

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026

## Draft for public consultation

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## Foreword by the Mayor

Too often I hear from local families in Newham who are homeless or live in insecure, overcrowded or substandard housing and my heart goes out to them.

I know what it is like having had the experience of losing my family home when I was younger and spending several years living in temporary accommodation.

I know nothing is more important than a place to call home.

That why is when I was elected in 2018, I made a pledge to make tackling our homelessness crisis a priority.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is our plan to make a difference.

We want to hear from you because homelessness is something we have to tackle together as a community and your experiences and viewpoints will make our plan better. We are keen to hear from all residents, particularly those with lived experience of homelessness and those working or volunteering to support people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Homelessness is particularly serious issue in Newham because national government economic policy has hit our community hardest. In Newham many people with low incomes and insecure jobs are being forced to pay high rents in the private rented sector.

We need to be ambitious about housing in Newham if more people are to have a place to call home. We plan to build 1,000 new Council-owned homes to be let at social rent levels by 2022, which will enable more of our residents to stay in Newham.

Newham Council is more than prepared to rise to the challenge and will be investing £1 billion in new housing. We can't do it alone and that's why we plan to work with partners such as local institutions, the local voluntary, community, and faith sector, and private rented sector landlords.

Government has to help too. They have such power to make a difference when they choose to do their job of helping people live better lives. We saw at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic that a government injection of funding dramatically reduced rough sleeping, not just in Newham but nationally. We have a right to expect that they will help get rid of homelessness permanently.

**Rokhsana Fiaz OBE, Mayor of Newham**

## Introduction

In December 2019 the Council published its first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in a decade. Since the publication of the strategy, we have had a number of successes:

- A reduction in the annual rough sleeping count from 64 to 6, the largest proportional drop in the country, which has been recognised by the Secretary of State as exceptional;
- Establishing an Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service;
- Agreeing to purchase a building which will host a flagship Rough Sleeping Assessment Centre;
- The launch of a transformation of the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Support (HPAS) service;
- A reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation; and
- Sourcing external grant funds
- In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, moving all families from shared temporary accommodation to self-contained homes.
- Developing a vision for statutory homelessness based on prevention and early intervention following assessment of individual needs.

However a considerable challenge remains; access to quality housing in which residents can make a long-term home, remains out of reach for many. A home is not only a source of shelter but a safe and secure place to live, bring up a family, relax, work and develop roots within a community.

This strategy sets out an intelligence-led, public health approach to tackling homelessness, and improving access to, and the quality of, housing within the borough. Prevention will be a golden thread woven through everything we do, ensuring residents have access to the support they need, when they require it. Our overarching aim is to reduce homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping, ensuring no resident is left with no other option but to sleep on the street or forced to live in dangerous or transient accommodation.

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan setting out specific actions we will take, and a review of homelessness in the Borough, which comprises a review of the previous strategy's action plan, alongside data on the state of homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough.

The vision set out in the strategy is for a future in which:

- No one is sleeping rough or forced to live in dangerous or transient accommodation;
- Everyone at risk of homelessness gets the tailored help they need to prevent it;
- There is an end to 'revolving door' homelessness;
- There is access to affordable, secure and fit homes; and
- The council is working in partnership with others to provide support to those who need it, when they need it.

The vision will be delivered through six overarching principles, which form the structure of this strategy:

1. Understand current and future housing need
2. Prevent homelessness through early help
3. Support people to move off the streets and stay off the streets

4. Improve access to better housing that meets the needs of residents
5. Reduce the use of temporary accommodation
6. Adopt a partnership approach to preventing homelessness and improving wellbeing

## Context

### Defining homelessness

Homelessness does not only describe the condition of people visibly sleeping rough; it also includes those households to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority. This wider definition includes those with no access to suitable accommodation such as people staying with family and friends, people living in squats and those in temporary accommodation provided by the Council or those threatened with Homelessness within 56 days with no alternative suitable accommodation.

### Statutory framework

Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996) sets out the definition of homelessness, and the duties that local authorities owe to applicants who are accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The Council has a duty to provide accommodation if there is reason to believe that an applicant may be eligible, homeless and in priority need. If these criteria are met, interim accommodation is arranged for the applicant until a decision has been reached on their application. If the Council decides that it owes the 'main homelessness duty' to an applicant, they will be offered temporary accommodation until they find their own accommodation or are made a final offer of accommodation, or the duty ends in another way. The Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) requires a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district, to be renewed at least every five years and consulted upon by other local or public authorities or voluntary organisations.

In 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan which stated that all local authorities must update their homelessness strategies and rename them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies. The Strategies must be made available online and submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Local authorities must report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) made significant changes to the Housing Act (1996) and placed a number of new duties upon local authorities. These include:

- To assess the cause of homelessness, circumstances and needs of all household members, including children.
- To develop and agree with applicants a personalised plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that local authorities have a duty to prevent homelessness from an earlier stage.
- New duties to assess all eligible applicants (not just those unintentionally homeless and in priority need), and new duties to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness.

- A duty on public authorities to refer service users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to the housing authority (with the consent of the individual)
- Services must be designed to meet the needs of specific groups including care leavers, people leaving hospital / prison and victims of domestic violence.

The Localism Act (2011) also amended the 1996 Housing Act by allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty by arranging a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.

The National Rough Sleeping Strategy, published August 2018, sets out the Government target of halving rough sleeping by 2022 eradicating all street homelessness by 2027. It emphasises three aspects of its approach: Prevention, Intervention and Recovery.

The Domestic Abuse Act, which was signed into law in April 2021 places a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. It makes provision that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' status for homelessness assistance.

### National context

Over recent years, homelessness has been rising nationally, with the number of households accepted as statutory homeless in 2019 being 42% higher than the low point in 2009<sup>1</sup>. At the end of 2020 Crisis estimated that there were 200,000 'core' homeless households in Great Britain. This is down slightly from the previous year's figure of 220,000 due to the emergency measures put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>. These measures included income protection programmes such as the rise in Local Housing Allowance, a moratorium on evictions, and the 'everyone in' directive which instructed local authorities to find temporary housing for all rough sleepers.

However, despite these successes, the economic impacts of Covid-19 are likely to contribute to greater financial and social precarity. Unless met with sufficient welfare and housing interventions from central Government, this is likely to drive up rates of homelessness.

While the causes of homelessness for individual households vary, there are a few agreed reasons for the long-term national rise:

#### **Failure of Local Housing Allowance to keep pace with rents**

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is the maximum amount of housing benefit a private renter can claim to help them pay their rent. When first introduced in 2008, the rate was calculated to cover rent for the cheapest 50% of the housing market in a household's local area, known as 'Broad Rental Market Area'. Since 2011, the rate has been reduced to cover only the bottom 30% of the local housing market, reducing the pool of properties available. In 2013, the link between LHA rates and actual rent increases was broken, resulting in a two-year 1% rise and a four-year freeze from April 2016, during which time actual rents continued to rise rapidly, particularly in London.

Analysis by London Councils has shown that on average, only 8% of the housing rental market across all of London is affordable on LHA. In the Outer East London Broad Rental

<sup>1</sup> Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019* (London: Crisis, 2019), p. xvii  
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2019/>

<sup>2</sup> Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021* (London: Crisis, 2021), p. xv  
<https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244702/crisis-england-monitor-2021.pdf>

Market Area, which covers Newham, less than 2% of one-bedroom properties, less than 5% of two-bedroom and four-bedroom properties, and less than 10% of three-bedroom properties are affordable on the 2019/20 LHA rates<sup>3</sup>. This means that many households have been forced to rent properties where LHA doesn't cover the rent, and make up the shortfall themselves.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the Government realigned LHA rates with the 30% percentile, however it has since announced that the rate will be frozen again. If rents continue to rise, this will reopen the gap between LHA and actual rents. As a London Borough where rents tend to rise rapidly year on year, Newham is particularly vulnerable to this dynamic.

### **Benefit cap and Universal Credit**

The benefit cap was introduced in 2013 at £26,000 per year (£500 per week) which was the average family income in the UK – the aim was to both reduce Government spending and tackle perverse incentives that meant that in some cases, benefits paid better than paid employment. This has since been reduced, and the current benefit cap in London is £23,000 a year (£20,000 outside London). As a result, many households have seen their benefits effectively cut, especially in London where Housing Benefit claims are particularly high as a result of high rents.

The number of households subject to the benefit cap rose 8% between May and November 2020, mainly as a result of Covid-19.<sup>4</sup> This is due to a range of factors across households, including furlough or a loss of working hours reducing their monthly earnings, so that they are no longer exempt from the cap, or losing their job altogether. Some households found themselves newly capped because of the increases in Universal Credit and LHA rate meaning their benefit income now exceeds the cap.

Universal Credit was introduced in 2013, with the aim of simplifying the benefits system, rolling a number of different benefits including Housing Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance into one monthly payment. Rollout has been gradual but will be complete by 2022. New claimants for Universal Credit must wait five weeks for their first payment potentially compounding existing problems with debt and rent arrears, as many claimants do not have savings to support them during this waiting time. People also need to have a bank account and be able to use a computer or smartphone, which can exclude some of the most vulnerable groups from accessing benefits.

Charities have also noted that some claimants who had previously had Housing Benefit paid directly to their landlord, are now responsible for paying rent from a monthly budget under Universal Credit. This change has led to some households falling into arrears, raising concerns about eviction and homelessness.<sup>5</sup>

### **A declining social housing supply, and an expanding private rented sector**

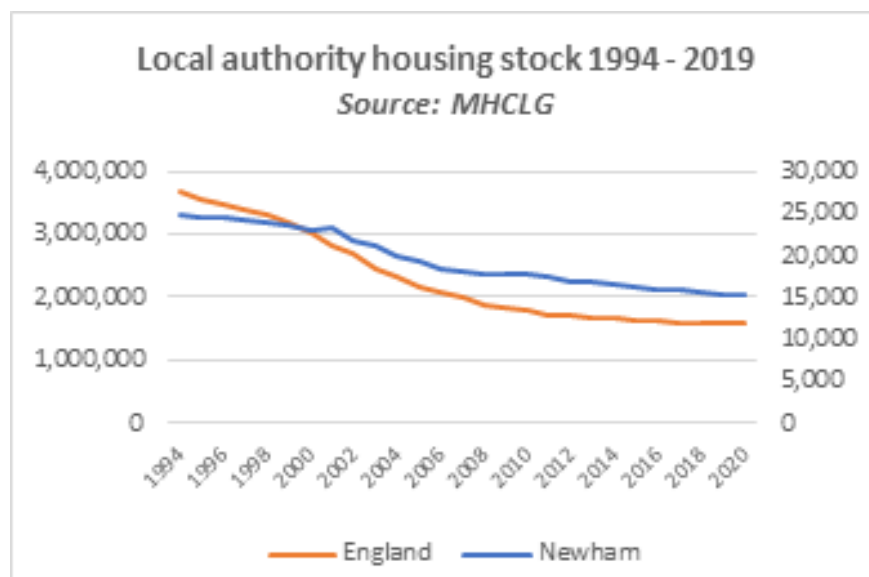
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<sup>3</sup> London Councils, "Local Housing Allowance", <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/tracking-welfare-reforms/local-housing-allowance> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>4</sup> Child Poverty Action Group, "170,000 Households Hit By Benefit Cap", 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/170000-households-hit-benefit-cap#:~:text=At%20a%20minimum%20the%20cap,children's%20basic%20needs.%E2%80%9D&text=The%20level%20of%20the%20cap,lone%20parents%20outside%20the%20capital> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>5</sup> Crisis, "Universal Credit" <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/benefits-and-employment/universal-credit/> [accessed 25.05.21]

Since the 1980s, the number of new Council and social-rented properties has been steadily declining. This is the result of two processes: fewer new homes being built, and existing Council homes being sold through the Right to Buy. This means that large numbers of low-income households have been unable to access low-cost housing and have instead found homes in the private rented sector.



