

# LB Haringey Council

## Exit strategy for rough sleepers and homeless households currently housed in emergency accommodation in response to Covid-19

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In March 2020, in response to the growing spread of Covid-19 the Government committed to ensuring that nobody would be sleeping rough in England and Wales. This meant that local authorities needed to urgently find emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough in their local areas. In some parts of the country, in particular in London, this has been a huge task.
- 1.2 The Housing Act (1996/2002) and Homelessness Reduction Act (2018) provide the statutory framework setting out local housing authorities' (LHA) duty to assist homeless households. In addition to confirming that someone is homeless, LHAs would ordinarily assess eligibility for assistance (e.g. relating to immigration status), 'priority need', local connection and intentionality.
- 1.3 However, since March 2020, Haringey like other LHAs, is using its general powers of competence pursuant to the Localism Act (2011) to accommodate people who would otherwise be expected to make their own arrangements. This includes street homeless people, and those at risk of street homelessness, regardless of their local connection, immigration status, eligibility or priority need. While the vast majority of these households have been single people, there have been some couples, families with non-dependent children and families who may otherwise have been considered ineligible, or to have made themselves intentionally homeless.
- 1.4 Homeless people who have been provided with accommodation since March 2020 have been made aware that this is discretionary. However, alongside other London boroughs, Haringey is adopting the SWEP 'In For Good' principle, i.e. making a commitment to prevent a return to street homelessness for all who have been placed. The Council's exit strategy has been developed to enable this, to make best use of available funding and other resources, and to note where further resources are required.
- 1.5 Along with other London boroughs, the GLA and NHS, Haringey contributed to the development of the pan-London Rough Sleeping Exit Strategy, which has been supported by the Government's Rough Sleeping Taskforce. Haringey supports its seven principles and has developed its emerging Exit Strategy to deliver these at the local level, that is:
  - That no-one who has been placed in emergency accommodation in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an ongoing offer of support to end their rough sleeping
  - That there is the capacity and capability to deliver and implement In For Good offers of support

- To ensure continued protection from Covid-19 for those who need it
- To ensure that responsibility is shared fairly across London boroughs, and that none are disproportionately impacted by hosting rough sleepers from outside their boroughs
- To ensure a London-wide approach supports and complements the efforts of individual boroughs and providers, and vice versa
- To ensure an integrated housing approach with health and care to secure access to services and continuity of care
- To ensure that the roll out is gradual, to avoid a 'cliff edge' and overload of services as lockdown is lifted

1.6 Haringey has also noted MHCLG's announcement that £160m of capital and revenue funding, from the overall £431m funding to help rehouse Rough Sleepers, has been brought forward into 2020/21. While details on the allocation/bidding process are not yet known, work is underway to develop schemes which deliver the exit routes outlined below, which could be extended or accelerated with the support of this funding.

## 2. HARINGEY'S RESPONSE

2.1 Since 23 March 2020 Haringey Council has secured more than 13,500 nights of emergency accommodation for more than 420 adults. There are currently – as of 2 June 2020 - 375 single people living in emergency accommodation. The impact of this effort was evidenced in May, when as part of its bi-monthly street count, the Council recorded only nine people sleeping rough, its lowest recorded figure.

2.2 During this period, the Council will have spent around £1.6m on the provision of emergency accommodation and subsistence for these single homeless households by the end of June 2020. As well as providing immediate emergency accommodation, the Council immediately implemented needs and housing options assessments to help residents secure positive long-term housing options, for example by securing more settled accommodation or returning to live with family and friends. In effect, the Council has always been in "exit strategy mode", and this Strategy document represents the articulation of that effort and as well as our plans to broaden and scale up that work.

