



# **Bromley Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

2025 – 2030  
DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

# Contents

Foreword .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Key Achievements from the 2018 – 2023 Homelessness Strategy .....	4
The Statutory Framework.....	4
Bromley’s Strategic Vision.....	5
Context.....	7
National.....	7
Local .....	9
Summary of Homelessness in Bromley .....	12
Homelessness Applications .....	12
The New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030.....	18
Our Mission Statement.....	18
Key Objectives.....	18
The Key Priorities .....	18
Key Priority One – Early Intervention and Prevention of Homelessness .....	19
What we have achieved so far: .....	19
Our objectives and goals.....	20
Key Measures of Success.....	20
Key Priority Two – The Right Support at the Right Time for Adults, Young People and Children ....	21
What we have achieved so far: .....	21
Our objectives and goals.....	22
Key Measures of Success.....	22
Key Priority Three – Providing Suitable and Affordable Housing for Eligible Households .....	23
What we have achieved so far: .....	23
Our objectives and goals.....	24
Key Measures of Success.....	24
Priority Four – Reducing Rough Sleeping and Ending Repeat Homelessness.....	25
What we have achieved so far: .....	25
Our objectives and goals.....	26
Key Measures of Success.....	26
Priority Five – Reducing the Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation .....	27
What we have achieved so far: .....	27
Our objectives and goals.....	27
Key Measures of Success.....	28

# Foreword

## **from the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing, Councillor Yvonne Bear**

Our Homelessness Strategy for 2018 to 2023 has reached its conclusion and we are pleased with the progress we have made on the objectives we set out in that strategy. Our achievements so far and ongoing work would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff and the positive and productive partnerships that have been key in delivering services.

The strategy for 2025 to 2030 sets out the priorities that have been identified to address the homelessness challenges for the next 5 years. The strategy builds on the achievements of the 2018 to 2023 strategy.

The homelessness landscape is very different now to the landscape for the development and delivery of the 2018 to 2023 strategy. We have faced the challenge of a pandemic, refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, an increase in the cost of living and rising rent and mortgage costs. These challenges have heightened the importance of the work we do to ensure people in our borough receive practical and timely support when they face difficult housing pressures or are faced with homelessness.

Our learning from the previous strategy and a wide consultation with our customers, partners, Members and stakeholders has created the five key priorities set out below. These priorities will create the foundation for the delivery of the support and services that will enable us to achieve the objectives of Homelessness Strategy for 2025 to 2030.

1. Early Intervention and Prevention of Homelessness.
2. The Right Support at the Right Time for Adults, Young People and Children.
3. Providing Suitable and Affordable Housing for Eligible Households.
4. Reducing Rough Sleeping and Ending Repeat Homelessness.
5. Reducing the Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation.

By focusing on these key priorities, we aim to support our residents to secure stable accommodation, making Bromley a place where everyone can lead healthy, safe and independent lives.

# Introduction

## Key Achievements from the 2018 – 2023 Homelessness Strategy

- Maximising our resources has seen the **prompt triage of new applications**, providing more timely advice and assistance **to aid overall homelessness prevention**.
- Bromley-owned sites used to provide **60 properties delivered and tenanted to Bromley residents** with further Council owned projects underway.
- **Utilised grant funding** as part of the Greater London Authority Affordable Homes Programme 2021 – 2026, funnelling **£37,959,000 into developing affordable homes in the borough**.
- **Distributed funds** from the Household Support Fund across Bromley residents experiencing financial hardship by **consolidating council tax and rent arrears and preventing further adversity leading to homelessness**.
- **Improved the customer journey** through the regeneration of our assessment process, **providing residents a better service of care and consistency**. Uniting team processes **to give timely advice and support**.
- Facilitated a contract with Bromley Croydon Womens Aid (BCWA) to **increase accommodation support to vulnerable households experiencing abuse, providing faster access to counselling sessions and specifically designed support services for children and young people**.
- The introduction of the **Homelessness Forum brought us together** with partner agencies such as Bromley Homeless, BCWA, and Housing Associations, **to enable open communication and a shared understanding of our residents needs and how best we can cater to them**.
- Partnership working with external housing providers resulted in the acquisition and refurbishment of **615 properties many of which were let to homeless applicants as longer-term affordable housing** relieving the instability of nightly paid temporary accommodation.
- Between 2023 – 2024 we improved the visibility of our marketing to private landlords in our borough and **secured more placements for residents, successfully procuring 142 more private rental properties**. All used for the provision of **providing stable, safe tenancies to homeless households**.
- Revised the Council's Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers, setting out our commitments as Corporate Parents to maintain accommodation for those leaving care. **Our joint work with the Leaving Care Team was commended in the Ofsted Inspection of Bromley local authority children's services in 2023**.

## The Statutory Framework

The Council's Housing and Homelessness Services are governed by a number of key pieces of legislation and Government Strategy and priorities. These are:

- **Housing Act VII (1996)** is the primary homelessness legislation and provides the statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- **The Homelessness Code of Guidance** provides guidance on how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from 3 April 2018.

