

# Ending Homelessness in Enfield

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025





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<b>Scope</b>	This five-year strategy explains how we will work with partners to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Enfield. The strategy meets our obligations under the Homelessness Act 2002 for all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy.
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Approval date</b>	4 December 2019
<b>Document Author</b>	Policy, Partnership, Engagement and Consultation Hub
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<b>Document owner – Portfolio holder</b>	Cllr Gina Needs, Cabinet Member for Social Housing
<b>Review</b>	A new multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board will review performance against the measures of success identified in this strategy and will monitor performance against our strategy action plan on a quarterly basis.

# INTRODUCTION

Homelessness has become a national emergency and in no place is this clearer than Enfield. This strategy sets out how we will work to prevent and end homelessness and rough sleeping.

Since 2011/12, homelessness has increased by 246% in the borough. At March 2019, Enfield had 3,410 households in temporary accommodation, a 74% rise since 2012. This makes us the second highest provider of temporary accommodation in England. Eviction from private rented accommodation continues to be the highest cause of homelessness in Enfield. We have also seen a significant rise in rough sleeping since 2017, giving us the fourth highest rough sleeper count in London in 2018.

The causes of homelessness are complex and addressing the rise in homelessness is particularly challenging due to a lack of good quality, affordable housing in the private rented sector. This challenge is magnified when combined with our very limited stock of social rented homes, which continues to decrease year on year through Right to Buy.

The scale of these challenges means that we require a radical step-change in the way we work across the Council, with our partner organisations and in the community to prevent homelessness. Enfield's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy sets out how we will move towards a culture where homelessness is everyone's business and how together we can support all residents to have a safe, stable place to live, now and in the future.



Cllr Gina Needs  
Cabinet Member for Housing



# OUR VISION

We want to end homelessness in Enfield.

This means ensuring that everyone has a safe, stable place to live. It means supporting residents to make informed choices so that they have a home they can afford, at the right time, which meets their needs. It means that if an individual or family is at risk of homelessness, they receive the support they need to prevent it.

We will deliver on this vision through the following five ambitions:

## Make homelessness prevention a priority for everyone

Working with the community, our partners and across the Council to spot risks of homelessness early and take holistic action to prevent it.

## Treat people with empathy, dignity and respect

Supporting people with compassion, listening to their views and ideas and working with them, other services and the community to prevent and end homelessness together.

## Support people to access the right accommodation

Empowering local people to find suitable accommodation and driving up standards in the private rented sector.

## Support people to plan for their lifetime housing needs

Helping people to think about how they can meet their housing needs now and in the future, and to respond to changing requirements over their lifetime.

## End rough sleeping in Enfield

Working in partnership to positively engage with and support people who are sleeping rough and prevent this form of homelessness from happening.

We are delivering on these priorities to end homelessness alongside our **Housing and Growth Strategy**, which sets out how we will deliver more homes and better homes for Enfield, where everyone benefits from the opportunities that growth can bring.

We cannot end homelessness alone. We know that we need more homes and better homes, but it is the communities who will live in these homes that are crucial in truly ending homelessness. We also need to work more closely with our statutory, voluntary and community partners at a national, regional and local level. Through partnership working, this strategy seeks to address the causes and consequences of homelessness and rough sleeping. This is key to achieving our overarching vision for housing and good growth in Enfield.

# ENFIELD'S REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS

We published our previous strategy on preventing homelessness in 2013. The borough has changed considerably since then, and during this time homelessness has increased significantly, both nationally and locally. Our homelessness review shows us that both the challenges, such as increasing numbers of people on low incomes in the private rented sector, and the opportunities presented through the Homelessness Prevention Act, mean we now need a different approach to tackling the challenge.

Whilst homelessness is increasing across England, homelessness in Enfield is rising at a considerable rate. The London Borough of Enfield has experienced a 246% increase in homelessness acceptances between 2010 and 2017 compared with a 35% rise in London. In 2017/18, 786 households were accepted as homeless and were owed a full homelessness duty by the local authority.

We are also seeing more households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness presenting with multiple and complex needs which puts increased pressure on homeless services.

At March 2019, there were 3,410 households living in Enfield's temporary accommodation, a 74% rise since 2012, and making us the second highest provider of temporary accommodation in England. This indicates an average annual increase of 208 households since 2011/12. 77% of the families in

Temporary Accommodation in Enfield have children. National evidence shows us that people living in temporary accommodation are more likely to have poor health outcomes and have worse educational attainment.

Temporary accommodation is also costly to the local authority. In 2018/19, Enfield spent over £66m on the Temporary Accommodation service, with a net cost to the local authority of £7m. Whilst the Flexible Housing Support Grant currently meets some of the cost of temporary accommodation, the uncertainty of this grant every year means that we cannot plan for the longer-term, making it harder to put in place longer term approaches to preventing and addressing homelessness.

There has also been a very significant increase in rough sleeping in the borough since 2017. Reported numbers have increased from 7 in 2017/18 to 78 in 2018/19. This reported increase can be explained by an encampment being included in the 2018/19 count.