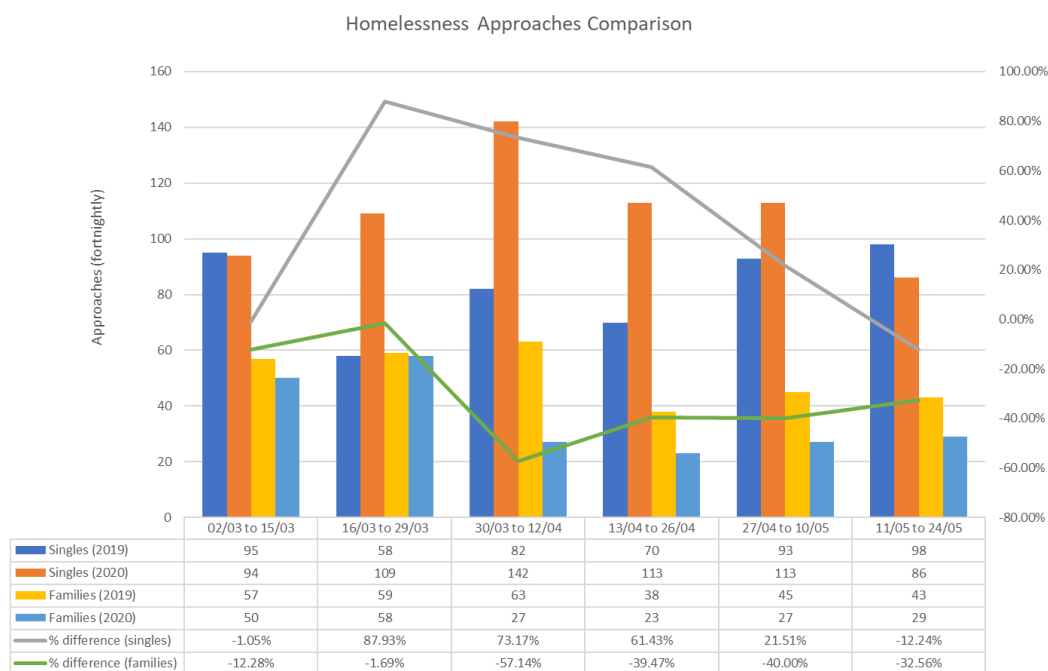
2.3 The majority of emergency accommodation has been in commercial hotels. B&Bs and hostels have each provided a little less than 10% of the total emergency accommodation sourced. And while an average of 9 people move-on from our emergency accommodation each week, there remains a net increase of around 20 placements every 7 days.

2.4 It is noted that 81% of these accommodation placements are in Haringey and neighbouring boroughs, up from 40% in early May. It is also noted that only 20 of those placements were in the 900 plus units secured by the GLA.

2.5 Haringey has the third highest rate of placements in London and the highest in the North Central London sub-region. In particular Haringey is an outlier in the

number of people placed who are unverified rough sleepers (i.e. not previously recorded 'bedded down' by an outreach team). This appears in part because of a significant issue with hidden homelessness in the borough, driven by high levels of overcrowding, which Covid-19 has brought to the fore. Haringey has fully adopted the requirement and spirit of Luke Hall MP's directive in this regard, providing accommodation to everyone affected by street homelessness and those at risk of street homelessness. However, the Council is constrained by a lack of available accommodation options, due to a shortage of available social rented homes and over-subscribed supported housing pathways.

2.6 The table below sets out a 12 month comparison in homelessness approaches from single people and families over the period 2 March to 24 May in 2019 and 2020. This demonstrates the substantial increase in single presentations and notable decline in family presentations during lockdown. Ordinarily, the Council would have had a duty to provide accommodation to only 33 of the single people who have approached the Council since lockdown began.



2.7 Monitoring of the numbers of people placed shows that:

- 134<sup>1</sup> people (33%) have been CHAIN verified rough sleepers and were street homeless at approach. Around 70% of these have drug and/or alcohol needs.
- 123 people (30%) have been under 35 years old and 22 (5%) under 25 years old. Around 90% of these were not street homeless when they approached the Council but had nowhere to sleep that night so would have been sleeping rough if they had not been accommodated.
- 79 people (19%) would ordinarily not have been eligible for any assistance. The majority of this group are non-verified rough sleepers from EU states.