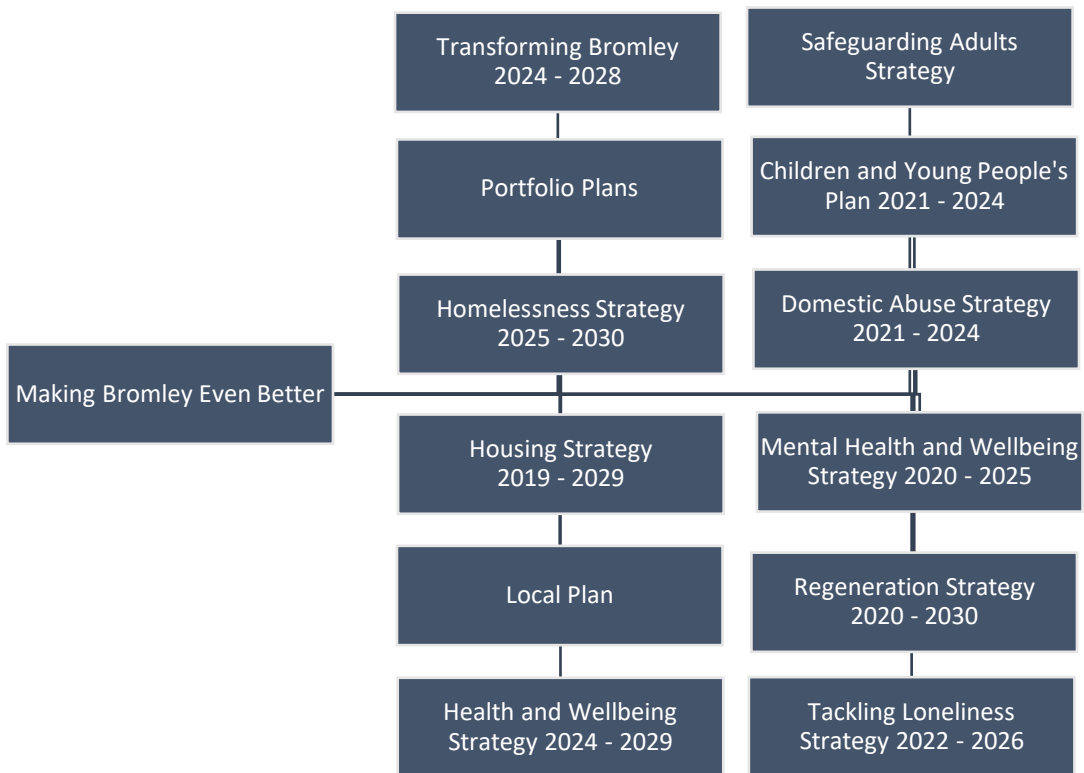
- **The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) and Persons Subject to Immigration Control (Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness) (Amendment) Regulations 2024** enables local authorities in England to provide housing and homelessness assistance to victims of transnational marriage abandonment and to those whose "no recourse to public funds" condition has been lifted. It also prevents individuals subject to a deportation order but who have not had their refugee status revoked from accessing such assistance.
- **The Localism Act (2011)** gave local authorities new powers to shape their approach to allocation of properties, manage waiting lists and give social landlords the choice to grant tenancies for a fixed term. This allows local authorities greater control over eligibility criteria to join the Housing Register, enable the discharge of the Section 193 main Housing Duty into the Private Rented Sector (PRS), and support greater geographical mobility across the social housing sector.
- **The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)** significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation, which included new responsibilities on local authorities to prevent homelessness earlier, broaden the availability of assistance for all affected individuals regardless of priority status, and extend support for those already homeless. It aims to address homelessness more effectively and ensure individuals and families receive the necessary help to secure and maintain suitable housing.
- **The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)** amended Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act to strengthen support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Act also introduced a new definition of domestic abuse, which Housing Authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless.
- **The Government Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018)** set out the Government's commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. The Strategy outlined a range of cross-Government initiatives that included, as an example, new ways of joint-working with Health Partners.
- **The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) (Amendment) Order 2024** reduces the requirement of suitability for applicants who make a homeless application within 2 years of arriving in the UK.

## Bromley's Strategic Vision

Whilst Local Government is governed by a comprehensive statutory framework, locally, a Golden Thread runs from the highest ambitions in our Corporate Strategy 'Making Bromley Even Better' through to every single and joint agency strategy.

*'Bromley, a fantastic place to live and work, where everyone can lead healthy, safe and independent lives' – Making Bromley Even Better 2021 – 2031*

In this way, our Homelessness Strategy, in combination with other Partner strategies, Portfolio Holder Plans and Service Level Plans, will ensure our vision to prevent and reduce homelessness and meet housing needs.



*Infographic: Bromley's Strategic Vision – Prevent Homelessness and Meet Housing Need*

# Context

## National

Housing and homelessness pressures remain the fastest growing risk to local authorities, as numbers requiring temporary accommodation continues to grow, the cost of provision of temporary accommodation is rising rapidly and social housing budgets are not increasing with demand.

In 2023-24, the top three reasons for homelessness across England were the end of private rented tenancies, the breakdown of relationships with family or friends leading to the loss of accommodation, and domestic abuse. These persistent drivers of homelessness reflect broader challenges in housing stability, where personal circumstances and housing market factors combine to leave many households vulnerable to losing their homes.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) October 2024 Report on 'Statutory Homelessness in England: Financial Year 2023/24' highlighted the extent of these pressures, which is summarised below:

## Key Facts

- £2.3 billion spent by local authorities to provide temporary accommodation alone in 2023/24.<sup>1</sup>
- Initial assessments were made for 358,370 households in England in 2023/24, up 10.4% from the previous year.
  - Of these, 324,990 households were assessed as owed a homelessness duty, due to being threatened with homelessness or already being homeless.<sup>2</sup>
- 178,560 households were assessed as homeless and therefore owed a relief duty in 2023/24. This is up 12.3% from 2022/23.
  - Of these, 22,160 households were those threatened with homelessness due to the end of an assured short hold tenancy.
- Increase in households owed a prevention duty (up 113.9%) or a relief duty (up 251.2%) on being required to leave accommodation provided by the Home Office as asylum support. This makes up 3% of prevention duties owed and 8% of relief duties owed. This increase relates to action to clear the backlog in asylum decisions, with households becoming eligible for homelessness assistance (if they are granted refugee status).
- Increase in households owed a prevention duty (up 92.0%) or a relief duty (up 79.2%) due to rent arrears from an increase in rent, although this comprises less than 1% of households owed each type of duty.
- The most common support need for households with children in 2023/24 was those with a history of mental health problems, recorded for 17,970 households.
  - Risk of/ experience of domestic abuse was also a common support need among households with children, recorded for 16,230 households.
- In 2023/24, the most common age group of lead applicants in households owed a prevention or relief duty was those aged between 25 and 34 years old, making up 95,380 households or 29.3% of the total.

