



WALTHAM FOREST HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

2024 – 2029



CONTENTS



FOREWORD

4

1 INTRODUCTION

6

2 MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

32

3 GLOSSARY

34

4 APPENDICES

38



CLLR AHSAN KHAN

FOREWORD

In the midst of a national housing crisis, it is with a strong sense of responsibility that we are presenting this new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This strategy supports the overall vision of our Housing Strategy which makes clear that ensuring an improved and fairer access to

high-quality and affordable homes for Waltham Forest residents is one of the Council's key priorities. A good home is more than a roof over someone's head – it is a foundation to live a happy and healthy life. As Councillors, we can see every day the challenges residents face in relation to housing

and homelessness, and we understand how much the experience of homelessness, or the threat of homelessness can be detrimental to our residents' health, wellbeing and life chances.



Homelessness is indiscriminate. It can happen to anyone. To tackle homelessness effectively, it must be seen as a symptom, not only of wider economic and social factors that affect our country, but of the many, highly individual, underlying causes. This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy represents a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to addressing homelessness in the borough and, supported by our wider Housing Strategy, is designed to lay the foundation for a resilient and prosperous future for everyone.

This strategy reflects our unwavering commitment to ensuring that homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented wherever possible becoming rare, brief and non-recurrent. We are especially proud of having developed this strategy closely with residents and partners and we are grateful for their time and participation. Close to

one hundred residents contributed to our overall strategy development process, by sharing their experience of housing and homelessness in Waltham Forest, offering their thoughts on priorities, and sharing with us how they feel we can achieve better housing for all. We also carried out workshops with partners and staff, you will see their views and aspirations reflected in this strategy. We are confident that this strategy reflects the challenges faced by Waltham Forest residents, and their aspirations.

We are now looking forward to delivering this strategy in partnership over the next five years. We know this will be a challenge, and we are acutely aware that national changes to housing policy will also be needed. We are however, hopeful that together we will make a difference, ensuring our communities prosper for many years to come.



CLLR AHSAN KHAN

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Housing and Regeneration



SECTION 1.

INTRODUCTION



Homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented so that they become rare, brief and non-recurrent.

Residents' housing circumstances shape their experience of living in our borough. A good home is more than just a place to live, it provides a foundation from which people can build a happy and healthy life. In short, a good home is the foundation of a good life. Despite Waltham Forest having one of the best records in London for building affordable homes, thousands of our residents are still at risk of homelessness, living in temporary accommodation or sleeping rough.

Whilst our new Housing Strategy seeks to address the root causes of homelessness including by delivering more genuinely affordable homes in the borough, action is

also required to address the more immediate needs of residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

The Homelessness Act 2002 includes a requirement that all local authorities must undertake a Homelessness Review and develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years.

Under the Act, we are required to consider the following as part of our Homelessness Review:

1. The current and future level of homelessness in Waltham Forest.
2. The services provided in the borough which:
 - Help to prevent homelessness.
 - Help residents to find accommodation.
 - Provide support for homeless households, including support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
3. The resources available to the council, including housing and social services, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other agencies, for provide services facing homelessness.



There have been significant national policy changes since we last conducted a homelessness review. These include but are not limited to:

- The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from April 2018.
- The Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 and, in particular, the changes this required to the way in which front line services are delivered to residents. The launch in 2022 of the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Ending Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy
- The introduction of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Ukrainian placements schemes and Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme.

- The Cost-of-Living Crisis and a growing need to support our most vulnerable residents.

In addition, several local priorities have emerged which are shaping the way the Council seeks to deliver services to its residents:

- The ongoing Energy Crisis and the focus this placed on insuring residents' homes are well insulated and heat efficient.
- LBWF recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary through the national charity City of Sanctuary. This include the acquisitions of 117 homes at Osier Way, Leyton, to be made available to refugee households how have come to the UK via government approved routes from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

- Most importantly, the approval by Cabinet of the borough's new draft Housing Strategy in January 2024, which will be followed by the strategy's consideration by Full Council in April 2024.

The priorities and actions identified in this strategy were developed through a comprehensive Homelessness Review and engagement programme. In early 2023 we conducted a review of homelessness and rough sleeping (Appendix 1).

To support and complete our review we also:

- Commissioned research into housing and homelessness in the borough as part of our Affordable Housing Commission (appendix 2).
- Launched a transformation programme to focus on reviewing and reshaping our homelessness support.