<sup>1</sup> These figures are subject to daily change and were accurate as at 28 May 2020

### 3. HARINGEY'S EXIT STRATEGY

- 3.1 Long term reliance on this emergency accommodation would not deliver quality outcomes for vulnerable people and is not financially sustainable for the Council. To achieve positive housing outcomes for this group, the Council will work to the exit strategy set out below.
- 3.2 The Council recognises that the large number of people who have been rehoused since March 2020 fall into different groups, with distinct needs and for whom different opportunities may be available. Therefore, the Council will be taking a "cohort-based approach" with a number of exit strategies being developed in parallel, which will be applied on a case by case basis to ensure the best chance of long-term success for each individual and most effective use of the Council's limited resources.
- 3.3 The Council also recognises that some people are able to move on more quickly than others, either because they are able to live independently with limited support or because the appropriate housing option is more readily available. Therefore, the Council will be taking an "easy wins" approach, looking to move on swiftly those for whom it is viable, but recognising that others, in particular those with the most complex needs and vulnerabilities, may need to remain in emergency housing for longer periods to secure an appropriate and sustainable outcome.
- 3.4 The Council is also working in the context of a chronic shortage of social housing in the borough, with over 9,000 households on the Council's housing register and 3,000 households in temporary accommodation. The Council is taking a lead in addressing this deficit by building new Council housing, but this will not be available in the timescales required to contribute to this Exit Strategy. And this shortage is pressured further by our decision to decant tenants from two blocks on the Broadwater Farm Estate for health and safety reasons. This has resulted in a further pressure on 1-bed social homes in the borough, which we have needed to prioritise for tenants transferring from the affected buildings.
- 3.5 The Council's Exit Strategy approach flows from the three factors outlined above:
  - A cohort-based approach
  - A sequential 'easy wins first' approach
  - An approach working within the constraint of the scarcity of social housing in Haringey
- 3.6 Delivery of this Exit Strategy is defined by a multi-disciplinary and partnership-based approach to providing the personal care and support that is essential to achieve effective and sustainable move on for this client group.

3.7 The main options for move on within this approach are:

- Private Rented Sector tenancies (with and without floating support, including house-share models)
- Supported housing
- Night shelters (local and sub-regional, commissioned and faith-based)
- Sheltered housing
- Returning to friends or family

3.8 It is worth noting that to date, around 20% of people in emergency accommodation are not engaging with the Council, so identifying the appropriate exit option is challenging. A series of visits to them in their emergency accommodation is planned, to seek to ascertain the best option.

**A Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenancy is the identified exit strategy for nearly a third of those currently being housed.**

3.9 Effectively, this involves the Council assisting residents who were homeless in March 2020, or who have become homeless since then, to find an assured shorthold tenancy in the private-rented sector. This exit route has been determined with the recognition that whilst people may require floating support to sustain their tenancy, the private rented sector is where immediately available accommodation can be found and this represents the best option for both residents and the Council.

3.10 There are costs associated with this exit option. As well as the officer time to source PRS tenancies and engage with residents, landlords and letting agents, it is expected that in a majority of cases the Council will need to provide either deposits for tenants or incentives for landlords, and in many cases both. It is estimated that this will cost £2,000 per person and will mean significantly extending the Council's existing Rent Deposit and Landlord Incentive schemes. In addition, Haringey has increased capacity in its Floating Support Service, bringing in three new staff for an initial six-month period. Given the number of people and range of needs, this is likely to require further expansion and identified funding to sustain this approach for the medium to long-term.

3.11 The Council is exploring house-sharing options for the cohort of people under 35 years old. This approach will seek to commission dedicated but low-level floating support for an initial period of three to six months. Support will be provided to match younger people together, and to assist with viewings and tenancy signings.

3.12 Additionally, Haringey is a founding member of Capital Letters and has tasked it with securing studio and one-bed properties for the purpose of delivering the In for Good principle.

**Supported housing is the identified exit strategy for approximately 20% of the cohort of those currently being housed**

- 3.13 The Council commissions a range of supported housing for single homeless households with support needs. However, with available funding reducing over the last ten years, supported housing in the borough is already over-subscribed. Although supported housing viability is a key aspect of modelling for all new build schemes, this will not deliver new supported housing provision within the timescales needed. To address this, the Council is in the process of commissioning 40 modular build supported housing units for short to medium term use for people leaving emergency accommodation who require further support.
- 3.14 It is also noted that two buildings currently providing emergency accommodation are earmarked for other purposes – both (Cranwood and Red House) are part of the Council’s housing delivery programme, intended to deliver much need Council homes at Council rents. A third building identified for emergency accommodation, Osborne Grove, has temporarily been returned to use as a nursing care provision in light of Covid-19 demands on the NHS and Adult Social Care and is not available for this cohort. .
- 3.15 The Council’s Housing-Related Support service has agreed the prioritisation of emergency accommodation referrals into its supported housing Pathways and into non-commissioned units in the North London YMCA foyer service.
- 3.16 The Council is also exploring options to lease properties on a medium-term basis to meet the need for supported accommodation. In particular, it is exploring a 25-unit contract with an offender resettlement service in light of the early release scheme and the known needs within the existing cohort in emergency accommodation.

