



Homelessness Strategy

2018-2023



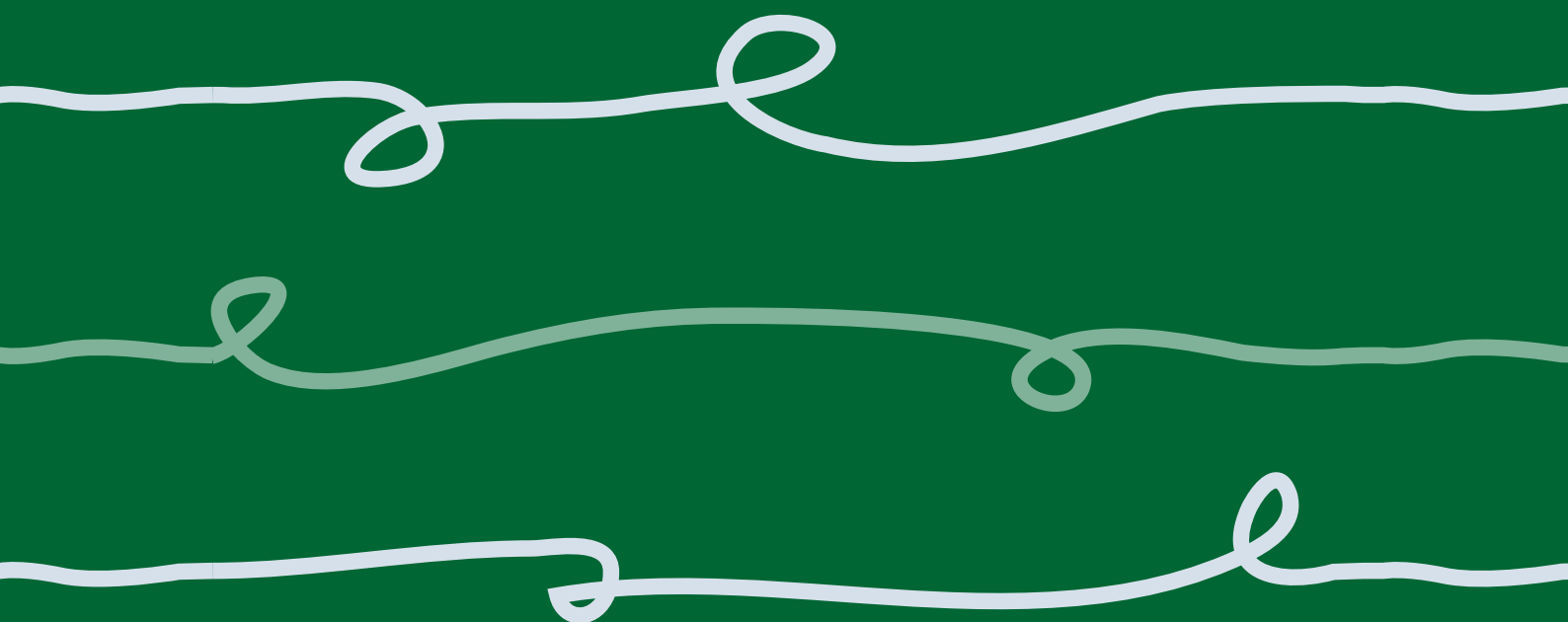
THE LONDON BOROUGH

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Homelessness review and strategy:

An Introduction



This strategy is published at a time of rapid and fundamental change in the way housing authorities support homeless or potentially homeless households.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in April 2018 placed new duties on authorities and has redefined the services that must be provided.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to publish, and renew every 5 years, a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of homelessness in their district.

The review considers the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in a district and describes any initiatives designed to prevent homelessness. The strategy must set out plans for the prevention of homelessness and ensuring sufficient accommodation and support are available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The strategy should also identify the resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority, other public authorities and voluntary organisations to prevent and address homelessness.

Consultation

We would like to thank all organisations and members of the public who have contributed to the development of this strategy. This input has been invaluable and has helped us shape our goals. We believe we can only end homelessness and improve the lives of Bromley residents by working together.



This strategy is divided into two parts:

Part 1: The Homelessness Review

The Homelessness Review examines the national and local picture and includes data on homelessness in the borough to identify current and future challenges

Part 2: The Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Strategy provides an overview of existing services and initiatives in place to prevent homelessness and outlines the priorities and objectives that will inform the development of our homelessness services from 2018 to 2023



What is homelessness?

Homelessness is often associated with sleeping on the streets and the issue of rough-sleeping attracts significant political and media attention.

There has been a rise in officially estimated rough sleeper numbers, with the national total now up by 169% since 2010.

More robust statistics collected by the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) system similarly show London rough sleeping has more than doubled since 2010.

Rough sleeping is just one aspect of homelessness and the vast majority of homeless people are families or single people who are not sleeping rough.

Some may be staying with relatives and friends on a temporary basis and many are living in temporary accommodation, such as nightly-paid, bed and breakfast hotels, hostels, night shelters and refuges.

The law defines someone as being homeless if they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation, or their accommodation is unsuitable.

This can cover a wide range of circumstances, including the following:

- Having no accommodation at all
- Having accommodation that is not reasonable to live in perhaps because of violence or health reasons
- Having a legal right to accommodation that you cannot access for reasons such as illegal eviction
- Living in accommodation with no legal right to occupy such as a squat or staying with friends temporarily

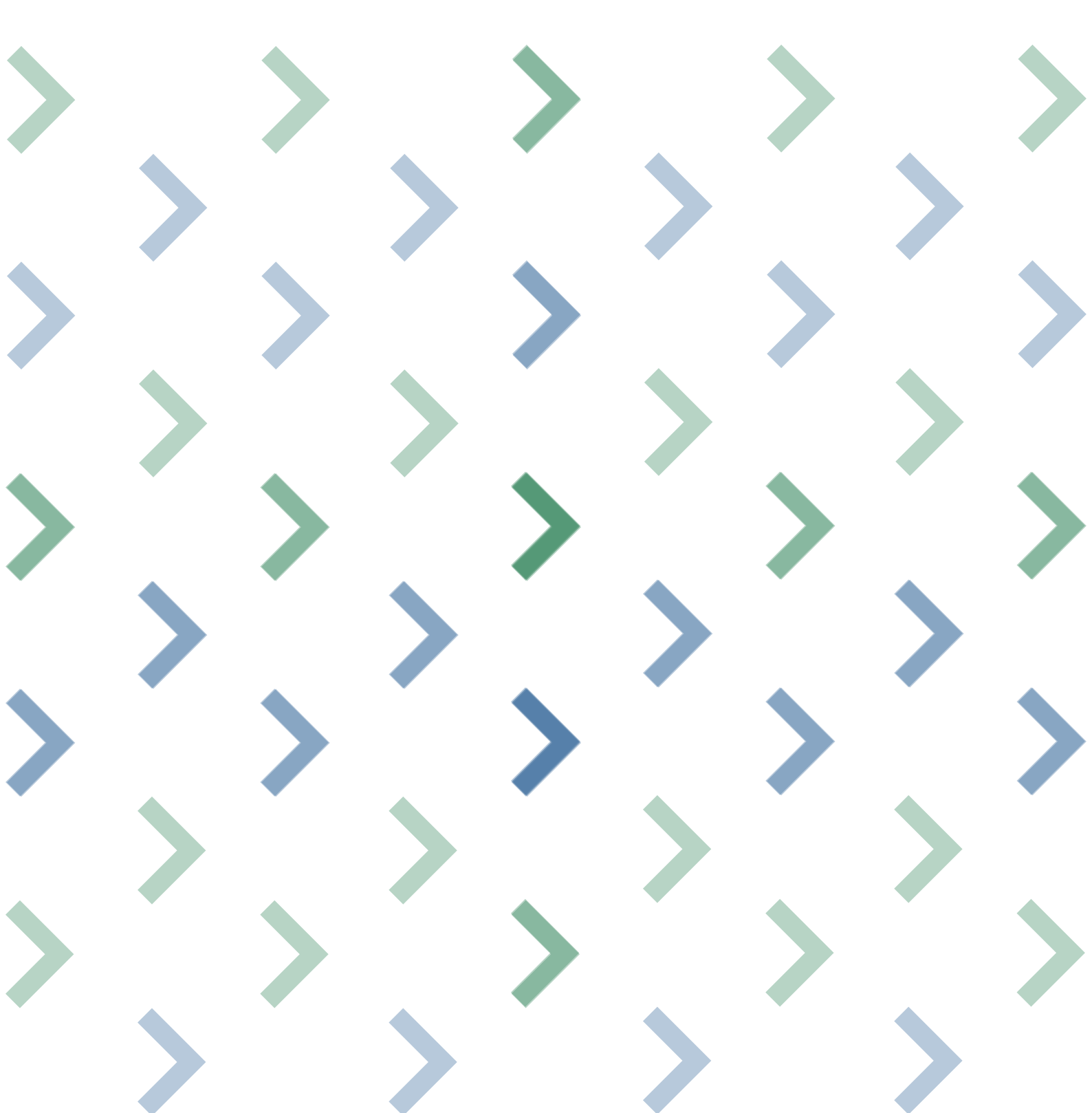
Councils now have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to all people who are legally defined as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

However, only those falling within the legal definition of homeless and in “priority need” must be offered temporary accommodation.

Since our last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2012 we have made significant progress in the design and delivery of effective services.

Over the next two pages we have provided a summary of our main achievements in the past 5 years.

This Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2023 will complement the Housing Strategy which will be published later in 2018.



OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2012 TO 2017

9,712

households have been prevented from becoming homeless

2,093

home secured by working closely with private sector landlords and employing a range of incentives

83

units of temporary accommodation in borough have been created through the refurbishment of two former residential homes

400

units to be purchased through the “More Homes Bromley” partnership with Mears Group property purchase programme

0

use of shared-facility Bed and Breakfast accommodation for all main duty acceptances

- We have eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast as temporary accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds
- We have created an in-house Debt Advice Officer post to undertake prevention work and achieve better outcomes for households in temporary accommodation and those affected by welfare reforms
- A new early intervention team has been established to assist households before crisis is reached to deliver prevention initiatives
- We operate a number of housing advice surgeries in locations including the domestic violence one-stop-shop, Green Parks House, Probation and the Youth Offending Service
- A new Housing Options online form has been introduced to improve the efficiency of triage and quickly identify the needs of our clients
- We have recruited specialist Housing Options Officers to support clients with the impact of welfare reform
- We have recommissioned accommodation and support services for young people provided by Depaul
- We have also recommissioned the tenancy sustainment floating support service provided by Hestia
- A welfare fund has been established to provide households with essential items when moving into a new home



Our mission statement is:

To work with our community to ensure everyone has access to a home

Four key priorities have been identified:





EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

Support people wherever possible before crisis and provide excellent services to those at point of crisis to prevent homelessness or assist them to secure alternative sustainable accommodation



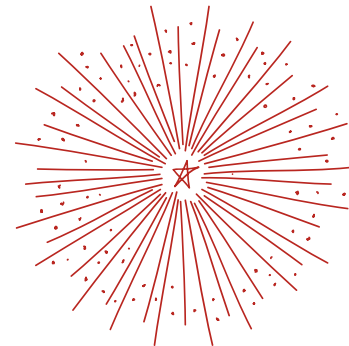
ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Preventing youth homelessness and ensuring young people are supported to make a positive transition into adulthood



INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION

Explore all available housing options to prevent homelessness and identify more affordable and sustainable long-term accommodation to reduce stays in temporary accommodation



ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES BY IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS

Ensure services are accessible, person-centred and equip people with the skills and resilience to sustain accommodation and avoid repeat homelessness

Homelessness legislation

The **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** places a new emphasis on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness. Authorities must now provide structured advice and assistance to everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, not just those who are considered to be vulnerable and in “priority need”.

Historically, the work of Housing Options teams has been focused on investigating the circumstances of homeless applicant to establish whether they are:

- Eligible (in terms of immigration services)
- Legally homeless
- Unintentionally homeless
- Locally connected
- In priority need

A pregnant woman and single parents or families with children will automatically be in priority need.

Also, 16/17 year olds (and some older care leavers) will automatically be in priority need.

Other homeless applicants may be 'vulnerable' and in priority need as a result of:

- Old age
- Mental illness
- Mental handicap
- Physical disability
- Having been in care (and now 21 or over)
- Service in the armed forces
- A period in custody
- Having fled actual or threatened violence

Priority need is important because authorities have a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation for these applicants until longer-term accommodation can be secured.

For a number of reasons, it is often very difficult to identify and secure this accommodation which will allow the authority to discharge the “main homelessness duty” and it is common for stays in temporary accommodation to last for several years.

The **Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977**, **Housing Act 1996**, and the

Homelessness Act 2002, place statutory duties on local authorities to ensure that advice and assistance for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is available free of charge. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amends the Housing Act.

The 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied the applicant is:

- Eligible for assistance
- Unintentionally homeless
- In a defined priority need group

Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'.

The 'priority need groups' include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way.