What we learned from our homelessness review:

Residents in Waltham Forest are more likely to be homeless than the London average:

- During the 2021 to 2022 financial year, 1,757 households in Waltham Forest were owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act, equating to 16.9 households per 1,000. This is significantly above the national (11.7 per 1,000) and London (14.7 per 1,100) averages.

Black residents are disproportionately at risk of homelessness:

- Almost a third of residents owed a homelessness relief or prevention duty in Waltham Forest in 2022 are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, despite only accounting for 15% of the borough's population.

Young adults are most at risk of homelessness:

- Residents aged between 18–34 accounted for 43% being assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty.
- Lots of residents that need our help are being asked to leave by family or friends. The biggest cause of homelessness in Waltham Forest in 2022/23 was eviction from family and friends' accommodation (34% of all presentations that year).
- Eviction from the private rented sector (PRS) is a growing concern particularly for families. In 2022/23, 26% of all presentations were from households who were at risk of homelessness from an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the PR.

Many people who are owed support from the Council have complex needs:

- 42% of residents owed a duty have additional support needs. The most common support needs are mental health problems, physical ill health and disability, or people at risk of or have experienced domestic abuse.
- Rough sleeping is increasing. In 2022, the latest year for which data is available, 27 people could be found sleeping rough on a typical autumn night in Waltham Forest, a significant increase on the previous year linked to the ending of the central government 'Everyone In' policy and changes to eligibility criteria for certain groups of EU nationals post Brexit.
- 50% of people owed a prevention duty were living in the PRS. This compares to 46% in England as a whole.

There are fewer residents in temporary accommodation than the London average:



- 9.49 in every 1,000 Waltham Forest residents are living in temporary accommodation, compared with 15.99 of every 1,000 Londoners.

Waltham Forest is one of the fastest changing housing markets in the country:

- House prices have increased by 118% in the last ten years – the fastest growth anywhere in the country.
- Local wages have not kept pace with house prices, and Waltham Forest has gone from being the fourth most affordable borough in London in 2002, to the fourteenth most affordable in 2022.
- The average private rent in Waltham Forest increased by 42% between 2011 and 2019.

In response to growing demand, the Council has been successful in delivering thousands of new homes for residents:

- New development provided homes for 1,500 households who were on the council's Housing Register
- Of the above households, over half had been on the Housing Register for three years or more.

Despite this strong delivery record, it is clear that London's housing crisis has deepened, and we need to go further:

- 9 in every 1,000 Waltham Forest residents were assessed as homeless – the 4th highest in Outer London
- Over 8,000 households are currently on the Housing Register

- 9 in every 1,000 residents in Waltham Forest is living in Temporary Accommodation
- The average asking rent in Outer London has increased by 13% between 2022 and 2023.

Our review identified that Waltham Forest continues to suffer from a lack of affordable housing. House prices have more than doubled since 2011. This is the most rapid rise in house prices in London. PRS rents in the borough have also increased. The Affordable Housing Commission found a 42% increase in mean rents between 2012 and 2019.

As the borough has become more unaffordable, there has been an increased demand for housing options / homelessness and rough sleeping services. Since



the inception of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018, the average number of households approaching London Borough of Waltham Forest for housing advice and assistance each year has been 2,635. Despite the demand for homelessness services, the use of temporary accommodation has reduced dramatically over the last five years. In March 2018, there were 2,235 households in temporary accommodation but by March 2023 this had reduced to 878, however, current supply and demand pressures are now threatening this record.

Learning from the Affordable Housing Commission and Housing Transformation Programme

Our Affordable Housing Commission Report (Appendix 3) identified a number of strategic priorities that will help to prevent homelessness and support ending rough sleeping in the long term and which will be taken forward through our overarching Housing Strategy:

- Respond proactively to the challenging financial context to accelerate the delivery of more genuinely affordable homes.
- Take action on both the immediate and structural challenges facing private renters.
- Prioritise additional support for the borough's most vulnerable residents.

In addition, our Housing Transformation Programme identified the need to:

- Improve resident experience.
- Develop our staff and place a focus on customer service.
- Reintroduce face-to-face homelessness assessments.
- Upstream the work we do to prevent homelessness.
- Develop a future operating model for the Families & Homes Hub.