The lack of security of tenure in the private rented sector make low-income tenants vulnerable to eviction. In particular, Section 21 ‘no-fault’ evictions allow landlords to end an assured shorthold tenancy without needing to give a reason. The Government has committed to ending this practice but has not yet introduced legislation to do so.

The growth of the private rented sector is an important trend related to homelessness. The end of a private rented sector tenancy is a leading trigger for homelessness applications. Nationally, over a fifth of applicants in 2019/20 judged homeless or threatened with homelessness were in this position due the loss of an existing tenancy in the private rented sector (22%).<sup>6</sup>

### Reduced affordability of housing in the private sector over the long term

Private sector housing costs are taking up an increasing share of incomes, as incomes fail to keep pace with rising rents. This trend is particularly apparent in London, where the cost of housing is particularly high. In London, someone on the median pre-tax pay in London would need to spend 46.4% of their income on an average one-bedroom house or flat on the private market. This contrasts with the rest of England, where only 24.1% of median pre-tax pay would need to be spent on an average one-bedroom house or flat on the private market.<sup>7</sup>

Rent levels are determined by the market, and are not subject to caps or controls. As noted above, LHA rates and incomes are not rising at the same rate as rents, but due to a lack of regulation, Councils are unable to take action against this rising cost of housing.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021* (London: Crisis, 2021), p47

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244702/crisis-england-monitor-2021.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Trust for London, “London rent as a percentage of gross pay”,

<https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/rent-affordability-borough/> [accessed 24.05.21]

## Impact of Covid-19

The economic impact of Covid-19, including furlough, job losses and loss of income for self-employed workers has resulted in income losses for many households, and this can affect their ability to afford housing costs. A study from LSE in May 2021 estimates that some 10% of private tenants may be unemployed, about double the average rate.<sup>8</sup> Given projections of unemployment and the relationship between unemployment and rent arrears, over 400,000 tenant households might be expected to be in significant arrears at the end of 2021.<sup>9</sup>

It is estimated that over 750,000 families nationwide were behind with their housing payments in January 2021, 300,000 of which contained dependent children<sup>10</sup>. The LSE study estimates that around 6 – 7% of tenants appear to be in arrears— around twice the ‘normal’ proportion before the Covid-19 pandemic. It also notes that the longer tenants remain in accommodation where they are unable to afford the rent, the higher their future debts will be and the greater difficulties facing both tenant and landlord.<sup>11</sup>

The effect of this economic impact is predicted to create a rise in homelessness as the temporary ban on evictions is lifted.

## Extensions of the duty local authorities owe

In recent years, the number of people who can seek support due to homelessness has risen. As noted above, the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force in 2018, increased the scope of duties owed by Councils. Whereas before 2018, Councils only had statutory duties to support households in priority need, they now also have additional prevention and relief duties.

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<sup>8</sup> Whitehead, C. et al, *Homelessness and rough sleeping in the time of Covid-19* (London: LSE, 2021), p4, <https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/119/files/2021/05/homelessness-reportfinal-1.pdf> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>9</sup> Whitehead, C. et al, *Homelessness and rough sleeping in the time of Covid-19* (London: LSE, 2021), p4, <https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/119/files/2021/05/homelessness-reportfinal-1.pdf> [accessed 24.05.21]

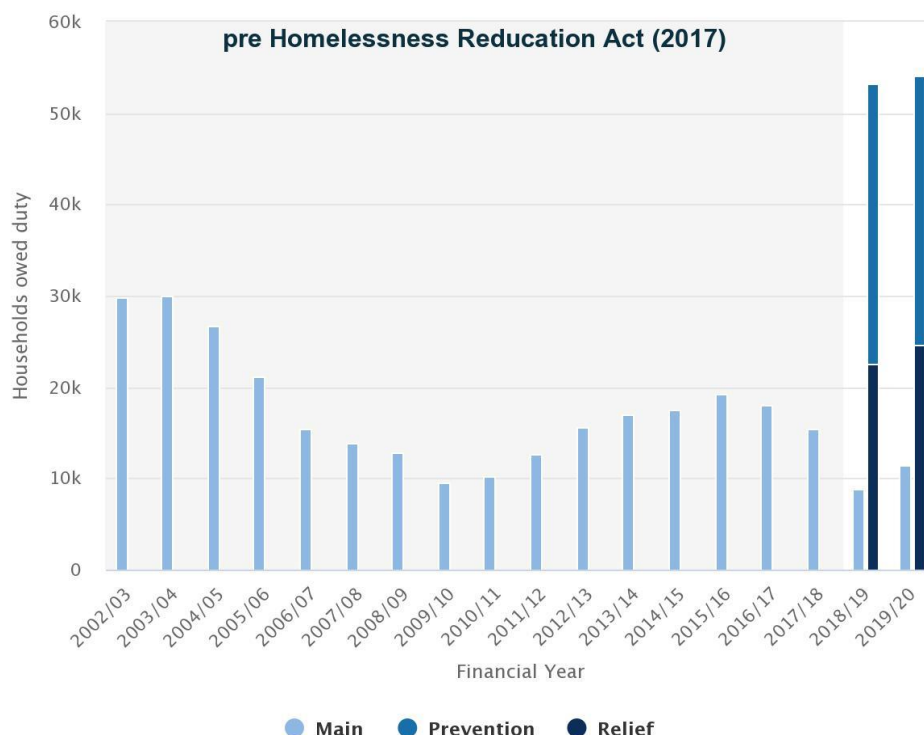
<sup>10</sup> Judge, L. “A loan scheme for renters could stop tenants from being made homeless”, Resolution Foundation, blog post published 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/comment/loan-scheme-for-renters/> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>11</sup> Whitehead, C. et al, *Homelessness and rough sleeping in the time of Covid-19* (London: LSE, 2021), p4, <https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/119/files/2021/05/homelessness-reportfinal-1.pdf> [accessed 24.05.21]



## Number of households London boroughs owe homelessness duties to by type of duty (2003/04 - 2019/20)

Data source: Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed, MHCLG



London's Poverty Profile 2020

### London context

Statutory homelessness figures for London are at a 15-year high, with 62,670 households living in temporary accommodation..<sup>12</sup> More than two-thirds (68%) of all homeless people living in temporary accommodation are in London – this equates to 1 every 52 people living in the capital<sup>13</sup>. Crisis' projection model indicates that if policy continues along pre-Covid lines, core homelessness will continue to rise, with London seeing the largest increase (91%) over 2012-41<sup>14</sup>. A key factor in London's high rate of homelessness is the high cost of housing when compared with other areas of the UK.

A total of 2,688 rough sleepers nationally were recorded in autumn 2020, of whom 44% were in London and the south east.<sup>15</sup> This represented a 37% decrease on the previous year, however it is notable that the 'everyone in' directive was still in place at the time of the study.

<sup>12</sup> Barker, N. "London homelessness pressures reaching 'worst-ever levels', councils warn", *Inside Housing*, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020, <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/london-homelessness-pressures-reaching-worst-ever-levels-councils-warn-69004> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>13</sup> Shelter, *Homeless and Forgotten: Surviving lockdown in temporary accommodation* (London: Shelter, 2020), p7 [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/2036803/TA\\_report\\_FINAL\\_PDF.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2036803/TA_report_FINAL_PDF.pdf) [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>14</sup> Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021* (London: Crisis, 2021), p75 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244702/crisis-england-monitor-2021.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, W. and Barton, C. *Rough Sleeping (England)* [Briefing Paper] London: House of Commons Library, 2021), p4 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN02007/SN02007.pdf> [accessed 24.05.21]

The London rough sleeper population climbed year-on-year from 2017/18, and it is likely that the decrease experienced in 2020/21 was greatly affected by 'everyone in'.

The Mayor's London Housing Strategy (2018) set out its approach to preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping in policies 7.1 and 7.2. While the powers of the GLA are limited in tackling homelessness, the strategy included the following commitments, focussed on funding, boosting collaboration, and supporting boroughs and third-sector organisations:

- Support for councils to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act, including calling on Government to ensure councils have adequate funding to deliver their new duties
- Coordinating and leading the No Nights Sleeping Rough taskforce to bring together key partners involved in supporting rough sleepers off the street Improving data collection on why and how people end up sleeping rough
- Allocate around £8.5 million per year to fund a range of pan-London services that work alongside borough services to identify rough sleepers and intervene rapidly to support them off the street
- Working with councils to take a significantly more collaborative approach to securing private rented accommodation for homeless households
- Work with Government, boroughs and refuge providers to explore the scope for London-wide refuge provision for victims of domestic abuse, and of other violence against women and girls
- Work with councils to ensure they meet the obligations to veterans who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so

## **Homelessness in Newham**

### **Newham's population**

Newham's population is young and growing rapidly; it is projected to reach 480,000 by 2050, more than doubling the population of the 1980s. The delivery of new homes has not kept up with this growth, with the number of homes increasing by 14% in the period 2008-2018, and the population growing by 25%.

Newham has the lowest average wages in London. 27% of employees in the borough are paid under the national statutory minimum wage and more than half of Newham residents (55%) are paid less than the London Living wage. The high cost of housing compounds the disadvantages faced by those on low incomes, and 49% of Newham residents are in poverty after housing costs are considered.

Newham is the most diverse local authority in the UK. Just over 72% of Newham's residents are from a minority ethnicity, compared with 43.5% in London overall. No single ethnic group predominates in Newham, contributing to its unique and hyper-diverse demographic character.

### **The housing crisis in Newham**

Rents have been rising across London, and Newham is no exception. Wages have failed to keep pace with this rise; between 2011 and 2020:

- rents in Newham increased by 55%;
- house prices increased by 87%; but
- wages only rose by 37%.

This is a particular problem given that around one in three residents live in the private rented sector (compared with one in four across London), with almost 50,000 private rented homes.