The key drivers of rising homelessness in Enfield are complex and interconnected. Eviction from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) is now the main cause for someone becoming homeless in Enfield and we have the second highest eviction rate in London. This sector has rapidly increased in recent years, from 22% of all housing in Enfield in 2012 to 27% in 2017. Between 2011 and 2018, PRS rents in Enfield increased by 37%.

Increased levels of inward migration, deprivation, low incomes and the limited supply of affordable social rented homes means that vulnerable and migrant communities are increasingly reliant on finding accommodation in the private rented sector in Enfield and are exposed to these higher housing costs.

At the same time, the Council is also reliant on the private rented sector for discharging our homelessness duty.<sup>1</sup> We are competing with other London boroughs for available temporary accommodation in Enfield: during 2017/18, just 44% of all placements were made by Enfield, with 56% being made by other boroughs. In 2018/2019, as little as 40% of placements were made by Enfield, with 25 other boroughs making up 60% of temporary accommodation placements in Enfield.

Enfield is a low wage borough<sup>2</sup> and there is growing deprivation. Welfare reforms have had a significant impact, particularly for those living in the private rented sector, with Enfield having the fifth highest number of households impacted by the benefit cap nationally. In addition, changes to the way Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are calculated means that even those on a lower quartile rent do not have their full housing costs met by LHA. 25% of low-income households in PRS accommodation have outgoings that are more than their income.

This unique combination of drivers and pressures starkly demonstrates the scale of challenge that Enfield faces. The changes to the London housing market, alongside welfare reforms, means that, despite rising rents, Enfield is a comparatively affordable place to live for those on low incomes. This could mean the Borough's housing market is attracting lower income residents who are at greater risk of homelessness – with the proportion

of London's Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claimants in the Private Rented Sector increasing in Enfield, while inner London boroughs' share is in decline.

Interviews with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Spring 2019 showed that people move to Enfield for a variety of personal reasons and it is a change in personal circumstances such as sickness, loss of employment, benefits changes or pregnancy that can make private tenancies unaffordable. These interviews found that life changes resulted in people needing to move but finding themselves unable to pay the rent of suitable properties.<sup>3</sup>

**The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** places new duties on housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those who have 'priority need' under the Act. This new legislation provides us with the opportunity to further develop a holistic approach to preventing homelessness that is person-centred and provides our residents with greater autonomy and choice. The Act also provides the opportunity to enhance partnership working and knowledge-sharing to make the best use of all our resources.

**Our full homelessness review is available on our website.**

**Full Homeless Duty** means that the Council has a legal duty to secure suitable accommodation for applicants who are:

- eligible for assistance
- in priority need
- unintentionally homeless

**People in Priority need** are homeless and:

- pregnant
- have dependent children under 16, or under 19 if they are in full-time education
- homeless because of an emergency
- aged 16 or 17

A person may also be in priority need if they are:

- elderly or have an illness or disability
- at risk of exploitation or have been in care
- at risk of violence
- homeless after leaving hospital, prison or the armed forces

**The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** means that we must do more to identify homelessness early and work to prevent it. It extends the period an applicant is 'threatened with homelessness' to 56 days. We have a duty to provide all homeless applications with information and advice and to secure suitable accommodation for all homeless applicants, regardless of whether they are 'intentionally homeless' or 'priority need'. We must also carry out an assessment of the applicant and put in place a housing and support plan.

**3,410** households living in temporary accommodation

**74% increase** in households in temporary accommodation since 2012

Enfield is the **second highest** provider of temporary accommodation in England

# PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY: WE WANT TO END HOMELESSNESS IN ENFIELD

	<b>TREAT PEOPLE WITH EMPATHY, DIGNITY AND RESPECT</b>	<b>SUPPORT PEOPLE TO ACCESS THE RIGHT ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>SUPPORT PEOPLE TO PLAN FOR THEIR LIFETIME HOUSING NEEDS</b>	
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A reducing number of people become homeless:

- as a result of being evicted from private rented sector accommodation
- as a result of being evicted from council or registered provider (housing association) housing
- as a result of family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate

An **increasing** number of households are prevented from becoming homeless

There is an <b>increasing</b> number of statutory referrals into homeless prevention services	An <b>increasing</b> proportion of people accessing Housing Advice and prevention services give positive feedback on their experience of the services they received	Since the introduction of the HRA the proportion of households living in temporary accommodation for more than 6 months is <b>decreasing</b>	An <b>increasing</b> number of people who are single and have non-priority homeless status are supported to stay in their existing accommodation or are supported to find alternative accommodation to prevent rough sleeping
There is an <b>increasing</b> number of non-statutory referrals into homeless prevention services	Housing Advice and prevention services experience a <b>decreasing</b> proportion of complaints	A <b>reducing</b> number of people experience delayed discharge from hospital or a delayed move on from residential care/ specialist housing due to the need for general needs accommodation	A <b>reducing</b> number of people are sleeping rough
There is an <b>increasing</b> number of people approaching homeless prevention services before the 56 days		An <b>increasing</b> number of households living in temporary accommodation move into the private rented sector	
A <b>reducing</b> number of people live in temporary accommodation:		A <b>reducing</b> number of people live in temporary accommodation:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family households</li> <li>• Single households</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family households</li> <li>• Single households</li> </ul>	
		Households are spending a <b>decreasing</b> amount of time living in temporary accommodation	
		A <b>stable</b> or <b>increasing</b> number of households with assessed support needs are being allocated social rented homes via the Housing Allocation Scheme	
		An <b>increasing</b> number of grants are approved for adaptations to council, housing association, private rented sector and owner-occupied accommodation	
		There are <b>no families</b> with children living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks	
		An <b>increasing</b> number of households are moving into the private rented sector to prevent homelessness	
		The net cost of temporary accommodation is <b>decreasing</b>	
		A <b>decreasing</b> number of households live in expensive nightly paid accommodation	

## AMBITION 1

# MAKE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION A PRIORITY FOR EVERYONE

If we want to end homelessness in Enfield, we must focus on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place. We will redesign our services to intervene at the earliest opportunity. We will work across council services, with our partners and local organisations to make sure that the right people are getting help at the right time. We will also work with partners and with the community to respond to links between poor housing, low income and poor health to help residents to build resilience to prevent homelessness.

Enfield has a high percentage of residents on low incomes living in the private rented sector; almost a quarter of residents in the private rented sector have higher outgoings than income, mainly driven by housing costs.<sup>4</sup> These residents are at high risk of becoming homeless. We will use data innovatively to identify residents who could be at risk of homelessness which will enable us to intervene much earlier to prevent escalation of issues.

We will strengthen our tenancy sustainment services by providing residents with support and training before they start their tenancy, so that they are informed about their rights and responsibilities. We will provide on-going support to residents who need it, to help them to sustain their tenancies and stay in their homes. Part of this offer will also mean supporting and training council staff and partner agencies to spot the risks of homelessness early and know what action to take to prevent this.

Timely access to benefits, effectively dealing with debt and rent arrears, and access to employment and training all play a critical role in whether or not someone becomes homeless. Our work with Enfield Citizens Advice and co-location of staff from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) with our Council Financial Assessment Service is helping us to support people early with issues that can escalate to homelessness if not effectively dealt with. Where we cannot prevent homelessness through income maximisation, services will be joined up and linked in with our partner organisations to work together and share information.

The second highest reason for residents becoming homeless is being asked to leave their home by family or friends. We are strengthening our mediation services and more people are now being supported to stay where they are until we have helped them to find different accommodation.

Our Voluntary and Community Sector (or Third Sector) makes a significant contribution to supporting those who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness by providing support, advice and guidance, as well as practical support like food and accommodation. Working effectively with these organisations is critical, and we want to strengthen our partnerships with the Third Sector to increase the range and quality of services to support homeless residents.

We will work in partnership to co-ordinate and join-up our activities and make sure that our work will provide the best outcomes for residents. We will work together to develop and increase the capacity of local organisations whilst also attracting new organisations into the borough and continue to seize opportunities for new funding and joint working.



## KEY PRIORITIES

We are delivering on the following priorities to make homelessness prevention a priority for everyone:

- Design, deliver and develop a new homelessness prevention service to make sure we can intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and support people at risk in the private rented sector to sustain their tenancies.
- Create a network of services and support for people within their communities, taking a whole person approach to preventing homelessness by also tackling worklessness, debt and poor health outcomes, maximising income and building literacy and ICT skills.
- Raise awareness across the Council and with partner agencies about public agencies' Duty to Refer<sup>5</sup> and how and when to refer to Enfield's preventing homelessness service.
- Develop a service offer for residents that provides tenancy sustainment support and intervention for all types of rented accommodation.
- Use data smartly to understand the needs of our residents, identify who could be at risk of homelessness and take proactive action to prevent this at the earliest stage possible.
- Strengthen partnership working with the Voluntary and Community Sector and increase the range and quality of services provided for homeless people by this sector.



## KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We will know that our approach is working if we can evidence:

- A **decreasing** number of people become homeless:
  - as a result of being evicted from private rented sector accommodation
  - as a result of being evicted from council or registered provider (housing association) housing
  - as a result of family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate
- An **increasing** number of households are prevented from becoming homeless.
- There is an **increasing** number of statutory and non statutory referrals into homeless prevention services.
- There is an **increasing** number of people approaching homeless prevention services before the 56 days.

\*A full list of measures of success can be found on pages 8 and 9.

### Duty to Refer

The Homelessness Prevention Act requires certain public services to refer cases to homeless prevention services if they identify that someone is homeless or is at risk of homelessness. The new duty applies to:

- prisons;
- youth offender institutions;
- secure training centres;
- secure colleges;
- youth offending teams;
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
- Jobcentre Plus;
- social service authorities;
- emergency departments;
- urgent treatment centres; and,
- hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care.