DEVELOPING OUR HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

We developed our Homelessness Review into a set of strategic outcomes and actions by engaging with staff, residents and partners through a theory of change approach.

Whilst the data on the housing crisis provides a clear moral imperative to act, it gives only limited insight into the impact it is having on people's lives. To address this, we prioritised in-depth conversations with the people who know the borough best, our residents. Through the Affordable Housing Commission and further engagement to



develop the Housing Strategy, we held conversations with over 150 people. We used semi-structured focus groups to understand people's experiences of living in Waltham Forest and our resident's priorities for change. We also wanted to ensure that our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was developed in consultation with our frontline staff and partners.

Our 'theory of change' for homelessness and rough sleeping

We developed our Homelessness and Rough sleeping strategy using 'theory of change' principles. Theory of change is a process of describing the long-term change we want to achieve, and then working backwards to understand how we can influence our desired changes with the powers and resources at our disposal.

Instead of just talking about the outputs that we want to deliver, we will also talk about the outcomes we want to see. Our strategy has been developed as part of the outcomes Framework for our overarching Housing Strategy that we hope can support a new dialogue with residents, by being clearer about the long-term changes we are striving for.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS:

We cannot deliver our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy without first engaging local residents, landlords, and partners to explore the impact of previous decisions, and their perspectives on what does and doesn't work. Engagement is critical to inform this strategy and ensuring

it is grounded in the lived experience of housing in the borough. A total of six online focus groups brought together people based on their current housing tenures and circumstances including residents in PRS accommodation, social housing and temporary accommodation and/or at risk of homelessness. In addition, there was an online focus group for residential landlords.

To address demographic and other gaps in participation, we undertook further targeted engagement activity with young people, older people's groups, Residents Associations, people receiving support in relation to their housing situation, people who are homeless living in temporary accommodation, and resettled families. In total 80 people were part of the conversations that inform this strategy.



SITA'S STORY

Sita and her husband are living in a 1-bedroom flat which they rent from a private landlord. They've been told that their rent will be increasing by £400 per month. They both work but cannot afford this increase:

“

Seven years he's been our landlord and suddenly he's asking for more rent. He's renovated next door and he's getting more money and he's told us to move. I'm looking and looking, but I can't find anywhere. Whoever can pay more gets the flat, it's very expensive and I cannot afford it.”

Sita has been looking for alternative accommodation but has been unable to find anywhere. She does not reach the income threshold most letting agencies require to rent a property equivalent to the one she is currently in. Sita therefore considers herself and her partner to be at risk of eviction:

“

I've been nervous and panicking. Yeah, I want a property from a housing association. This is the one I want. I'm looking for that.”

She is unsure about what support is available to her and is worried that she will only be able to access help when she and her partner are made homeless.



RESIDENTS ALSO TOLD US THAT:

It is sometimes unclear where to go to for help:

“

I called legal aid, they said I'm not eligible for that. I called the Citizen's Advice bureau they said no, they can't give me any advice. They gave me this number I called the whole day. They told me the person worked from Tuesday to Thursday, they gave me a specific number and specific time and I called back again..."

- Resident in a vulnerable housing situation

The way the system works was also felt to be confusing:

“

The online forms are confusing, sometimes I spend ages on them and get so frustrated I don't even send them in."

- Resident in a vulnerable housing situation

The Council should be able to do more to prevent homelessness:

“

I feel the Council can implement programs and services aimed at preventing homelessness, such as financial assistance, mediation, and support for those at risk."

Resident at risk of eviction

The impacts of being in temporary accommodation are having a negative effect on people's physical and mental health:

“

Being made homeless has had a huge impact on us. We've been put in hotels in Southend, Harlow, Romford. I have to bring my three daughters to school every day. And my wife had a high-risk pregnancy, so she had to come back for lots of hospital appointments. She's been under huge stress"

Resident living in a vulnerable housing situation



WHAT WE HEARD FROM PARTNERS

The Council is not the only organisation responsible for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in Waltham Forest. We work closely with our partners who share our vision for change. We recognise the challenges facing many of our key partners and the need to work together to tackle the challenging issues we face as a borough. We discussed the findings of our homelessness review and our suggested outcomes framework and actions in a workshop with partners.

OUR PARTNERS STORY...

