Reducing risks while making sure our services keep running and remain accessible to residents
5. Looking at ways of reducing loneliness and isolation
6. Engaging with community groups online and making sure that residents have the support to access online meetings
7. Ensuring the rough sleeping services we commission are COVID appropriate

In detail

Above is a very broad summary of our COVID-19 response. Throughout this strategy document, you will find more detailed information on how we faced up to various issues (such as poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol support and employment support) in the pandemic, and what we'll do next.

Going forward

We have been able to provide support and accommodation to many during the pandemic. We have also found new ways of working. We are now looking at how we can continue to deliver great services going forward – especially adjusting our plans for rough sleeper services to fit the current picture.

We are looking at

- **Finance** – Housing budgets for Councils are tight, with budgets in deficit during COVID-19. We are exploring funding opportunities to support the extra housing we provided during lockdown, and seeing where our budgets need to change
- **People** – We're figuring out whether to continue remote working, or face-to-face services
- **Sector Capacity**– Looking at the sector to identify housing options for residents impacted by the pandemic
- **Partnership Working** – How we can work together to provide good, continuing services.

- **No Recourse to Public Funds** – Identifying how to support those individuals who are not normally eligible for assistance
- **Housing First** – Continuing to provide housing to people with a history of entrenched rough sleeping
- **Floating Support and Supported Housing** – Ways to provide these wherever needed
- **Homelessness Prevention** – Unemployment levels in H&F, as well as Universal Credit claims, have risen sharply during the pandemic. The economic impact of the pandemic has pushed many households to the verge of homelessness. This vital support is needed more than ever
- **Accessibility** – New ways of working must be designed so services are fully accessible to residents

What we're taking away from COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on those living and working in H&F. We have come together to get through this difficult time and provide important services when residents needed them most. As a result, we have supported large numbers of residents and have discovered better ways to deliver services. Lockdown has also highlighted the important relationship between access to suitable housing and physical and mental health and wellbeing – reinforcing our drive to provide great, accessible housing and services to residents.

DEFINITIONS

Defining Homelessness

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) states that a household is considered statutorily homeless if they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation that is accessible, physically available and which would be reasonable for the household to continue to live in. Their definition also includes households who currently have the right to occupy suitable accommodation, but that are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

If a household is facing homelessness within 56 days, the new homelessness prevention duty requires that we help stop that household from becoming homeless. This includes enabling residents to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodation to prevent them from becoming homeless. The duty lasts for 56 days but may be extended if the local authority is continuing with efforts to prevent homelessness.

Defining Rough Sleeping

Sleeping rough is rarely a choice. There are many causes and unique circumstances which lead to rough sleeping – but rough sleeping is usually a result of structural and personal issues combined.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines rough sleeping as:

“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, in doorways, parks, bus shelters, or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation”

For this strategy we use a wider definition; we also include people who are at a high risk of sleeping rough for the first time or returning to rough sleeping, such as:

- People who used to sleep rough, who are in supported or other temporary accommodation

- Sofa surfers who were previously, or at risk of rough sleeping again
- People who are staying with relatives and friends on a temporary basis, with a history or risk of rough sleeping

WIDER STRATEGIC CONTEXT

NATIONAL CONTEXT

SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Homelessness

The national picture for homelessness and rough sleeping is worrying

Where needed, our housing advisers support residents in housing need to complete homelessness applications, to see if we owe them the **main housing duty**. The **main housing duty** is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until that duty is ended, either by an offer of settled accommodation, or for another specified reason.

In recent years, the number of homelessness applications accepted have gone up nationally. In 2016/17 annual homelessness acceptances were at nearly 57,000 - nearly 17,000 higher than in 2009/10. An estimated 8.4 million people in England are living in an unaffordable, insecure or unsuitable home. As homelessness has grown, the number of people in temporary accommodation has also increased.

In June 2019, the total number of households in temporary accommodation was 86,130, a 4.5% increase from 82,390 a year earlier. The number has been generally rising since 2010, but the number of households with children is more stable: 61,800 compared with 61,570 on the same date last year.

Rough Sleeping

How can this happen?

Explaining Homelessness

At the end of March 2018, the most common reasons for losing a home were:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (28%)
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy (25%)
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner (12%)
- Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad) (7%)
- Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner (6%)

The human cost

The impact of homelessness

The social, emotional and financial costs of homelessness are large - creating barriers to education, work and training and undermining mental and physical health. Homelessness, if sustained or repeated, can even lead to premature death, with some research suggesting an average age of mortality is 47.

Disabled people and rough sleeping

Disabled people are disproportionately represented among people sleeping rough. Many mental illnesses are invisible disabilities, and over half of rough sleepers in the UK have mental health issues which require support. As well as having a huge impact on physical health, sustained rough sleeping can negatively impact mental health and make it harder to seek support. A strong awareness of mental health barriers faced by people with such invisible disabilities is needed to support many rough sleepers in the way they need. This awareness fits in with our plans for housing services designed for disabled people, with disabled people, as part of a new Disabled People's Housing Strategy.

The impact of rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the sharpest end of the homelessness and housing crisis. It ruins lives, making people vulnerable to violence and abuse, and takes a terrible toll on an individual's mental and physical health.

The Economic Cost

The economics of homelessness

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It's better to avoid disaster beforehand than to deal with it after it occurs. This is true when it comes to homelessness prevention: research shows that good prevention work reduces the personal and financial cost of homelessness.

In a report conducted by Nicholas Pleace in July 2015 on behalf of Crisis, the cost of homelessness of a single person to the public sector is £11,733 for 12 months while preventing it will only cost £1,558. A 2012 review of financial costs of homelessness in England, conducted by DCLG, estimated that annual public spending was up to £1 billion higher as a result of homelessness.