If you want to refer someone who needs help with their housing, you can email [dutytorefer@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer@enfield.gov.uk).

Make sure to include:

- Their name and telephone contact details
- Confirmation that they have given you permission to contact us on their behalf
- Information about their housing situation and why they need help

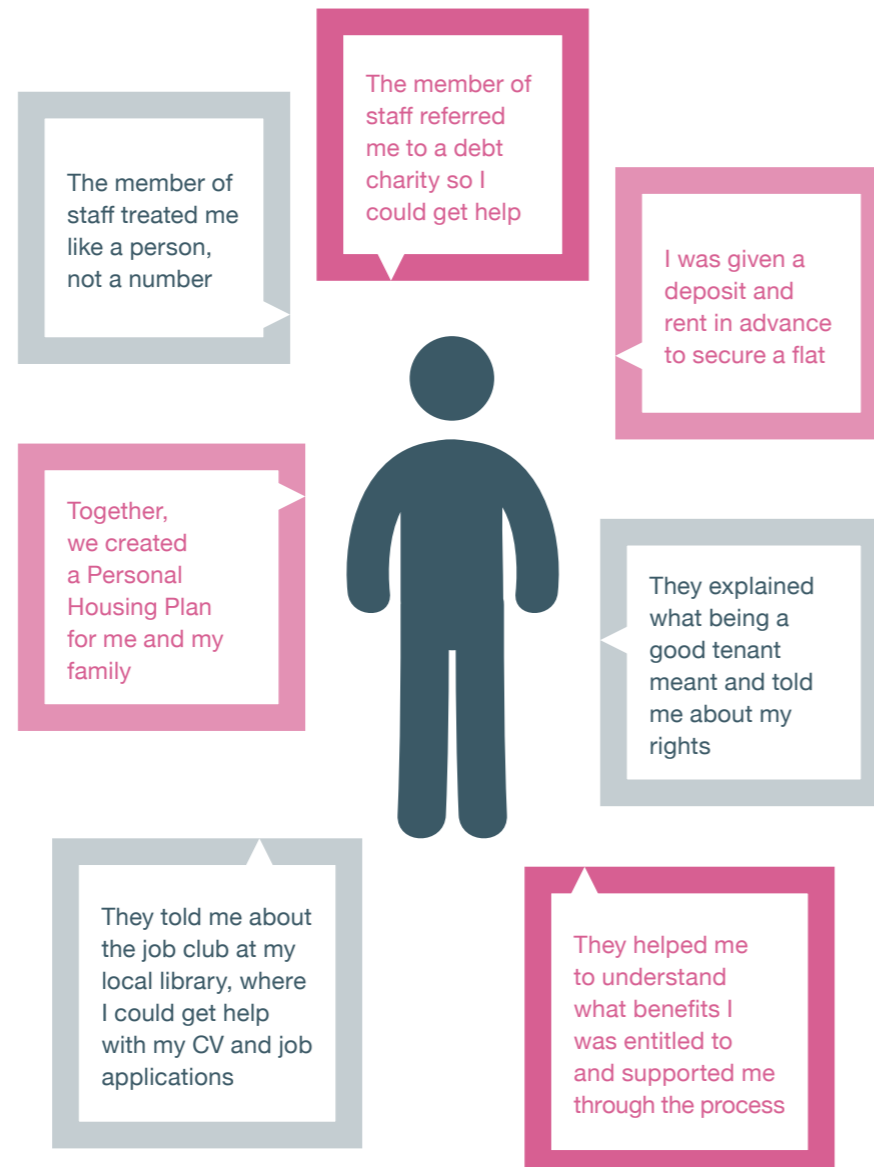
## AMBITION 2

# TREAT PEOPLE WITH EMPATHY, DIGNITY AND RESPECT

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are at a stressful and difficult time in their lives. Whatever type of help they may be eligible for, and whatever the reasons for their homelessness, they need to be treated with compassion. This means all our staff need to treat people with empathy, dignity and respect.

To achieve this person-centred approach, we will work collaboratively with people who have experienced homelessness in order to design and deliver a service which meets the needs of people requiring help and support.

It also requires homeless prevention services working in partnership with children and families services, adult social care, health services, schools, police, probation, voluntary and community organisations and others – to help people at risk of homelessness to address the range of issues contributing toward their risk of homelessness.



## KEY PRIORITIES

We are delivering on the following priorities to make sure that we treat people with empathy, dignity and respect:

- Design, deliver and develop a new homelessness prevention service with people who have experienced homelessness, so that people with lived experience of homelessness have a direct influence on how we work together to prevent and end homelessness.
- Design, deliver and develop a new homelessness prevention service which means that the workforce is enabled to work collaboratively with partners and with the community to respond to people's needs sensitively, effectively and quickly.



## KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We will know that our approach is working if we can evidence:

- An **increasing** proportion of people accessing housing advice and prevention services give positive feedback on their experience of the services they received.
- Housing advice and prevention services experience a **decreasing** proportion of complaints.

