

Appendix 1

Report on Consultation: Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Review and Strategy

A variety of council services and external partners were consulted to help inform the development of the homelessness review and the draft homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy. The informal consultation included:

- A front line staff workshop
- A dedicated staff working group
- Individual interviews with a variety of key delivery partners
- A Homelessness Forum event with external stakeholders
- An internal stakeholders event

The findings of consultation sessions considered alongside available data and have fed into the homelessness review and assisted in the development of the consultation draft. The Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee considered the draft strategy prior to the formal consultation.

The formal consultation process ran from 30th October 2019 to 26th November 2019. The consultation draft has been highlighted on the Council's website with an accompanying questionnaire and opportunities have been taken to draw attention to this, including via social media. Consultation events have also been held including:

- A drop-in session for front-line staff and stakeholders from other council departments
- A homelessness forum including both voluntary sector and housing association partners
- Specific meetings for key partners and issues such as adults and children's social care and domestic abuse

Questionnaire responses

The questionnaire asked respondents to confirm the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the six priorities identified in draft strategy and asked for additional comments.

Priority One:	Ensure that residents are able to access good quality, clear housing advice regarding their housing options
Priority Two:	Prevent earlier
Priority Three:	Eliminate the need to sleep rough in Hillingdon
Priority Four:	Increase the availability of affordable rented housing
Priority Five:	Manage the quantity, quality and cost of temporary accommodation
Priority Six:	Bring greater purpose, clarity and focus to local homelessness partnership arrangements

There have been 54 responses in total from the online questionnaire and further questionnaires completed during the drop-in session and the homelessness forum. The online questionnaire provided 10 responses, all of which came from Hillingdon residents. Nine were home-owners and one was a tenant. The respondents were a good mix of

gender, age and faith groups. A majority of respondents were white UK and 37.5 per cent of respondents were from other ethnic groups. There were no responses from LGBT groups.

The responses are summarised below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Priority One	37	13	0	0	1	51
Priority Two	31	16	1	0	1	49
Priority Three	33	13	1	0	1	48
Priority Four	31	9	3	1	0	44
Priority Five	31	11	3	0	0	45
Priority Six	29	14	1	0	0	44

Note: not all questions were answered by all respondents

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Priority One	73%	25%	0%	0%	2%	100%
Priority Two	63%	33%	2%	0%	2%	100%
Priority Three	69%	27%	2%	0%	2%	100%
Priority Four	70%	20%	7%	2%	0%	100%
Priority Five	69%	24%	7%	0%	0%	100%
Priority Six	66%	32%	3%	0%	0%	100%

Note: percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding

Additional comments included in questionnaire responses and made verbally during the consultation events are summarised below:

Priority one

- Closer working with a variety of partners, including landlords and housing associations
- Make better use of the Council's website to provide clarity regarding housing pathways, including the likelihood of being housed in the social sector. Good quality advice online will assist self service
- Provide more and wider guidance to clients regarding their tenancy, housing options and opportunities
- Standardise information sharing
- Make advice easily understandable and easily accessible
- Introduce online feedback surveys
- Hold regular meetings with a wide variety of partners, internal and external and ensure awareness of each others services and effective co-ordination
- Co-location is to be encouraged
- Work with schools in relation to preventing homelessness
- Consider communication needs of disabled clients i.e. deaf clients; provision of leaflets in braille
- Make information clearer to those who are less able
- Aim communication to street homeless in an appropriate location / format
- More information should be accessible in libraries, schools and hospitals
- Diverse locations and ways to access advice

- Sharing information to help deliver outreach, reconnections project from Heathrow
- Make sure people get advice when they need it or ask for it
- Reach out to the community rather than waiting for them to come to you

Priority two

- A focus on the main causes of homelessness is welcomed. There is a need to get to high risk groups earlier if a step change is to be achieved
- Encourage tenants to be proactive in dealing with teenagers and carry out in-depth home visits / mediation where appropriate to avoid family evictions
- Use the housing register appropriately to avoid homelessness.
- Accommodation is often not sustainable for some client groups without support i.e. care leavers and those with mental health needs
- Support clients and landlords
- Good to see accommodation needs of prison leavers included
- Put in place procedures with agents to aid early intervention
- More co-location of homelessness officers with duty to refer partners
- Early intervention to help address bed blocking in Hillingdon Hospital
- Employment is important in avoiding homelessness and is also linked to debt. Encourage links to support agencies. Provide encouragement for employment, training and education
- Develop procedures concerning illegal evictions, including working with external partners i.e. police; referrals from other services
- Quantify the time spent by staff in undertaking housing assessments and completing the personal housing plan
- Support for physical and mental health issues
- Floating support important for maintaining tenancies
- Domestic abuse victims shouldn't have to move elsewhere, consider a perpetrator strategy
- Customer journey mapping across housing and social care and with partner organisations would assist in identifying where processes require improvement including where there might have been an earlier intervention
- Employment is a key factor in the early intervention and prevention approach and as such, it is important for the homelessness team to build strong partnerships with the range of employment support agencies working in the borough
- Joint working concerning drugs, alcohol and mental health – protocol between services
- Working together to support those leaving prison or hospital
- Advice to care leavers
- Understanding immigration and eligibility
- Ensure all who require tenancy sustainment are engaged with that service
- Spotlight on sofa surfing as the often ends up as rough sleeping – have an active campaign for sofa surfers to access advice
- Prevention workshops / Roadshows
- Sharing information to help deliver outreach, reconnections project from Heathrow
- Use influence for increased Local Housing Allowance rates
- Emergency accommodation for rough sleepers
- Support prevention via Housing Associations
- Develop tenancy sustainment packages