Our voluntary sector partners all recognise that more joint working is needed with the council and in particular the DWP and would like to see these arrangements formalised. There was broad agreement that a bespoke Housing/Homelessness Forum for the council and its voluntary partners needs to be set up and more joint training between council officers and voluntary sector partners would also help strengthen this partnership.

Our partners want to work with us promote to residents the benefits of seeking help early before homelessness happens. They want to see better coordination between points of access to homelessness services and improvement is needed in access to, and the quality of, information provided by the council. In general, as a partnership, we need to be smarter in how we use data to support better outcomes for homeless people and share data more effectively between services.



OUR PARTNERS ALSO TOLD US:

“ More resources should be directed at early intervention’.

“ A team of Tenant Liaison Officers is needed’.

“ The system isn’t quite working as well as it could’.

“ The current objectives are great if we can get there.’

“ Realistic move on options are extremely difficult for those in shelters’.

“ Availability of affordable accommodation in the PRS extremely limited’.

“ We should explore more the role of schools in educating people about housing and homelessness’.

“ At the moment the service can be inconsistent and not joined up – clients experience being asked for the same document multiple times’.

“ Workers providing front line services in the voluntary sector need to be able to ‘get in a room with housing officers’ to share experiences’.





WHAT WE HEARD FROM FRONTLINE STAFF

As well as consulting with residents and our partners in the voluntary, community and statutory sectors, it was also essential to consult with service managers and frontline staff to evaluate our current priorities, objectives, and processes and how they are delivering for residents in practice. We discussed the findings of our homelessness review and our suggested outcomes framework and actions in a series of workshops with frontline staff.



OUR STAFF STORY...

Our frontline teams recognise the need for early intervention and identifying the right solution at the right time. Building and effective relationship with landlords, particularly in the private sector is critical if we are to prevent homelessness before it happens, and staff want more support and training to help tenants deal with disrepair cases and damp and mould. To keep residents in their homes we need to be able to provide tenancy sustainment support, particularly for families, including income maximisation and help to find employment.

When people are threatened with homelessness our staff want us to

have closer relationships with advice services so that residents receive realistic, consistent, and tailored advice on their housing options. Our staff also recognise that our relationships with other partners in the voluntary sector and in revenues and benefits need to improve.

In terms of rough sleeping, our staff told us they are working with individuals with many complex needs. Some residents with addiction issues afraid to use hostels because of drugs and alcohol and behavioural issues. Our staff recognise there is a greater need for interventions from Community Mental Health, including more emphasis needed generally on rehabilitation.

When it comes to assessment, staff want us to make sure we get our policies and procedures right so that can provide a consistent and uniform approach, including when we are supporting people fleeing domestic abuse.

For our staff, empathy and the correct tone with clients is essential to building trust. Although managing expectations and realism are important, staff do not want to be seen to be dismissive where residents have a strong expectation of social housing.



STAFF ALSO TOLD US THAT:

“

We need to define what we mean by early intervention - is it early enough?

“

More honesty was needed about why people are placed where they are’.

“

We need a better idea is needed of what each team does’.

“

Customer care is important - doing things on time builds trust.’

“

More In house training needed - learning from the same person was desirable for consistency’.

“

Not enough investment is made in communicating vital information for clients / households. Better posters needed in libraries and doctors waiting rooms’.



“

In terms of things the service could do better; we currently don't have time to help clients search for PRS properties - to actively support clients more effectively we need a dedicated team for this purpose. Existing staff are too tied up with casework to do this'.

“

Many clients in TA have mental health issues and need help with counselling - if this could be more readily available it would also help people to be better equipped to help themselves'.

“

By creating sufficient choices, we can eradicate the need to rough sleep.'

“

We cannot succeed alone and there was a stress on the role of statutory organisations such as the NHS who can play a major role'.





OUR STRATEGY

Due to the cost-of-living crisis, lack of affordable PRS accommodation in London and many households being impacted by the government's Benefit Cap, homelessness in Waltham Forest is becoming more prevalent.

The council has a legal duty to provide support to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness and it is vital that we deliver a person-centred service to our residents. Reflecting the importance of this, we have produced this separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that will sit alongside our overarching Housing Strategy.