This proportion has risen steeply over the last twenty years, with only 17% of residents in the private rented sector in 2001.

The private rented sector is the largest tenure in Newham's housing sector, but is also the most unstable, and because of high costs and low rights in this sector, residents can find their housing to be especially vulnerable to changes in their economic circumstances. Newham also has the highest rate of evictions of any London borough, at 3.2 per 1,000 households compared to 1.7 for London overall.<sup>16</sup>

In line with trends across the country, the provision of social-rented housing has failed to keep pace with need, and private sector delivery has proven inadequate. In addition, the Right to Buy, which offers substantial discounts on the sale of Council properties, has proven to be particularly lucrative in Newham due to high property values in London and this has further reduced the supply of social rented accommodation. 47% of Council homes sold under right to buy in Newham are not occupied by former council tenants, as the properties are 'flipped' to be rented out in the private sector. In the last 25 years the council's housing stock has fallen by 35% with a loss of 9000 homes.

As a result of this undersupply, Newham has one of the longest Housing Registers in London at over 28,000 applicants, with only around 600 properties becoming available each year. Limited access to Council properties means many are forced to occupy properties in the private rented sector despite being on low wages or having a recognised housing need. The average waiting time for a three-bed property, for a household with a housing need, is over 13 years.

The affordability of homes for sale has also been falling over recent years. Newham has seen the largest rise in house prices anywhere in the UK between 1999 and 2019, according to data from Halifax. Newham's average house prices rose by 429.0% over a 20-year period, from £75,762 to £400,574.<sup>17</sup>

### **The impact of Covid-19 on Newham**

Newham has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic and has seen the greatest number of excess deaths between March 2020 and January 2021 of anywhere in the UK. The excess deaths during this period is 54% higher than the five-year average, compared with a 19.6% increase across the UK as a whole.<sup>18</sup> This aligned with a national trend which saw the areas with the highest rates of poverty and deprivation also experience high case numbers and deaths from Covid-19.

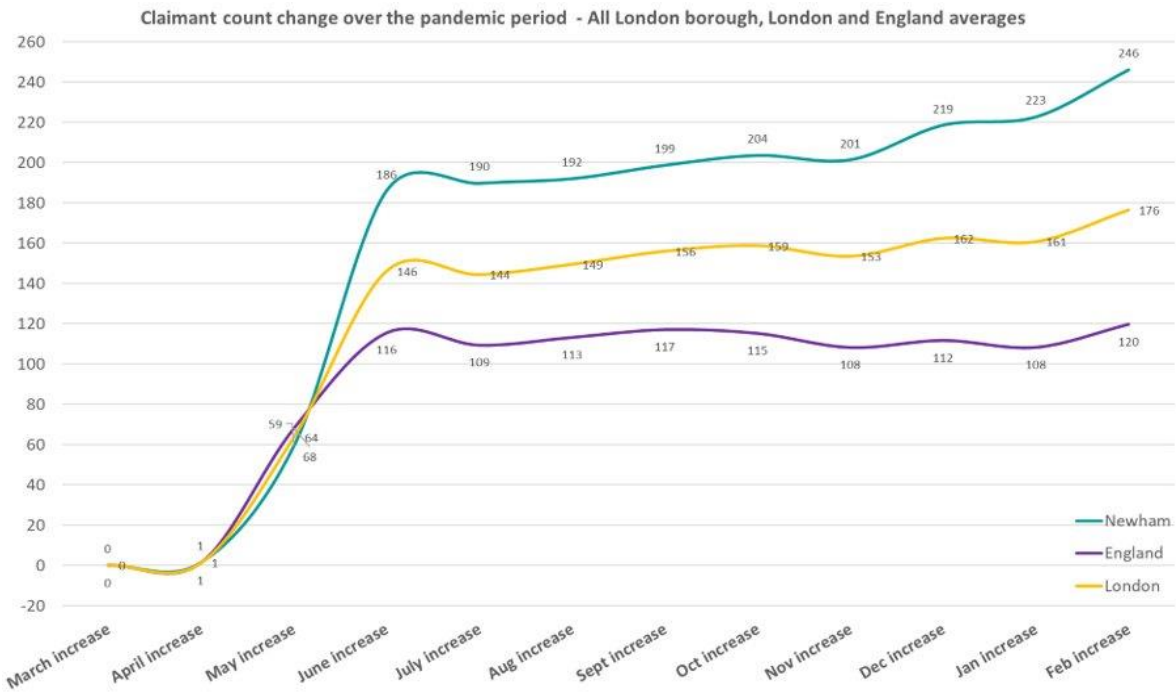
Newham has seen the numbers of residents claiming unemployment benefits dramatically increase during the first Covid lockdown in March 2020, and the rate has been rising again since December 2020. Overall, between February 2020 and February 2021, Newham saw the highest increase in claimants in London, at 246%, compared with the London average of 176%, and England average of 120%.

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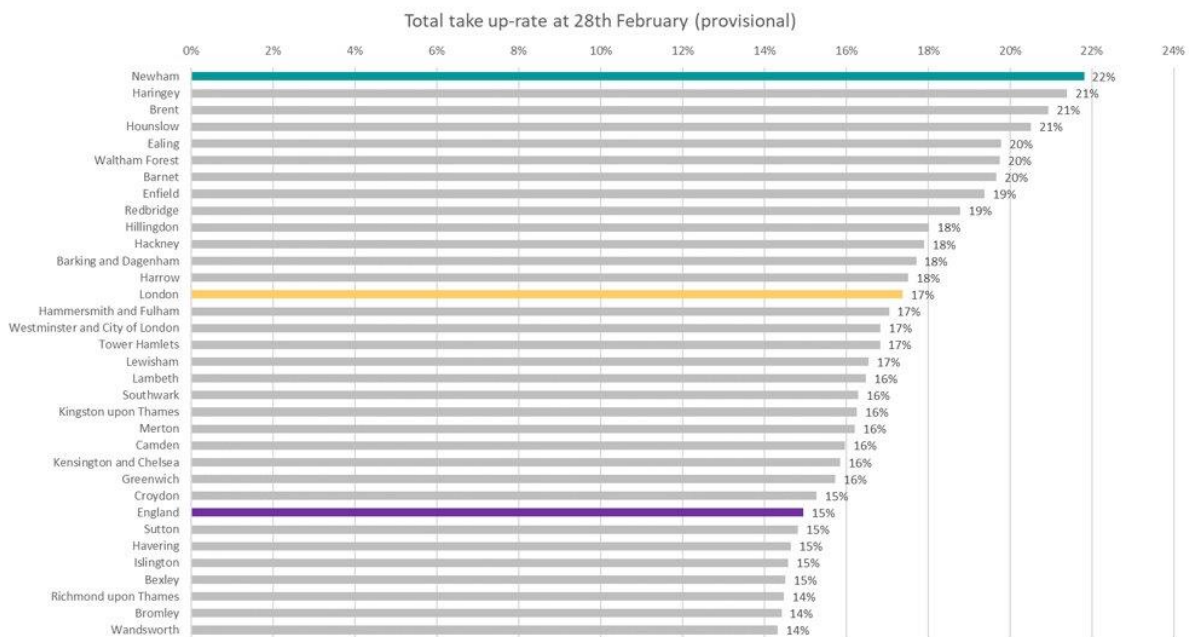
<sup>16</sup> Trust for London, "Newham" <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/newham-poverty-and-inequality-indicators/> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>17</sup> Collinson, P, "Newham in east London has steepest house price rises of the century", *The Guardian*, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2019/dec/28/newham-price-rise-steepest-century-property-newry-northern-ireland> [accessed 24.05.21]

<sup>18</sup> Hill, D. "London boroughs have seen the ten highest 'excess death' rates in Britain during Covid pandemic" *On London*, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021, <https://www.onlondon.co.uk/london-boroughs-have-seen-the-ten-highest-excess-death-rates-in-britain-during-covid-pandemic/> [accessed 24.05.21]



Newham has had the highest rate of take-up of the job retention scheme during the Covid-19 of any London Borough, and second highest of any local authority nationally. In February 2021, 22% of the eligible population had taken furlough, around 35,600 workers.



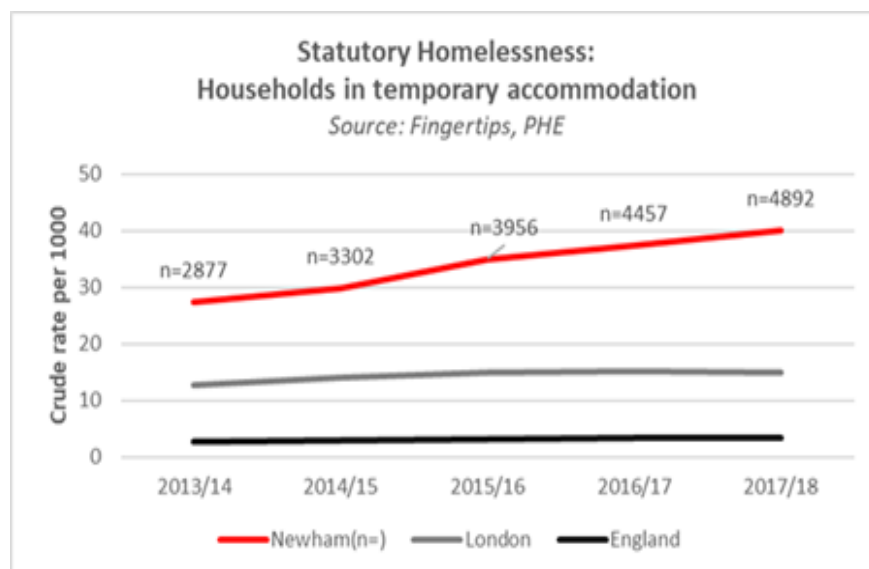
These figures emphasise that large proportions of Newham’s working population saw their incomes reduced over 2020/21, which increases their financial vulnerability, and therefore their risk of homelessness.

A survey of 419 Newham landlords conducted in December 2020 found that the most common impact of the pandemic has been reduced rental income, which has affected 61% of survey respondents. In common with national trends outlined above, a significant minority of tenants have had trouble paying their rent: 39% of landlords said their tenants had

requested a rent reduction, and 33% had had to delay a rent payment. Twenty-nine per cent of landlords had tenants in rent arrears. Half of these landlords had one or two tenants in arrears.<sup>19</sup> This suggests that a significant proportion of tenants in Newham’s private rented sector may face eviction when the ban is lifted.

### Temporary accommodation

The rate of households in temporary accommodation in Newham is the highest in London with 48 per 1,000 contrasting against 17 per 1,000 in London overall.<sup>20</sup> Between 2011 and 2018 the number of Newham households in temporary accommodation rose by more than 120%, a far steeper increase than across London or in England.