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<sup>1</sup> [Homelessness bill doubles in five years to £2.3bn - Shelter England](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2023-24 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- The most common employment status for lead applicants of households owed a prevention or relief duty was registered unemployed, accounting for 113,510 or 34.9% of households in 2023/24, an increase (11.5%) since 2022/23.
  - The second largest category was households where the lead applicant is not working due to long term illness/disability, accounting for 45,460 or 14.0% of households. There was a similar number of households where the lead applicant was in full time work, accounting for 44,180 households or 13.6% of households owed a duty.
- Local authorities made 94,280 main homelessness duty decisions in 2023/24, up 25.1% from 2022/23. Of these, 68.9% (or 64,960 households) were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty in 2023/24.
- As at the end of March 2024, 117,450 households were in temporary accommodation, an increase of 12.3% from the same period last year.
  - Households with children in temporary accommodation increased by 14.7% to 74,530, while single households increased by 8.5% to 42,920.
- Specific groups such as ex-offenders face additional challenges related to housing instability. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 85.7% of offenders were housed on the night following their release from custody,<sup>3</sup> meaning nearly 1 in 7 people released from prison reported being homeless on their first night out of custody.
- Prison leavers without a stable home are approximately 50% more likely to reoffend,<sup>4</sup> underscoring the importance of secure housing as a critical factor in preventing repeat offending and promoting successful reintegration into society.
- Recent data from the Trussell Trust highlights a record rise in foodbank usage across the UK. Between April 2023 and March 2024, more than 3.1 million emergency food parcels were distributed—an all-time high.<sup>5</sup> This represents a nearly 94% increase compared to five years ago,<sup>6</sup> demonstrating the escalating need. Importantly, over 1.1 million of these parcels were for children<sup>7</sup>, underscoring the growing impact on vulnerable families.
- Over the past five years, UK credit unions have experienced steady membership growth, largely due to financial pressures and the need for more accessible lending options. By early 2023, adult membership exceeded 2 million for the first time, a significant increase from around 1.3 million in 2016. This growth reflects the expanding role of credit unions as a key resource for those facing financial vulnerability.<sup>8</sup>

In context locally, despite ongoing early intervention work, the number of homeless approaches rose with an increase of 326 new approaches in 2023/2024 compared to the preceding year, equating to a 10% rise for the financial year.

The supply of temporary accommodation is under increased pressure, which means the majority of new placements are being secured through the nightly paid market. However, there is increased pressure on nightly paid accommodation rates across London and the Southeast which have risen sharply during the past 12 months with roughly a 30% increase in average rates. In an emergency the Council has had to utilise emergency short term commercial hotel placements in order to meet its statutory duty as there is simply insufficient

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<sup>3</sup> [Offender Accommodation Outcomes - Statistical Summary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-accommodation-outcomes-statistical-summary)

<sup>4</sup> [Government sets out ambitious plan to tackle drivers of crime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-ambitious-plan-to-tackle-drivers-of-crime)

<sup>5</sup> [End of year stats - Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/news/end-of-year-stats)

<sup>6</sup> [End of year stats - Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/news/end-of-year-stats)

<sup>7</sup> [End of year stats - Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/news/end-of-year-stats)

<sup>8</sup> [Credit union annual statistics - 2023 - Bank of England](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/credit-unions/annual-statistics-2023)



accommodation becoming readily available. This resulted in a £4.8m overspend on temporary accommodation in 2023/24, with a £5.3m overspend on housing overall.

The Council continues work to increase the supply of affordable housing to mitigate and reduce the current pressures relating to temporary accommodation, which includes, but not limited to, the Council's housing delivery programme and increased ability to secure leased accommodation within temporary accommodation subsidy rates.

## Local

Bromley is the largest London borough by area, covering 59 square miles. It is a unique mix of urban and rural with distinct town centres and over half the borough designated as Metropolitan Green Belt land.

Bromley is a relatively affluent borough ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> least deprived across London. However, around a quarter of the population live in some of the most deprived areas of the country.



## Bromley and Its Residents

Bromley is the 8<sup>th</sup> most populous London borough. There are approximately 331,000 residents living in an estimated 141,000 households.

22% of our population is aged 18 and under - some 71,000 young people. We have the largest population of older people of all London boroughs - 18% of the current population is aged 65 and over (58,700 people) and 15% of our residents are retired, which is approximately double the London average of 7%. The proportion of working age residents (18 to 65 years) will remain fairly stable over the next twenty years, at approximately 60% of the total population (200,500 people).

20% of Bromley's population is made up of different minority ethnic groups. 29% of the borough's current children and young people population are from minority ethnic groups. Bromley has one of the highest populations of settled travellers in the UK.