In 2002 an **Order** made under the 1996 Act extended the priority need categories to include applicants:

- aged 16 or 17
- aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care

- vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in HM Forces
- vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence

Where the main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and their household. The duty continues until a settled housing solution becomes available.

Where households are found to be intentionally homeless, or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through the **Homelessness Act 2002** and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to:

- Ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness by requiring a homelessness strategy for every

- Strengthen assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 year olds; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence

The **Homelessness Reduction Act**

2017 places several new homelessness duties on local authorities and makes amendments to several existing duties.

The new duties placed on local authorities mean they will be required to:

- Treat households as threatened with homelessness 56 days before they are likely to become homeless (an increase from 28 days)
- Provide enhanced information and advice, tailored to the specific needs of groups who are at a greater risk of homelessness
- Undertake a detailed assessment with each household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness to explore their circumstances and any issues or support needs contributing to their homelessness
- Prepare a Personalised Housing Plan setting out the steps both the household and the authority will take to resolve their homelessness
- For up to 56 days, take reasonable steps to help all eligible households threatened with homelessness maintain their accommodation or find new accommodation for (households will be required to co-operate with the support provided)
- For up to 56 days, take reasonable steps to help all eligible homeless households secure accommodation - households in priority need will be provided with interim accommodation during this period (households will be required to co-operate with the support provided)
- Carry out checks on accommodation they secure in the private rented sector for households in priority need

Additionally, under the Act certain specified public authorities are required to notify a housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The public authorities subject to this duty to refer are:

- Prisons
- Youth offending institutions
- Secure training colleges
- Youth offending teams
- Probation services
- Jobcentre Plus
- Social services authorities
- Emergency departments
- Urgent treatment centres
- Hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care

The type of data collected around homelessness is due to change under the Homelessness Reduction Act, with the introduction of a new collection system H-CLIC. This will enable local authorities to report in much greater detail and produce a more comprehensive overview of homelessness and associated support needs to inform the live Action Plan.

The **Localism Act 2011** gave local authorities new powers to shape their approach to allocations manage their waiting lists and make more effective use of tenancies by:

- Giving social landlords the choice to grant tenancies for a fixed-term
- Allowing local authorities greater control over eligibility criteria to join the housing register
- Enabling local authorities to discharge the main homelessness into the private rented sector
- Supporting greater geographical mobility across the social housing sector
- Requiring local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy in partnership with local registered providers

The **Care Act 2014** places a duty on local authorities to protect the wellbeing of their residents through the delivery of appropriate housing services and ensuring accommodation meets the care and support needs of older and vulnerable people. The act is geared towards preventative services and housing-related support.

Below are the key housing elements of the Act:

- A general duty to promote wellbeing, making specific reference to suitable accommodation and housing-related support
- Housing must be considered as part of an assessment process that may prevent, reduce or delay an adult social care need
- Information and advice should reflect housing options, as part of a universal service offer
- Care and support should be delivered in an integrated way with cooperation between all partner organisations, including housing

Resources to deliver the Homelessness Strategy

Bromley Council has a range of resources which fund activity to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable residents in housing need:

Discretionary Housing Payment fund (DHP)

DHP is paid by the Department of Work and Pensions annually to the Council (DWP). It is used to prevent homelessness through payments of rent in advance, tenancy deposits, assisting benefit cap and 'bedroom tax' cases and to cover Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shortfalls.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

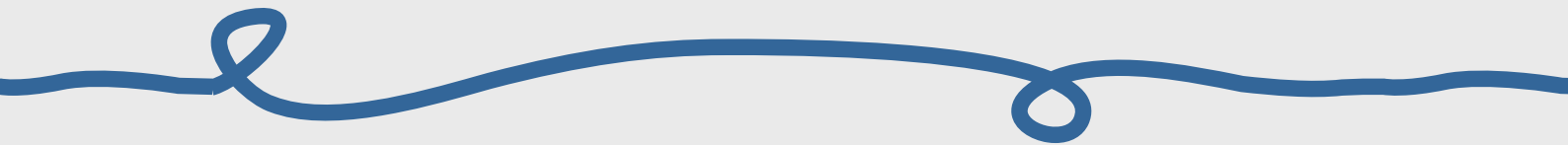
The Council receives an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

New Burdens Funding

Each housing authority has been given an allocation of funding over the next 3 years to assist with the anticipated increase in volume and complexity of work under the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

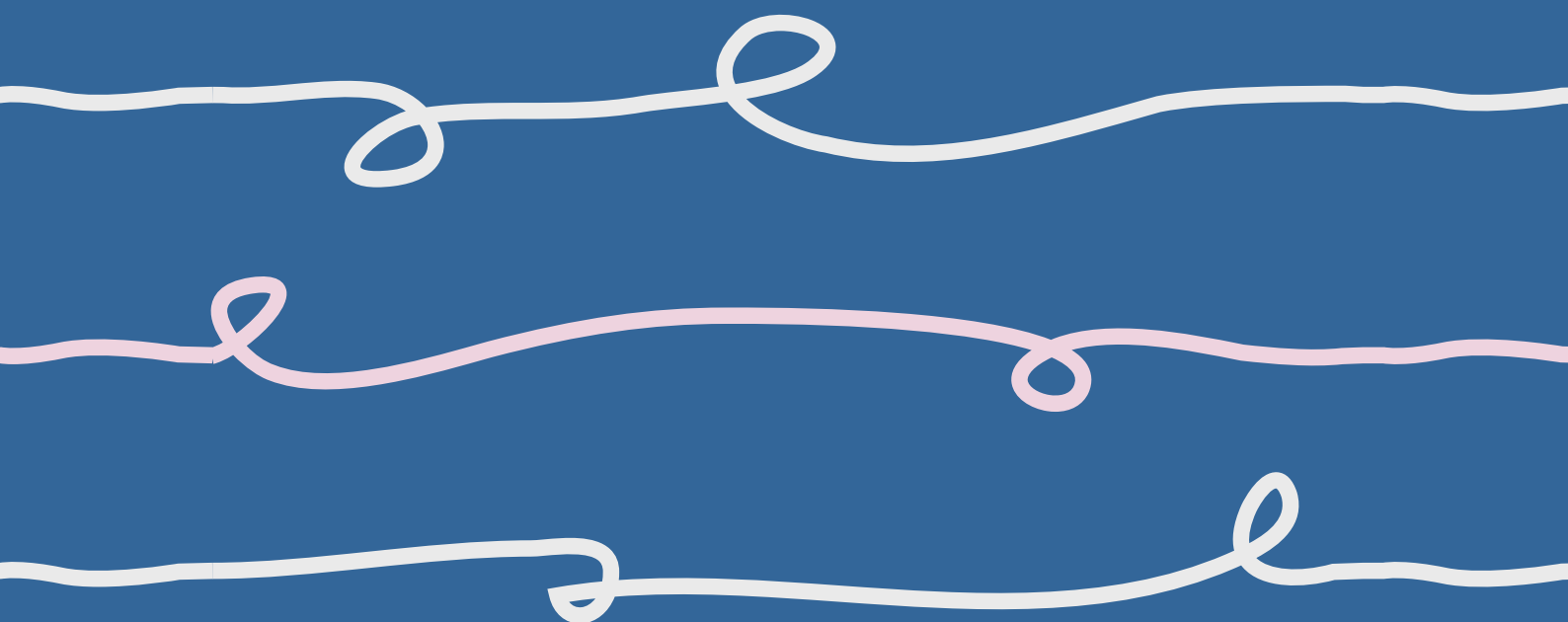
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

This grant replaces the DWP temporary accommodation management fee and can be used to support the full range of homelessness services including employing additional staff.



Part 1

The Homeless Review



National context

Rising house prices and rents make home purchase or access to private rented properties unattainable for many people.

Since 2012 there has been a steady increase nationally, both in the number of households approaching their local authority for homeless assistance and also in those subsequently accepted as statutorily homeless.

The “Homelessness Monitor: England 2018” (<http://bit.ly/crisis-homelessnessmonitor2018>) indicates that since 2010/11, placements in temporary accommodation nationally have risen by 61% and the National Audit Office has identified a 39% increase in local authority spending on temporary accommodation in the five years to 2015/16.

There are around 78,000 homeless households in England in temporary accommodation and, if current trends continue, more than 100,000 such households will be living in temporary accommodation by 2020.

There were over 59,000 homelessness acceptances in England in 2016/17; 19,000 higher than 2009/10 and acceptances are now 48 per cent above the 2009/10 total.

This increase in statutory homelessness is largely the result of an increasing number of households made homeless from the private rented sector. The number of these cases has increased from 5,000 in 2010/11 to over 18,000 in 2016/17.

As a percentage of all statutory homelessness acceptances PRS cases have increased from 11% in 2009/10 to 31% 2015/16 and 2016/17.

In contrast, homelessness acceptances resulting from mortgage repossessions and social sector rent arrears remain at historically low levels.

In areas such as Bromley the same factors, such as high rents, which have caused or contributed to a household becoming homeless, are likely to present challenges around the discharge of duty.

Assisting people to access private tenancies used to be the most common homelessness prevention activity but since 2009/10 the annual volume of these cases has almost halved.

This decrease may be a result of the increasing detachment of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates from market rents and the diminishing proportion of local lettings remaining affordable for benefit dependent households.

LHA is Housing Benefit for households in the private rented sector. The maximum amount of support a household can claim will depend on where they live, the minimum number of bedrooms they need and their income. LHA rates are based on private market rents being paid in the area and set at the 30th percentile of rents meaning claimants are only able to afford the cheapest 30% of properties.

All working age benefits, including LHA rates, are frozen for 4 years from April 2016. Claimants are effectively being priced out of even the cheaper end of the private rented market. This increases the challenge for all local authorities attempting to discharge duty into the PRS.

Landlords may be unwilling to accept formerly homeless households, because of issues such as previous rent arrears, and may have an additional concern that they will not be able to pay any rent increases within the next few years.

The loss of a private sector tenancy is now the leading cause of homelessness both locally and nationally.

Local authorities are increasingly preventing homelessness by providing financial support and debt advice or by mediating with landlords.

In addition to narrowing opportunities to access the private rented sector there is evidence to indicate homeless households also have increasingly limited access to social tenancies. New social lettings decreased by 11% during 2016/17 and there is evidence to suggest social landlords are reluctant to offer tenancies to benefit-dependent households and those with complex needs.

The challenge of temporary accommodation provision represents a key strategic consideration for authorities. The cost of some types of accommodation is not met in full by the

benefits households are eligible to claim and so represents a net cost to authorities who meet this shortfall to comply with their statutory duty.

For Bromley the cost of meeting this shortfall during 2017/18 was £4,088,711 with £3,711,374 of this total being spent on “nightly-paid” accommodation.

Bromley currently has over 1500 households in temporary accommodation and the identification of longer-term accommodation which would permit discharge of the main duty remains an enduring challenge.

The Homelessness Reduction Act provides an opportunity to reconfigure our services, identify our priorities and direct resources to the prevention of homelessness.

We will be developing informed strategic responses to the challenges of our context and supporting our residents to avoid the experience of homelessness.

Welfare reform

Since the last Homelessness Strategy was published Government has introduced a number of welfare reforms and a number of these are thought to be directly linked to homelessness:

- **Total household benefit cap** limits the maximum amount of benefits a household can receive – in London the cap is £442.31 a week/£23,000 per annum for couples and families and £296.35/£15,410 per annum for single people – by February 2018 Bromley had 796 (<http://bit.ly/Benefitcap2018>) households who have had their entitlement restricted as a result of the benefit cap
- **Removal of the spare room subsidy** (“the bedroom tax”) reduces Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants considered under-occupying their homes by 14% (one bedroom) or 25% (two or more bedrooms)
- **Local Housing Allowance frozen (LHA)** is now limited to 30th percentile of market rent (meaning that 30% of rents in an area should be lower than the LHA rate) – LHA rates are frozen for 4 years from April 2016

- **Universal Credit** is replacing 6 other benefits with a single monthly payment for out of work or low income claimants – the element of Universal Credit for housing costs will now be paid directly to residents rather than to their landlords which may increase arrears
- **The Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35s** is paid under LHA rules, and single people aged under 35 with no children, who are living in private rented accommodation, are normally assumed to be living in shared accommodation – their benefit entitlement is based on the cost of renting a room in a shared house or flat in their area even if they live in a self-contained property

Regional strategic context

The Bromley Homelessness Strategy should achieve consistency with the Greater London Authority (GLA) “London Housing Strategy”.

The London strategy includes a set of commitments boroughs should consider when addressing homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy focuses on helping rough sleepers, increasing the number of affordable homes and improving the private rented sector.

The Mayor is keen to work with boroughs to intensify the focus on homelessness prevention and ensure those who lose their accommodation are supported into sustainable long-term accommodation.

The key commitments in the London Housing Strategy are:

- The development of a collaborative approach between boroughs to securing private rented accommodation for homeless households
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Local strategic context

Building a Better Bromley (BBB) – 2020 vision

This vision for the London Borough of Bromley has been prepared by Councillors in partnership with organisations responsible for delivering public services in the Borough.