**Night shelters are the identified exit strategy for approximately 20% of the cohort of those currently being housed**

- 3.17 Around 80 people within the emergency accommodation cohort are ineligible for assistance and have no recourse to public funds. These people are largely from EU nations but there is a small number of people from other countries also. This group are amongst the most vulnerable and socially isolated within the EA cohort.
- 3.18 Securing positive outcomes for this group is largely dependent on the reopening of night shelter provision, with 30 spaces in the borough currently closed. Initial discussions have been held with all these non-commissioned provisions and at present there is very limited opportunity to reopen services that are only able to provide dormitory style accommodation. While all the organisations have expressed a commitment to support the delivery of the In for Good Principle, there is concern that the provision of dormitory style accommodation is simply

no longer viable. Local relationships between the Council's Housing-Related Support Team and non-commissioned shelters are generally good, nonetheless there is no requirement for them to prioritise Haringey referrals and this represents a risk.

- 3.19 Sub-regional night shelter resource and resettlement support is available via Hope Worldwide, and the Council is liaising closely with the North London Housing Partnership to ensure this resource is fairly distributed across the sub-region for the purpose of achieving In for Good.
- 3.20 The Council's commissioned night shelter, Cranwood Hub, has expanded by 8 units during the lockdown period, including moving to a self-contained model. The Council is currently exploring the viability of an increase of a further 5 units. These units will be exclusively available to Haringey referrals and will be allocated for CHAIN verified EEA nationals with support needs as a priority.

**Sheltered housing and returning to friends or family are the identified exit strategy for approximately 5% respectively of the cohort of those currently being housed**

- 3.21 Haringey has a substantial stock of sheltered housing and is practised in using this to resolve homelessness for single adults with support needs over 50 years old. Demand for this provision is consistent but not at the level for general needs provision, therefore this offers a relatively swift housing outcome for older people whose needs can be met in sheltered housing.
- 3.22 There are an average of 10 sheltered housing lets per month and 23 current voids. Four of these are pre-allocated for people in emergency accommodation, with others already committed to older people on the waiting list. Future lets will be prioritised for those in emergency accommodation where possible.
- 3.23 To assist younger people in Emergency Accommodation to return home to family and friends, the Council has redeployed its Family Mediation service, funded from its Housing Related Support budget, to advise and support this group. The Council has a successful record in facilitating voluntary returns, including back to homes outside London, and this support service will be extended to help with move in from emergency accommodation.
- 3.24 It is estimated that up to 20 of people may return to live with friends or family abroad. However, this route off the streets is complex and notoriously prone to failure, therefore this option will be explored sensitively and comprehensively with those people for whom it may be relevant and desirable.
- 3.25 There are also around 50 people in the emergency accommodation cohort who are entrenched rough sleepers, who have had long periods living on the streets over numerous years. These individuals face significant inequalities around housing, health and welfare and require expensive wrap-around support and the flexibility of relevant services. For this group, the positive impact of providing

emergency accommodation, food and welfare during the lockdown period is truly ground-breaking and has enabled opportunities to form and strengthen relationships which would have been unimaginable previously.

- 3.26 Each of these individuals is being supported by a multi-disciplinary team to access primary care, acquire identification and start the process for claiming benefit entitlements, which are prerequisites for successful longer-term outcomes. Achieving this is not to be underestimated, and the Council is committed to a trauma-informed and relational approach to this work to achieve meaningful outcomes.