Bromley's employment rate of 78% is the 7<sup>th</sup> highest of the 21 Outer London Boroughs. 165,000 of our residents are economically active with 80,000 commuting outside the borough for work and 109,200 employed within the borough. The average annual income for Bromley residents is £38,000, which is comparable with the national average, however this is 30% lower than the average for the South East.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [Income and wealth - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

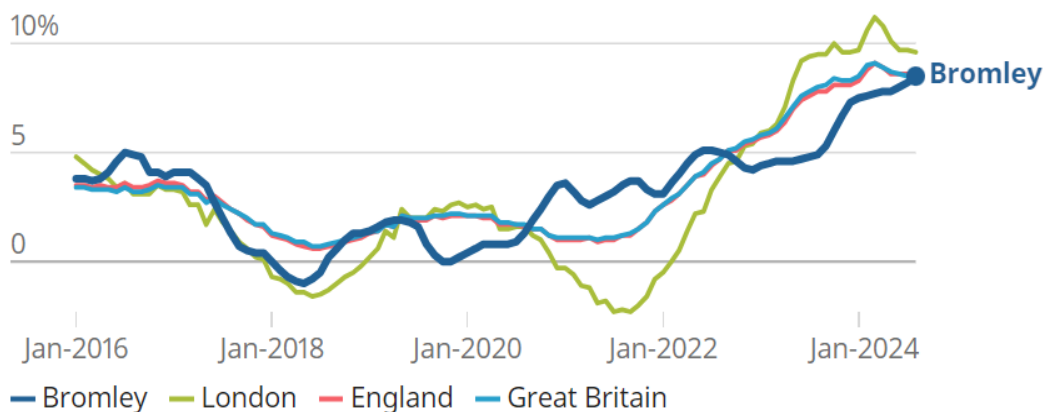
## Housing in Bromley

The average house price in Bromley was £504,000 in July 2024, which is an increase of 1.3% from the same period last year.<sup>10</sup>

In the year to July 2024, the average price for terraced properties in Bromley rose by 2.2%, while the average price for detached properties stayed around the same over the year. For each property type, average prices as of July 2024 in Bromley are as follows:

Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Flats and Maisonettes
£1,016,000	£625,000	£464,000	£315,000

Private rents rose to an average of £1,557 in August 2024, an annual increase of 8.5% from £1,435 in August 2023. This was reportedly lower than the rise in London (9.6%) over the year.



Source: Price Index of Private Rents from the Office for National Statistics

The average rent for flats or maisonettes rose by 8.6%, while for detached properties it increased by 7.8%.

The average rent for one bed properties rose by 9.0%, while the average for four-or-more bed properties increased by 6.8%. The table below compares the average rent in Bromley (as of August 2024) with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and confirms the challenges those on welfare benefits are experiencing when it comes to rent as the majority of Bromley comes under Outer South East London.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [Housing prices in Bromley \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/housing-prices-in-bromley)

<sup>11</sup> [Local Housing Allowance Rates for the Bromley Local Authority : DirectGov - LHA Rates \(voa.gov.uk\)](https://www.direct.gov.uk/en/LocalAuthorities/LocalHousingAllowanceRatesfortheBromleyLocalAuthority)

Room Size	Average Rent (£)	LHA (£)	
		Inner	Outer
One Bedroom	1,202	1,292	1,047
Two Bedrooms	1,515	1,546	1,296
Three Bedrooms	1,839	1,945	1,546
Four or More Bedrooms	2,748	2,193	1,795

# Summary of Homelessness in Bromley

## Homelessness Applications

Since 2018/19, the number of households approaching as homeless has increased by 19.9%. This compares with a 24.6% increase across London and 22.4% across England.

*Initial Homelessness Assessments by Household in Bromley, London and England (2018/19 - 2023/24)*

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Bromley</b>	1,711	1,611	1,210	1,083	1,687	2,052
<b>% change based on previous year</b>	-	-5.8%	-24.9%	-10.5%	55.8%	21.6%
<b>London</b>	57,790	57,450	55,350	54,560	62,800	72,020
<b>% change based on previous year</b>	-	-0.6%	-3.7%	-1.4%	15.1%	14.7%
<b>England</b>	292,690	305,680	284,330	291,620	324,650	358,370
<b>% change based on previous year</b>	-	4.4%	-7.0%	2.6%	11.3%	10.4%

Source: MHCLG, 2024

In Bromley, the percentage of those owed a homelessness Prevention or Relief Duty in 2023/24 was 93.8%, with over half (55.3%) owed a Relief Duty at the time of initial assessment.

This marks a significant rise from the start of the previous strategy in 2018/19, when only 22.4% of households were owed a relief duty. The 32.9% increase reflects the growing number of individuals and households in urgent need of accommodation, driven by factors such as family breakdown, domestic abuse, and other challenging circumstances.

Across London in 2023/24, 90.7% of those approaching local authorities were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, with 52% owed a relief duty at initial assessment. These figures closely align with the national data, where 90.7% were owed a prevention or relief duty, and 49.8% were owed a relief duty at the time of assessment.

Homelessness applications have been steadily increasing over the years. While rising rent costs have contributed to the pressures, the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) has also led to an increase in applications by enabling local authorities to intervene earlier in housing issues. Additionally, changes to welfare policies since 2011, particularly those related to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and the implementation of Universal Credit, have influenced the housing challenges faced by many households.

Working age households are increasingly finding the gap between LHA and rent prices growing at an exponential rate. In Bromley alone, this gap can vary from £280pcm for a one-bedroom property to £859pcm for those in three bed accommodation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [Home.co.uk: Bromley Market Rent Summary](https://www.home.co.uk/bromley-market-rent-summary)

## Reasons for Approach

The three primary reasons given for loss of settled home have remained consistent throughout the previous five years, with the main reasons being “Family no longer willing or able to accommodate”, “End of Private Rented Tenancy” and “Domestic Abuse”. Many households who have been asked to leave by a family member or are experiencing domestic abuse are normally owed a Relief duty at the time of approach.