The strategy provides a clear commitment to supporting our most vulnerable residents and will be delivered through 8 themes, including housing.

The priorities within the housing theme include:

- The supply of decent housing as a prerequisite to health and wellbeing
- Housing associations across the Borough will be supported to maintain a high quality of traditional stock
- Targeted development designed to assist those with special needs, either to reflect their age, abilities or frailty and to support the Council meet its statutory duties
- Engagement with the private rented sector through the Landlord Forum

- Improved access to both the social and private rented sector by employing new technology
- Future developments will recognise the need to tailor accommodation to satisfy a variety of tenure requirements
- New build homes will meet higher energy efficiency and mobility standards
- Initiatives designed to bring more empty properties back into use

Children’s Social Care Improvement Plan – “Roadmap to Excellence”

The health and life prospects of children are dependent on many factors including housing. Research has shown that the current and future wellbeing of children are significantly affected by the standard of their housing. Inadequate housing or homelessness could potentially have an adverse effect on a health, both physical and mental, as well as their educational attainment and life expectancy.

The housing directorate works with children’s social services to achieve the commitments outlined in the Children’s Service Improvement Plan “Roadmap to Excellence” by:

- Helping vulnerable young people access supported housing
- Providing safe and secure accommodation, which will improve safeguarding practice and support the increasing number of young people living in temporary accommodation and needing be placed in safe and appropriate housing
- Ensuring we have appropriate accommodation options for care leavers that has eliminated the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation
- Assess the risk to care leavers in potential accommodation prior to placement

Bromley context

Bromley is the largest London borough by area, covering 59 square miles much of which is Metropolitan Green Belt land. The borough shares borders with Lewisham and Greenwich to the North, Bexley to the North East, Southwark and Lambeth to the North West and Croydon to the West.

Bromley ranks as the eighth most populous London borough. There are approximately 330,907 people living in Bromley and an estimated 140,602 households

(<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-borough-profiles>). The Greater London Authority predicts the overall population of Bromley will rise by 62,067 to 392,974 in the next 20 years (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/2016-based-population-projections>).

The combination of longer life expectancy, increasing birth rate and net migration have all contributed to the steady rise in the borough population which has had an impact on the availability and cost of housing.

The population of Bromley is predominantly white (80%). The second largest ethnic group is Black (9%) followed by Asian (4%), and mixed and Chinese/other with 3% respectively. In recent years Bromley has become more ethnically diverse. The number of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group has gone up by 29% between 2011 and 2015, from 48,000 to 62,000. The trend suggests that the number of BAME community members will continue to rise.

The population is relatively old in comparison to other London boroughs. The population aged 65 or over is forecasted to increase by 82,500 (42%) by 2035 (www.poppi.org.uk). Bromley also has the lowest proportion of people in 16-24 and 25-34 age range in London (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/gla-population-projections-custom-age-tables>). As the number of people aged over 65 in Bromley grows there will be more pressures on services for older homeless people, and the need to ensure appropriate accommodation is available.

The tenure mix in the borough has not changed significantly since the last strategy was published. Home ownership in Bromley remains high at

73%, compared to 51% in the rest of London. Whilst the private rented sector has grown steadily for consecutive years it remains relatively small sector at 14% compared to the London average of 27%. Again the social rented sector is also small, accounting for 13% of the borough stock compared to the London average of 23%. As with much of London, demand for housing across all tenures outstrips supply.

Buying a home in Bromley is becoming increasingly expensive. House prices rose by 45 % between 2012 and 2016 and continue to rise.

The majority of sales in Bromley during the 2017 were terraced properties, selling for an average price of £428,069. Flats sold for an average of £321,314, with semi-detached properties averaging £572,482.

Overall sold prices in Bromley over the last year were 5% up on the previous year and 20% up on the 2015 level of £415,739 (www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/Bromley.html).

Private rent levels have also risen sharply and this has subsequently reduced access and security for low income households.

Demand for social housing in Bromley is high and there were 3332 applicants on the Housing Register at the end of May 2018. A Housing Register is a way of recording the details of households who have applied to the council for rehousing. Data from a Housing Register can be used to monitor trends, assess demand and provide grounds for future housing development and the creation of tailored housing advice services.

Around 70% of people who apply are not included on the Housing Register. Households who have a combined annual income of £60,000 or more before tax will not be accepted on to the register. Also, households who have combined savings or capital of £30,000 or more will not be included.

Also, in most circumstances households must be currently resident within the borough boundaries and have resided here for at least 5 years (continuous residence) before they are able to join the Housing Register.

Homelessness in Bromley

The Housing Options and Support service is an extremely busy service and there is growing demand for housing advice and assistance from residents in housing need or at risk of homelessness.

On average around 460 households approach the Housing Options service each month for advice. Most of these customers receive advice and information to assist them to look for accommodation or sustain their existing accommodation. Some will be passed through for more intensive casework assistance and assessment. The number of customers approaching has increased steadily over the past five years.

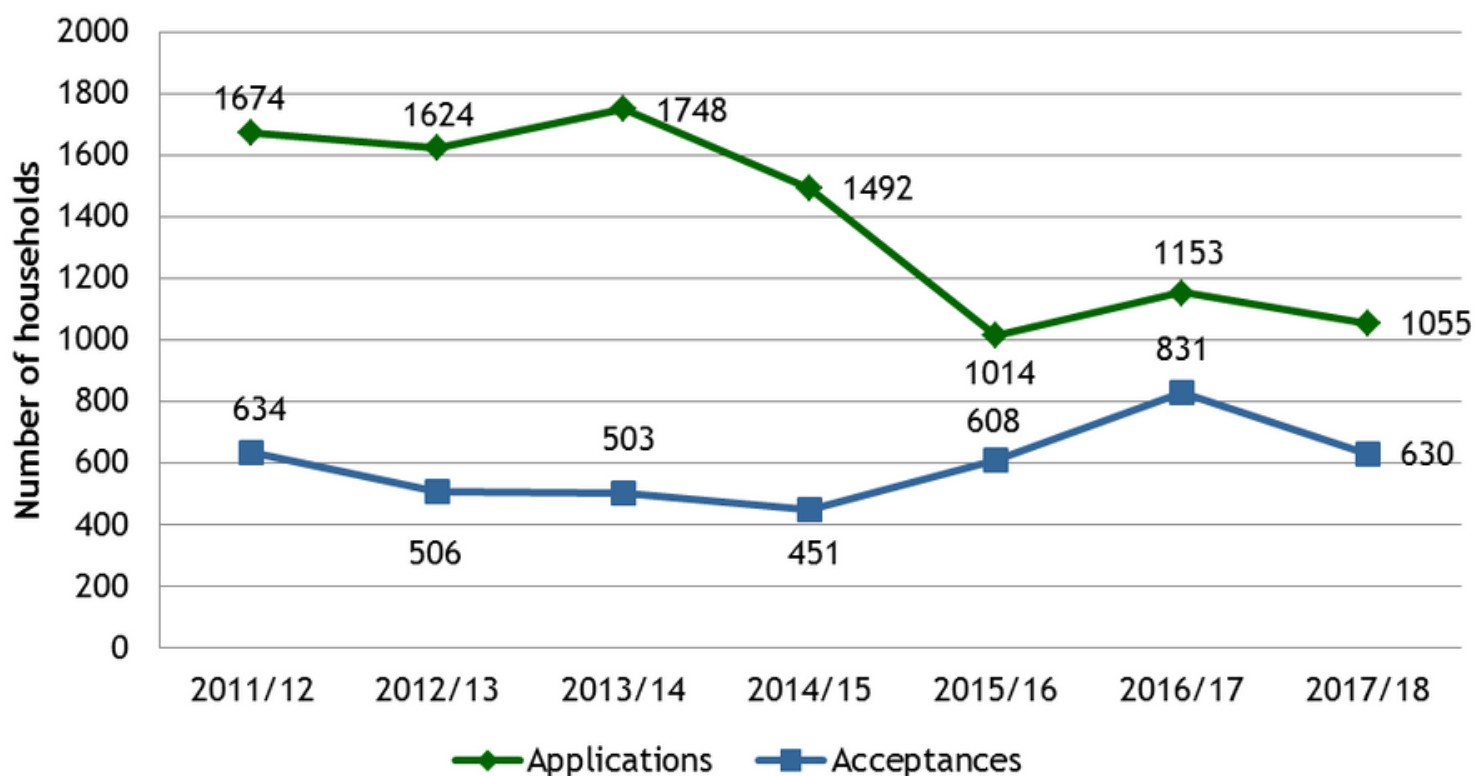
Applications and acceptances

Whilst the number of households seen in housing need has continued to rise, effective signposting and intervention services have meant that the number of formal homeless applications has reduced from its peak in 2013/14, with more than 80% of initial approaches diverted from the need to make a formal homeless application.

However, in recent years, prevention options have become more difficult to

achieve, mainly due to reduced access to affordable accommodation. The proportion of households accepted as homeless increased by 31% over the past 5 years. This upward trend in homeless acceptances has been addressed with focused prevention activity. This work is likely to become more challenging given current high rent levels, the full roll-out of universal credit in Bromley from 2018 and the continuing freeze on LHA rates.

Homelessness Applications and Acceptances 2011/12 - 2017/18



Reasons for homelessness

There have been significant changes in the reasons for homelessness over recent years with loss of private rented accommodation representing the biggest increase. In the majority of cases the reason relates to affordability in rents and in particular the shortfall between rental levels and LHA levels.

Parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate is one of the main stated reason for homelessness. It is thought that an increasing number of households have actually previously lost private rented accommodation and

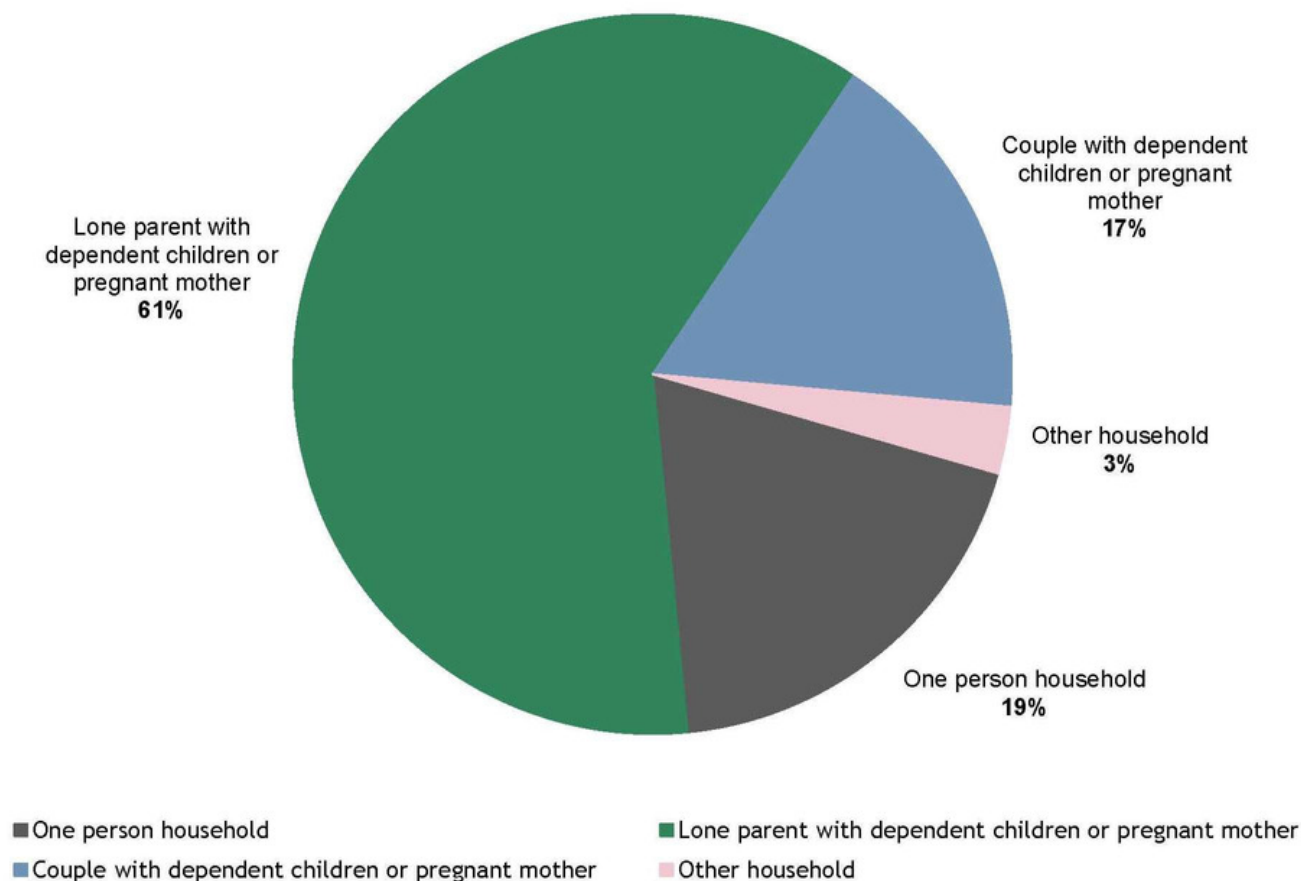
have had to return to family or friends for often unsuitable interim accommodation, later approaching the council when this arrangement becomes unsustainable.