The economics of rough sleeping

In the same report, the cost of rough sleeping of a single person on the public sector is no less than £20,128 for 12 months. If that person is helped quickly, the cost will be reduced to £1,426. The additional cost of rough sleeping can escalate very quickly. Thirty people sleeping rough for 12 months, with an additional public expenditure (for example of developing mental health issues, or drug dependency issues due to the unbearable suffering) would cost over £600,000, rising to £1.2 million if the situation persisted for 2 years.

The additional financial costs of homelessness and rough sleeping could include: the cost of providing homelessness services especially to homeless people with high support needs; costs for health and social care and the NHS, and additional costs for criminal justice systems associated with homelessness.

STATUTORY CONTEXT

Statutory changes have made partnerships more important

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 emphasises prevention rather than relief of homelessness and places a new 'duty to refer' on a range of public bodies who work with residents who are at risk of homelessness, before they access housing services.

The 'duty to refer' is designed to help ensure that services are working together to prevent homelessness. There are public services which often meet homeless people, but don't usually provide homelessness services. The 'duty to refer' works by those public services looking at a resident's housing situation when they meet them, and referring them to us if they need housing support.

In addition to this, we know that our third sector partners, community agencies, and other Council colleagues play a big part in helping us prevent homelessness.

Improved data sharing with Housing Associations and the voluntary sector as well as internal council departments, and better links between housing, social services and health, residents will be integral to the success of this strategy.

New Fire Safety regulation and scrutiny has highlighted the importance of safety at home

In 2017, the devastating loss of life in the Grenfell Tower fire brought health and safety issues in social housing to national attention, driving a full review of how we ensure fire safety, and general health and safety, across all tenures.

We are committed to making sure accommodation acquired to house our homeless applicants meet the Decent Homes Standards and Homes-Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018.

Importantly, we will continue to work with landlords to help raise standards: holding joint landlord workshops and forums with the Private Sector Housing Team. We will also update landlords on any changes in legislation around licensing requirements or health and safety compliance issues.

Statutory change has increased demand for housing, making building the right housing more important than ever

The Homeless Reduction Act places additional duties upon us to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Since the implementation of the Act, demand for housing assistance has increased by over 200%. We are taking an innovative approach to meeting the demand for affordable housing, which is growing in H&F in line with the rest of London.

We are building more affordable housing across our five regeneration areas, and on sites within our ownership. We are also working with housing associations to start building more affordable housing, with all sectors contributing to providing new affordable housing schemes. We also continue to review the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme regularly to ensure we meet the needs of residents in the greatest housing need.

Welfare reform has meant more people come to us in crisis, every contact counts

Changes to welfare benefits continue to have a significant impact on low income or non-working families' ability to secure and maintain accommodation in the borough.

While only 8.1% of residents claimed Universal Credit before COVID-19, 2020 has seen a big spike in applications – residents now need our help more than ever to stop economic difficulties leading to homelessness.

While we must work within the constraints of the homelessness and welfare benefit legislation, as well as budgetary demands, we will ensure the quality of contact that a resident has is the best it can be.

We also offer support to people affected by Welfare Reform – offering tenancy sustainment and welfare reform mitigation services.

People in crisis deserve to feel supported and listened to during their contact with the service, knowing that the council is working on their behalf. We also need to make things less confusing by acting as 'one Council' - if various internal departments are involved and multiple points of contact are required, we must make sure effective referral processes are in place to ensure access to all the right services.

HOUSING DUTIES

Statutory Definition of Homelessness:

“A household is considered statutorily homeless if a local authority decides they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation that is accessible, physically available and which would be reasonable for the household to continue to live in” - MHCLG

Crisis has defined Homelessness as follows:

“Homelessness is about more than rooflessness. A home is not just a physical space; it also has a legal and social dimension. A home provides roots, identity, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing. Homelessness is about the loss of all of these. It is an isolating and destructive experience and homeless people are some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society”

The duties set out by law relating to homelessness have changed considerably:

Part 7 of the 1996 Act sets out the powers and duties of housing authorities where people apply to them for accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation in cases of homelessness or threatened homelessness.

The Council has specific duties towards households that are;

- Eligible for assistance
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness
- In priority need
- Unintentionally homeless

Other homeless applicants may be 'vulnerable' and in priority need as a result of:

Old age; Mental illness; Mental handicap; Physical disability; Having been in care; Service in the armed forces; A period in custody; Having fled actual or threatened violence.

The Homelessness Act 2002 ('the 2002 Act') places a requirement on housing authorities in England to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness in their district. This 2002 Act also amended several provisions in Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the safety net for vulnerable people. Section 1(1) of the Act gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities new powers to shape their approach to allocations manage their waiting lists and make them more effective, and **The Care Act 2014** places a duty on local authorities to protect the wellbeing of their residents by providing appropriate housing services and ensuring accommodation meets the care and support needs of older and vulnerable people.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) ('the 2017 Act') places a set of duties on housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas and to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just people who have priority need under the Act.

The HRA places an emphasis on intervening earlier to prevent homelessness and places new duties on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to a broader range of residents.

The changes brought in by the new Act include:

- A need to provide single homeless people with effective advice and information about preventing homelessness
- An extension of the period considered to qualify as 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days
- A new duty to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of their priority need or whether their homelessness was intentional
- New assessments and personalised housing plans ("PHPs") to be created for both the housing authority and the resident to record the actions they're taking to secure accommodation
- Suitability of private rented sector accommodation
- A new duty for other public bodies to inform the housing authority when they know that a resident is becoming homeless

There are positive changes on the horizon regarding the housing assistance we can give victims of domestic violence

When passed through Parliament, the Domestic Abuse Bill will give those who are homeless as a result of fleeing domestic abuse priority need status for accommodation secured by the local authority.