\*A full list of measures of success can be found on pages 8 and 9.

## AMBITION 3

# SUPPORT PEOPLE TO ACCESS THE RIGHT ACCOMMODATION

To prevent people in Enfield becoming homeless, and to support those who are currently homeless into stable accommodation, we will help local people to access affordable, good quality accommodation in Enfield.

Our Housing and Growth Strategy sets out how we will increase the range of different affordable housing options available in Enfield over the next ten years. However, given the current scarcity of affordable housing in the borough, we will help people at risk of homelessness into accommodation in the private rented sector.

Where we cannot prevent homelessness by supporting people in the private rented sector, we will provide access to suitable, decent and good-value temporary accommodation which is genuinely temporary. Our aim is to end the use of long-term temporary accommodation so that no household will live in temporary accommodation for longer than six months.

We want people across London to achieve the best life outcomes and we believe this means staying within their communities, in the borough they call home. We support calls for ending the use of out of borough placements for our residents; we are committed to working towards the end of such placements and encouraging other boroughs to do the same. However, this can only be achieved through national policy change and we continue to support the urgent call on Government to increase LHA levels to enable local authorities to access accommodation in their own boroughs. We will play our part by continuing to strengthen partnership work with neighbouring boroughs and across London through both pan-London and Enfield-led initiatives. Not only will this help us to secure good quality temporary accommodation, it means that it will be easier for residents in the private rented sector to secure suitable and affordable housing themselves.

In this context, we will intervene directly in the private rented market to improve conditions. We will increase the supply of good quality private rented sector accommodation through Housing

Gateway, an Enfield Council owned company, which buys and manages homes for homeless residents.

We will be an exemplar landlord, providing stable and longer-term tenancies for families. We also recognise that for some people, as their circumstances change, shorter tenancies might be more appropriate to provide them with flexibility. We will provide a range of products that meets the needs of our residents.

We will explore options to set up an ethical lettings agency to provide a good offer for residents who are privately renting. We will also undertake further research to better understand the demand for affordable housing from single people on low incomes and further develop solutions in the private rented sector which meet their needs.

We will broaden and strengthen the support that we provide to landlords, helping them to raise standards, sustain tenancies and offer longer-term tenancies. We will move away from paying landlords incentives to let their properties and move towards a model where we fund the deposit and month's rent in advance required by private landlords, for people who are otherwise unable to access private rented accommodation due to these costs. This is more cost-effective, is less likely to drive up private sector rents and empowers tenants to take responsibility and have the financial capacity to move in the future. We support pan-London programmes that promote this approach.

We are consulting on proposals to implement an additional and selective licensing scheme for private landlords to drive up standards and reward good practice in the sector. Whilst the Council will support and encourage good practice, we will take a robust approach to enforcement action to tackle rogue landlords and lettings agents.



## KEY PRIORITIES

We are delivering on the following priorities to support people to access the right accommodation:

- End the use of long term temporary accommodation.
- Increase the availability of quality best value private rented accommodation in Enfield.
- Support landlords and agents to improve standards of management within Enfield's private rented sector, whilst taking a strong approach to tackling poor conditions and stopping rogue landlords and letting agents.
- Build confidence in the market to encourage private landlords to offer greater security, certainty and stability for their tenants, especially families with children, vulnerable households and those with disabilities and additional support needs.
- Revise our housing allocations scheme so that we continue to meet the Council's priorities for allocating our limited social rented stock and also incentivise residents to work with us to prevent homelessness.



## KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We will know that our approach is working if we can evidence:

- A **decreasing** number of people live in temporary accommodation:
  - Family households
  - Single households
- An **increasing** number of households living in temporary accommodation move into the private rented sector.
- An **increasing** number of households are moving into the private rented sector to prevent homelessness.
- Since the introduction of the HRA, the proportion of households living in temporary accommodation for more than 6 months is **decreasing**.

\*A full list of measures of success can be found on pages 8 and 9.



## AMBITION 4

# SUPPORT PEOPLE TO PLAN FOR THEIR LIFETIME HOUSING NEEDS

We will empower residents to make positive decisions about their lives. This means supporting them so that they can take responsibility for their current housing needs, helping them recognise how their needs may change over time and enabling them to plan for those changes.

To achieve this, we will provide the right information, advice and training at the right time. We will make sure that the information we provide online, in our civic buildings, in the community and face-to-face is accessible, particularly in hard to reach communities, and make sure that advice is targeted. By providing comprehensive, accessible and freely available information, residents will be more able to take responsibility for their own housing needs.

This is important for everyone, but particularly so for people with additional care and support needs or vulnerabilities, who are at greater risk of poor housing conditions and have specific challenges when accessing the right accommodation. We want to help people stay living independently, wherever possible, and help those in rented accommodation to sustain their tenancies.

We will increase the range of options and support that we provide. Our Housing and Growth strategy sets out how we increase the supply of high quality, flexible and affordable housing options to help those with assessed care and support needs to live independently and to prevent them from becoming homeless.