It is primarily the affordability gap and reduced supply of lettings that caused rising levels of homelessness within Bromley. Many individuals and families simply find themselves priced out of the market and have little option other than to approach the local authority for assistance.



Homeless household type and composition

Families account for the majority of accepted homeless households. 61% of accepted homeless households in temporary accommodation are lone parents.



Over the past 4 years the proportion of homelessness acceptances from ethnic groups has increased, mainly accounted for by households who identify as Black or Mixed. Since 2012/13 the number of people from BAME communities accepted as homeless and in priority need has gone up by 38%, compared to the 7% of people who identify as white. This shows that BAME communities are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness. The BAME community represents 18.9% of Bromley's population, yet members of these communities make up 28% of homelessness applications.

This problem is not confined to Bromley and it is common for BAME populations to be disproportionately affected by homelessness, both regionally and nationally. As of 2016/17 BAME communities made up 39% households accepted as homeless and in priority need nationally, but only 15% of the total population in England.

Homelessness prevention and relief

The Homelessness Prevention Team has been established to identify the triggers leading to homelessness and undertake intensive casework to prevent households becoming homeless. The team work with households before a housing crisis occurs to try and sustain their existing accommodation or secure a new home to avoid a period of homelessness.

Youth homelessness

Young people are one of the groups most vulnerable to homelessness. In 2016/17 125 young people aged 16- 24 were accepted as homeless by Bromley. This represents a reduction from the total of 197 acceptances for this age group during the previous year. Youth homelessness represents a distinct challenge because of the potential additional vulnerability of young people and the need for supported accommodation offering opportunities to acquire independent living skills.



Rough sleepers in Bromley

The number of rough sleepers in London has increased significantly over the last five years, until a reduction during 2017/18. The number of people rough sleeping in Bromley is still relatively low in comparison to other London boroughs.

CHAIN is the multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/c-hain-reports>).

CHAIN, which is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by St Mungo's, represents the UK's most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rough sleeping.

Services recording information on CHAIN include outreach teams,

accommodation projects, day centres and specialist projects such as the GLA-commissioned No Second Night Out (NSNO). The system allows users to share information about work done with rough sleepers and about their needs, ensuring that they receive the most appropriate support and that efforts are not duplicated.

During 2017/18, 47 people were seen rough sleeping in Bromley, more than double the number of people (21) identified in 2011/12, but a reduction of 10 from the 2016/17 total of 57.

Of the 47 people seen rough in 2017/18, 34 of these were new rough sleepers. The majority of rough sleepers were seen just once and 7 were those that had returned to the street after a period away. The total of 47 people includes 11 women and 36 men.

CHAIN Database – Age of Rough Sleepers Identified

Under 18 years	18 – 25 years	26 – 35 years	36 – 45 years	46 – 55 years	Over 55	Total
0	5	9	10	145	9	47

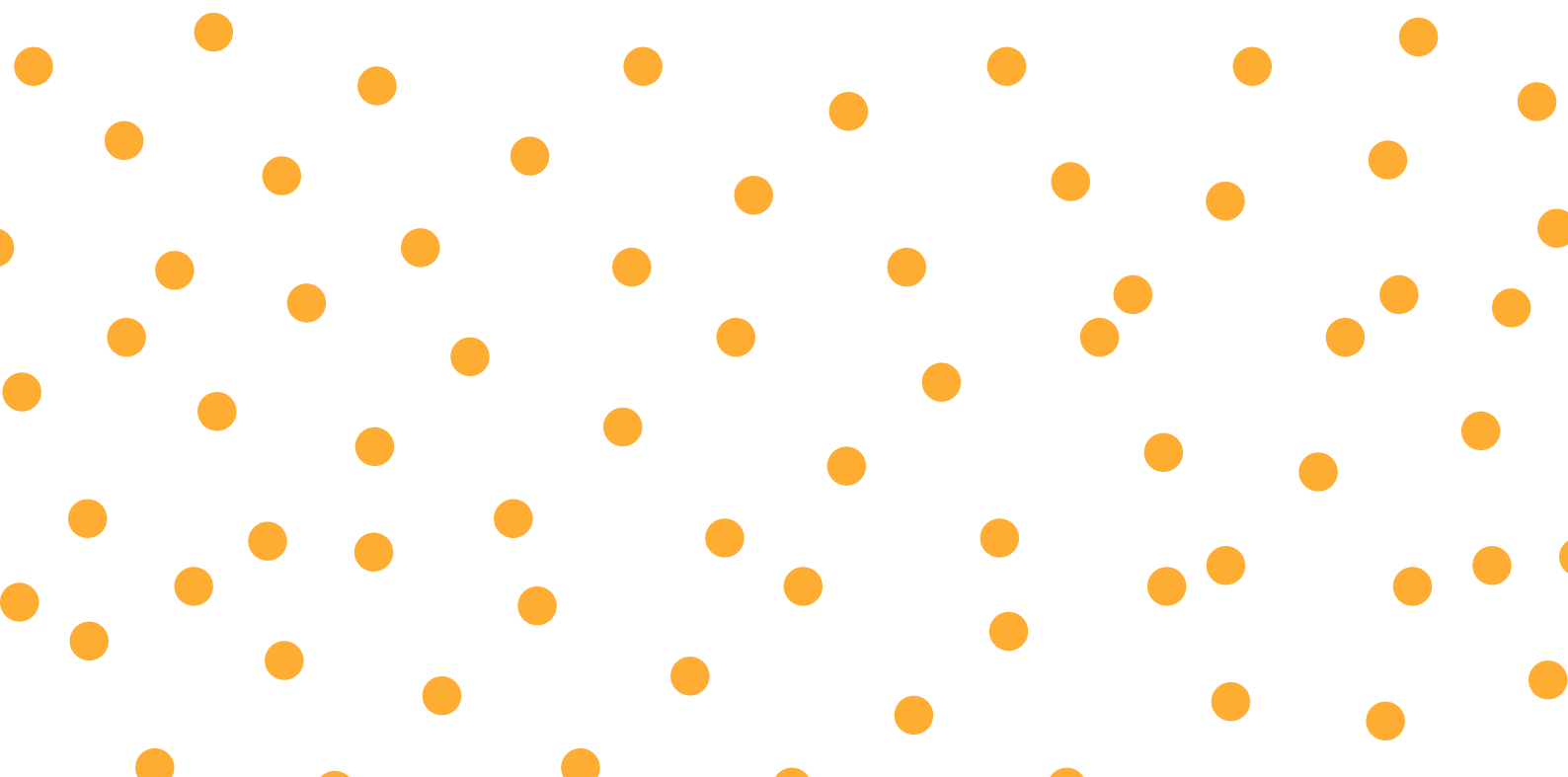
Between 1st October and 30th November each year all local authorities undertake a rough sleeper count on a single night, or compile an estimate, and report the total to central government.

London Borough of Bromley - Annual Rough Sleeper Count

	Nov' 2014	Nov' 2015	Nov' 2016	Nov' 2017
No. of people found to be rough sleeping on the night of the count	2	4	3	5

The rough sleeper count only provides a snapshot of a single night in the borough. The count has been criticised as this may not reflect the true scale of the problem.

During the last rough sleeper count in Bromley 5 rough sleepers were found.



Temporary accommodation

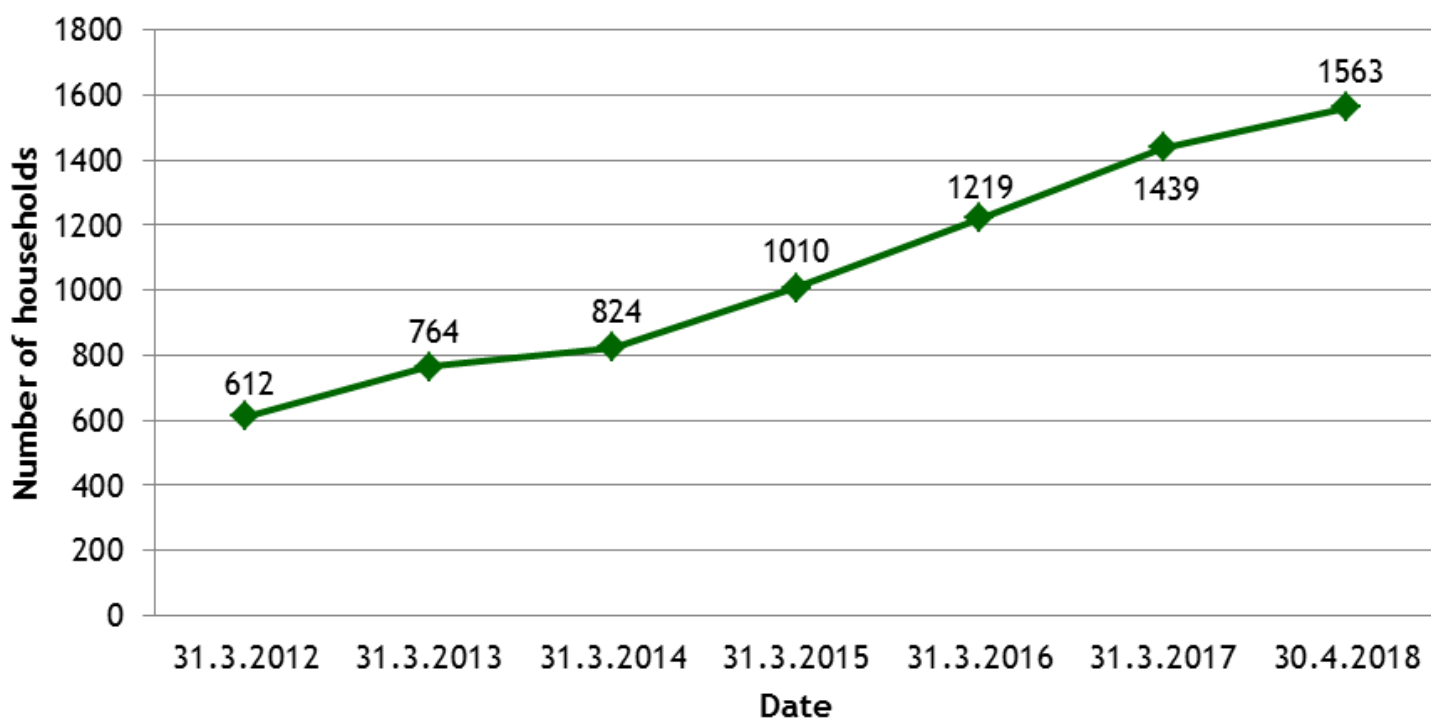
The number of households in temporary accommodation has risen significantly in the past seven years.

At the end of April 2018 there were 1,563 households in temporary accommodation placed by Bromley Council. This represents an increase of over 6% from the same period last year.

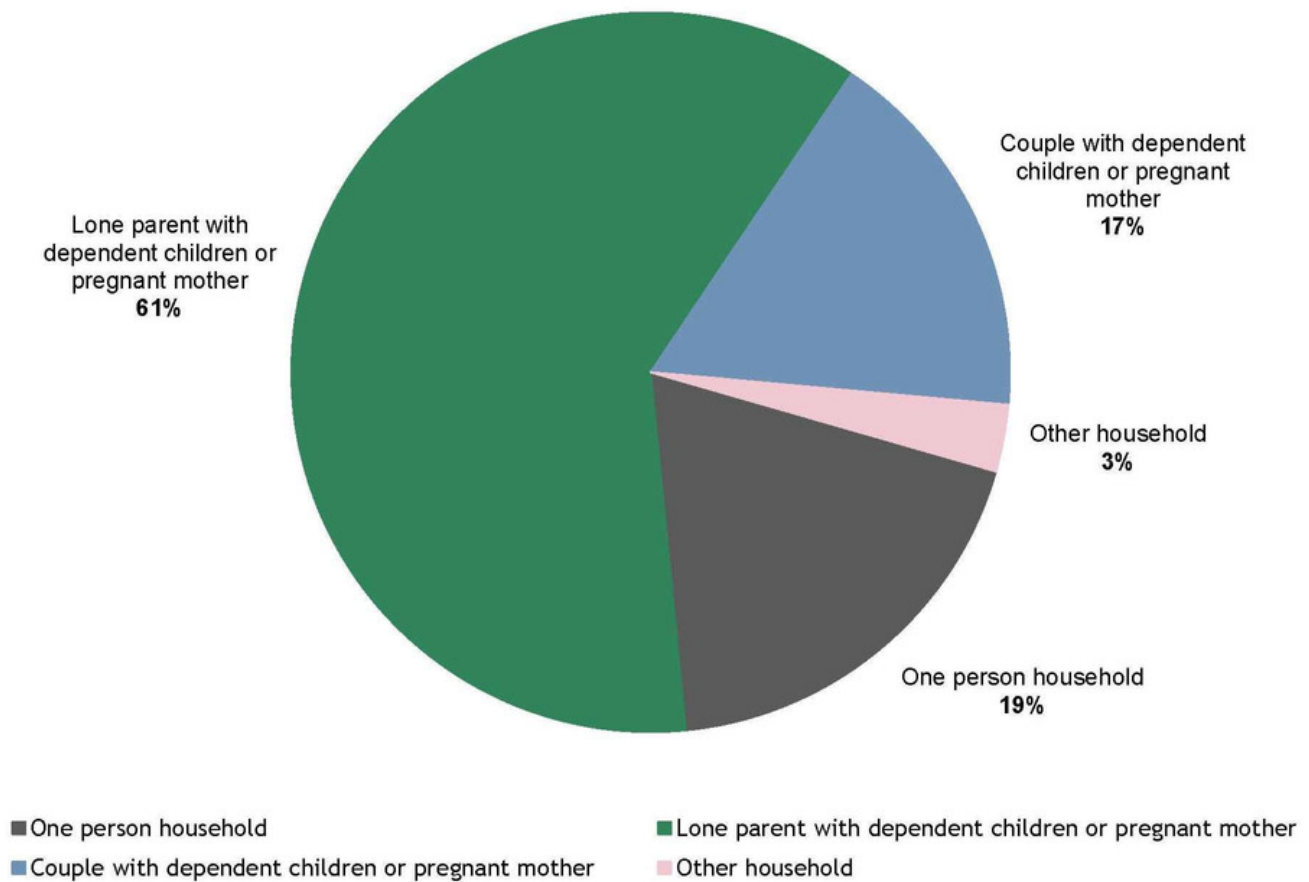
62% of placements in temporary accommodation are currently outside the borough.