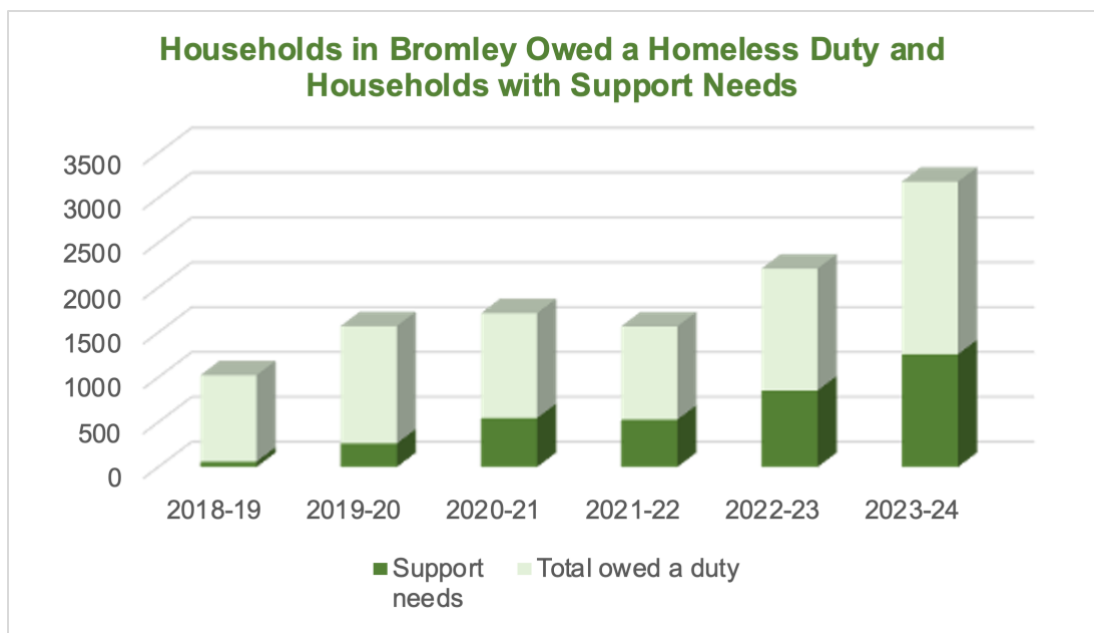
While “Family no longer willing or able to accommodate” remained the primary reason for approach from 2018/19 to 2022/23, the primary reason for approach in 2023/24 was “End of Private Rented Tenancy”.

The proportion of approaches due to domestic abuse has nearly doubled, rising from 6.6% in 2018/19 to 12% in 2023/24.

## Support Needs

Support needs refer to the additional assistance required to help a household secure and maintain accommodation. In 2023/24, 65.3% of households owed a homelessness duty also had one or more identified support needs.

Since the last strategy was published, there has been a significant increase in the number of households declaring support needs.



Source: MHCLG, 2024

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) report, ‘Statutory Homeless in England: Financial Year 2023/24,’ found that across England, 41.9% of households with children and 60.6% of single households owed a prevention or relief duty in 2023/24 also had at least one support need, an increase from previous years. For both single households and families with children, the most common support need was a history of mental health problems.

These trends are reflected in Bromley during 2023/24, where 58% of households reported having one support need, just over a quarter (27%) had two support needs, and 14% had three support needs.

In 2023/24, the three most commonly reported support needs among households were: 'history of mental health problems' (49%), 'physical ill health and disability' (35%), and 'being at risk of or having experienced domestic abuse' (20%).

## Successful Homelessness Preventions

In 2023/24, 28.5% of households' homelessness was successfully prevented in Bromley as they were able to secure accommodation for 6+ months. Despite preventing homelessness for 62 more households than the previous year, the percentage rate fell by 16.6% from 45.1% in 2022/23. This decline is largely due to a significant increase in the total number of prevention duty cases (up from 435 to 905), which placed additional pressure on available housing resources and made it more difficult to secure long-term accommodation for all households.

The challenge for local authorities to have a real impact on the market persist, and the Council will depend on Central Governments anticipated reforms and new legislative changes to address some of these pressures.

Nonetheless, to both support those most vulnerable in our communities and ensure the sustainability of our budget, it remains important to work with landlords to develop a responsive Service offer, provide effective resettlement and tenancy sustainment services to homeless households placed in PRS accommodation, and continue with our early intervention and preventative work to increase resilience and prevent homelessness.

## Temporary Accommodation Numbers

As of the end of March 2024, there were 1,646 households in temporary accommodation. The number of households in nightly paid accommodation has risen each year, representing a 44.5% increase since 2018.

*Trends in Temporary and Nightly Paid Accommodation (2018/19 - 2023/24)*

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Temporary Accommodation Total</b>	1661	1606	1847	1653	1539	1646
<b>Nightly Paid</b>	938	915	1178	1144	1064	1356
<b>% Nightly Paid</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>82%</b>

Source: MHCLG, 2024

Despite the Council's ongoing focus on homelessness prevention and its housing delivery programme, the continued withdrawal of housing providers from temporary accommodation and the private rented market, along with increased pressure on local accommodation from other external sources, have contributed to a growing reliance on nightly paid placements for most new cases.

Nightly paid accommodation rates across London and the Southeast have faced increased pressure, rising sharply over the past twelve months. Since Quarter One of 2023/24, the average net cost of these placements has increased by £4,000 per year, from £8,268 to £12,272 per placement. In comparison, the average cost in Quarter One of 2022/23 was £6,323 per annum, representing an almost 100% increase over the past two years.

This has added to the pressures on the Housing Portfolio Budget in recent years, including a £4.8 million overspend on temporary accommodation in 2023/24.