HOMELESSNESS TRENDS

Over the last five years, the number of people in temporary accommodation has been rising in England, moving up and down in Wales, and stayed quite stable in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

When homeless applicants are found accommodation, Scotland and Northern Ireland rehome almost all applicants in social housing, while England and Wales help people into accommodation across the social and private rented sectors.

Characteristics of homeless households are relatively similar across the UK, despite legislative and reporting differences; the largest groups seeking support include single person households without children, those aged between 25 to 49 years, and male.

Households seeking help for homelessness with a main household member aged over 60 years have increased in recent years, while those with a main household member aged under 24 to 25 years have decreased.

There has been an increase in the complexity of homeless household needs in recent years, particularly in relation to physical and mental health conditions.

Reasons for the loss of previous homes are broadly consistent across UK countries; often due to changing relationships or disputes within households.

It is estimated that the number of people rough sleeping is increasing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but decreasing in Scotland.

However, legislative changes in England have widened the number of households owed a homelessness duty. This may explain some of the increase in application numbers from 2018 onwards. England reported an increase from around 20,000 to 25,000 decisions made on applications in a three-month period prior to the changes, compared with around 60,000 assessments every three months following the new legislation.

THE PICTURE IN H&F

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a particularly big issue in London.

According to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), there are 90,000 Homeless households in the UK, 63% of which are in London. Due to the economic uncertainty brought in by Brexit, and COVID-19, those numbers could still rise.

The proportion of households in temporary accommodation is higher in London than the rest of England. In London, there are 16.07 households living in temporary accommodation per 1,000, compared with 1.47 households per 1,000 in the rest of England. The increase in these numbers can be strongly linked to austerity and welfare benefit reforms since 2010.

Hammersmith and Fulham has more expensive rents and more housing pressures than most other London boroughs.

Hammersmith and Fulham is the fifth smallest borough and the sixth most densely populated area in London, where 1 in 50 people has no home.

Hammersmith and Fulham's residents face challenges of high rents, high housing prices and a shortage of affordable rented housing.

These challenges are heightened with welfare reform reducing benefit levels; Local Housing Allowances capping the level of Housing Benefit that can be paid, often well below the market rent; and, continued cuts to local government funding.

Considering the on-going impact of welfare reforms, and the continued pressure of increased costs for housing services resulting from the HRA, it is likely that the need for homelessness and housing advice services will increase.

Losing a private rented tenancy is the second biggest cause of homelessness in H&F. Where appropriate, we help households tackle the root causes of the crisis and help them to return to independent living, rather than to take them out of the private housing market for good.

Domestic abuse is one of the four main causes of homelessness in H&F. We had 114 homeless applications from survivors of domestic violence in 2018/19, where the loss of their home was due to 'domestic abuse'.

The latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales show little change in levels of domestic abuse in years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2018, an estimated 2 million adults had experienced domestic violence in the last year (1.3 million women and 695,000 men).

ROUGH SLEEPING

Most Recent figures in London

In 2019, the number of people estimated to be sleeping rough in London had decreased for the first time in six years and is the largest decrease since 2010. There were 1,136 people estimated to be sleeping rough in London on a single night in autumn 2019. This was down by 147 people or 11% from the previous year.

The South West of England was the only region where there was notable increase in the number of people sleeping rough, all other regions were broadly similar or decreased with London and the West Midlands decreasing the most.

The majority of people sleeping rough in England are male, aged over 26 years old and from the UK. This is similar to previous years.

However, CHAIN data showed a previous rapid increase in the number of rough sleepers in the borough between 2008/09 and 2016/17; an increase of 328%.

There was a 30% reduction in the number of rough sleepers counted throughout 2018/19 compared to 2016/17; we are very pleased with this significant reduction but know we face several challenges in continuing to reduce the numbers and to meet our target of ending rough sleeping for good.

Breakdown of H&F Rough Sleepers in 2018-19

In 2019, there had been a reduction in the proportion of new rough sleepers in the borough; 44% of people who were new rough sleepers had been in settled accommodation prior to sleeping rough for the first time, with 34% (29 people) having to leave private rented accommodation. There has been a small increase in the proportion of former rough sleepers who are rough sleeping again. Our strategy focuses on improving prevention and early intervention through better information, signposting and partnership working.

The causes of homelessness are complex with most in-borough homelessness approaches arising from:

- loss of private rented accommodation;
- exclusion by parent, relative or friend; and, domestic violence.

There are many risk factors associated with homelessness such as:

- substance abuse
- mental health issues, but these issues may also arise because of homelessness.

Though numbers had been reducing for years, before lockdown in March 2020 the number of rough sleepers in H&F had started to rise. We are taking action to make sure this is just a temporary rise in numbers. We are also working hard to ensure that everyone supported into accommodation as part of 'Everyone In' will continue to receive good services post-pandemic.

WHAT WE'RE ALREADY DOING

Our homelessness prevention work sits alongside work on other issues - which are often related to homelessness or its causes.

While providing homelessness services, we are also working hard on;

- Tackling poverty
- Building an inclusive local economy
- Working with partners
- Preventing human trafficking
- Reducing the use of temporary accommodation
- Supporting victims/survivors of domestic violence
- Improving access to accommodation & support
- Providing drug and alcohol support
- Coordinated services
- Private sector supply and quality assurance
- Employment and training
- Maintaining our success against accommodating families in bed and breakfast

Tackling Poverty in H&F

Homelessness does not exist in a vacuum. As the link between welfare reform and homelessness shows – homelessness often happens for financial reasons.