This reliance on temporary accommodation presents a considerable cost to the council. Much of the temporary accommodation used to house homeless households is nightly booked accommodation which is insecure, and particularly costly for the Council. Currently, the share of nightly-paid temporary accommodation is just under 60% of the Council’s total temporary accommodation, and we are committed to reducing this share over the coming years.

The majority of Newham’s temporary accommodation placements are made within the Borough. Currently, 63% of placements are in Newham, 34% of placements are made in another London borough, and 3% are made outside London. The Council’s approach to in-borough and out-of-borough placements is set out in the Council’s Placements Policy.

### Rough sleeping

At the start of 2020, Newham had the second highest rough sleeping population in London. This was largely due to a number of well-known ‘hotspots’ in the borough, including the Stratford Mall. A Rough Sleeping Taskforce was launched in June 2019 with an agenda to end rough sleeping in Newham, with care and compassion at the heart of the approach.

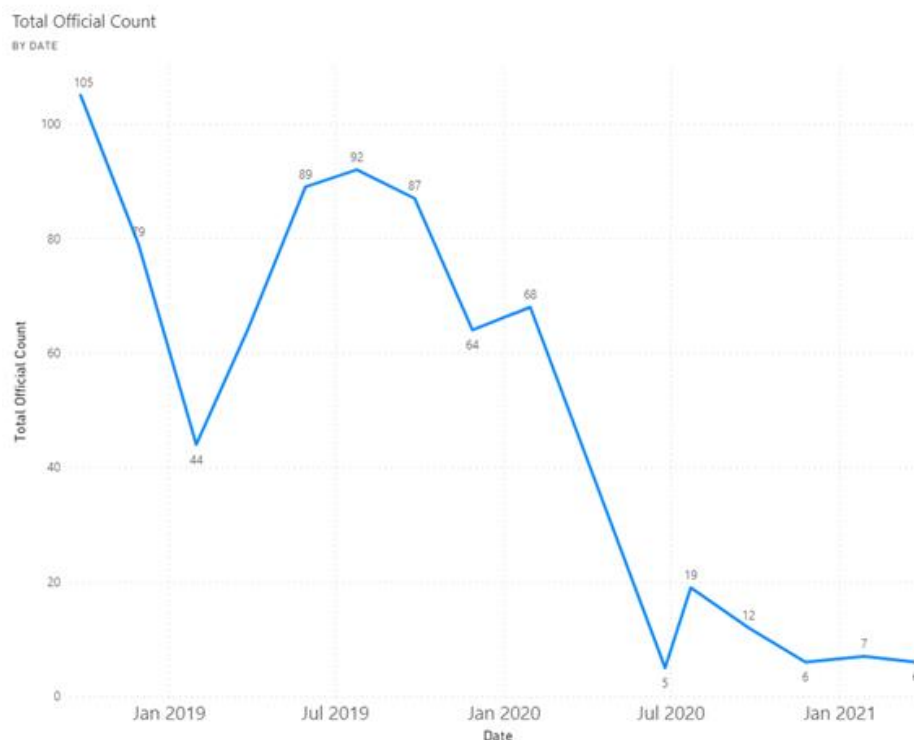
Since 2019, the Council has adopted a public health and intelligence –led approach to tackling rough sleeping, and our focus has been to develop and deliver the first fully commissioned Rough Sleeper service within the borough for several years, The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the delivery of our action plan to tackle rough sleeping, and we have

<sup>19</sup> London Borough of Newham, *Rapid landlord survey: impact of Covid-19*, December 2020

<sup>20</sup> Trust for London, “Newham” <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/newham-poverty-and-inequality-indicators/> [accessed 24.05.21]

brought about a significant reduction in our street population. In response to the 'everyone in' directive, the Council supported 610 rough sleepers between March 2020 and March 2021.

The graph below highlights the progress made in reducing Rough Sleeping numbers over 2020/21:



However it is crucial that we do not become complacent, and instead build on this success to develop sustainable pathways out of rough sleeping. The level of funding available during the pandemic is no longer guaranteed and we must manage services according to existing resources, maximising funding opportunities wherever possible.

### Newham's policy context

#### Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019

A two-year homelessness and rough sleeping strategy was introduced in December 2019, the borough's first in almost a decade. The strategy set out how the Council intended to respond to the problems of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping two years and the work that will be undertaken to produce a further and updated strategy from December 2021. An accompanying action plan was agreed by cabinet in July 2020, having been postponed from April due to the Covid-19 crisis.

#### Well Newham: 50 Steps to a Healthier Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023

In November 2020, the Council published its Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This sets out 12 priorities and 50 actions to improving health and wellbeing in the borough, using a broad definition of health and wellbeing, and recognising the links to equity, transport and public realm, poverty and housing. Priority 11 focuses on housing, with the following actions specifically tackling homelessness:

Step 45: Reduce levels of homelessness and rough sleeping in Newham

Step 46: Reduce the numbers of children living in temporary accommodation (family homelessness)

The strategy takes a collaborative approach to these two actions, involving the voluntary, community and faith sector, private landlords, and departments across the Council beyond housing.

### **Homes for People: Newham's Housing Delivery Strategy 2021**

The Housing Delivery Strategy built upon the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to identify the following actions in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping:

- Prevention of homelessness through joint working
- Early intervention where homelessness cannot be prevented
- Developing pathways for complex cases
- Developing the existing pathways for people sleeping rough
- Creating a long-term plan to reduce rough sleeping in Stratford
- Developing alternatives to nightly-paid accommodation
- Reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation
- Improving the quality of temporary accommodation

It also committed the Council to a resident-first approach to service delivery with joint working between departments and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to a caring and compassionate approach to homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy was open for 12 weeks of public consultation, and the final agreed version was amended following feedback from members of the public and local stakeholder groups.

### **Towards a Better Newham Covid-19 Recovery Strategy 2020**

Newham's Covid recovery strategy sets out the Council's plans for recovery over 2020 and 2021, and longer-term reorientation of the Borough's economy. The reorientation seeks to fundamentally shift the local economy towards one that is inclusive, that addresses inequalities such as race and gender, and that tackles poverty and deprivation.

In order to reach this radical shift, the recovery is organised around eight pillars, relating to health and wellbeing, support to access work, safety and wellbeing of under-25s, inclusive neighbourhoods, greening the local economy, good housing, and inward investment. Of these, Pillar 7 sets out the Council's aim to deliver genuinely high-quality and affordable homes for Newham and keep homelessness and rough sleeping services under review.

## 1. Understand current and future housing need

In order to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in a strategic way, the Council will develop its understanding of housing need in the Borough, based on a range of evidence. The Council will continue to gather data about our residents' housing circumstances and develop effective systems to help us analyse this data. In doing so, we can build a picture of current and future housing need in our borough, and model potential impacts of changes in legislation and the housing market on homelessness.

### 1.1 Housing in our borough

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a study undertaken to estimate current and future housing requirements, informing local planning authorities' local plans and housing strategies. It estimates the number of new homes needed in a borough or group of boroughs by tenure and type, as well as analysing the housing requirements of important sub-groups of the population. The most recent SHMA covering Newham was the Outer North East London SHMA, published in 2016.

The Council is currently in the process of commissioning a new SHMA, which will not only inform planning and building of new homes but will enable the Council to understand which groups are not having their housing needs met and indicate groups at risk of homelessness.

### 1.2 Rough sleeping

Prior to COVID, the Council lacked meaningful intelligence on its rough sleeping population. The Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Strategy 2019 – 21 outlined an ambition to develop a new mechanism to assess need and gather intelligence to inform our commissioning approach and assess future housing needs. Since then, we have established a minimum dataset (MDS). This provides information on everyone on the street and in emergency accommodation using a web-based platform that we have developed to meet our requirements.

The Council has adopted the strengths and assets-based CHAOS index and outcomes star tools to assess someone's needs. This allows for a more nuanced and intelligence led response. The intelligence allows commissioners to understand specific needs at an individual level and, importantly, the progression of that individual. This has been used to inform the development of our new Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service, as it tells us what support and interventions work.

In 2021 we are undertaking a comprehensive health needs assessment and broader evaluation to provide a more detailed analysis our rough sleeping population and what future need will look like.

Newham is engaging with the University of Cardiff and NHS Digital to explore opportunities joint intelligence research between homelessness and health as part of a national pilot project.

### 1.3 Private sector housing

We have 25,000 private landlords renting homes in the borough including 40,000 properties licensed by the Council through one of the three current licensing schemes. Our discretionary landlord licensing schemes cover 95% of the Borough's private rented sector, and is an important tool enabling us to understand who our landlords are. Because we are in this unique position, we can use the information provided through the licensing scheme to understand the size of the PRS, type and quality of properties, where PRS homes are in the



Borough, and the profile of landlords in Newham. This provides us with the opportunity to understand needs within this sector, and to use this intelligence to drive up standards in private sector housing across the borough. It also offers a unique opportunity to influence and regulate the sector, driving out bad practice and criminal landlords.

Our aim is for a private rented sector that offers safe, secure, good quality and affordable housing for our families. We believe we can only continue to do this whilst we operate our discretionary landlord licensing schemes that cover 95% of the PRS. That is why we wish to see our schemes extended for a third term, as without this regulatory framework we believe the PRS will once again shift its external costs onto the authority and we have serious concerns regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the fragile housing market in Newham after 2021.

The data the Council already holds, including through the landlord licensing schemes, can help us to identify households who may be at risk of homelessness, for example due to renting without a contract or accruing substantial debt, and support them early on. We will use the data we have to understand who might be at risk of homelessness, and work with both tenants and landlords (whether private or housing associations) to prevent eviction and subsequent homelessness. We are also training officers to identify 'red flags' associated with cases of Modern Day Slavery and exploitation, and to escalate them to a designated officer who will refer cases to a multi-agency safeguarding team where appropriate.

In 2020, the Council launched a 'deep dive' research project examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on tenants in the private rented sector. This brought together various strands of research, including a survey of Newham landlords, to build a picture of the challenges the sector faces, identify risks for tenants and landlords, and set out best practice solutions. We are building upon this work to develop a 'data warehouse' so that we can identify people in danger of housing crisis before it hits and target support where it will be most effective

We will also contribute to and support cross-borough data on homelessness, to enable London-wide and regional policy to be developed, and comparisons between boroughs to be made. This includes contributing to the CHAIN dataset, the GLA's Rogue Landlord Database, and our statutory H-CLIC return (see paragraph 1.4 for more information).

#### **1.4 Learning from our new duties**

With the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act, the government also introduced new data reporting requirements. These are the Homelessness Case Level Information Classification, or 'H-CLIC, data return. As with many other local authorities we have found it has sometimes been a challenge to effectively capture this information. However, sustained improvements to our systems mean that we can now provide much more detailed information on the causes and effects of homelessness, long term outcomes and what works to prevent it. We will continue to improve data collection and the systems we use to manage it.