Challenges around the discharge of duty have caused a slowing in the number of households moving on from temporary accommodation meaning that the net inflow into accommodation is more than those leaving.

TA Placements 31.3.12 - 30.4.18

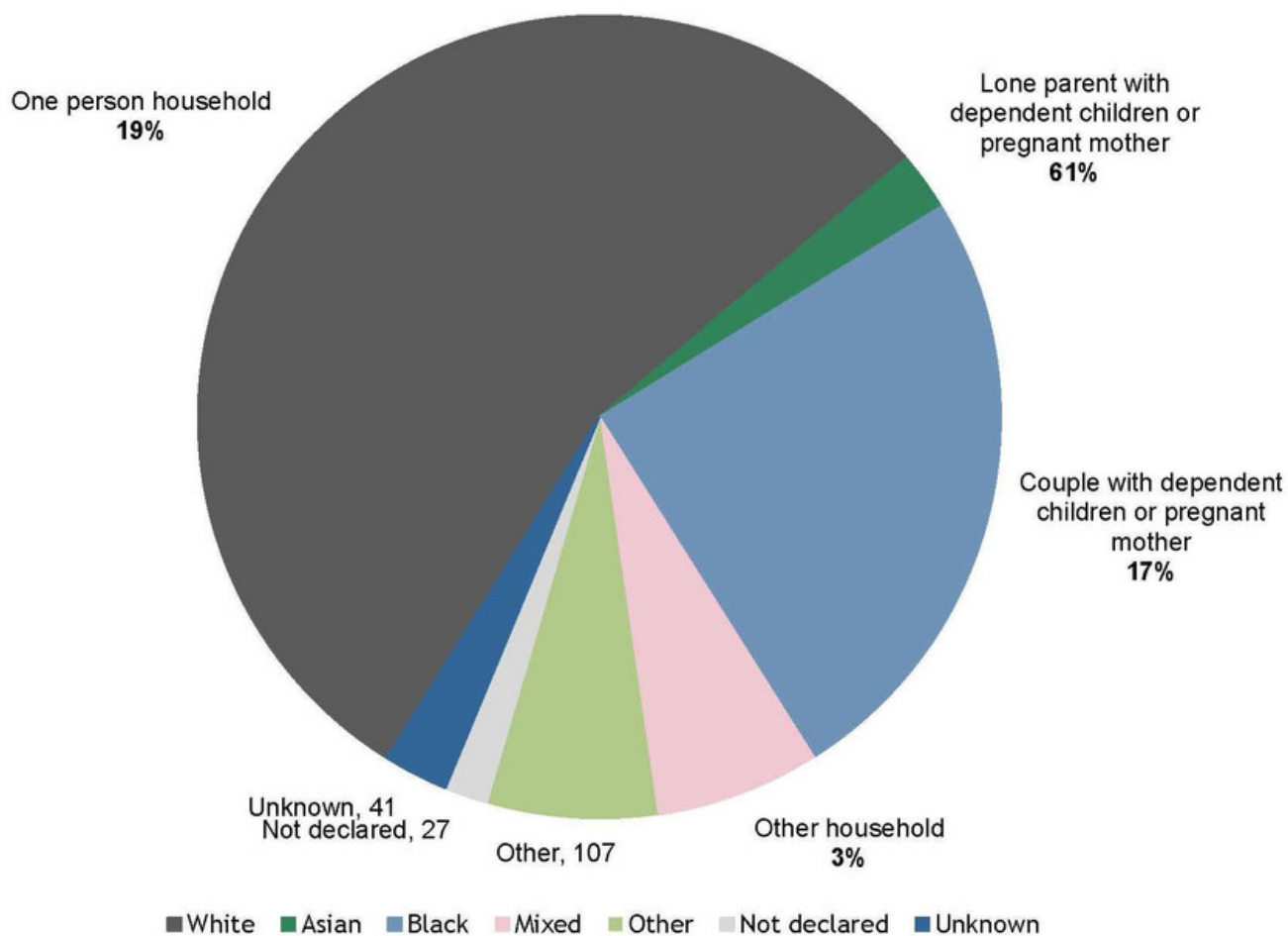


Family Composition of Households in Temporary Accommodation (2018 Quarter 1)

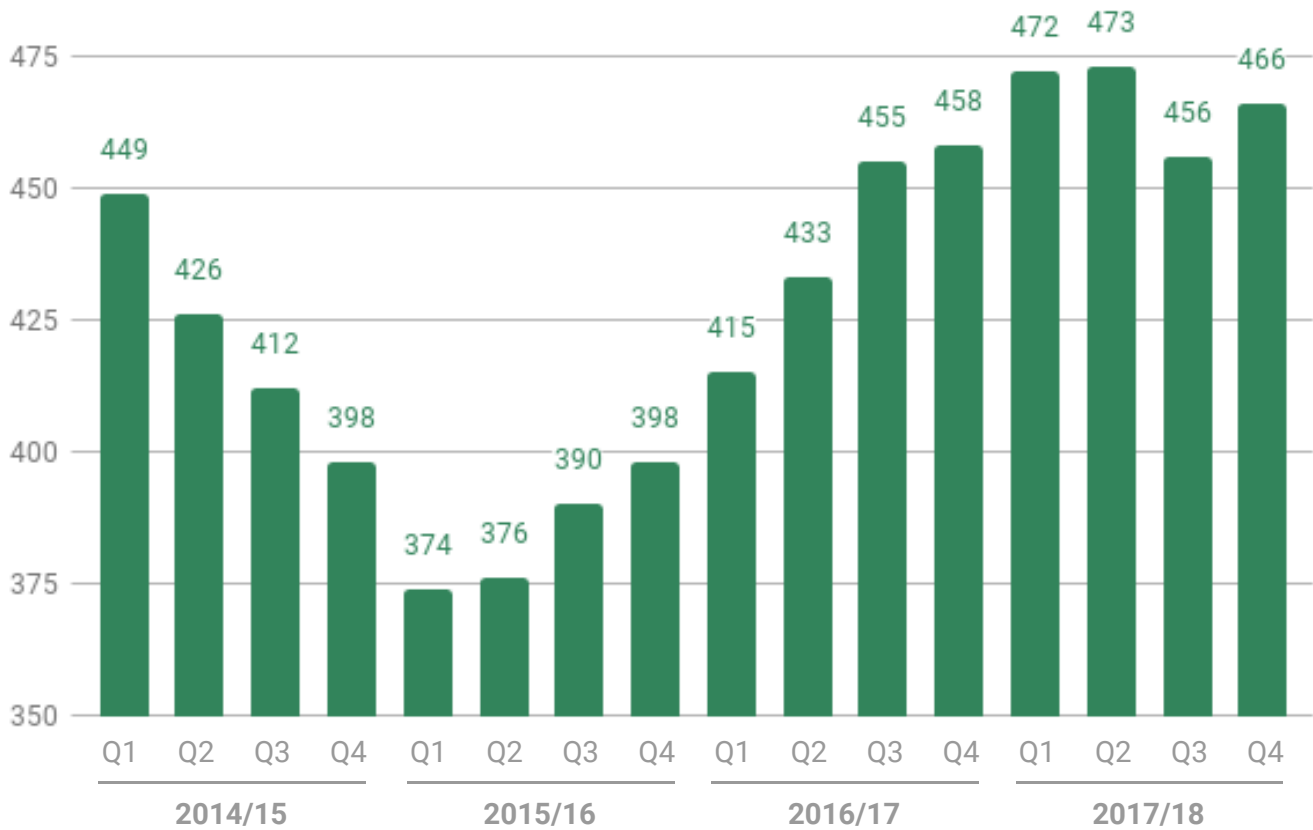


78% of households in Temporary Accommodation are families (pregnant or with at least one dependent child). The most common household composition in Temporary Accommodation is single-parent households (61%). 17% of households in Temporary Accommodation are couples with dependent children and 19% are single-person households.

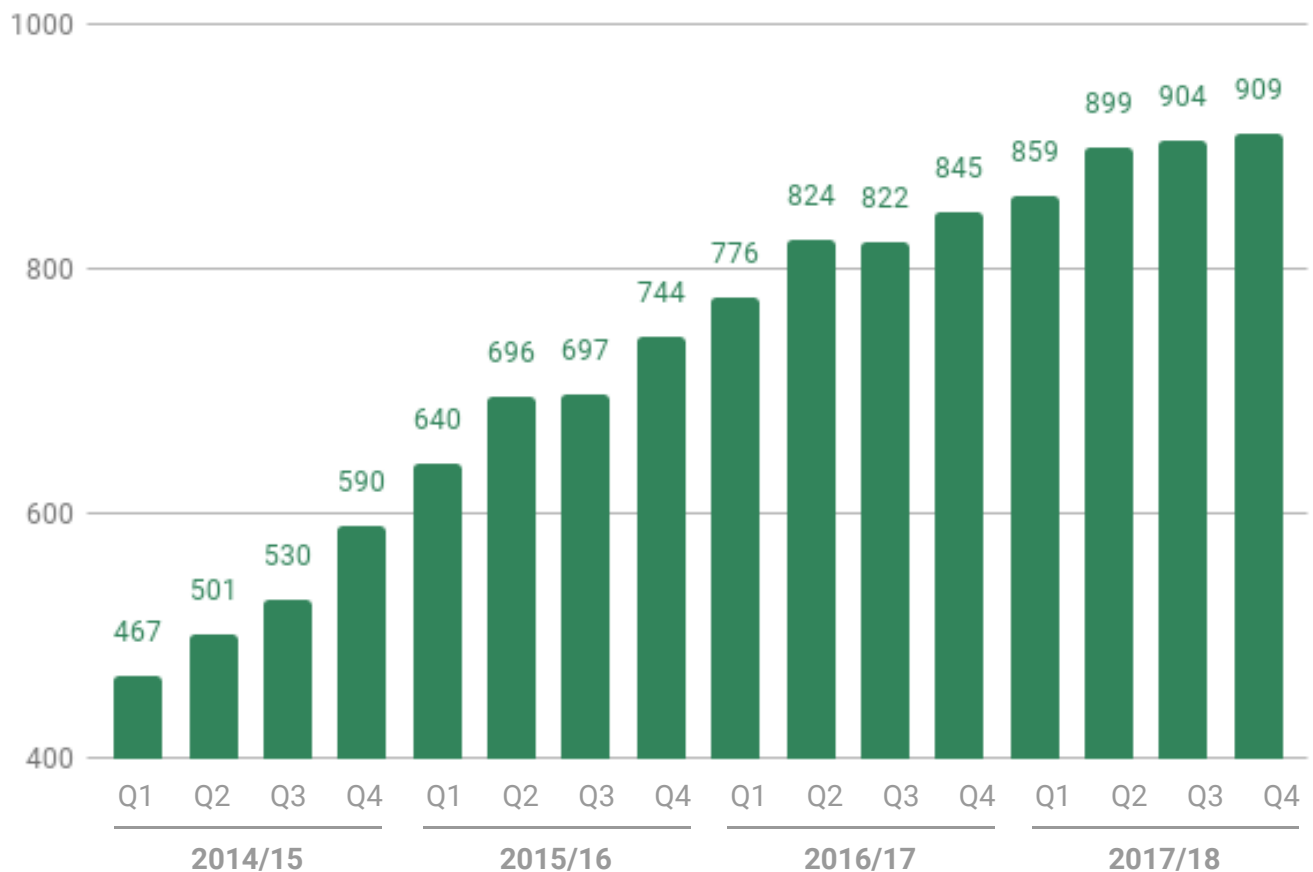
Households in Temporary Accommodation by Ethnicity (2018 Quarter 1)



Average days in Temporary Accommodation



Households in nightly paid accommodation



Temporary accommodation supply

Like many local authorities, a large proportion of the temporary accommodation we use is nightly-paid accommodation procured within the private rented sector.