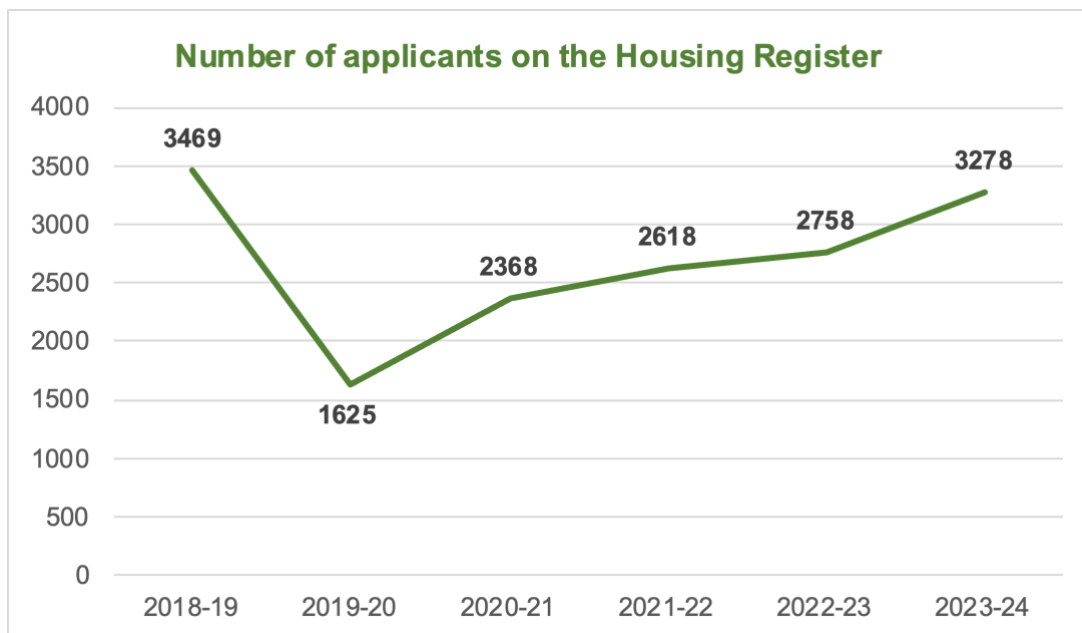
Work is ongoing to increase the supply of affordable housing to continue to mitigate and reduce the current pressures relating to temporary accommodation, particularly in relation to the increased ability to secure leased accommodation within temporary accommodation subsidy rates.

Our Transformation efforts, which include enhanced support to delay, prevent, or relieve homelessness, along with maximising the use of available accommodation and increasing the supply of alternative temporary and long-term housing solutions, have had a positive impact. We have seen a slight reduction in the average cost of placements and a 6% decrease in new homelessness approaches this year (2024/25) compared to 2023/24.

## The Housing Waiting List

The 2022 Built Environment Lords Select Committee report, 'Meeting Housing Demand,' highlighted a 'serious shortage of social housing, as evidenced by long waiting lists for social homes and the large number of families placed in temporary accommodation.'

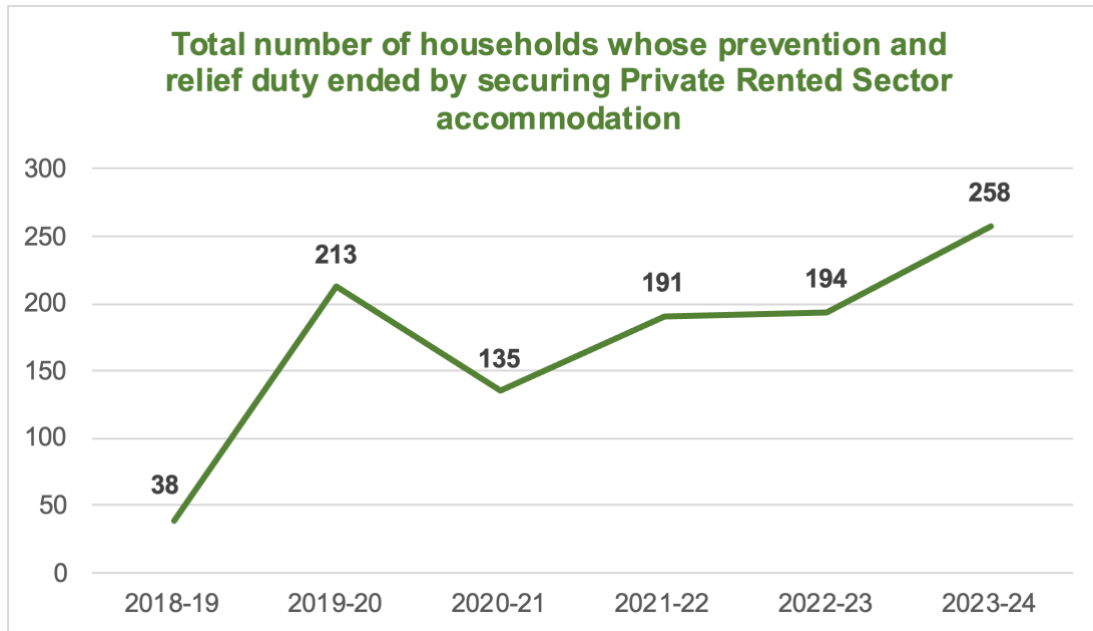
In Bromley, the number of households on the Housing Register has increased each year since a re-registration of applications at the end of 2019, however the total number of households currently included on the Housing Register, is still slightly lower than five years ago.



Source: *Housing Digest*, 2024.

Over the past year (2023/24), the number of approaches to the Housing Register has remained steady. However, there has been a significant increase in households awarded a Band 2, largely due to the rising number of Main Duty Homeless decisions.

Despite challenges in the Private Rented Sector (PRS), the Housing Department has successfully secured more moves compared to 2022/23, thanks to an enhanced incentive package and improved advertising efforts by the Council.



Source: MHCLG, 2024.

The Council's Housing Development Programme has also contributed to an increase in the number of moves, with a noticeable uplift in 2022/23. However, this uplift was not achieved again in 2023/24 due to factors beyond the Council's control which have delayed delivery of some of the schemes. It is expected that these gains will be realised in 2024/25.