We are committed to helping residents living in poverty. Hundreds of new homes are being built, and many more improved, for local people. We are now building more genuinely affordable homes, to rent and to buy, than at any point in a decade. We also have an ambitious Industrial Strategy: we want to improve our economy in a way which benefits all residents. We have plans to ensure equality of opportunity, and a good standard of living, for all residents.

The H&F Independent Poverty and Workless Commission published their report looking at the causes of poverty, and how to tackle it, in 2017. We have not stopped there - we have continued to innovate and find new ways to help.

We know that people living in secure, affordable housing have more opportunities to access employment and skills training, and other routes out of poverty. But the sad fact is that 31% of our residents are currently living in poverty. While we work hard to tackle housing and economic inequality in the borough, people living in poverty need support to meet their daily needs – right now.

What we are doing to help residents living in poverty:

- **Housing inequality:** We are building more **affordable housing** to rent and buy, and working to end **rough sleeping** in H&F for good
- **Food poverty:** H&F now offer a universal free breakfast to every primary school pupil to help local families combat food insecurity. Our partners **Hammersmith & Fulham Foodbank**, who we help fund, provide emergency food parcels, and advice or referrals to other organisations. We also work with **Rose Vouchers:** a scheme to help people on low incomes to get fresh fruit and vegetables from local traders

- **The economy:** Hammersmith & Fulham is one of the fastest growing boroughs in terms of opportunity and prosperity – and we want to take everyone on that journey with us
- **Skills and jobs:** Our employment support service **WorkZone** helps residents gain the right skills and qualifications they need for work, and support access to work. We also work with **BEAM**, a charity which helps homeless people access steady employment and better housing options

Covid-19 has left more people experiencing unemployment and food poverty. We have been working hard to provide these services to the increasing numbers who need them, and coming up with new ways to help in the pandemic. For example, working with local businesses to make sure people can access food deliveries in lockdown, and stepping in to provide school pupils in need with free lunches over October 2020 half-term.

Building an inclusive local economy offering good work for the most vulnerable

Universal Credit is putting an increasing number of residents living in the private sector at risk of homelessness. This is especially clear since COVID-19 led to mass redundancies. Supporting people to access work will be an important part of helping our communities recover from the pandemic.

Increased access to employment and training opportunities, such as BEAM, will result in increased social mobility and an increased ability for homeless applicants to afford rents in the private sector. The move to those referred into sustainable full-time employment will enhance life opportunities for those who will benefit most from that support.

H&F have an ambitious industrial strategy, *Economic Growth for Everyone*. We want to make our borough the best place to do business in Europe, and ensure that everyone benefits, not just a favoured few.

Partnership Working

Anchor Institutions

Working with institutions like Imperial College and Westfield, as well as making the most of public sector employment services like Work Zone, we will provide more opportunities to meet the needs of the 6% of the borough's residents who are in the 10% most deprived nationally.

West London Sub-Region

In West London, we have strong working relationship with our sub-regional housing colleagues. We regularly come together to discuss shared issues, to respond to government calls for evidence, to collaborate on bids for central government funding, and to benchmark our services.

We have recently agreed a standard way to measure the work we do; helping us to better understand trends in our own performance, and to share best practice around service delivery. The sub-region has also successfully secured funding to helping us run more preventative services for potential rough sleepers, and an out-of-London private rented sector option.

Employment & Training support

Consultation responses show that you want us to provide more support to access training and employment opportunities.

BEAM

H&F know that living in temporary accommodation can make it harder to look for work. We also know that finding steady employment can help residents to move out of temporary accommodation, and have more choice in their housing options. That's why we commission BEAM, to help homeless residents enter skilled, secure and well-paid work.

We are the first local authority in Britain to partner with BEAM, 2018's winner of the London Homelessness Awards. BEAM is a unique charity, and digital platform, which uses crowd funding to help people living in temporary accommodation to prepare for and enter employment. By running crowd funding campaigns to help pay for training and cover costs such as work equipment, rent deposits or laptops, BEAM helps people to find secure, well-paid jobs and move out of temporary accommodation for good.

BEAM has proven a powerful new model to help homeless people for the long-term to get into skilled work. More than 85 per cent of homeless people who completed training have started work in their chosen area, ranging from jobs as a bricklayer to a dental nurse.

Work Zone

Our employment support service, WorkZone, is also supporting all residents of the borough (including residents who are homeless/at risk of homeless) access jobs and skills support.

Our in-house job brokerage service helps a broader range of residents to access training and sustainable employment. It is free to employers and residents, offering:

- CV development
- Tailored pre-employment 1-1 support
- Access to online job vacancies & training portal
- Schools & community outreach
- School work experience placements
- Support to employers, developing & recruiting apprenticeship and work experience offers

In 2018/19 the service helped 1,185 people into work

Between April 2019 and December 2019, a further 518 people were helped into work and 51 people were helped into apprenticeships.

Employment support in the pandemic

Like the rest of the country, H&F saw a rise in unemployment as a result of Covid-19. Residents who become unemployed and threatened with potential homelessness are being assessed and assisted into tenancy sustainability or move-on support, employability provisions and budgeting advice through Housing Solutions, H&F Link and Support, H&F Assured Shorthold Tenancy (Private Rented Sector) Matching Service, the DWP, Work Zone, BEAM, Crosslight and Hammersmith Law Centre.