The demand for TA has increased dramatically with all London boroughs chasing the same limited supply. In response, the TA market has moved to nightly-paid models of accommodation (essentially private rented accommodation offered on a less secure, more expensive nightly rate basis) rather than the more traditional longer-term lease arrangements. This shift has been driven by providers as nightly paid arrangements are more lucrative.

The difference between the cost of temporary accommodation units and the maximum recoverable rent (set by Local Housing Allowance) is high, averaging over £7,000 net cost per unit per annum.

The Council has a policy of never using shared facility bed and breakfast accommodation for families with dependent children and young people. Intensive work has allowed us to comply with this policy and source alternative accommodation.

There is a shortage of affordable, local, self-contained temporary accommodation so accommodation may be:

- In borough or out of borough
- Self-contained or with shared facilities
- Managed or un-managed
- Short-term or long-term

The Council seeks to provide temporary accommodation for people close to where they were previously living, but if this proves impossible attempts will be made to place people as close as possible to the area.

There is a shortage of accommodation that can be secured in the borough to meet statutory housing need. It is not possible to provide accommodation within Bromley for every household owed a duty and accommodation secured may be at some distance from the borough.

In addition welfare reform has influenced the location of placements for some families on the grounds of sustained affordability because of benefit they are now entitled to receive towards their housing costs.

Homeless households are often placed outside the borough and these decisions are properly evidenced and explained, both in terms of demonstrating available housing supply and in assessing the suitability of any individual placement.

The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy sets out how we prioritise homeless households for accommodation according to location. Priority for available in-borough accommodation will be given to certain households with a particular need to be housed in the borough of Bromley.

For example, priority will be given to those who are receiving treatment for a physical or mental health condition from a specialist hospital unit which cannot be transferred to another NHS service or where they are at a critical point in their treatment.

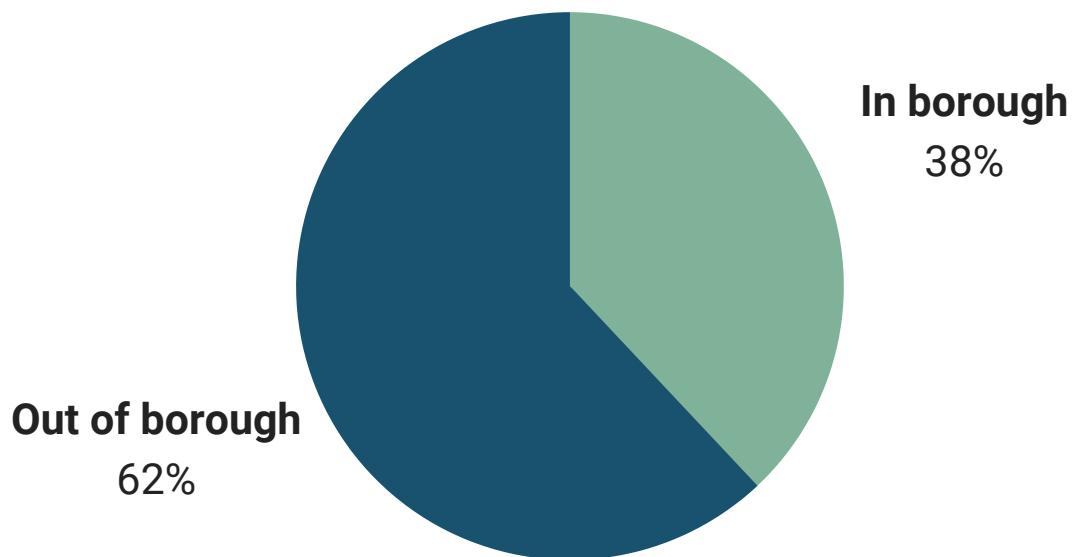
In-borough priority does not guarantee an in-borough placement, but if suitable and affordable accommodation is available in Bromley, it does give households priority over others without this assessed priority.

Traditional models of TA have centred on use of existing social housing stock or long-term leasing of private rented sector accommodation. Work continues to maximise supply in the private sector but it is no longer possible to provide a sufficient supply of accommodation within borough to meet statutory housing needs and comply with our legal duties. The situation is worsened by the increasing number of private landlords offering their accommodation through the more lucrative nightly-paid arrangements.

Alternative sources of accommodation supply are being sought, for example through use of vacant properties, conversion of former residential care facilities and a property purchase programme (“More Homes Bromley”).

The acute pressures necessitate that, like all London boroughs, we are having to consider new strategies to tackle growing demand and look to more innovative schemes and also further afield in London and beyond to provide sustainable housing solutions.

Temporary Accommodation Placements (at 2018 Quarter 1)

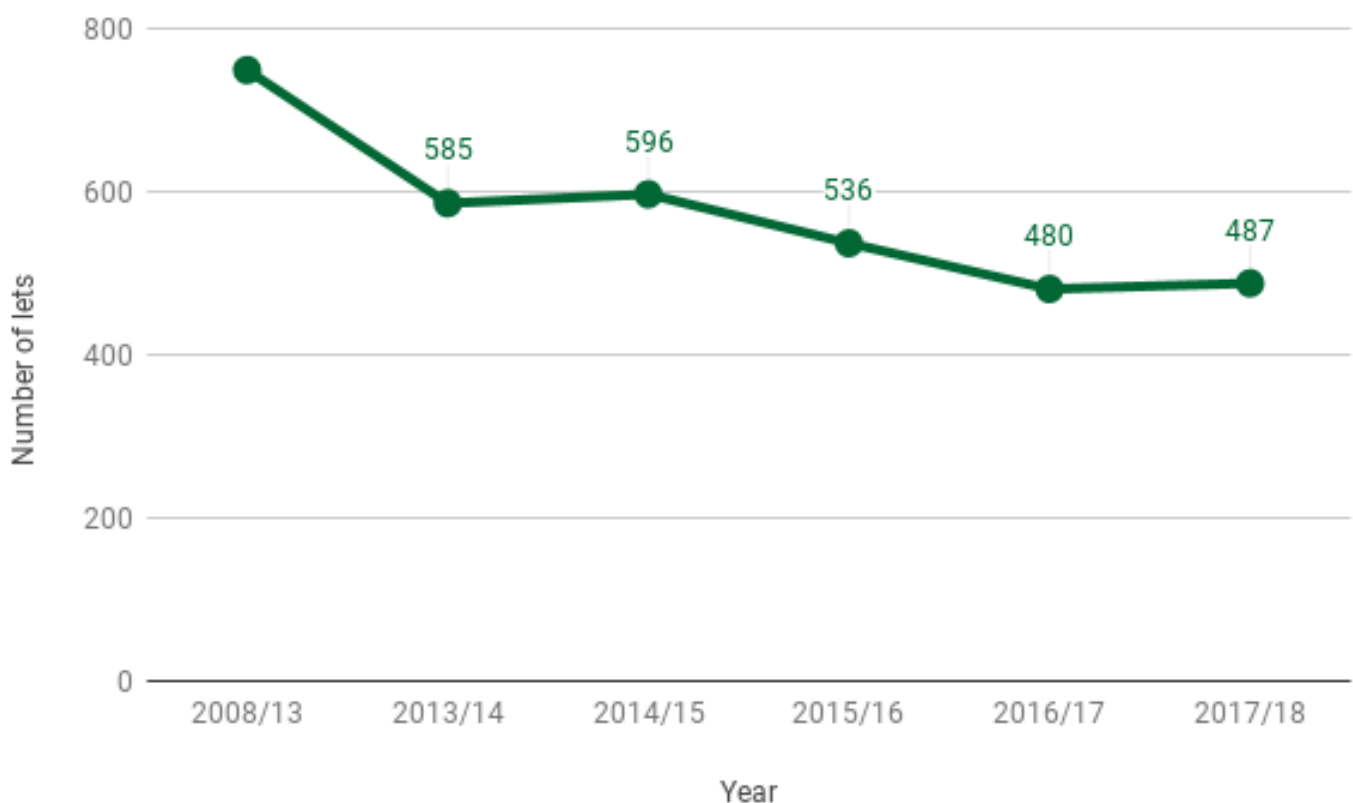


Social and affordable rented accommodation

Since 2013 the number of social lettings has been reducing, both through re-lets and new build properties becoming available. There was a slight increase during the last year but the number is still significantly smaller than in the years up to 2013.

Developing housing associations have highlighted increasing difficulty in obtaining sites and anticipate lower levels of new build developments as a result of changes in development and housing association finance frameworks.

Number of lets per year through Bromley Homeseekers



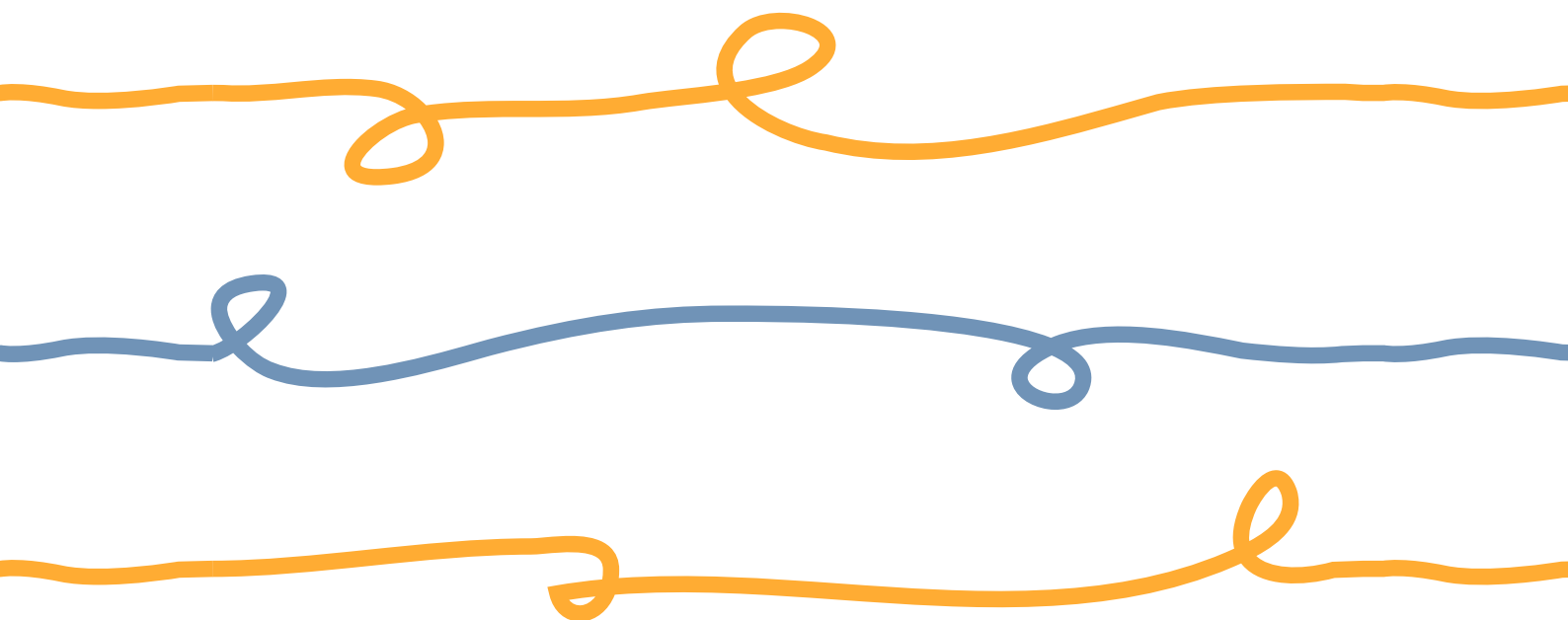
The waiting times for social housing have gradually increased over the last 5 years. Currently a typical waiting time for a two bedroom property is 4 – 5 years.

Private rented sector

Historically Bromley has been successful in assisting homeless households to secure private rented accommodation as a long-term housing solution. However rising rents overtaking and leaving behind the Local Housing Allowance and the loss of direct housing benefit payments to landlords means that the private rented sector in Bromley is out of reach for an increasing number of households.