However, homelessness cannot be tackled in isolation. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy establishes our delivery

priorities to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping wherever possible so that they become rare, brief and non-recurrent. These delivery priorities also interface with other sections of our overarching Housing Strategy that can help to alleviate homelessness in the long-term, such as building more affordable homes and supporting renters.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Delivery Plan sets out a genuinely integrated approach to homelessness and rough sleeping based on our Homelessness Review and developed in conjunction with our residents, partners and staff. Together, the strategy and delivery plan will balance delivery against immediate acute need, with the long-term actions to tackle the root causes of homelessness.



OUR OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Having developed the findings of our Homelessness Review through engagement with Partners, Staff and Residents we have agreed an outcomes framework which sets out our strategic approach to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping for the next five years. This outcomes framework forms part of a wider outcomes framework which supports our overarching Housing Strategy:

LONG TERM OUTCOME:

Homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented so that they become rare, brief and non-recurrent.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES:

- A. Early intervention and support are improved.
- B. Residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are empowered to make decisions which are right for them.
- C. Residents in temporary accommodation are supported into long-term homes.



A: Early intervention and support are improved

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, however, for local authorities, homelessness support is much broader. Residents owed homelessness support can include households people staying with family and friends, and those living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council. Homelessness Support also includes those threatened with homelessness within 56 days with no alternative suitable accommodation – many of whom will be renting privately. We work hard to ensure that anyone who approaches us at risk of becoming homeless has a roof over their head while we work to help them find a suitable solution in settled accommodation. We appreciate how stressful the situation can be for anyone in this position.

Wherever possible and appropriate, early intervention will be our priority. Taking a preventative approach has dual benefits. Firstly, it can deliver better mental and physical health impacts for residents by avoiding the trauma and upheaval of being made homeless. Secondly, prevention is far more cost effective than the relief of homelessness – enabling limited council resources to go further. To improve early intervention and support, our new Housing Sustainment Team is identifying and working with families and households at risk of homelessness before they reach a point of crisis. The team's focus is currently and will continue to be on families within the private rented sector, particularly those who are impacted by the government's Benefit Cap. The team provides advice and assistance across a wide range of issues including benefits, employment, and health that enable them to sustain their tenancies'. This

new team works closely with other Council departments to identify and reach out to those most in need.

Evidence received through the Affordable Housing Commission showed that the precariousness of the PRS is undermining tenants' health and wellbeing, meaning that we need to go further. Building on the learning from the Housing Sustainment team, a new team of Tenants' Rights Officers will focus on expanding the offer, through providing advice and guidance on a range of tenancy matters. We cannot tackle this challenge alone. Our partners in the voluntary and community sector do incredible work to prevent homelessness in our communities. Through our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Plan we will reaffirm our commitment to working in partnership to address homelessness and set out the actions we will take to build the coalition for change.



We will:

- Create a team of Tenants' Rights Officers who, working with Regulatory Services colleagues and health and wellbeing services will provide direct support to PRS tenants through individual casework.
- Proactively identify families at risk of homelessness in the PRS and engage with them to identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention.
- Improve record keeping on the vulnerability of tenants in Council homes.
- Develop a dedicated Vulnerability Support Policy for Housing Services.
- Seek to enhance current and develop new opportunities to prevent homelessness in partnership.

Create a team of Tenant' Rights Officers.

Evidence received through the Affordable Housing Commission showed that the precariousness of PRS is undermining tenants' health and wellbeing, meaning that we need to go further. Building on the learning from the Housing Sustainment team, a new team of Tenants' Relations officers will focus on expanding the offer, through providing advice and guidance on a range of tenancy matters.

Proactively identify families at risk of homelessness in the private rented sector.

To improve early intervention and support, our new Housing Sustainment Team is identifying and working with households at

risk of homelessness before they reach a point of crisis. The team's focus is currently and will continue to be on families within the PRS, particularly those who are impacted by the government's Benefit Cap. The team provides advice and assistance across a wide range of issues including benefits, employment, and health that enable them to sustain their tenancies.

Improve record keeping on the vulnerability of tenants in council homes.

As a landlord it is important for the council know who our tenants are and properly consider their needs and potential vulnerabilities when managing their tenancies. To do this we need to make sure our tenant records are up to date and that we have the right policies and procedures in place to ensure that vulnerability information is collected and stored responsibly.



Increase homelessness prevention awareness.