CASE STUDY – BEAM

Tony, one of Beam's success story, wrote to update all the people who donated for him:

'Got some BIG news for you! As you might know, I passed my electrician training that was funded on Beam. I'm so proud to write now that I'm in work! I'm in a team doing the wiring on a new block of flats. It's really exciting to work on a big project and I'm learning loads. For the first time in decades, I have a structure in my life. And it feels great!

I remember when I heard about Beam for the first time - I thought it sounded too good to be true!! I never thought anyone would fund my campaign let alone 135 people! I'd like to thank each and every one of you again. You changed my life.

I am now moving away from benefits and will be putting aside a bit each month to one day fulfil my dream to have a home I can call my own. I'm also going to donate myself to Beam's members each month and am excited to hear how they get on. IF I CAN DO IT, SO CAN THEY!

If you haven't supported a Beam members, please consider it. There are so many people out there who have been through tough times with homelessness and other problems. They also deserve the chance to make the most of themselves.

For me now it's about staying focused. I never answer my phone in work hours, ask questions about anything I don't understand and each weekend, it's about some relaxation with friends and my boy but mostly recharging for the week ahead so I can stay sparky :)

I've enjoyed getting each message of support and comment so keep them coming but more than anything please help others.

Blessings, Tony'

Preventing Human Trafficking

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of modern slavery & human trafficking

Our Housing Advisers have all been trained on how to identify modern slavery and make necessary referrals. We have ensured that our staff are equipped to act as 'first responders' in cases of modern slavery & human trafficking.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the government's system for victim of Modern Slavery. It provides minimum a minimum of 45 days of support for adult victims regardless of their immigration status, whether their experiences are recent or not, or happened in the UK or abroad.

Only 'first responder' organisations can refer individuals to the NRM, and we are one of these. Under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, we have a Duty to Notify the Secretary of state when we come across a victim.

This is done through the NRM. Adults must give informed consent to enter and if consent is not given, an anonymous Duty to Notify form can be completed through the NRM portal.

The Governing Body, Senior Management Team and all employees are committed to ensuring that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in any part of our business activity and in so far as is possible to holding our suppliers to account to do likewise.

Supporting victims/survivors of domestic violence

Responses to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation show that making sure there is support for people fleeing domestic violence is extremely important to residents.

Support agencies / refuge

The latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales show little change in the area of domestic abuse in recent years. For instance, In the year ending March 2018, an estimated 2.0 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic violence in the last year (1.3 million women and 695,000 men)

Domestic abuse is one of the four main causes of homelessness in H&F. We had 114 homeless applications from survivors of domestic violence in 2018/19, where the loss of a settled home was due to 'domestic abuse'. Effective and compassionate assessments and a range of appropriate housing options, including refuges, are important parts of how we help.

We attend a multi-agency risk assessment panel (MARAC) as part of our commitment to work in collaboration with key partners around safeguarding children and adults from domestic abuse.

Domestic violence and child abuse in the pandemic

There has been a slight increase in 2020/21 of people seeking homelessness help due to domestic abuse. Responding to this, and preparing for the upcoming Domestic Abuse Act, we are working closer with partners and the Greater London Authority to carry out a local needs assessment and create a domestic abuse strategy. We are also creating a sovereign Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategic partnership to continue to monitor progress and improve the ways we provide safe accommodation.

H&F Family Services reported a reduction in child abuse cases during lockdown. This is probably because professionals who work with Family Services have had less contact with

children and their families. H&F have a wide range of services that support children and families, with the aim of reducing risk. We have been working creatively to support as many families as possible safely despite these challenges, taking interventions online and limiting physical contact. When Housing encounters a case of suspected child abuse, a referral is made via the Family Services Front Door Team (ICAT).

Maintaining success against using bed and breakfast

H&F have successfully made sure zero families with dependent children have been put in bed and breakfast or nightly rate accommodation since 2015. We have managed to do this by intervening early and discussing housing options with homeless applicants on their first approach.

We have built into their personalised housing plans the option of securing accommodation in the private sector, registering with “Homefinder” for a permanent social let outside of London, accessing more affordable private rented accommodation outside of London with a resettlement support package in the local area. Also, we have increased our stage one accommodation which we use to place families and single applicants in, pending a move into alternative accommodation.

Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation

“I think housing needs to be long-term so people feel secure” – Consultation response

The Council is committed to reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation, providing more housing options to support households to live independently.

Where appropriate, we will make use of new powers under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, discharging our prevention and relief duty by helping applicants access housing in the private sector within 56 days of them coming to us with a housing issue. For some households, renting in the private sector may not be a realistic option immediately; in which case the council will provide suitable temporary accommodation.

Improving access to accommodation & support

“Help people specifically with a range of mental health support needs access supported accommodation in the community following the Housing First model” – Consultation response

Access to accommodation and support is key to achieving an end to rough sleeping. To secure this, we have a well-established route into a range of supported and general needs accommodation for rough sleepers as well as people at risk of rough sleeping. We are reviewing all existing supported housing services.

These services currently include:

- First stage assessment beds
- Medium and 24-hour high support supported housing including self-contained facilities and training flats
- Housing First, an innovative approach for people with multiple and complex needs, which was piloted then expanded in 2019/20
- Good access to move-on options in the private rented sector and social housing.
- In-reach health services including nurse-led clinics
- Peer support

We are now recommissioning these services. We are also recommissioning our services for rough sleepers, and making sure all of our services are appropriate considering COVID-19; choosing self-contained accommodation over 'crash pad' style shared spaces.