In some cases, this will mean helping people to access practical support services in their home (known as 'floating support'), helping people to adapt to their home, or helping people move to another general needs home that helps them better manage their needs. This could include moving to somewhere where safeguarding concerns can be better addressed or moving to somewhere with ground floor or wheelchair access.

Those fleeing domestic abuse and victims of hate crime are at particular risk of homelessness. We want to make it safe for those experiencing abuse to stay in their homes. Where that is not possible, we will make sure that victims of abuse have a safe place to stay and

improve our offer and support for these people. We are conducting an audit into our response to domestic abuse in Enfield to identify gaps in service provision and improve housing pathways and support for those experiencing domestic abuse.

We will work across the Council, with partners and with the community to develop and improve housing pathways for:

- Care leavers and young people
- People fleeing violence or abuse
- Ex-armed forces
- People with physical disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health needs
- People leaving prison
- Rough sleepers

We will work with all residents to understand what their needs are, listen to how they would like to address them, advise them about what options are available and support them to achieve positive change. Sometimes, this may mean helping people to think differently – for example, a social or affordable rented home or a lifetime tenancy may be their initial preference, but accommodation in the private rented sector may be the only realistic option. We will give people the right information and support them to understand their housing options so that they can make an informed choice about what is the right accommodation for them.

We will work hard to prevent people becoming homeless and from spending time in temporary accommodation. However, this is not always possible, and our aim is to make temporary accommodation genuinely temporary. To achieve this, we will increase the support that these households receive so that they can move out of temporary accommodation and into suitable, longer-term accommodation. We will help them to make positive choices which will help build their resilience and prevent them from becoming homeless in the future.



## KEY PRIORITIES

We are delivering on the following priorities to support people to plan for their lifetime housing needs:

- Increase local access to high quality, flexible and affordable housing options for people with assessed care and support needs and vulnerable households.
- Increase the range of advice and support given to all households approaching housing options and advice services, taking a person centred approach that considers and responds to the needs of everyone in the household so that they feel supported, informed and empowered to secure accommodation that meets their needs.
- Support people earlier to plan ahead and make positive housing choices, clearly communicating the different housing options for people in different stages of their lives and at key transition points.
- Improve the support and advice we give to homeless households living in temporary accommodation, in order to empower them to make positive choices about their future housing options and facilitate their transition to more permanent accommodation.



## KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We will know that our approach is working if we can evidence:

- Households are spending a **decreasing** amount of time living in temporary accommodation.
- An **increasing** number of grants are approved for adaptations to council, housing association, private rented sector and owner occupied accommodation.
- A **stable or increasing** number of households with assessed support needs are being allocated social rented homes via the Housing Allocation Scheme.
- A **decreasing** number of people experience 1) delayed discharge from hospital and 2) a delayed move on from residential care/ specialist housing due to the need for general needs accommodation.

\*A full list of measures of success can be found on pages 8 and 9.

## AMBITION 5

# END ROUGH SLEEPING IN ENFIELD

It is unacceptable for anyone to be sleeping rough and our aim is to end rough sleeping in Enfield completely.



When the previous strategy was published in 2013, Enfield had very low numbers of rough sleepers and funding reflected this. However, numbers have increased considerably in recent years, giving Enfield the fourth highest rough sleeper count in London in 2018.

As is the case for all forms of homelessness, preventing rough sleeping is everyone's responsibility. We are raising awareness across council services, with our partners and in the community. We must not view homelessness in isolation but understand that rough sleepers will have a range of complex needs. We will do this by strengthening links between homeless services and support services, like adult social care and health services, to provide a rapid response. We will work collaboratively with relevant agencies, so we can support people who are sleeping rough to understand their options for suitable, sustainable and safe accommodation for the future and encourage them to engage with other relevant support services.

It is particularly important to work collaboratively with voluntary and community organisations that can gain the trust of people sleeping rough. This means identifying community groups with staff or volunteers who speak the languages of the people with whom we need to engage.

Rough sleepers are at risk of exploitation and abuse. We will train and support people who are working with rough sleepers so that they are able to identify those who may be victims of modern slavery. Where cases are identified, we will refer them to our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and work collaboratively with adult social care to support victims.

Where rough sleepers have set up encampments on public parks and open spaces that we manage, we have a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of these people and anyone using these spaces. Our first step will be to engage with them, alongside relevant partners, to offer advice and support. Where this does not lead to rough sleepers accepting support or voluntarily moving on, we will take appropriate and proportional action in our role as a corporate landlord.

Enfield Council has secured funding from MHCLG and GLA for a **winter homeless shelter** (2019/20). This will include 20 emergency bed spaces, and will be run by the charity, All People All places.



## KEY PRIORITIES

We are delivering on the following priorities to end rough sleeping:

- Continue to strengthen partnership working, particularly with the Voluntary and Community Sector, to provide a rapid and responsive outreach service to help rough sleepers to access appropriate, safe accommodation and support.
- Increase the supply of supported accommodation for eligible rough sleepers.
- Improve our housing offer for single, homeless people and continue to drive up standards in the private rented sector so that they can access appropriate accommodation in this sector.
- Offer support and assistance prior to taking any legal action to move people living in encampments or address antisocial behaviour, continuing to work collaboratively to address needs alongside any action we take.



## KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We will know that our approach is working if we can evidence:

- An **increasing** number of people who are single and have non priority homeless status are supported to stay in their existing accommodation or are supported to find alternative accommodation to prevent rough sleeping.
- A **reducing** number of people are sleeping rough.

\*A full list of measures of success can be found on pages 8 and 9.

# GOVERNANCE AND MEASURING SUCCESS

A new Enfield Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board will agree, deliver and monitor an annual action plan to deliver on the commitments set out in this strategy. They will also monitor annual targets based on the outcome measures set out for each of our five ambitions.

The board will ensure that homelessness prevention activities are co-ordinated and strengthen partnership working across Enfield to end homelessness together.

# NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL WORKING

**We are committed to working with national partners, our partners across London and our neighbouring boroughs to compare and review current housing need and homelessness practices and identify opportunities for coordination and efficiencies wherever beneficial.**

We do this through several different partnerships. We work collaboratively with neighbouring boroughs in sub-regional meetings, coordinated by the North London Housing Partnership. We work across London through participation in the Pan London Housing Needs Group. We are active members in the National Homeless Policy Network and utilise opportunities to work with London Councils and the Local Government Association. We will strengthen these partnerships and continue to make a contribution, always being led by the needs of our residents and residents in other boroughs.

Through these partnerships we aim to:

- Improve services through sharing knowledge and best practice
- Create better services and efficiencies through joint working
- Identify gaps in service provision and work to address these
- Bid for funding opportunities to provide additional assistance for boroughs, wherever possible
- Develop an excellent understanding of housing demand, needs and conditions across North and pan-London
- Lobby for national policy changes that positively impact homeless people and those at risk of homelessness

We will also be joining Capital Letters, a pan-London lettings agency, to improve the housing options for homeless households. This scheme will support joint working by reducing competition between boroughs for temporary accommodation and incentives to landlords. By joining this, we aim to increase the amount of temporary accommodation in Enfield that is for Enfield residents, whilst contributing to our aim of reducing out of borough Temporary Accommodation placements.

# A NATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE HOUSING CRISIS: OUR KEY ASKS

**The Government has begun to take positive steps to address the national homelessness crisis. Lifting the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap means that councils will be able to build more social housing that is so desperately needed. Proposals to create more stability in the private rented sector through banning no fault evictions and giving tenants more control will be vital in preventing homelessness.**

This strategy shows that homelessness cannot be viewed in isolation and we need national Government to take a holistic approach in order to achieve our vision of ending homelessness in Enfield. We believe there are further steps that can be taken to make a significant impact in preventing and ending homelessness nationally and to help Enfield achieve the aims of this strategy.

## FUNDING

Despite significant increases in demand, councils are spending almost £1 billion less on homelessness services compared with 2010. The new burdens funding is severely underfunded and does not consider the significant cost of new duties for London boroughs, in terms of increased demand, wider housing market conditions, impacts of welfare reform and the higher cost of handling cases.

The London School of Economic (LSE) estimates that from the year preceding the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) to 2022/23, London Boroughs will be spending an extra £80m, while the new burdens funding is £30m, leaving London boroughs to find an extra £50m.<sup>6</sup> Local authorities are left with no choice but to direct limited resources to acute and crisis services, curtailing our ability to deliver the full extent of preventative interventions that we want to deliver.

We believe that funding models are too fragmented, too short-term and too uncertain – such as the Flexible Homelessness Grant. Councils cannot plan stable services for the long term and this fragmentation can have a negative impact for individuals who need stable, consistent and responsive services. This is a five-year strategy, but short-term funding means that we cannot plan to achieve our aims as effectively as we could with longer term funding.

The Fair Funding Review provides Government with an opportunity to prevent and end homelessness through sustainable funding. We support the Local Government Association (LGA) and London Councils' concerns that homelessness is of such significance that it should not feature as part of the foundation formula but should have its own separate formula.

We argue for this as homelessness continues to rise significantly nationally and in Enfield. The disparity between the distribution of the general population and the homeless population is clear. London has 68% of England's total households in temporary accommodation but only has 16% of the total population – Enfield has the 2nd highest temporary accommodation rates nationally. The drivers of homelessness and their associated costs are complex; we must consider the interaction between the benefits system, the relative costs of living and rental costs. A separate formula would allow each local authority to secure adequate funding to combat homelessness, in line with local demand – this would particularly benefit Enfield, where the scale of homelessness poses considerable challenges.

We are calling on Government to commit to sustainably funding local authorities to deliver vital preventative homelessness services. This is particularly crucial for Enfield. High levels of both homelessness and the number of households in temporary accommodation mean that we must continuously focus our efforts on the crisis stages of homelessness. The lack of adequate funding means that currently we cannot direct sufficient resources into early intervention to prevent homelessness on the scale that is required.