Wherever possible and appropriate, early intervention will be our priority. Taking a preventative approach has dual benefits. Firstly, it can deliver better mental and physical health impacts for residents by avoiding the trauma and upheaval of being made homeless. Secondly, prevention is far more cost effective than the relief of homelessness – enabling limited Council resources to go further.

Develop a dedicated Vulnerability Support Policy for Housing Services.

We will develop a dedicated Vulnerability support Policy which sets out our commitment as a landlord to assisting our vulnerable tenants and leaseholders to ensure they can access our services, and for vulnerable tenants to ensure they receive the

assistance they need to sustain their tenancy. We provide additional support and responds as flexibly as we can to residents who are facing exceptional circumstances that can make them more vulnerable and unable to manage their tenancies, but we know there is a lot more we can do.

Enhance current and develop new opportunities to prevent homelessness in partnership.

We cannot tackle this challenge alone. Our partners in the voluntary and community sector do incredible work to prevent homelessness in our communities. Through our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Delivery Plan we will reaffirm our commitment to working in partnership to address homelessness and set out the actions we will take to build the coalition for change.

B: Residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are empowered to make decisions which are right for them

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was one of the biggest changes to homelessness legislation in England for 15 years and added two new duties to the original statutory duty. The duties require that local authorities take ‘reasonable steps’ to help applicants prevent or relieve their homelessness. The Act also places an onus on applicants to cooperate with the local authority if they require assistance. Our aim is to help people remain in their own homes or to find alternative accommodation quickly. This is so that households do not experience the crisis of actual homelessness. We will



provide resolution-focused advice and assistance and ensure that there are clear pathways which support residents to address their housing needs. In addition, we will review the range of advice, support, guidance, and assistance available to residents as well as ensuring we upskill officers to take a strengths-based approach to service delivery. As a council, we have a duty to consider “all groups of people who may be affected by homelessness”. Through this strategy we are committed to ensuring all protected groups within the Equality Act 2010 are able to access our homelessness services and make the decisions that are right for them.

We will:

- Ensure that there are clear pathways which support residents to address their housing needs.
- Ensure the advice and assistance we provide is resolution focused.
- Provide residents who are threatened with homelessness with access to information which empowers them to take proactive steps to prevent their homelessness, either by staying in their existing home or identifying alternative accommodation
- Develop empowering ways of working within our workforce, emphasising the rights of residents and making them part of the solution to homelessness.

Ensure that there are clear pathways which support residents to address their needs.

Positive Pathways help to avoid a housing crisis. They also help to support residents to achieve outcomes in other areas of their lives alongside housing, for example in education, training and employment, health and emotional well-being. We will seek to develop positive pathways which help our residents to address both their housing and wider needs.

Ensure the advice and assistance we provide is resolution focused.

Solutions focused practices concentrate on helping people move towards the future that they want and to understand what can be done differently by using their existing skills,



strategies and ideas, rather than focusing on the problem. We will ensure the housing options advice and assistance we provide focuses on helping our residents to help themselves

Provide residents who are threatened with homelessness with access to information which empowers them.

Empowerment is best described as a process which supports people to enhance their capacity to be informed, make choices and transform those choices into actions and outcomes. We want to help residents to help themselves. We will do this by ensuring the advice and information we provide is factual, easily accessed and readily available.

Develop empowering ways of working within our workforce, emphasising the rights of residents and making them part of the solution.

We will support our workforce to develop empowering ways of working which focus on respecting the rights of residents, providing resources and creating opportunities.

C: Residents in temporary accommodation are supported into long-term homes

Temporary Accommodation is a type of accommodation provided to households experiencing homelessness. A key difference between temporary housing and other types of accommodation offered to individuals experiencing homelessness is

that the household has not yet been offered a stable or permanent alternative. The acute shortage of suitable and affordable accommodation both in Waltham Forest and nationally means that where households are owed a temporary accommodation duty, they are likely to experience multiple short-term placements. Without proactive effort to move on and the appropriate support from the Council, households face living in temporary accommodation for several years. This is undermining people's mental health. Research from Groundswell and Trust for London showed that 67% of people in Temporary Accommodation reported challenges with their mental health, along with 64% of those experiencing other types of homelessness. Our aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, negating the need for temporary accommodation. Where this is not possible, we will ensure



that officers are appropriately equipped to support residents to access the support needed to move on from temporary accommodation as quickly as possible. In line with this we will make sure that residents are aware of actions they can take to move on to longer-term homes and are empowered to take appropriate action to resolve their housing need. Through our overarching Housing Strategy, we will continue to deliver new council homes and work with developers and housing associations to deliver new social homes, offering residents a route out of temporary accommodation.