Priority three

- Activate plans for extreme hot weather as well as cold

- Have the winter night shelter open for longer and with more spaces
- Have male and female shelters
- Work across borders with other authorities
- Create a central 'hub' for services connected to rough sleepers
- Focus on outreach mental health workers to help those that the usual methods of housing don't work for
- More accommodation is needed for rough sleepers
- Need for supported housing with high levels of support
- Celebrate successes in relation to rough sleepers and use their experiences to inform actions
- Quicker implementation of support and transparent processes
- Enforcement to be linked to individual and their behaviour (anti-social) rather than the act of rough sleeping
- Keep the rough sleeper project going
- Involve practitioners from none homeless professional backgrounds in rough sleeper counts to encourage engagement with other services. E.g. GPs, JCP, Foodbank etc.
- When accommodating ensure connections are made to holistic support i.e. mental health, training, employment support
- Find accommodation solutions where not all rough sleepers are placed together in shared accommodation. Prone to relapses and exacerbation of issues.
- Clients who want to avoid alcohol or drugs shouldn't be housed with those who use
- Better link to mental health services and substance abuse
- Possible involvement of Hillingdon MIND
- Consider extending period for winter night shelter
- How might Heathrow airport be more actively engaged in relation to rough sleeping
- Include an approach to street begging and anti-social behaviour
- What more can be done to reach rough sleepers that do not want to be found
- Provide funding for rough sleepers to return home
- Pathways needed for those with personality disorder. Mental health service offer for those with a chaotic lifestyle
- Work harder to engage not enforce

Priority four

- Focus on releasing under-occupied properties, make available one bed housing for that purpose and remove barriers such as rent and council tax arrears. Make available better and more flexible incentives. Could voluntary sector partners be involved in presenting downsizing options to older people?
- Review age restrictions on bungalows
- Some may consider 35% of social housing for homeless to be unfair
- Low cost home ownership continues to be needed by those who want to buy
- Build more affordable homes. Some local authorities have used shipping containers
- Buy more stock
- Increase affordable and intermediate rent
- Work closely with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness and assist with incentives
- Build closer relationships with Housing Associations
- Develop commissioning plans
- Consider additional storeys to low rise blocks
- Provide training for negotiating skills for officers to aid dialogue with landlords
- Create new loft extensions
- Consider other extensions

- Where the council acts as landlord it has greatest control over cost and quality
- Strengthen monitoring
- Be more specific regarding how affordability would be defined and what are the particular needs regarding property type and size
- Purchase of empty homes to be used as temporary accommodation
- Is there enough provision in the borough for women fleeing domestic abuse
- Are reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities regarding domestic abuse working effectively and can these be extended to Housing Associations
- Provide accommodation for single people
- There is an urgent need for more housing of all bedroom sizes
- Explore property ownership by BAA around Heathrow and possible used by homeless people

Priority five

- Move people on from temporary accommodation in a timely manner
- More incentives to persuade landlords
- Increased staffing to manage additional / larger properties
- The quality and affordability of some of the bed and breakfast accommodation is not great
- Buy whole buildings and / convert old sheltered schemes decanting residents to more desirable schemes
- Buy and manage our own temporary accommodation
- Align the enforcement framework, including licensing to support the homelessness strategy
- Provide a move-on option from Trinity
- Finding and retaining new landlords who are willing to work in partnership to provide rooms in a shared house.
- Consider financial guarantees for landlords
- Review case load and encourage clients to seek move-on accommodation
- Communication with landlords regarding expectations
- Convert temporary accommodation to permanent where possible
- Set targets for use of temporary accommodation
- More inspections of temporary accommodation before and during use
- Larger private sector housing team to meet increased workload
- Supported temporary accommodation to prevent abandonments
- Focus on temporary accommodation being safe and clean

Priority six

- Include probation and police in actions concerning partnership working
- More employment support is needed
- Homelessness prevention, benefits and budgeting workshops in schools and colleges
- Have a monthly meeting with each client
- More events with landlords and community
- Consider single pooled funding stream to support collaborative working toward shared priorities
- To make long-term holistic change the employment support sector has to be fully engaged in partnerships
- Work closely with mental health services
- Improve communication between departments
- Housing forum should meet more often. More staff to contribute

- Partners need to have awareness of limitations in what the local authority can offer
- Include someone from adult social care on the strategy implementation group
- Monitor the hospital discharge protocol on a monthly basis. Early identification and action duty to refer if admitted as homeless. Work with reablement service. Make good use of already existing hospital services
- Need to gain better understanding of homeless flow in hospitals, numbers involved and most prolific attenders
- Homeless people with TB, more create with online assessments
- Representative from Children's services on strategy implementation group
- Working arrangements sometimes depend on existing relationships. Would benefit from being more formalised and systematic.
- Robust forum and opportunity to feedback
- Wide cohort of partners
- Make criteria for referrals clearer
- Consider a domestic abuse link in housing
- More support around dual diagnosis
- 16-25 year old forum – front line staff attending

Additional comments

- There is a strong focus on vulnerable groups in the strategy, but less in relation to families
- Concerns were expressed regarding the sufficiency of resources
- Positive comments regarding the content of the strategy and the consultation process
- Achievable smart objectives should be set
- There is a need for performance metrics
- Focus on early intervention
- Data needs include greater complexity of understanding and improved data quality to assist business planning
- Placement of families by other boroughs has an impact on social care