#### **1.5 Improving services**

The continuous improvement of our services is crucial if we are to meet the challenge of rising levels of homelessness across London, and Newham in particular. We are learning from the complaints we receive from service users, legal challenges, and Housing Ombudsman's inquiries to drive our work to improve services. We will undertake regular reviews of past cases to improve the efficacy of our service delivery, the ability of our frontline staff to respond to complex needs, and the customer service received by people approaching us for help and advice.

## 2. Prevent homelessness through early help

Homelessness prevention means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. Wherever possible and appropriate, housing authorities should prioritise efforts to prevent homelessness so that households can remain in their accommodation. Preventing homelessness avoids the trauma and upheaval of homelessness. Even where a person needs to move, prevention may allow a planned move giving the person more control over the timing as well as the type and location of any accommodation. Prevention incurs fewer costs for the Council than relief of homelessness, helping to reduce pressure on homelessness budgets.

### 2.1 Preventing homelessness in the PRS

The PRS is Newham's largest source of accommodation, and the ending of PRS tenancies is one of the leading causes of homelessness in the borough. It is therefore essential that we tackle the causes of homelessness in the PRS and increase the numbers of homelessness cases we can prevent by early action.

#### 2.1.1 Tackling harassment and illegal evictions

The Council is committed to tackling illegal evictions in Newham. Illegal eviction – when a landlord evicts a tenant from a property without going through the correct legal process – is a criminal offence. Harassment is a separate criminal offence, which involves an individual such as a landlord or agent knowingly engaging in conduct which interferes with another person's rights or causes them alarm or distress.

We are working in collaboration with the police and Safer Renting<sup>21</sup> to bring cases against landlords accused of illegal evictions and harassment and have recruited a dedicated officer to handle such cases. We will also monitor illegal PRS evictions and harassment in the borough and participate in tenant's forums. We will also take part in any London-wide schemes to ensure that monitoring is comparable across boroughs.

#### 2.1.2 Improved communications and engagement with landlords

We licence around 40,000 properties and 25,000 landlords in the borough. Our licensing schemes are a valuable tool in enabling us to understand who our landlords are and being able to communicate with them. We will improve our engagement with the landlord community in the borough and try to better support them as a Council to improve conditions in the PRS. Building a better relationship with landlords will enable us to work together to sustain tenancies, drive up quality and safety in the sector, find suitable accommodation for homeless households and better respond to crises like the Covid 19 pandemic.

We have already established a regular forum for landlords as an effective way of exchanging information. Through forums we can keep landlords informed of their responsibilities and any changes in the law, whilst enabling them to raise concerns and discuss difficulties they may be facing. Landlord forums are the first step towards improving the front-end communications, with a wider communications review within the Private Sector Housing Service due to take place in 2021. This will include specific information and advice aimed at PRS landlords to improve their business practice, including easier access to advisors and improved web information.

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<sup>21</sup> For more information on Safer Renting, see <https://ch1889.org/safer-renting>

We will work with PRS landlords to avoid tenants being evicted from their properties because of arrears, antisocial behaviour, or tenancy dispute. This might involve negotiating repayment plans or sorting out benefit issues, but could also include mediating in conflicts, supporting both parties to understand their rights and responsibilities. We will support the sustainment of private rented sector tenancies by providing mediation around antisocial behaviour and other tenancy issues. We have a dedicated officer in place to support this mediation service. Landlords who work with us to provide accommodation for homelessness prevention, relief or move-on will benefit from the support of our tenancy sustainment service and be provided with a direct point of contact.

### **2.1.3 Improved communications and engagement with private rented sector tenants**

A lack of awareness around tenants' rights can allow rogue landlords to practice exploitative tactics like harassment and illegal evictions and leave households in insecure accommodation or at risk of homelessness. Tenants will be able to access tailored and accessible information setting out their rights, responsibilities, and how to seek help from the Council and other agencies. This will include:

- Dedicated tenancy relations officer
- Information being made available in a range of languages
- Working with partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector to develop and distribute information and advice and improve communication channels.
- Regular forums with PRS tenants to raise awareness of their rights and landlord responsibilities and support them in sustaining their tenancies.

Communications and information-sharing with PRS tenants will be kept under review, and subject to feedback from tenants.

We will establish a programme of research identifying 'hard to reach' tenant groups within the PRS, and designing suitable approaches to engage with them. 'Hard to reach' groups are those that often have limited interaction with authorities, for example people with no recourse to public funds, and for a range of reasons may find themselves particularly vulnerable to exploitation and harassment in the PRS.

### **Case study: Generation Rent project to improve communications**

Generation Rent has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust to work with five local authorities across the country to develop best practice models for consultation and engagement with private sector tenants that can be tested and piloted in each local authority area. Newham is one of the five Councils to benefit from their support.

The Council and Generation Rent are developing ways to engage with our most hard to reach private renters in the borough. We will listen to private renters who often go unheard, to get to the heart of their concerns and directly inform how we can support them and works with landlords to improve the quality of private rented housing.

At the end of the 12 month project, we will produce a report identifying the key learnings and suggested best practice models for private renter consultation and engagement that can be continued in Newham, and could be adopted by other local authorities around the country.

## **2.2 Preventing homelessness due to eviction from social tenancy**

The Council's general practice as a landlord is that evictions are a last resort and every effort to sustain a tenancy is made prior to any legal action. When a resident has fallen into arrears, we take a number of actions, including:

- Providing welfare benefit advice
- Referrals to Our Money Newham for financial advice and support
- Referrals to the Housing Independent living team to support vulnerable people and families
- Referrals to social services/community mental health teams – where appropriate
- Agree repayment terms which was affordable and sustainable, based on income and expenditure
- Apply for direct payment from benefits
- Direct resident to independent third parties to provide financial support – such as Community Links, Citizens Advice
- Income assess residents who are struggling to pay, to ensure support can be provided
- Agree direct payment methods, such a direct debit or standing order, to ensure arrears do not build

However in some cases, we need to progress to an eviction. In order to ensure that evictions from Council properties do not result in homelessness, we are taking the following actions:

- Involving the Homeless Persons Advice Service (HPAS) in pre-eviction panel meetings for all cases where the residents is known to Adult Services, Children Services or within Temporary Accommodation.
- HPAS will work with residents who are at risk of eviction before court orders are enforced.
- Using a prevention fund to sustain tenancies based on risk/benefit, to avoid evictions.
- Care leavers pre-eviction panels will be implemented, which will include the young person's support worker or social worker.

## 2.3 Improved pathways for people leaving institutions and long-term accommodation

People leaving institutions such as prisons and hospitals and leaving long-term accommodation such as looked after children leaving care can be especially vulnerable to homelessness if suitable housing options are not identified early on. We will work with National Asylum Support Service and Offender Services externally, and our Adults and Health, Children and Young People and Brighter Futures directorates internally, to ensure that we are aware of cases in advance and able to secure accommodation to avoid individuals having to make a homelessness application upon leaving an institution or other provided accommodation.

## 2.4 Focussed support for people to sustain their tenancies.

### 2.4.1 Working with Our Newham Money to reduce debt and financial insecurity

Our Newham Money is a Council service that offers support to Newham residents who may be struggling with debt or the everyday cost of living. We will continue to work with Our Newham Money to ensure households who are struggling with debt are able to access help before they reach crisis point and face homelessness. The service offers debt advice, emergency support and low-interest loans to help households struggling to manage their finances and facing a build-up of debt.

Our Newham Money can also support residents to access and maximise benefits which can help eligible households meet housing costs. Welfare reform over the past ten years has resulted in a reduction in benefits for many households, with the introduction of Universal Credit also putting the onus for rent payment on tenants, where previously this would have been paid directly to the landlord.

The pandemic has exacerbated these existing pressures for many households, with Newham experiencing the highest rate of new claimants of unemployment benefits over 2020, and the highest share of workers furloughed. To tackle this rising financial insecurity, and risk of arrears and other debts, Our Newham Money can support residents to negotiate repayment plans with landlords and maximise benefits, and can provide emergency low-interest loans.

We will work with the Brighter Futures directorate within the Council and local charity Money House to provide tenancy training for young people leaving care.

### 2.4.2 Tenancy sustainment hub

Our dedicated tenancy sustainment service will be co-located with Our Newham Money, and we will ensure that people will have access to employment services and benefit advice, to maximise their income. We will offer training for tenants who need it in how to manage and sustain their tenancy, whether it is in the PRS, with a housing association, or a Council tenancy. We will develop a targeted tenancy support offer for young people leaving care and those in our young persons' pathways in partnership with young peoples' services.

#### **Spotlight on : Tenancy Sustainment Team**

One of the critical ways we will prevent homelessness is through sustaining tenancies in the private rented sector. We have recently transformed our HPAS service, and one of the most significant changes is the creation of our 'hub'.

Newly-created Tenancy Sustainment Officers will assist people when they first move into private rented accommodation they have found with the help of the council. They will

ensure payments are set up and contact tenants regularly to check that their tenancies are going well, being the first point of contact and support should there be any risk of the tenancy failing. They will also liaise with landlords to resolve issues with the tenancies or rent.

A major barrier to tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector is affordability. This can be relieved by access to employment or key benefits, debt management and income maximisation. Therefore the hub includes three Our Newham Money posts and a dedicated Housing Benefit Process and Recovery Officer. As well as providing a direct link to Housing Benefit for the purposes of setting up new payments, we will seek to recover Housing Benefit debt for both private rented tenants and those in temporary accommodation.

## **2.5 Enable survivors of domestic violence to stay in their own homes**

We will establish a sanctuary scheme for survivors of domestic violence that offers them the option to stay in their own homes, if it is appropriate for them to do so. Sanctuary schemes involve installing a range of measures to improve the security of a property, the specifications of which depend on the risk to the survivor and their household, the type of property, and the needs of the household. Under the scheme, sanctuary should be available (free of charge) to all households and individuals at risk of domestic violence, regardless of tenure or gender, as long as the perpetrator is no longer living at the property. The establishment and co-ordination of the scheme will involve working with a range of external partners, including specialist domestic violence services, the police, and the fire service. The Council will work with partners to provide quality legal advice and support for survivors, helping them to understand their rights.

## **3. Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets**

Rough sleepers are often considered a homogenous community, defined only by the place in which they sleep, a measure used in no other part of society. In fact, their housing need could be the result of any number of factors, often complex and traumatic, with related problems such as substance misuse and mental health exacerbating other issues. It is easy to forget that people very rarely choose the path of rough sleeping: it's often an unfortunate consequence of a unique journey.

The Council has embraced a public health approach to rough sleeping. Through this approach we consider all the needs of the person and work to secure long term improvements in health and wellbeing, deal with longstanding inequalities, and prevent a return to rough sleeping and homelessness.

### **3.1 Transformation of rough sleeping services**

The Council has the ambition to end rough sleeping in Newham. To achieve this, we are transforming our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion. We believe that a compassionate approach to supporting Rough Sleepers is required to rebuild trust with those who have fallen through our societal gaps and often experienced significant trauma. However, this approach requires a balance between providing tailored support and building the confidence required to maintain long-term independence.