We will:

- Work on increasing the supply of suitable rented homes, including concluding a second joint venture to increase supply to enable the council to discharge its homelessness duty by finding residents permanent homes in the PRS.

- Focus on move on, ensuring residents are aware of actions they can take to support a move on to alternative accommodation as quickly as possible.
- Develop and maintain high quality data which can be used to inform future service delivery.
- Establish and maintain good relationships with service providers to ensure residents have access to the services that best meet their needs.
- Invest in maintaining a skilled workforce. Ensuring officers have the necessary experience, people skills and time to help each resident access the support required to move on from temporary accommodation as quickly as possible.

Work on increasing the supply of suitable rented homes.

We know from the work of our Affordable Housing Commission that there will not be enough social housing for everyone. With this reality in mind, we will be developing a PRS Procurement strategy and will also explore further joint ventures and ways of maximising social lettings in new builds.

Focus on move on, ensuring residents are aware of actions they can take to support a move on to alternative accommodation as quickly as possible.

We know from the conversations we have had with residents, and the work of the Marmot Report into health inequalities, that living in temporary accommodation can



have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Good quality secure housing is the foundation of a good life, so we want to ensure that residents in Temporary Accommodation are supported as much as possible to move into more secure housing.

Develop and maintain high quality data which can be used to inform future service delivery.

Our staff and partner engagement session both highlighted the importance of having up to date and accurate data on our residents and on the housing options that they have. It's also important for us to understand the full costs of temporary accommodation so that the decisions we make as a council maximise value for money and the ensure the best possible services for residents.

Establish and maintain good relationships with service providers.

Our engagement sessions with frontline staff and partners told us that more can be done to improve how we work together. We will explore ideas for a more formal partnership setting and for joint training between council and VCS staff.

Invest in maintaining a skilled workforce.

Our Housing Transformation programme is focused on how we get the most from our current limited resources and this includes upskilling staff and building a culture delivers the best possible customer service for residents who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.



SECTION 2.

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

MEASURING OUR LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

We will also track our long-term outcomes. Because these are long-term, they will not be achieved over the lifetime of a single strategy.

We will use this data to understand the broader impact we are having to better understand the impact our delivery priorities are having.

Reflecting the breadth of the Strategy, we have selected a range of indicators to monitor our long-term outcomes. Individual actions will also have their own delivery measures set out in the delivery plan.



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping are prevented so that they become rare, brief and non-recurrent

Indicator (responsibility)	Reporting frequency	How we'll measure
# of residents accepted as homeless (Shared challenge)	Annually	Housing Needs Team Data
# of households in temporary accommodation (shared challenge)	Annually	Housing Needs Team Data
# of residents sleeping rough (shared challenge)	Annually	Housing Needs Team Data



SECTION 3.

GLOSSARY



TERM	DEFINITION
Benefit cap	The benefit cap is a limit on the total amount of benefit you can get. It applies to most people aged 16 or over who have not reached State Pension age.
Housing Benefit	Housing Benefit can help you pay your rent if you're unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits. It is being replaced by Universal Credit.
Housing Register	The housing register is the list of people who qualify for council housing and are waiting to be offered a property.
Homelessness	The state of a household being without accommodation that it has the right to occupy and/or that is suitable for their occupation.
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	LHA rates are used to set a limit on the amount of Housing Benefit tenants can claim based on local market rents.



Private Rented Sector

Where homes are owned by companies or individuals and rented to tenants at market rents.

Renters Reform Bill

A Bill to make provision changing the law about rented homes, including provision abolishing fixed term assured tenancies and assured shorthold tenancies.

Temporary Accommodation (TA)

TA is somewhere to live while you wait for longer term housing.

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is one of the most significant changes to the rights of homeless people in England for 15 years. It effectively bolts two new duties to the original statutory rehousing duty:

- Duty to prevent homelessness
- Duty to relieve homelessness





SECTION 4.

APPENDICES



- 1 Homelessness Review
- 2 Affordable Housing commission evidence
- 3 Affordable Housing Commission Report
- 4 Waltham Forest Housing Strategy
- 5 Delivery Plan