"We also need to establish that when we talk about safe housing, we are including public health approaches in housing to ensure these are healthy spaces. We must build on the lessons from Covid-19 around this." – Consultation response

Coordinated services

Early intervention to prevent people from sleeping rough is key to achieving our goal of ending rough sleeping. Therefore, we want services that are approachable and sensitive to the needs of people - services that encourage people to engage and get the help they need.

Those services need to be joined-up and working well together. They also need to be promoted well so people know where to go for help. We need to get it right first time and avoid people's circumstances worsening. We are strengthening the way that Adult Social Care and Housing working together, to improve access to multiple services at once.

"A government's most important function is to ensure that its citizens have food, shelter, and safety. Some take that job more seriously than others, and I'm proud to live in a place that's at least trying to do better" – Consultation response

Drug and Alcohol Support

Despite some media portrayals, many people who experience homelessness do not have drug or alcohol support needs. But some homeless residents – just like some residents in general – do have one or more support needs, such as a mental illness, or issues with drug and alcohol use. Homelessness can be complicated. Providing access to affordable housing is not always enough to help residents break the cycle of homelessness. To provide a proper service to homeless residents, we need to make sure residents have access to the right support as well as access to housing. This support includes drug and alcohol services, where needed.

H&F's Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service, and The Alcohol Service

H&F have specialist services which support people with drug and alcohol support needs. Adult Social Care work with Housing to help people access these services – to make sure residents' housing and support needs are both addressed.

H&F's Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service (DAWS) and The Alcohol Service (TAS) work in partnership with other agencies to reach as many residents as possible. DAWS and TAS also work with Housing to ensure that any housing needs are identified during their assessments, and action plans are put in place to reduce the likelihood of homelessness - sustaining tenancies. If someone working with DAWS and TAS is already homeless, DAWS and TAS work with the relevant housing teams to assess eligibility for housing assistance.

Substance use services for rough sleepers

DAWS, delivered by Turning Point, provide outreach to rough sleeper projects and hostels. DAWS also conduct street outreach to ensure that offers of housing by local services are given alongside access to treatment. This is supported by the DAWS immediate on-the-day access to treatment and prescribing service - 'OutDAWS'.

Drug and Alcohol Support and the pandemic

H&F's Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service (DAWS) and The Alcohol Service (TAS) work in partnership with other agencies to reach as many residents as possible. During the pandemic DAWS have received extra support from the community, including supplies for the Basic Supplies Project, as well as volunteer delivery drivers, and support from Fulham FC, whose club Doctor volunteered in the DAWS Covid Rough Sleepers Response.

The Alcohol Service provided by Change, Grow Live (CGL) played a key role in supporting people placed in hotels when lockdown initially took place. CGL provided an 8am-9pm support service led by a Nurse with on-call support from the Lead Nurse and Consultant Psychiatrist, as well as raising awareness with partners and support staff in hotels. TAS also provided support at the very start of the pandemic to the end of September, whilst rough sleepers were living in hotels. Nurses and doctors also worked collaboratively with partnership agencies and sign posted some residents to continue the treatment after they were moved from hotels to different accommodation.

Private sector housing and housing quality

The law allows us to discharge a homelessness duty to a household if we can secure a private sector tenancy with a 'fit and proper' landlord. The only condition is that the accommodation must be affordable and suitable for the household's needs.

For many years, we have been brokering private rented sector accommodation for households faced with homelessness, as an alternative to Temporary Accommodation: assisting 150 households this way in 2017/18. Many households seeking temporary accommodation will have been living in the private rented sector for years until they encountered a crisis, such as unemployment, arrears, a rise in rent, or ill health.

Some landlords have been hesitant for us to meet local housing needs through assisting people into private rented accommodation. However, it is important that we work with landlords to improve access to private rented housing. With social housing shortages, we can help more people by assisting them to live in the private rented sector. When doing this, we demand that good lettable standards are maintained.

We set an example for private landlords, using our powers of persuasion and negotiation to bring about improvements in standards. Where this fails, we step in to enforce robustly against inadequate stock maintenance and poor management in the private sector, sustaining tenancies wherever we can to control the re-occurring cycle of homelessness.

While landlords are aware that we have limited powers to bridge the gap between the local housing allowance and the market rents, most of our local landlords strongly support us to raise standards in the sector. Our promise is to be vigilant in reporting rogue landlords and eliminating them from council's property procurement process. It is important that the council supports responsible tenants and ensures that landlords provide good quality accommodation.

Private sector evictions and the pandemic

There has been a moratorium on evictions throughout the pandemic for all but the most extreme cases. In 2020 this meant tenants in the private rented sector were protected from eviction, but this could be storing up problems for the future. Research has shown that many private tenants are accruing arrears; we are likely to see more residents threatened with homelessness from the private rented sector once evictions proceedings start up again. We have strengthened our

relationships with colleagues working in private sector housing enforcement and are

CASE STUDY – HOUSING FIRST

W is a 51-year-old female. W experienced a chaotic and abusive childhood and was alcohol dependent from an early age. After a long prison sentence, W was asked to leave the family home which led to sofa surfing and eventual street homelessness. To cope with her traumas and the challenges of rough sleeping, W began to use crack and heroin which led to a rapid deterioration in her mental health. In 2015, W moved in hostel accommodation but it became quickly apparent this was an unsuitable environment and her substance use increased dramatically and her physical and mental health declined. During this time W made a number of intentional suicide attempts and she was sectioned three times in a 12-month period.