As part of this service transformation, we sought to include the views and experiences of people with lived experience, which fed into the development of our strategy and commissioning of services. What people told us was:

- Losing their accommodation was the last thing to go. Restoring a roof for the night, whilst a platform for change, wouldn't be enough.
- People wanted to be part of the decisions made about their own future.
- Generic pathways didn't work for everyone.
- Many wanted to return to the lives they had before becoming homeless, with support to get back into work.
- Immigration advice and support was a key feature.
- It was clear that more complex rough sleepers required a model of care that wrapped around them, rather than expecting them to travel for services.
- Rough sleeping pathways for substance misuse and mental health were welcomed.
- Services should approach rough sleepers with care and compassion.

### **3.2 Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service (IRSS)**

Taking these views into account, and in order to meet the overarching aims, the Council has introduced an Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service. This model integrates accommodation and non-accommodation service covering; outreach, floating support, accommodation-based support and Housing First and will:

- Adopt a universal strength and assets-based assessment process for all rough sleepers to meaningfully understand the complex needs of the individual
- Provide suitable accommodation and personalised support services that provides an immediate route off the street but that also reflects their assessed needs
- Develop a person-centred plan that reflects and builds on their strengths, assets and hopes. This will cover their immediate next steps and the longer term to form the basis for their single service offer
- Develop and deliver innovative and evidence based biopsychosocial approaches to rebuilding people's security, confidence and, importantly, independence
- Enable a sense of belonging and purpose in their wider community
- Work with partners in health and across the system to ensure more joined up approaches to care, where the Rough Sleeper can access the right care at the right place at the right time
- Develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping in the borough
- Focus on improving longer term outcomes for Rough Sleepers particularly for those who are 'complex and entrenched', and not just a roof for a night
- Support Rough Sleepers with unclear immigration status to access available support and opportunities to find a sustainable route away from the street

### **3.3 The Newham Pathway**

#### **3.3.1 Assessment hub**

The Council will open a new assessment centre, called Lady Helen Seymour House. Lady Helen Seymour House will provide temporary accommodation for 42 rough sleepers and the assessment unit will provide onsite wraparound health and care support, with external agencies such as GPs, substance misuse and mental health services.

The unit will provide:

- A central hub that will be able to accept people straight from the street and provide an immediate safe and secure space to assess their needs.
- A route to longer-term accommodation tailored to the individual needs of the person. This may include “Housing First” which is a programme that provides a stable home, with specialist floating support, for entrenched Rough Sleepers or specialist supported accommodation
- Accommodation for people after they are assessed and while support is put in place before they move onto next steps.
- Support for rough sleepers who do not need such intense residential care.

The centre will act as a hub for those placed in social or private rented housing and will be a one-stop-shop where recovery plans can be developed and monitored.

### 3.3.2 How the Model Responds to Need, Equality and Disproportionality

The IRSS is the first fully commissioned rough sleeper service within the borough for several years. The service model is designed to support all resident who are experiencing multiple and intersecting disadvantage. The model adopts an approach that balances both the specific needs of individuals with the shared needs of the wider rough sleeper population.



The model has been enhanced in response to service user feedback.

### 3.4 Gender

The programme identified the need for a specific offer responding to the needs of women who were rough sleeping. This was rolled out in the summer of 2020 and has adopted a psychological and neurological approach to supporting vulnerable women who are rough sleeping. It is proving to be successful in supporting women and providing a better platform for further case work, and will therefore be continued, with the appointment of a dedicated officer to support the work.



### 3.5 Nationality

37% of those currently accommodated have unclear immigration status, although this figure masks the large proportion who have been supported to regularise their immigration status. Of those currently accommodated 44% have unclear immigration status. At times over the last 18 months this has been as high as 60% (May 2021).

To support these residents, the new service includes immigration advice and support for people who have unclear immigration status. While we acknowledge that some may not be willing to engage with our services, we are committed to support everyone we can within the means we have available. The Council maintains its opposition to the government's 'hostile environment' policy, referenced in the Windrush Council Motion, carried at Full Council in November 2018.

### 3.6 Health and wellbeing

COVID has underscored the importance of rough Sleepers accessing medical care; as a result, we have ensured that 90% of currently accommodated rough sleepers are registered with a GP. The model currently being developed will build on the existing relationships with health, with further work taking place to enhance the health response.

Newham has been embedding the principles of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach into the wider transformation of the rough sleeping service. The MEAM approach was established to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, and to avoid people falling through the gaps between service provision. Newham joined the MEAM Approach network in May 2020 to help design and deliver better coordinated services for people engaged with sex work. The approach to people engaged in sex work has previously been focussed on enforcement based and the new approach will build a 'support before enforcement' response that is underpinned by a greater understanding of trauma. The same principles will inform the Council's response to rough sleeping.

Workers in the IRSS will be expected and supported to broaden their skills over the length of the contract. Importantly, roles in this pathway are seen as an opportunity to improve health and care for rough sleepers, with workers being trained to deliver health and care. This would include STI tests and mental health first aid.

Significant additional investment has been made in mental health services in inner northeast London to provide rough sleeping specific support through Rough Sleeping Mental Health Services. Further transformation of the mental health offer is ongoing which enhances the pathway further.

Finally, enhancing the Adults Social Care pathway was identified as a priority, ensuring that those eligible for a care act assessment and appropriate safeguarding support receive it in a timely manner. Resource has been identified to maintain the dedicated social worker which commenced in Q4 2020/21.

### Case Study: Hospital Discharge Pilot

A new out of hospital model is proposed for North East London. This includes a new team within the existing integrated discharge hub for those who are rough sleepers or at risk of rough sleeping. They will focus on supporting rough sleepers, sourcing step down accommodation where appropriate, and provide wider project management. Newham has led the bid for funding to support this model, and boroughs are awaiting the results of the bid

### 3.7 Substance Misuse

43% of rough sleepers being accommodated by the Council and currently on the street have been referred through to the national charity Change Grow Live with substance misuse issues. Change Grow Live's homelessness team offers substance misuse support, and medical and psychological support around complex issues such as mental ill health or sex working. The new model includes specific navigators to support people who are rough sleeping with substance misuse issues. In addition, the Council has separately enhanced the rough sleeping substance misuse pathway, which provides dedicated support to those motivated to change.

### 3.8 Future work and sustainability

We will continue to develop all areas of delivery to improve the lives of rough sleepers and work toward the target of zero people on the street. Particularly, we will further embed evidence-based multidisciplinary approaches, working across various departments and using a range of expertise to rebuild people's security, confidence and importantly independence. The vision continues to treat every individual with care and compassion, but also to understand their very specific needs and aspirations and not to see them as simply someone who sleeps on the street.

### 3.9 Move-on from hostels.

As the "everyone in" directive has ended, the emphasis is now on supporting all individuals accommodated into long-term sustainable accommodation. To facilitate this, we have created a dedicated move-on team, which will involve joint working between the rough sleeping service and HPAS to improve the single person's pathway.

## 4. Improve access to better housing that meets the needs of residents

We are working to ensure that we offer a tailored homelessness prevention and advice service that meets the needs of the full diversity of service users.

We recognise that housing is central to promoting good health and wellbeing among our residents. Having a stable home is also vital to ensure that residents can access many of our services, and we are working to increase the availability of floating support for vulnerable residents, alongside the improvements to our housing offer.

We aim to support the transition that several Council services are making, and to work together and develop pathways for groups facing challenges and multiple disadvantages. For more detail on our approach to partnership working, see section 6, below.

## 4.1 Working in partnership to provide personalised support

We know that some people will require more specialist support to access and maintain accommodation. This includes developing tailored support for people with complex and multiple needs, including:

- Survivors of domestic violence and abuse
- People with no recourse to public funds
- Vulnerable young people
- Single persons
- People being discharged from hospital
- People being discharged from prison
- People with mental health issues
- People with learning disabilities
- LGBTQ+ people
- Older people who may be vulnerable to exploitation

It is important that the pathways developed for each of these groups are adaptable to the circumstances and needs of the individual or household, and that they are flexible enough to be able to accommodate cases with multiple needs.

As part of considering and reviewing our housing pathways we will take a wider approach to providing support, wherever it is needed and will actively seek to work jointly with adult social care and mental health services.

### Spotlight On: Pathways Team

As part of the transformation of our homelessness service, we have recently created a Pathways Team. This will comprise four co-ordinators who will work with other areas of the Council to create and monitor pathways for people being discharged from hospital, women experiencing multiple disadvantages, families needing additional support, and single persons including rough sleepers and other vulnerable adults.

## 4.2 Improving communications with households in temporary accommodation

We will improve the way in which we communicate with households in temporary accommodation. Our approach to engaging residents in temporary accommodation in decision making and feedback is set out in the Resident Involvement Strategy. Residents in temporary accommodation will not be overlooked, and will be provided with similar opportunities to engage with the Council as Council tenants and leaseholders. We will establish a working group for residents in temporary accommodation which will meet regularly to enable residents to contribute to the development of policy and improvement of service delivery.

As part of our service transformation we will also introduce a team of resettlement advice officers who can support residents with options to move on from temporary accommodation into longer-term housing, and to access further housing help and advice.

## 4.3 Maximise opportunities in the PRS for prevention and supply

We will work with landlords to find suitable properties in the PRS, where discharge of duty into the PRS is appropriate. We engage regularly with landlords seek to build new

relationships to increase the supply of good quality accommodation in the PRS. We will ensure that our landlord partners meet our standards, and support them to meet standards where they do not currently. Where properties do not meet the required standards, and where the landlord fails to make suitable improvements, we will be swift to take enforcement action.

#### **4.4 Increase supply of accessible accommodation**

We will use our acquisitions programme to increase the supply of Council-owned accommodation suitable for those with disabilities. The limited supply of adapted properties can result in households being placed in expensive and insecure short-term accommodation and accommodation which does not meet their needs.

We will make best use of the local Home Improvement Agency to enable people to adapt their existing home to their needs. Home Improvement Agencies are local organisations that offer information, advice, and support in modifying the homes of older, disabled and vulnerable people. In Newham, the local agency is called HAIL (Home Adaptations for Independent Living), and they can make adaptations to eligible residents' existing homes, including:

- widening doors or installing ramps
- improving access to rooms and facilities - e.g. installing a stair lift or a downstairs bathroom
- adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use
- installing a loud door bell
- making it easier to use the toilet, bath or shower

Council tenants can receive adaptations free of charge if the recommendation by an occupational therapist is approved, and housing association may carry out the adaptation if asked directly. Those who own their home or rent privately can apply for a grant to cover the costs. By supporting residents to adapt their existing homes, we hope to reduce the number of homelessness applications on the basis that a resident's current home is no longer suitable.