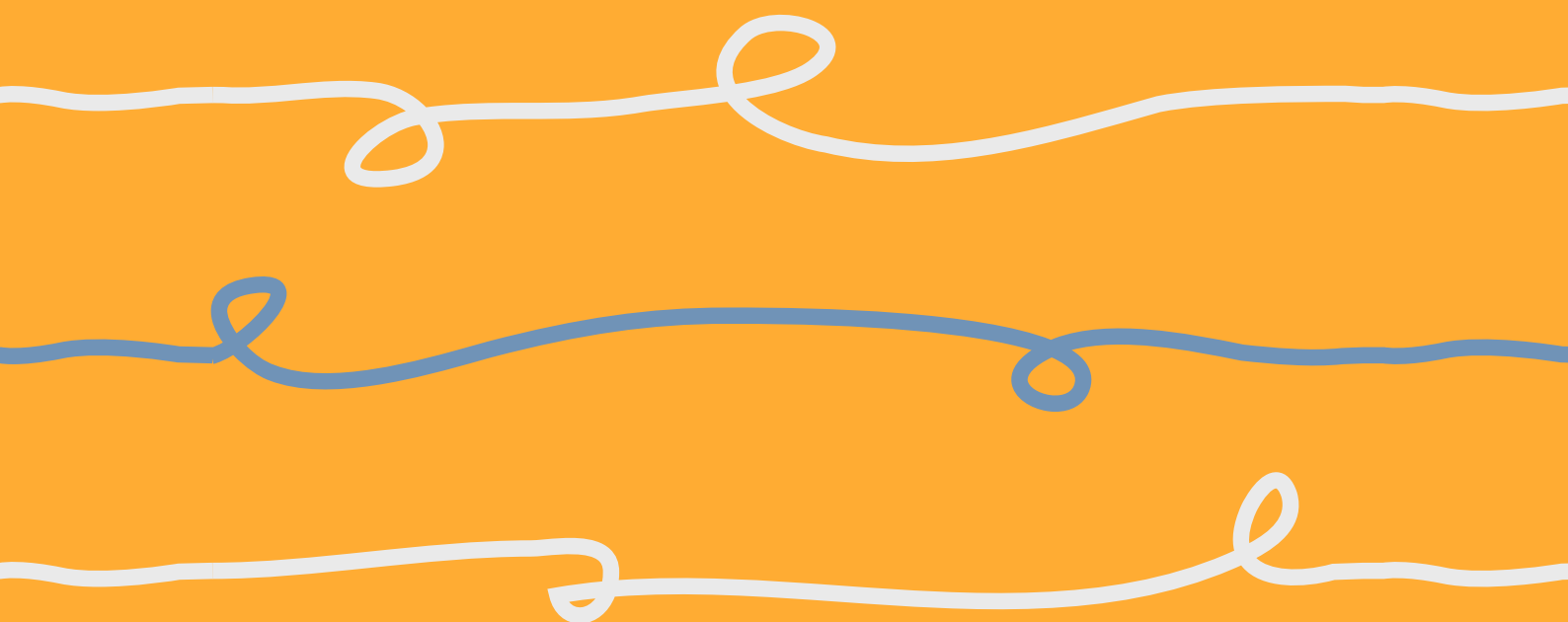
The average rent for a 2-bedroom property in Bromley is around £545 per month (over £6,500 per annum) more than the maximum benefit payable to assist with housing costs.

The widening gap between the LHA and actual rents has reduced the supply of private rented sector properties able to be secured to prevent or relieve homelessness has reduced year-on-year.



Part 2

The Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023



The three main causes of homelessness in Bromley are:



It is important that the strategic responses we deliver to prevent and relieve homelessness are appropriate and responsive to these identified circumstances.

The consultation exercise undertaken as part of the development of this strategy helped us to identify the priorities of our partners and stakeholders:

- More affordable accommodation
- More support for those considered to be vulnerable for example young and old people, victims of violence and those that suffer from ill health, mental or physical.
- The right advice and support at the right time in the right place

EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS



Over 5,000 households approach the Bromley Housing Options service each year for advice. This number is projected to increase as a result of rising housing costs, the impact of welfare reform, population growth and provision of new services under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The homelessness review demonstrated disproportionate levels of homelessness amongst particular groups in Bromley and this evidence will inform our decisions when designing our services and allocating resources.

In recent years Bromley has increased focus on early intervention and

homeless prevention. Given the challenges faced around increasing homelessness it is critical that we continue to put homeless prevention at the heart of everything we do. We believe this will significantly increase the chances of positive outcomes for people at risk of becoming homeless. We have adopted a person-centred housing and support solution which seeks to ensure effective information and advice is available at every stage to maximise the positive outcomes for those who are or may face homelessness. This requires professionals across agencies to be able to identify the risk of homelessness and know how best to respond.

Challenges

- The number of people at risk of homelessness increased from 451 households during 2014/15 to 831 during 2016/17 – the reduction to 630 during 2017/18 reflects the new focus on prevention activity and the additional staff and resources directed to this activity and this must be maintained
- The most common reasons for homelessness are that family or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate, loss of private rented sector accommodation and relationship breakdown including domestic abuse
- 796 households in Bromley were affected by the benefit cap by February 2018
- House prices and rents have risen steeply in recent years

Our goals

Maximise the level of homeless prevention by:

- Delivering accessible information services
- Providing effective advice and assistance in the right place at the right time
- Assisting people to stay in their own homes or access alternative accommodation before becoming homeless

To achieve these we will

Deliver accessible services:

- Making sure our services are accessible and appropriate for the people most likely to need our help
- Working in partnership with our voluntary and statutory partners to provide the right advice at the right time
- Comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act and support people through agreed Personalised Housing Plans and work together with our customers to prevent or relieve their homelessness
- Provide outreach housing advice surgeries to reach the most vulnerable sectors of our community
- Use our funding and resources to support people to sustain their accommodation or secure a new home

ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



It is critical that we support and safeguard young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and ensure they are placed in suitable accommodation which meets their needs and helps them to achieve their aspirations and potential.

Working closely with Children's Social Care and undertaking preventative work is important to minimise the number of young people experiencing a housing crisis.

Challenges

- The number of 16-24 year-olds accepted as homeless during 2017/18 was 141 – although a reduction on the total for the previous year (197) this figure still represents a challenge as these young people may require supported accommodation because of their potential vulnerability
- 254 young people were open to the leaving care team in June 2018

Our goals

- Deliver better outcomes for children and families by reducing youth homelessness
- Enable young people to access appropriate accommodation and support service that meet their needs
- Provide coordinated services to tackle the wider causes of homelessness

To achieve these we will

- Ensure no young people are placed into bed and breakfast and all young homeless people are placed into accommodation where they are safe and their needs are met
- Work alongside the Leaving Care Team to ensure young people leaving care are found appropriate accommodation and support to lead independent lives
- Undertake a comprehensive review of young people's supported accommodation to ensure sufficient supply and quality-assured services



INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION

Access to affordable long-term accommodation, particularly within the borough, has become increasingly problematic as demand is high, costs are rising and social housing stock is limited.

Securing good quality affordable temporary accommodation has also become increasingly difficult. Rents have risen and LHA has not kept pace. Homeless households are spending longer in temporary accommodation, and this has placed a significant financial burden on the Council.

Increasingly we have to look beyond Bromley to meet demand and identify temporary and longer-term accommodation for the discharge of duty which is affordable and sustainable. It is often necessary to place households out of borough and in some cases outside London in more affordable locations.

The Council has a temporary accommodation placement policy

and placements are subject to agreed criteria and individual risk, priority and suitability assessments.

We will use s106 Agreements to increase the supply of affordable housing as part of new developments in the borough. The Local Plan includes a requirement that all developments of more than 11 units include 35% affordable housing, which includes intermediate tenures such as shared ownership.

The Council must also make best use of all existing available stock through mechanisms such as encouraging housing associations in the borough to implement fixed-term tenancies. These tenancies allow providers to review the circumstances of their tenants and only issue a new tenancy if the property is still suitable for their needs and their income and savings are not at a level that would enable them to access a different tenure to free up a social let for a household in greater need.

Challenges

- A reducing supply of housing association properties becoming available
- Rising private sector rents and limits on Local Housing Allowance meaning fewer properties are affordable for benefit-dependent households
- The difficulty of securing move-on accommodation means households are staying longer in temporary accommodation

Our goals

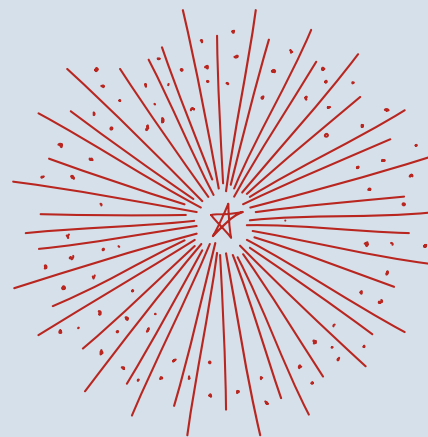
Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation by:

- Making greater use of the PRS for homeless households and those at risk of becoming homeless
- Reconfigure our portfolio of temporary accommodation properties and reducing use of expensive nightly-paid arrangements
- Explore joint-procurement arrangements with other borough to quantify potential savings
- Working with development partners to build more affordable homes
- To make the best use of existing stock to meet housing needs

To achieve these we will

- Promote of out-of-London accommodation for households who cannot afford Bromley or London
- Review incentives offered to private landlords and agents to increase the number of landlords willing to take referrals
- Hold regular Landlord Forums
- Deliver 400 units through the More Homes Bromley property purchase scheme
- Publish a new Housing Strategy to set out the strategic aims of new supply
- Explore opportunities to develop existing council or housing association-owned land for conversion and use for modular homes or new build affordable housing
- Align procurement with adult and child services to secure appropriate accommodation and support services
- Work with planning colleagues to ensure that affordable housing provision is secured on new developments and maximise the use of s106 payment in lieu contributions for new supply
- Review the Allocations Scheme to ensure it supports the delivery of the Homeless Reduction Act and focuses on homeless prevention and discharge of the main homeless duty

ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES BY IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS



The threat of, or actual homelessness, is a traumatic experience and can impact negatively on the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals and families. Some homeless people have complex needs, which may include physical or mental ill-health, disability, an offending history, financial difficulties or substance misuse issues.

We understand that without the necessary person-centred support for each individual, outcomes may not be positive and tenancies not sustained. We need to address the family needs as a whole and help households to develop the skills and resilience to manage independently in the long term.

Homelessness can also disconnect people from support networks and services and the longer a household remains in unsettled accommodation the harder it is to protect vulnerable adults and children. We must ensure households placed outside Bromley have appropriate support and access to services.

Rough sleepers are likely to experience a range of complex needs which are rarely able to be addressed by one service. In addition to the risks faced by rough sleepers, rough sleeping can also have a negative impact on the wider community. Tackling rough sleeping requires effective collaboration between agencies.

Challenges

- The number of rough sleepers in Bromley has more than doubled since 2011/12 - 47 rough sleepers were identified in 2017/18
- The recent JSNA health needs audit highlighted the high proportion of single homeless people with complex needs relating to physical and mental health
- The time spent in temporary accommodation is increasing
- Due to increasing need the Council has to place households into temporary accommodation outside of the borough to meet its statutory housing duties - this is often at some distance from support networks
- The number of homelessness acceptances, because of domestic violence has remained consistent with 78 cases in 2017/17 and 70 in 2017/18
- Welfare reform has increased the number of people facing homelessness because they cannot afford their accommodation costs

Our goals

- Minimise the impact of welfare reform
- Provide person-centred support to prevent homelessness and sustain accommodation
- Build resilience
- Reduce the risk of rough sleeping