## WELFARE REFORM

Whilst Government has made some positive steps to address homelessness, welfare reforms, such as the introduction of Universal Credit, the benefit cap and changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), are contributing to increasing homelessness and undermining efforts nationally to prevent homelessness.

The increasing gap between LHA rates and private sector rents is a systematic driver of homelessness and the displacement of residents outside their home borough. For this reason, we call on Government to increase rates urgently to enable more boroughs to house their own residents, to stop the displacement of lower income residents to outer London, with the significant consequences that this is having in Enfield.

Since 2015, most LHA rates across the country have been frozen. Prior to this, rates reduced from the 50th percentile to the 30th percentile – meaning that recipients can only afford the lowest rents in the market. This freezing of LHA, along with changes to how it is calculated, including extending the age of the recipients of the shared accommodation rate for single people from 25 years of age to 35, is significantly increasing the risk of homelessness for people on low incomes. This poses serious challenges to any renter who is reliant on Housing Benefit for all or part of their rent. This is particularly relevant in cases where offenders are to be rehabilitated into the community and may result in larger numbers of individuals co-housed in challenging conditions, increasing the risk of re-offending.

Nationally, more than 9 out of 10 homes are now unaffordable for those receiving housing benefit;<sup>7</sup> this is even more acute in London. In Enfield, even lower quartile private sector rents are higher than the LHA rate, from a room in a shared flat to a four-bed house. We know that the biggest cause of homelessness is eviction from the private rented sector. In 2018/19, Enfield paid £2,161,975.75 in Discretionary Housing Payments as a top up to Housing Benefit to prevent homelessness. This is not a sustainable way to prevent homelessness.

As an indirect consequence, landlords are increasingly refusing to accept tenants who receive benefits.<sup>8</sup> Such policies leave our most vulnerable residents with no choice but to turn to the Council for their housing needs. This is costly to the Council and has devastating impacts on these residents. We support Crisis' campaign to end DSS discrimination and urge Government to take action against this.

We are working with landlords and letting agents to promote good and responsible landlordism, but we need Central Government to take responsibility for policies that incentivise landlords to act poorly as well as for welfare reforms which are contributing to rising homelessness.

To truly prevent and end homeless, LHA rates must be unfrozen and must reflect the true cost of living in the private rented sector. We are calling on Government to restore rates to the median market rate and to reverse reforms to shared accommodation rates. We urge the Government to return to paying housing benefit directly to landlords and end discrimination against those claiming benefits.

The Government must develop policies that will positively impact our residents and ease pressure from services that are already severely stretched.



# CONNECTED STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

Our Preventing Homelessness Strategy contributes towards our Corporate Plan to deliver a lifetime of opportunities in Enfield, by good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods; sustaining strong and healthy communities; and building our local economy to create a thriving place. It also links with a number of other local policies and strategies.

### Relevant Enfield policies for the delivery of this strategy include:

- Housing Allocation Scheme
- Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
- Discretionary Housing Payment Policy
- Intermediate Housing Policy
- Tenancy Strategy and Policy
- Housing Enforcement Policy
- Council Housing Rent Policy
- Housing Assistance Policy (Disabled Facilities Grant)
- Empty Homes Policy

### Our Preventing Homelessness Strategy links with the following Enfield strategies:

- Housing and Growth Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy
- Strategic Asset Management Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Children and Young People Plan
- Family Resilience Strategy
- Safeguarding Adult's Strategy
- Market Position Statement (Health and Adult Social Care)
- Customer Experience Strategy
- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG)
- Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) Partnership Plan

Enfield Council launched the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission (EPIC) on 7th June 2019. This independent commission, facilitated on our behalf by the Smith Institute, will help us to understand the forces driving poverty and inequality in the borough and point the way to potential solutions locally. Following a period of engagement with local people, the Commission will publish recommendations in December 2019. Poverty and housing are closely linked, and the results of this commission will influence and inform the Council's delivery of this strategy.

# REFERENCES

1. The Localism Act 2011 enables local authorities to fully discharge their statutory homelessness duty via a Private Rented Sector Offer.
2. Our emerging economic development strategy seeks to address the borough's low wage economy and grow our local economy for the benefit of local people.
3. Smith Institute report on the drivers of homelessness in Enfield. 2019.
4. <http://policyinpractice.co.uk/lsi-london/>
5. The Homelessness Prevention Act requires certain public services to refer cases to homeless prevention services if they identify that someone is homeless or is at risk of homelessness
6. The Cost of Homelessness Services in London October 2019 – LSE and London Councils
7. <https://www.housing.org.uk/press/press-releases/housing-benefit-freeze-9-in-10-homes-unaffordable-for-families/>
8. Shelter 2018 <https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2018/08/ending-dss-discrimination/>

# Ending Homelessness in Enfield

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025





**Housing and Regeneration**  
**Enfield Council**  
December 2019

[www.enfield.gov.uk](http://www.enfield.gov.uk)