Where it is possible to undertake home adaptation works while the tenant or homeowner is in hospital, we will work upstream with healthcare partners to ensure that residents being discharged are able to return to their homes with adaptations complete.

#### **Case Study: Home Adaptations**

The Council adapted the home of RC, a 33-year old man living with his mother in a two-bedroom housing association property. He has a progressive disease and is a wheelchair user. He has a bedroom on the ground floor but is no longer able to negotiate the stairs to access his first floor bathroom.

A ground floor toilet was extended by 1m to provide a wheelchair accessible wet room. This adaptation gave RC access to all essential facilities on the ground floor, it prevented him and his mother from applying for rehousing and allowed them to remain in a house that they loved close to all their family and support networks.

## **4.5 Where TA is used, ensuring good standard of TA and that appropriate to needs of households**

Unfortunately, due to the limited supply of Council properties and other affordable accommodation, households can be in temporary accommodation for a long time. It is therefore crucial that it is appropriate to the needs of the household. Any new temporary accommodation must meet our standards and the specific needs of the household, and we will ensure that properties are pre-inspected before they are accepted for use as temporary accommodation.

### **4.5.1 Responsive to residents and their concerns**

Our service will be responsive to residents of temporary accommodation and deal swiftly with their concerns and maintenance issues. Residents will be treated with courtesy and empathy, and staff will be trained to handle complex cases, working with other parts of the Council and external partners where necessary. Where issues of disrepair are reported to the Council, we will act swiftly to liaise with the accommodation provider to resolve the issue. Where the property is owned by the Council, our repairs and maintenance service will remedy the issue directly.

As part of this, we are developing targeted plans for our larger temporary accommodation schemes, to ensure that they have dedicated support from the Council, as well as opportunities to feedback on management and customer service.

#### ***Case study: Victoria Street***

We are making improvements to one of our large temporary accommodation sites in Victoria Street, Stratford, based on feedback from residents. A resident engagement plan specific to the site has been produced, and we have made a commitment to meet regularly with residents and the resident working group to discuss any issues. We have organised a range of ‘surgeries’ for residents of Victoria Street, covering issues such as bidding, money management and health, and we are asking residents what other sessions they would benefit from. Improvements to the fabric of the building have also been agreed, and a significant maintenance programme is being carried out

The site will have its own dedicated resettlement support officer to support families with their housing options and assist them to move on to alternative accommodation.

### **4.5.2 Setting the Standard**

We are part of an inter-borough initiative called ‘Setting the Standard’ which sets out agreed standards for temporary accommodation for single persons across all participating boroughs. We will continue to participate in the scheme and shape its future development. This initiative was set up in response to concerns around the safety standards of HMO-style accommodation, widely used for rehousing single people.

### **4.5.3 High standards in nightly-paid accommodation**

Where we have no option but to do so, we will use nightly-paid accommodation, provided it meets exacting standards. Compliance and contract managers, part of a dedicated property

management and compliance team, will visit nightly booked accommodation to ensure standards are met, before any household is placed in the accommodation.

#### **4.6 Empty homes and use of Council voids where appropriate**

We are committed to using empty Council properties for temporary accommodation where appropriate – for example if a property is scheduled to be demolished as part of a regeneration scheme so would not be suitable for longer-term tenants. This ensures that we are making best use of the housing stock available to us to provide affordable temporary accommodation within the Borough.

We are establishing a team to work with owners to bring empty properties in the Borough back in to use. The team will be located within the Private Sector Housing Standards team, and will use desk based research to identify empty homes across all tenures, and contact landlords and owners, with the aim of supporting them to bring properties back into use as safe and secure homes.

#### **4.7 Use placements policy to identify the most suitable locations for TA and PRS offers**

Where possible, the Council will allocate accommodation for homeless households within Newham. However unfortunately, this is not always practical given the scale of demand and a shortage of accommodation in the Borough. This is compounded by the escalating cost of housing in recent years and increasing pressure on Council budgets.

We will use our placements policy to prioritise homeless households for accommodation within the Borough, ensuring that those with the greatest need to stay in Newham are prioritised for local housing. The placements policy applies to offers of both temporary accommodation and private sector properties.

#### **4.8 Improve the customer experience**

We understand that households may be feeling at their most vulnerable when they reach out to the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Advice service, and we are committed to a caring and compassionate approach to homelessness. We are training front-line officers to deliver a high level of service that is equipped to respond swiftly and effectively to people with complex and multiple housing needs. We are learning from past mistakes to enable us to identify problems and adapt our approach so that the resident experience is at the heart of our service. We will ensure a programme of continuous improvement through regular reviews of our casework, increased engagement with residents and activities such as 'mystery shops' of our service. Results will be collated and used to further inform training and development of our officers.

##### **4.8.1 Reduce inequalities and improve access and outcomes**

In line with the Council's corporate objectives, we will work to reduce inequalities both in access to our homelessness services, and in the outcomes of our work. This involves ensuring that staff are trained to understand and support the additional vulnerabilities that people might face when approaching our homelessness services, for example customers from ethnic backgrounds that experience racism and discrimination, rough sleepers with complex health needs, people experiencing domestic violence and LGBTQ+ residents.

##### **4.8.2 Reducing the number of times households must move between temporary accommodation properties**

We understand that moving home is a considerable upheaval for households and children in particular, and we will therefore seek to minimise the number of times households have to move home while in temporary accommodation. Our aim is that, if possible, a household will only move once into temporary accommodation, before they move on to long-term accommodation – whether a Council property or in the PRS. Where this is not possible, we will ensure that we plan ahead to avoid multiple moves and prioritise reducing upheaval for residents.

#### **4.8.3 More accessible services**

The lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the importance of having an adaptable range of ways that residents can contact our homelessness services, both in person and online. We want to make it easier for people to contact us, and to reach out to people where they need to be reached. Going forward, our in-person homelessness services will be accessible through our local housing hubs and libraries, as well as via improved online services.

#### **4.9 Keep allocations under review to assess impact on homelessness people**

In 2021 we agreed changes to our housing allocations policy, which will be implemented by the end of 2021 and seeks to prioritise those most in need for Council housing. To understand the effects of the new policy, it will be reviewed after one year, and we will take the opportunity to look at the effects of the new policy on homeless households.

### **5. Reduce the use of temporary accommodation**

Newham has the highest numbers of households in temporary accommodation of any local authority in the UK. This leaves many households in insecure accommodation, often for many years, as well as representing a considerable financial burden for the Council. A reliance on the use of temporary accommodation forces our response to be reactive rather than proactive, and prevents us using our resources effectively to prevent and reduce homelessness.

We recognise that the current level of temporary accommodation use is unsustainable. A key aim is therefore the need to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation. This process will be twofold: we will aim to reduce the number of families placed in temporary accommodation in the first place by improving our success in prevention and relief of homelessness as well as providing stable, long-term accommodation for households currently in temporary accommodation to move into.

#### **5.1 Reduce nightly-booked accommodation**

Nightly-paid, privately-managed accommodation is a particularly expensive form of temporary accommodation, and because of its unstable short-term nature it can involve households having to move several times. For these reasons we will seek to reduce its use, using data on households at risk of homelessness and strategic housing supply planning to provide alternatives.

#### **5.2 Increase the supply of sustainable and affordable accommodation**

To reduce our reliance on expensive nightly booked accommodation, we need to increase the supply of available properties. The Council has a number of programmes underway to do so:

- Our ongoing partnership with Local Space
- Acquisition of new properties for use as temporary accommodation

- Boosting the supply of social-rented properties through our Council-led housebuilding programme, Affordable Homes for Newham, and our wholly-owned housing company, Populo
- Exploring options to place modular housing on small and underused sites
- Establishing relationships with partners who can help open up additional routes to housing.
- Improving our relationship with registered providers in the borough to access nominations
- Taking part in London wide or multi-borough initiatives to increase supply eg Capital Letters and PLACE

### **Spotlight on:**

Capital Letters is a multi-Borough scheme which works with private rented sector landlords to provide housing to homeless households. It is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and, by representing multiple boroughs and providing a complete service for landlords, is able to source a greater range of properties than a single borough. It takes a collaborative approach to the sourcing of temporary accommodation properties for homeless households, to avoid the problem of boroughs competing for properties.

We have also recently established a leasing agreement with a housing association which will provide us with 21 private sector properties to be let at Local Housing Allowance rents. This provides us with a source of suitable PRS properties with lift access, affordable to residents on housing benefit. These will be made available to suitable households currently in temporary accommodation on two-year assured shorthold tenancies.

### **5.3 Work with private sector landlords**

As noted in 2.1.2 and 4.3 above, our positive working relationship with private sector landlords is crucial to the prevention and relief of homelessness in the Borough. We will work closely with trusted landlord partners to source temporary accommodation and build new relationships with landlords of suitable properties in the Borough.

### **5.4 Develop an improved move-on offer to TA residents**

We will provide dedicated support to enable people to move on from temporary accommodation, where this is appropriate. This will include providing information on alternative housing options and support to establish tenancies in new homes and communities. Dedicated resettlement support officers will support residents to secure and adapt to their new, long-term homes.



We will support tenants to use Homefinder where they are interested in moving out of the borough. Homefinder is a service which helps homeless households and social housing applicants find affordable properties with secure tenancies across the UK. Over 30 households from Newham have used the services to find new accommodation outside the borough.

#### **Case study: Homefinder**

One client who recently found a home through Homefinder reported: “They were amazing at finding us a great property, in the lovely area of Telford for myself and my two daughters. As well as introducing us to any other assistance that we would need for the move, he made sure everything went ahead as quickly as possible.

Prior to Homefinder we were stuck in a one bedroom flat in Newham looking at a 8 year wait before we were to be rehoused also dealing with antisocial behaviour for years prior. Homefinder UK has literally changed our lives. I couldn't be more thankful!”

In order to make best use of temporary accommodation we will support residents in temporary accommodation to seek stable accommodation in tenures other than social housing, where this would be appropriate for the household. This might include the private rented sector and shared ownership.

We will develop the way we communicate with residents of temporary accommodation, ensuring that they have opportunities to provide feedback on the service they have received, and inform the future development of the service. Regular communications with households in temporary accommodation can ensure that we keep their information up-to-date and are better able to identify suitable move-on options.

## **6. Adopt a partnership approach to preventing homelessness and improving wellbeing**

### **6.1 Partnership working with other Council teams**

We recognise that partnerships are the key to preventing and relieving homelessness and to supporting people who are either homeless or facing homelessness. The causes of homelessness are multiple and complex. We understand that the Homelessness prevention and advice service cannot do this work in isolation. Creating effective partnerships involves the sharing of information (subject to the GDPR) and working openly between the authority and stakeholders. It requires a culture change on the part of the Homelessness prevention and advice service and across the council as a whole. We will continue to strengthen our existing partnerships, both with other services in the Council and with external organisations, as well as building new working relationships to deliver more successful outcomes for our residents.