To achieve these we will

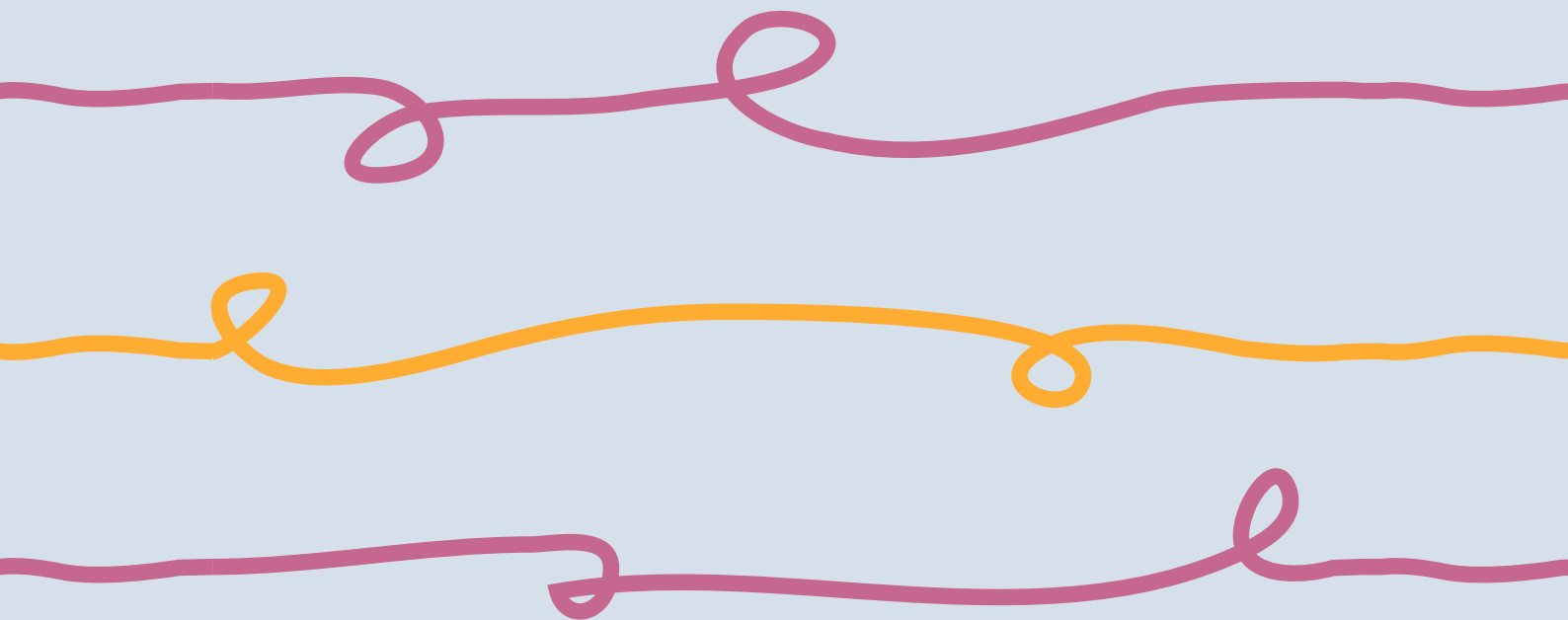
- Provide money and debt advice to resolve homelessness and ensure households are able to sustain future living expenses
- Review existing floating support and supported accommodation and ensure future commissioning meets identified needs
- Work with Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid to improve pathways for domestic abuse victims leaving refuges
- Work closely with partners in the criminal justice sector through Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) arrangement to provide appropriate support, including housing
- Complete a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) health needs audit to improve links with health to better understand and address health needs of homeless people
- Undertake the annual headcount to monitor levels of rough sleeping and encourage all partner agencies to contribute to the CHAIN database
- Work closely with StreetLink and London Street Rescue to identify and support rough sleepers away from the street

Delivering the Homelessness Strategy

To deliver our Homelessness Strategy we will have annual Action Plans for our relevant service areas. Each quarter the Homelessness Strategy Project Group will monitor the actions and performance measures to monitor our progress.

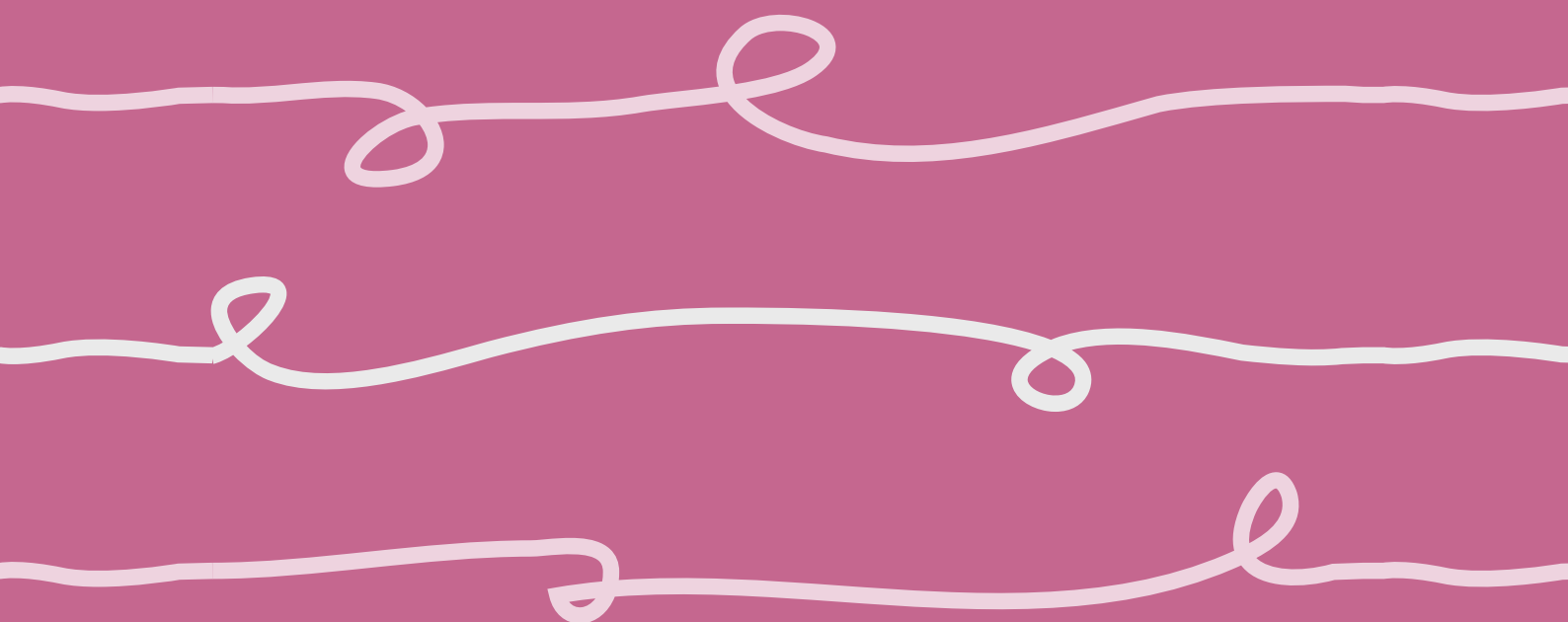
Performance reports will be regularly presented to Senior Officers, Elected Members and key external stakeholders through our Homelessness Forum.





Appendices

- **Appendix 1:**
Key points from consultation
- **Appendix 2:**
Members of the Homelessness Strategy Working Group
- **Appendix 3:**
Glossary
- **Appendix 4:**
Bibliography



Appendix 1:

Key points from consultation

The Homelessness Strategy was developed with the help of members of the public organisations from the statutory, voluntary and housing sectors.

Consultation workshops took place in February and March 2017 with Housing Advice Teams, stakeholders and service providers to better understand the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness in our community.

The strategy takes into account the views of our community and partners; we have ensured that their views are reflected in this strategy.

The key messages that came from the consultation are:

- The current housing situation is mostly affecting the ability of people to afford their rent and housing costs
- Having housing related issues is causing stress and ill health
- Very little access to private sector accommodation because Landlords are reluctant to let to tenants in receipt of benefits
- It was felt that the best way to manage this and identify those at risk is through partnerships, joint working and advice
- The top two initiatives put forward to prevent homelessness are, housing stock development and education
- Greater communication to deliver prevention work
- It was felt that the best way that Bromley Council could assist agencies is to work with developers to increase housing stock
- There needs to be greater awareness of our Housing Needs service and the options available to people
- The public felt that the best way to reduce homelessness is to reduce cuts and increase housing

The keys messages that came from the questionnaires are:

- More affordable homes need to be built in the borough
- More night shelters and drop in centres
- There needs to be more of an holistic approach in the public sector
- Prioritise people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems.
- There needs to be more research on the specific needs of minority groups like the LGBT, BME etc.
- Invest more in drug, alcohol and probation
- Support existing organisation committed to helping homeless people

Appendix 2:

Members of the Homelessness Strategy Working Group 2018 - 2023

- Affinity Sutton
- Bromley Citizen Advice Bureau
- Bromley Shelter
- Bromley and Croydon's Women's Aid
- Centrepont
- Community Links
- Crystal Palace Community Trust (CPCT)
- Health Watch Bromley
- Hestia
- Homeless Link
- Job Centre Plus
- Keniston Housing Association
- Latch Project
- LBB - Bromley Children's Project
- LBB - Early Intervention and Support
- LBB - Housing Department
- LBB - Leaving Care
- The Links Medical Practice
- Living Well
- Mayflower
- MOAT Homes
- No Second Night Out
- Penge Churches Housing Association
- Radcliffe Housing Society
- Thamesreach

Appendix 3:

Glossary

A

Action Plan:

A number of identified steps that must be taken, or tasks that must be completed for a strategy to perform.

Affordable homes:

Homes that are no more than 80% of the average local market rent.

Arrears:

Sum of money that is owed and should have been paid earlier.

B

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (B&B):

Most B&BS used by the council are not like hotel accommodation, and are often run specifically for homeless households. Residents placed in B&B may have to share facilities with other households/residents.

C

Choice Based Letting:

An online system that shows what social properties are available to rent. It is for people accepted onto the housing register who can place bids on properties and these will be ranked according to priority.

Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN):

It is a multi-agency database to gather information about rough sleeping in London.

Consultation:

It is a meeting where people/groups discuss a subject/topic and share views and experience.

D

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP):

It is a short term payment from a local authority to help cover some housing costs. DHP does not have to be repaid by the resident.

Domestic Abuse:

Women's Aid has defined abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour. It includes sexual violence, by partner, family member or carer.

F Forums:
It is a meeting/ medium where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged. People can talk about a problem or matter especially of public interest.

G Greater London Authority (GLA):
It is strategic city wide government for the city of London. The GLA holds the mayor accountable, investigates issues and influences policy development.

H Homeless:
You may be homeless if you live in unsuitable housing, do not have the right to stay where you are, or if you are sleeping rough.

Homelessness prevention:

Has been defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as a local authority “providing people with the ways and means to address their and other needs to avoid homelessness”.

Homelessness relief:

It is when a local authority is unable to prevent homelessness, but helps someone to secure accommodation, despite not being obligated to do so.

Homelessness Strategy:

Homelessness Act 2002 states that local authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district.

Housing association/Registered Social Landlord (RSL):

It is a non-profit organisation, and they rent properties to low incomes households with particular needs. Their portfolio consists of social and affordable rented properties, and they provide options for low cost home ownership.

Housing demand:

It is a market driven concept and relates to the type and number of houses that households will choose to occupy based on preference and affordability.

Housing need:

It is an indicator of existing deficit: the number of households that do not have access to accommodation that meet certain normative standards.

Housing tenure:

The legal status under which someone has the right to live in a property. The two most common forms of tenure are home ownership and renting. Home-ownership is when a property is owned outright or bought with mortgage or loan. The second type of tenure is renting, and it has two forms, and they are social and private renting.

J **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):**

A process by which local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and other public sector partners jointly describe the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population and identifying priorities for action.

L **Landlord:**

Owner of a property, and the landlord leases their property to an individual or business, and they are called tenants.

Leaving care:

It is a service for young people aged 16 plus to 21. It ensures that young people do not leave care until they are ready, and that they receive effective support once they have left.

Local Housing Allowance:

It is a housing benefit that helps people renting from private landlords. The LHA is administered by the local council.

Lodge:

It is a specialist accommodation project for long term rough sleepers.

M **Mortgage:**

It is a legal agreement by which a bank/building society, lends money at interest, and in exchange they take the title of the property. Over a set period of time, the borrower must repay the loan in order to own the property. If the borrower fails to meet the condition of the agreement, the mortgage provider can repossess the property.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA):

Multi-agency public protection arrangement ensures the successful management of violent and sexual offenders in the community.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC):

Where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representative of local police, probation, health child protection, housing practitioner, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialist from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

N

Nightly-paid accommodation (NPA):

Is used for temporary accommodation and the landlord is paid on a nightly basis which is more expensive than other types of accommodation such as those provided on a lease.

No Second Night Out:

It is a London-wide project aimed at ensuring that people sleeping rough do not spend a second night out on the streets.

Not for profit:

It means that any surplus generated is reinvested in the pursuit of a social goal. In this context profit would be reinvested into building more affordable home for low income households.

O

One stop shop:

It offers a multitude of services for people, and it provides a convenient and efficient service.

P

Private Rented Sector (PRS):

The PRS are properties owned and rented out by a private landlord. It is the fastest growing tenure in the country, and 14% of Bromley residents live in private rented housing.

Public Sector:

It is controlled by the state, owned and operated by the government. The public sector provides services for citizen and does not seek to generate a profit.

R

Rough sleeping (or street homeless):

It is the most visible form of homelessness. Rough sleeping has been defined as people sleeping or bedded down in open air, building or other places not designed for habitation.

S

Social services:

A government service that promotes the welfare of vulnerable people. Social service better the wellbeing of children, adults and the elderly.

Stakeholder:

It is person or group that has an interest in an organisation. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by an organisation's actions, objectives and policies.

Statutory homelessness:

Homelessness defined within the terms of the homelessness legislation and determining when local authorities will have a duty to offer accommodation.

Support Needs:

It is a mixture of practical, financial and emotional support for people who need extra help to manage their and be independent (including mental health, problematic drug and alcohol use and access to social supports)

T

Temporary accommodation:

Local authorities place households in an interim accommodation, when permanent housing is not available, or when households are awaiting a decision on their homelessness application.

Third sector:

Encompasses registered charities and other organisations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups, and they are 'value-driven'. This means they are motivated by social goal and not profit.

W

Welfare reform:

When government changes or amends social welfare policies. The goal is to reduce number of individuals/ families dependent on government assistant, so claimants of benefits can be self-sufficient. It affects how much monetary support people are entitled to.

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