<b>The role of multi-disciplinary support in achieving effective and sustainable move-on</b>
--

- 3.27 A key element of the Council's work to provide accommodation and support to single homeless adults during the Covid-19 period has been understanding the range of support needs and vulnerabilities. A significant effort has gone into understanding the needs and capacities of those the Council has placed, and the multi-disciplinary input of statutory and voluntary partners has been instrumental in achieving this.
- 3.28 Whilst Covid-19 is undoubtedly a crisis, it has afforded the Council unprecedented opportunities to strengthen its relationships and working practices with colleagues in primary, acute and secondary health services in particular. It has also enabled the Council to generate 'systems flex' around access to drug and alcohol support, bloodborne virus screening and claiming welfare benefits. The input from practitioners and strategic leaders across the borough has had numerous individual and whole-cohort benefits, most obvious in the very low rate of infection within the homeless population.
- 3.29 For those people with especially complex support, care, and health needs the ongoing commitment to this work is crucial. Building on and embedding the work which has taken shape during lockdown will be a key strategic priority both in terms of achieving the Exit Strategy and in achieving the Council's longer-term vision to end rough sleeping in Haringey.
- 3.30 For some vulnerable residents, this multi-disciplinary case management approach will secure accommodation in adults social care provision, forensic mental health services and other forms of highly specialist accommodation with care. Whilst this only relates to a very small number of individuals, the social and economic benefits of this in-depth work are clearly understood by all involved and supported by the Haringey Safeguarding Adults Board, for whom homelessness is a strategic priority.



#### 4. SCENARIO PLANNING AND KEY RISKS

- 4.1 A number of scenarios have been modelled for the exit strategy to identify the potential costs to the Council. While it is early in this work to make these assessments, it does show a potentially wide range of estimated costs, depending on how the strategy unfolds over the next year. These range from around £2.8m to just over £5.2m for the year period from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, which is entirely over and above the £1.6m the Council is already projecting to spend by the end of June 2020.

Scenario until the end of March 2021	Cost
All current placements and provisions are maintained for 12 months	£ 5.2m
50% of placements and provisions are maintained for 12 months	£ 2.8m
All current placements are maintained for 12 months, but food and other provisions for those who are UC eligible or working is ceased	£ 2.1m
All provisions are ceased after the initial 3 months, except the entrenched rough sleepers in Haringey/Finsbury Park, which is maintained for 12 months.	£ 3.4m
All current placements and provisions maintained for 3 months, then: all ASTs are moved on by 6 months, all supported housing by 9 months and all ineligible by 12months	£ 3.7m

- 4.2 The Council recognises the public health benefits of the approach being adopted and support the Government's drive to effect a step change in our responses to street homelessness. This does not, however, come without wider costs and risks, not least the four set out below:

- a. **The availability of appropriate move-on accommodation** is the biggest single risk to successful implementation within the timescales required for this cohort, which – as identified above – has a range of support and accommodation needs to be met concurrently. For Haringey, we know that there is a shortage of permanent social lets, and that this is particularly acute for 1-bed and studio units ideal for this cohort. In addition, we have limited access to large hostels in the borough which at the moment are outside our direct line of influence, which we are seeking to change over time but again which will be affected by the timescales. The picture on weak supply could be exacerbated should there be an eviction spike post lockdown, which increases further the demand being held across the system and further complicates the balance between demand and supply.
- b. **The affordability of appropriate and long-term support** is a key factor. The Council is mindful that the original driver of the MHCLG's directive to local

government was to ensure a public health response in light of Covid-19, the long-term support needs of this cohort are key to future successful implementation. The complex needs of many members of this cohort are well rehearsed and the long term and multi-disciplinary responses needed are equally well understood. Such support has both a workforce and a financial aspect and we need to ensure that there is sustainable and long term funding in place to ensure that move on into accommodation is sustained with successful outcomes for this cohort across a range of areas including health and wellbeing, education and employment and social isolation.

- c. **The welfare benefit system** is a further risk to implementation. Housing Benefit Regulations have been currently loosened but in their standard form prevent backdated claims of over 4 weeks, cannot be paid without a license/tenancy agreement and cannot be claimed for nightly paid accommodation. This will affect the affordability for the Council in responding to the longer term needs of this cohort.
- d. **The lack of clarity about MHCLG's long-term policy intentions** is a risk in that it is undermining long term planning for this cohort and leading to uncertainty about responses to this cohort in the future.