W began working with Housing First in 2017. W was supported to engage with substance use services and, despite a few early relapses, she has now maintained abstinence since October 2017 when she moved into independent accommodation. W engages positively with mental health services and there have been no instances of self-harm or suicidal ideation. Working with primary healthcare W now receives treatment for arthritis, hypothyroidism, COPD and neuropathic pain which impairs her mobility. Having her health issues clarified has given W more of a sense of ownership and she is now very proactive in managing her conditions.

Due to her social vulnerability W has, with high levels of support around assertiveness and boundaries, cut herself off from her previous peer group and is a central figure in her new community. Despite her health conditions she is regularly seen litter picking, dropping hot meals off to elderly neighbours and walking ill neighbours' dogs with her mobility scooter.

OUR PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

OUR PRINCIPLES

Looking at our vision and values alongside our national and local context, we have identified three core principles to underpin our mission to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.

PRINCIPLE 1. EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

We want to focus our services and partnerships on addressing homelessness early before residents reach crisis point. We are building robust, people-centred solutions to homelessness.

77% of respondents to the strategy consultation identified early intervention as key to preventing homelessness.

This principle marries three corporate values: Caring & Compassionate Council; Doing things with Residents, not to them; and Ruthlessly Financially Efficient. We know by doing things with residents, not to them, we are more likely to achieve resident centred solutions that succeed in intervening early. We know that early intervention reflects care and compassion but also financial efficiency by saving both the human cost of homelessness and rough sleeping as well as the financial cost to the taxpayer of escalation to crisis.

PRINCIPLE 2. RESIDENT FOCUS

Through enhanced partnership working, early intervention and more efficient handling of residents' cases, we want to improve residents' experience and develop a more seamless and collaborative way of working to serve our residents.

Responses to our consultation emphasised the importance of building trust with residents. This principle marries the values of a Caring & Compassionate Council with doing things with Residents, not to them. H&F is committed to creating a culture of co-production; working with residents and involving them in decision making. We know by working with residents we can improve the resident experience and more effectively meet needs, and create the services residents want and need. Our commitment to co-production will be underpinned by a people focused approach, with continuous analysis of our data and a willingness to pilot new and innovative solutions.

PRINCIPLE 3. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We want to work closely with third sector partners and other public authorities to prevent homelessness; recognising that we all have an important part to play in intervening earlier and supporting residents.

In responses to our consultation, we were reminded of the expertise of our partners. Our corporate value of doing things with, not to, compels us to work collaboratively with our West-London partners, pan-London, our private providers and across the council services and departments.

INTRODUCING THE FIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our five strategic objectives form our plan to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping. These objectives are; **End Rough Sleeping in H&F for Good, Better Partnership Working, The Right Housing Solutions, Improved Resident Experience: Every Contact Counts, and Safe Housing Solutions.**

These objectives are 'live;' they respond to the changing landscape in housing, as well as the Rough Sleeping Commission's Report. While the Housing Strategy explores these issues more broadly, here we focus in on what needs doing now.

OBJECTIVE 1: END ROUGH SLEEPING IN H&F FOR GOOD

“This cannot just be about dealing with homelessness, but addressing the many factors that lead to it, i.e. treat the causes not the symptom” – Consultation response

Our Commitment

We are determined to ensure no one has to sleep rough in Hammersmith and Fulham by 2022 and will do this by implementing a stronger prevention framework; better coordination of our emergency response; and ensuring the adequate supply of a range of housing options and support for rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping

Action Plan

Implement a stronger prevention framework across a range of organisations:

- Ensure everyone at risk of rough sleeping is accommodated by adopting a No First Night Out approach in our housing solutions service
- Involve the public in tackling rough sleeping through Hackathons; information campaigns; working with local businesses
- Build stronger partnerships and more joined-up services across health, social care, housing, public health, the police, and voluntary organisations.
- Embed a psychologically informed environment² approach in supported housing and other rough sleeper services to increase engagement and prevent a return to rough sleeping
- Ensure support is available to private tenants at risk of sleeping rough
- Provide clear information and early signposting to services that people need to prevent rough sleeping
- Work with West London regional authorities to deliver the Somewhere Safe to Stay hub for people at risk of rough sleeping
- Develop our links with faith and community-based organisations to raise awareness and identify solutions to rough sleeping
- Work with local prisons and probation teams to improve access to accommodation for people leaving prison.
- Establish a multi-agency panel for early intervention to prevent evictions from social housing.

Better coordinating our emergency response

- We will build on existing local and pan-London services to provide a co-ordinated emergency response to prevent rough sleeping and for people who are already rough sleeping. We will develop our emergency response by:
- Providing a new emergency night-time “crash pad” for up to eight rough sleepers who cannot access hostels or other forms of accommodation. This means we will have an immediate solution for rough sleepers who are not eligible for other services
- Providing more legal advice for people who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough
- Working with the voluntary sector to organise and design day services around the experience of people who sleep rough
- Ensuring the Outreach Team can respond rapidly to help people off the streets
- Ensuring we fully implement the emergency protocols in severe weather periods

Ensure access to and adequate supply of a range of housing options and support for people at risk of or rough sleeping.

- Review the priority banding for the nomination quota available for people moving on from supported housing
- Expand the Housing First service for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping with multiple needs
- Work with private landlords and Registered Providers to increase access to housing for rough sleepers
- Reduce evictions and the length of stay in supported housing
- Provide floating support to help people manage and sustain their accommodation
- Reduce the waiting time for people in the No Second Night Out Hub and temporary accommodation to access supported housing.

OBJECTIVE 2: BETTER PARTNERSHIP WORKING

“There are many charities that provide support for the homeless... they all have differing experience and expertise in helping the homeless so it would be good to have a coordinated approach.” – consultation response

Our Commitment

Work with a range of third sector partners and other public bodies to maximise early intervention and homelessness prevention.