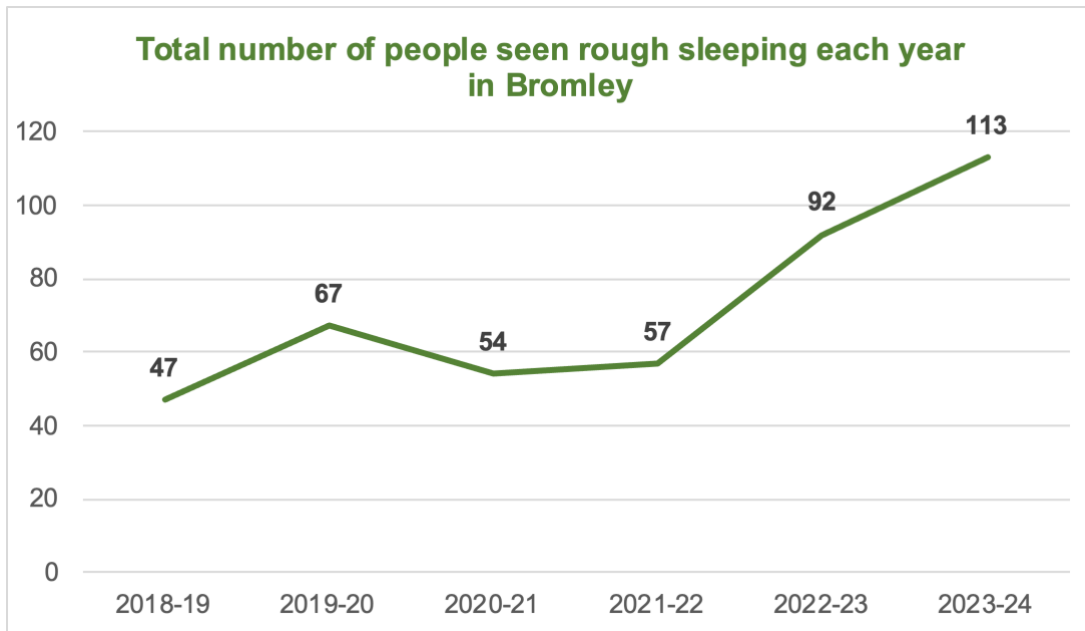
## Rough Sleepers

Figures from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) show a year-on-year increase in the number of instances of rough sleeping across London, reaching 11,993 in 2023/24. This represents a 19% increase from 2022/23 and a 58% rise compared to ten years ago.

This data presents an even more concerning picture, as at least a fifth of those sleeping rough were doing so for the first time, having previously been renting privately before ending up on the street.

This trend is also evident locally, with rough sleeping numbers in Bromley increasing by 66 instances since 2018.





Source: CHAIN, 2024.

The Council received £214,000 in Rough Sleeping Initiative grant funding in the last financial year (2023/24) to support individuals sleeping rough or at risk of doing so. Combined with the efforts of our Housing Options and Support Service and key partner agencies, this funding has helped move rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation as quickly as possible.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has announced an upcoming evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping, which aims to assess the effectiveness of interventions and identify the most impactful stages of prevention work. This evaluation, expected to be published in spring 2027, will be a valuable resource moving forward. The Council looks forward to contributing to the evaluation and applying its findings where appropriate.

# The New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030

## Our Mission Statement

*“To work with our community to ensure everyone has access to a home.”*

Our strategy is shaped by Bromley's **'REAL'** values, ensuring that every action taken **R**espects the individual's dignity, **E**mpowers them towards self-sufficiency, embodies the **A**mbition to reduce homelessness, and embraces **L**earning to adapt and enhance our approach.

## Key Objectives

Over the next five years, we will:

- Ensure prompt provision of housing advice, support, and options, to increase early identification and prevention of homelessness.
- Provide good quality accommodation that is accessible, affordable, and meets the needs of our customers.
- Reduce the number of people rough sleeping in the Borough and end repeat homelessness.
- Collaborate with all partners to effectively engage and support all vulnerable groups who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation.

## The Key Priorities

1. Early Intervention and Prevention of Homelessness.
2. The Right Support at the Right Time for Adults, Young People and Children.
3. Providing Suitable and Affordable Housing for Eligible Households.
4. Reducing Rough Sleeping and Ending Repeat Homelessness.
5. Reducing the Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation.

The full detail of how we will achieve this are set out over the following pages.

# Key Priority One – Early Intervention and Prevention of Homelessness

Preventing homelessness is the best outcome for anyone who is at risk of becoming homeless, avoiding the upheaval and distress that homelessness can cause. Homeless prevention is any action taken to remove the threat of a household's homelessness. This can include taking measures to allow a household to remain in their home or working with them to secure a new home, giving them greater control over the timing, location and type of accommodation they move to. Prevention of homelessness incurs fewer costs for the Council compared with relieving homelessness; which reduces the pressure on homelessness budgets.

The work we will do to prevent a household's homelessness may include:

- providing advice to enable households to remain in their private rented or social tenancy
- information to secure a new, affordable tenancy
- mediation to reconcile relationship breakdowns and prevent friend and family eviction
- negotiation with landlords

The Homelessness Prevention duty, under s195 Housing Act 1996, can only commence within 56 days of an eviction date. The earlier a client approaches the Housing department for advice within this 56 days, the sooner preventative action can be taken. We will work with professionals who come into contact with those who may be threatened with homelessness, to provide education and information to allow them to provide accurate and realistic advice to clients at the very earliest opportunity.

We will continue to work with professionals to make discharge arrangements for those leaving prison, hospital or other institutions under the Duty to Refer.