### **6.2 Working to support adults with social care and mental health needs**

Poor mental health can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness. In the last quarter of 2020, 25% of all households in England owed a homelessness duty had a history of mental health problems.<sup>22</sup> The experience of homelessness can also cause or

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<sup>22</sup> MHCLG, “Statutory Homelessness October to December (Q4) 2020: England”, [Official Statistics Release], (London: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) p15 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/979393/Statutory\\_homelessness\\_release\\_Oct-Dec\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/979393/Statutory_homelessness_release_Oct-Dec_2020.pdf) [accessed 24.05.21]

exacerbate mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and substance misuse, as well as affecting the behaviour and educational development of children.

The Council is currently undergoing a transformation of its mental health service. We will ensure that the transformation enables us to work better as a whole Council to support homeless people experiencing mental health issues. We will work alongside the relevant service areas to improve the housing pathway for people with mental ill-health and to develop the range of accommodation available to people with different levels of support needs.

#### **Case Study: Hospital discharge pilot**

We are working in partnership with the Newham NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and East London Foundation on a new hospital discharge scheme. It is thought that at any given time at least ~10-20% of all mental health bed days are occupied by people who are ready to leave hospital but for whom a sufficient package hasn't been agreed. Often this is as a result of not having suitable housing to move to. The result is that people remain in hospital for excessive periods, and in many cases people's health may deteriorate the longer they remain in hospital. This also results in people who urgently need beds, being unable to access them.

The funding is intended to 'bridge the gap' between inpatient care and community support by facilitating more timely and effective discharges, providing an enhanced level of support around people as they recover. We have recruited a dedicated Hospital Discharge Officer to be part of a multi-disciplinary discharge team that includes social workers providing support. The officer provides advice and supports access to housing, liaises with landlords to unblock delays in discharge and manages the move-on fund. The move-on fund can be used flexibly to help people move on from hospital, and includes payment for:

- Blitz cleaning properties
- White Goods
- Furniture packs
- PRS Incentive schemes
- PRS holding fee
- PRS Deposits
- Minor adaptations

This initial 3 month pilot has recently been extended to April 2022, and throughout the remaining period we intend to strengthen our offer and explore how we can make this a permanent part of our pathway for people leaving hospital.

### **6.3 Working to support children and young people**

It is essential that we ensure a whole council' approach to children and vulnerable young people with housing issues, and we are committed to providing integrated services that will provide wraparound support.

Engagement with children and young people will be key to improving our offer for these groups. In particular, we will seek to work with the Youth Engagement Service and Care Leaver's Forum to better meet the housing needs of young people.

### 6.3.1 Children's and Young People's Pathway

The Housing team within the Council is working closely with the Children and Young People's directorate (CYPS) to establish a single gateway to housing for homeless young people in Newham aged between 18 and 21. This is the joint responsibility of CYPS and housing and requires a fully integrated approach. Services we are developing include:

- A single front door for youth homelessness
- Joint assessments completed with Children Services and Housing Services
- A dedicated Social Work support service for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Young people going through the pathway have tailored support packages, including education, training and employment and health and wellbeing,
- Home visits completely jointly between housing officers and social workers when responding to homelessness approaches by young people.
- Access to family mediation services
- Accommodation options suitable for young people

### 6.3.2 Young people leaving care

As corporate parents, we have a responsibility to help care leavers gain access to services, and prepare them for adulthood and independent living. This includes support in accessing suitable accommodation. We are working to develop joint protocols to fully meet accommodation needs, which include:

- Arrangements for planning supportive transitions to independent living
- Identifying homelessness risks early and acting to prevent it
- Providing a joint response for care leavers who do become homeless
- Setting out accommodation and support options for care leavers,
- Support for care leavers to move on to more settled accommodation which could include social housing and Private Rented Sector accommodation
- The Care Leavers Rent Panel – to identify earlier triggers of tenancy breakdown or failure.

Housing is represented on the newly established Care Leavers Accommodation Commissioning and Development Board, the purpose of which is to achieve our sufficiency and commissioning strategy for Newham, so that Children and Young People in Newham live within resilient families, are happy, safe and healthy and grow up with the skills, knowledge and attributes to be confident and independent; ready for adult life.

The four strands within sufficiency that the Board will cover are:

1. Foster care
2. Supported accommodation
3. Residential
4. Other forms of care models, housing provision and pathways

As noted in 2.2 above, we are also implementing care leavers pre- eviction panels, which will include an individual's support worker or social worker.

### 6.3.3 Serious youth violence

As with other London boroughs, Newham experiences incidents of serious youth violence, of which housing environments/provision can play a key part in helping to prevent. While sometimes reciprocal transfers can be arranged for those affected by serious youth violence these are not always appropriate or available. The council's Housing, CYPS and community

safety teams along with housing associations and the police need to work together to react quickly and effectively to provide a suitable housing option to affected families .

#### **6.3.4 Young people at risk of exploitation**

We are coordinating joint working between Housing, Children's Social Care and the Youth Empowerment team to develop joint working protocols. This will include putting in place a housing single point of contact for safeguarding for those who are 18+ and at risk of exploitation and identifying suitable housing options for them. We will identify 'champions' in each service to spread awareness of the issues and provide training around the use of the National Referral Mechanism and safeguarding procedures.

#### **6.4 Working across services to maximise grant opportunities as they become available**

When opportunities for grant funding to support our work on homelessness and rough sleeping arise, we will work with other teams within the Council to bid for funding.

##### **Case study: Ex-Offenders Accommodation Funding**

The Council has recently submitted a bid for Accommodation for Ex-Offenders funding. This was produced in partnership with Probation and the Street Population Team. If successful, it will provide a focussed service working specifically with prison leavers and those in bail hostels who have left prison in the last year and who face multiple barriers to accessing housing. The service will be flexible and available via the Probation Service, Transitions Hub and HPAS

The bid will complement the specialist transition hub for 16-25s based at Newham Probation Office to tackle both youth homelessness and reoffending. The hub will provide support for mental health and substance misuse for young people under probation supervision, and is an opportunity to bring together a number of services, including housing, to tackle the complex issues facing vulnerable young people.

The hub is the first of its kind and has been developed by the Ministry of Justice and the Mayor for London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

#### **6.5 Working with external partners**

##### **6.5.1 Work with faith groups and voluntary and community sector partners**

We will work with community groups and the voluntary sector to better understand the best ways of engaging with residents and meet their needs.

We understand that community and faith leaders play a vital role in offering advice and support to residents. We will work with trusted partners to enable us to effectively share information relating to the homelessness service, tenants' rights and changes to policy. We will build relationships that facilitate community groups and organisations support households at risk of homelessness upstream, allowing us to intervene early and prevent homelessness.

We will work with the voluntary, community and faith sector through the range of existing networks, as well as building new networks to support residents at risk of homelessness. This will include Newham Social Welfare Alliance, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Newham Homelessness Forum and Newham Homelessness Action Group.

### 6.5.2 Multi-agency support for survivors of domestic violence

We will ensure that survivors of domestic violence and their families have access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs. We will work with a range of partners, including the Police, to deliver wraparound support, and where possible and appropriate, support victims to remain in their own homes.

We will attain DAHA accreditation, which is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK. Accreditation will require us to build in processes that will support staff to respond to the needs of survivors and ensure perpetrators are held to account.

We will also establish a sanctuary scheme for survivors of domestic violence and abuse – see 2.5 above.

### 6.5.3 Work with the antisocial behaviour team and police

We will work with Newham's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), antisocial behaviour team, police, and landlords to tackle antisocial behaviour. We will use the data we have from the landlord licensing scheme and programmes like the PRS deep dive to identify possible cases of modern day slavery and exploitation such as 'cuckooing', working with the police where appropriate.

While rough sleeping can be mischaracterised as an antisocial behaviour issue, the Council recognises that people sleeping rough are more likely to be victims of crime and 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence than the general public<sup>23</sup>. We will work with Newham's CSP to instil our caring and compassionate approach to rough sleeping across its work.

## 6.6 Working with service users and people with lived experience of homelessness

We are committed to designing our services around the people that use them, and are working in partnership with people with lived experience of homelessness to improve our services. The work to transform rough sleeping has been overseen by, and developed in partnership with the Newham Homelessness Action Group, which is independently chaired and supported by LBN Co-production service, and includes members with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping.

### Case study: Development of the IRSS

People with lived experience were a crucial element of the procurement of the IRSS. People with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping were supported and trained to independently develop and evaluate a method statement question which included a "competitive negotiated procedure" where they were involved in the negotiations, with providers addressing their concerns. Whilst it took time to develop capabilities, it added huge value and ensured that service users felt meaningfully involved in the whole process

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<sup>23</sup> Crisis, "Rough sleepers and complex needs" [https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/rough-sleepers-and-complex-needs/#:~:text=Rough%20sleeping%20is%20a%20dangerous,compared%20to%20the%20general%20public\).&text=Additionally%2C%20many%20people%20who%20rough,issues%20with%20drugs%20and%20alcohol](https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/rough-sleepers-and-complex-needs/#:~:text=Rough%20sleeping%20is%20a%20dangerous,compared%20to%20the%20general%20public).&text=Additionally%2C%20many%20people%20who%20rough,issues%20with%20drugs%20and%20alcohol) [accessed 24.05.12]

## Five government actions to tackle homelessness in Newham

**1) Protect tenants who have lost income during the pandemic.** Over a quarter of all tenants in the private rented sector have lost income during the pandemic. The Housing Act needs to be amended to protect them from evictions.

**2) Increased funding to help clear tenants' debts.** It is no-one's interests that due to Covid people have been left unable to pay their rent. Funding should be made available for those hardest hit such as those self-employed, students, and those with no recourse to public funds. Additionally, funding should also be made available to support landlords at risk of serious financial hardship.

**3) Review the benefit cap.** We welcome the realignment of Local Housing Rate (LHA) to the 30% percentile of the housing market; we are concerned that the decisions to freeze rates will very likely result in LHA rates falling well below actual rents once again. Making changes to one element of the benefits system can have unintended effects on other aspects. We would strongly suggest that alongside an end to the LHA rate freeze, the Government conduct a review of the benefit cap which has affected households who should have benefitted from the very welcome increases in Universal Credit and LHA rate.

**4) Support everyone who is homeless.** People in our community subject to immigration control have no recourse to public funds, and therefore they are barred by the Government from accessing housing support. This means that the risk of rough sleeping and other forms of housing-related exploitation are high among these people. The government cannot meet its 2024 target of eliminating rough sleeping without providing housing support as a right to all.

**5) Rights for renters with real back-up.** Renters deserve rights in their home that can be enforced. We would like to see the government properly resource and recognise the need for a comprehensive local authority regulatory framework for the private rental sector (PRS). This will to prevent homelessness, protect tenants from illegal eviction and harassment, and deal with criminal landlords who exploit people in need of shelter.