Action Plan

- Continue to establish the new ‘duty to refer’ with other public bodies, ensuring that it is working effectively to inform us when residents are at risk of homelessness so that we can intervene earlier.
- Use the data that we are gathering from referrals from other public bodies to understand the trends and focus in the right places.
- Expand our joint learning with internal and external partners so that they can better understand the housing offer; working towards a unified message to residents about how we can help.
- Make the best use of our third sector advice contracts to achieve better prevention of homelessness outcomes.
- Work more efficiently so that we can free up time to focus on prevention before the point of crisis.
- Maximise opportunities to access government funding to assist us in providing a better service.
- Providing support for young people including tackling worklessness and ensuring strong links with partners including drugs and alcohol services, and mental health when required.

OBJECTIVE 3: THE RIGHT HOUSING SOLUTIONS

“Quicker void turnaround in social housing to ensure flats are occupied to their maximum potential”
– Consultation response

Our Commitment

We will deliver a diverse range of housing solutions to meet the housing needs of our residents.

Action Plan

- Introduce and make available a variety of new packages to assist our residents seeking to access the private rented market.
- Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by securing more affordable rehousing opportunities in the private rented market.
- Review the Council's void programme and employ new contractors to deliver improvements and efficiencies to minimise void times and bring properties back into use for residents.
- Work to deliver up to 1,500 new genuinely affordable homes and 500 homes for part ownership.
- Carry out a full review of the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme in consultation with registered providers and residents to ensure we prioritise those households with the greatest housing need.
- Identify and create new innovative rehousing routes to deliver a choice of housing solutions for residents. We are carrying out tenancy audits to get to know our residents better to provide a mix of affordable housing options, including homes for social and private rents, ownership and part-ownership.
- Review and update the Accessible Housing Register
- Build closer working relationships with Registered Providers in the borough through regular liaisons to maximise modern and innovative housing opportunities.
- We will work with our partner RBKC (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) to provide 9 additional caravan pitches for H&F Gypsy and Traveller communities by 2030 in line with the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA)
- Carry out a houseboat dwellers accommodation needs assessment

OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVED RESIDENT EXPERIENCE: EVERY CONTACT COUNTS

"It is of the utmost importance that these people can deal with people they trust...This is not just a clerical job." – Consultation response

Our Commitment

We will handle every case with sensitivity and proficiency and make every contact count. This is increasingly important as residents who approach the Housing Solutions service as homeless or at risk of homelessness are usually in crisis and experiencing several stresses in their lives.

Action Plan

- Improve resident satisfaction of the Housing Solutions service ensuring their experience of the service feels joined-up, seamless, is as efficient as possible, and residents feel empowered and supported, not having to unnecessarily navigate multiple departments and agencies.
- Ensure staff-resident interactions are slicker and steps and processes for services delivered are clearer and communicated effectively by trained and competent staff.
- Increase the supply of affordable accommodation and provide extensive homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment support for households.
- Mitigate the effects of welfare benefit changes by providing tailored advice and support and increasing employment/training opportunities, whilst working in partnership with relevant statutory services and voluntary sector to achieve sustainable outcomes for those affected.
- Continue to gather evidence for more effective service delivery and embed the messages to develop preventative approaches to: address problems earlier; reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness applications; reduce the use of and improve move on from temporary accommodation; reduce level of arrears and sustain tenancies and put an end to no fault evictions; and help people with complex needs and no access to public funds.

OBJECTIVE 5: SAFE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

“somewhere to sleep, feel safe is a human right.” – Consultation response

Our Commitment

Delivering safe housing solutions by supporting high standards in the private rented sector, working with the third sector to support victims of domestic violence, and maintaining our record of no children in B&B accommodation, and prioritising fire, gas, water, electrical, lift and asbestos safety in our own stock.

Action Plan

- reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation, providing more housing options to enable households to live independently.
- Continue to work in partnership with Children’s Services and Health and other statutory and non-statutory agencies and the third sector to support survivors of domestic abuse into safe accommodation and to reduce exposure of children to domestic abuse
- successfully retained zero families with dependent children in bed and breakfast or nightly rate accommodation
- be vigilant in reporting rogue landlords and eliminating them from the Council’s procurement process
- support responsible tenants and ensure that landlords provide a good quality

STRATEGY ON A PAGE

The mission to prevent homelessness & end rough sleeping

Principles

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 EARLY INTERVENTION & PREVENTION | Focusing our services & partnerships on addressing homelessness early before residents reach crisis point. Building robust, people-centred solutions to homelessness. |
| 2 RESIDENT FOCUS | Enhanced partnership working, early intervention and efficient handling of residents' cases to improve residents' experiences. |
| 3 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP | Close work with partners to prevent homelessness seeing all intervening earlier & supporting residents to prevent homelessness & rough sleeping. |

Strategic Objectives

Actions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING IN H&F FOR GOOD | Stronger prevention framework better coordinated emergency response adequate supply of a range of housing options & support |
| 2 PARTNERSHIP WORKING | Working with a range of third sector partners and other public bodies to maximise early intervention and homelessness prevention. |
| 3 THE RIGHT HOUSING SOLUTIONS | Diverse range of housing solutions reflecting residents housing needs |
| 4 RESIDENT EXPERIENCE & EVERY CONTACT COUNTS | Handle every case with sensitivity and proficiency and make every contact count. |
| 5 SAFE HOUSING SOLUTIONS | Raise our own fire, health and safety standards and set an example in the private rented sector, work with the 3 rd sector to support victims of Domestic Violence |

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