## What we have achieved so far:

- Full implementation and continuous improvement of Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) legislation and processes, with targeted work throughout our Services to both prevent and relieve homelessness.
- As part of the Housing Restructure in 2020, the Money Advice Team was moved to sit alongside the Housing Support and Resettlement Service in order to provide a joined-up approach and more timely advice. The Team has significantly enhanced customer outcomes by optimising income opportunities.
- Improved communication and integration within the Housing Options and Support Service, resulting in better outcomes in addressing homelessness.
- Housing Officers now carry cases from initial assessment until conclusion, which provides consistency to the customer journey.
- Our early intervention and prevention offer contributed to a 37% success rate of prevention duties in 2022/23.
- Provided advice and guidance materials to help locals find a home in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). This has contributed to increased PRS take up in discharge of the Council's statutory Housing Duty.

## **Our objectives and goals**

Ensure provision of housing advice, support, and options, to increase early identification and prevention of homelessness. We will achieve this by:

- Targeting the prevention of re-occurring homelessness by providing information and support for clients to maintain their tenancy.
- Working with partners and other professionals to ensure they provide accurate advice and information to clients they work with who are at risk of becoming homeless, helping to manage client expectations.
- Providing effective, accessible and timely advice and support by improving our channels of communication and information on our website.
- Raising awareness of homelessness and rough sleeping support services to maximise the support available to clients.
- Maximising the use of support services to prevent homelessness by referring vulnerable clients and those with complex needs at the earliest opportunity.
- Continuing to contribute and work with specialist mental health services to better support our clients.
- Increasing the number of prevention tools and schemes available to all staff in housing.

## **Key Measures of Success**

- Reduction in the number of households accepted as homeless.
- Reduction of new temporary accommodation placements.
- Increase and maintain levels of duty to refer.
- Increase in the number of people that approach at prevention stage.
- Positive feedback from customer engagement.
- Increase in the number of positive prevention and relief outcomes.
- Increase in early intervention work.

# Key Priority Two – The Right Support at the Right Time for Adults, Young People and Children

In Bromley borough, there is a wide range of services that residents can turn to if they need advice, support or assistance. By working closely with our partners, communities, elected members, voluntary organisations, housing providers and statutory bodies we can ensure that we are providing the most appropriate support to our clients by accessing a range of options and expertise. Our continued partnerships will be crucial to ensure we are reaching the people who are facing homelessness in Bromley, achieving positive outcomes for those in need.

With homelessness comes a great deal of uncertainty for any household, however the impact is more acutely felt by those who already have additional support needs. The risk of homelessness has the potential to aggravate existing physical and mental health conditions, and so it is important for the Local Authority to consider how we can best support these clients.

We will continue to work with households once they have moved into temporary accommodation, supporting them to maintain their placement and to secure more settled accommodation in their preferred location. We will complete more visits to households in temporary accommodation, supporting clients to integrate and engage with their local community and support services until they are able to successfully move on.

## What we have achieved so far:

- Updated the Council's Joint Housing Protocols on Care Leavers to set out our commitments, as Corporate Parents, to commission and maintain accommodation for Care Leavers.
- The Supported Accommodation and Tenancy Sustainment Service for young people, delivered by DePaul, provides safe and secure placements to support young people on their journey to adulthood and independence.
- Joint Placement Panels involving Social Workers and Housing Officers to look at the accommodation needs of young people leaving care, has eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast placements for Care Leavers.
- Since 2023, a Housing Senior Practitioner has worked directly out of the Children and Families Hub to provide the most effective frontline Service to young people presenting in a crisis.
- Cator Medical Centre, in collaboration with Bromley United Reformed Church, has provided access to Primary Care Services for the homeless since September 2019. The '5000 Project' provides outreach to vulnerable groups and has since extended its function to work with those who have learning difficulties, mental health issues, substance misuse problems, or those who are socially isolated, providing a weekly lunch every Monday.

- Bromley GP Alliance has been supporting Bromley Homeless Shelter since 2019, and in April 2023 the Bromley Homeless Service commenced, which strives to form alliances to support the most vulnerable and ensure equal access to Primary Care Services.
- A dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Officers has supported work related to housing and those impacted by domestic abuse, which has included support to Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid to access grant funding for self-contained street properties supporting the Transitions Programme for victims fleeing domestic abuse.
- Allocated funding for the Accommodation for the Ex-Offenders Programme (AFEO) Initiative. The funding enables Local Authorities to support prison-leavers at risk of rough sleeping into the private rented sector.

## **Our objectives and goals**

Collaborate with all Partners to effectively engage and support all vulnerable groups who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We will achieve this by:

- Utilising the reach and expertise of all organisations in the community to identify, support and refer households at risk of homelessness.
- Engaging with people with lived experience of homelessness to better understand how and when support can be offered.
- Ensuring effective joint working for partners working with vulnerable groups through specialised pathways.
- Continue to ensure we deliver best practice when supporting survivors of domestic abuse, by maintaining DAHA membership
- Utilising the Sanctuary Scheme to support those at risk of domestic abuse to safely remain in their home.
- Attending multi-agency panels to support clients with specific vulnerabilities such as ex-offenders, mental health and complex needs.
- Visiting households in temporary accommodation, supporting them to access local services and to move on to settled accommodation.

## **Key Measures of Success**

- Maintain our presence on bodies related to safeguarding of young people.
- Maintain the levels of outreach and co-location services.
- Maintain level of referrals to internal support teams.
- Low levels of customer complaints regarding difficulties using digital platforms.
- DAHA membership maintained.
- Increase in the number of referrals to the Sanctuary Scheme.
- Increase in the number of moves out of temporary accommodation.

# Key Priority Three – Providing Suitable and Affordable Housing for Eligible Households

Securing affordable and suitable accommodation can be difficult, especially for households with a low income or additional vulnerabilities. As the number of social housing tenancies have reduced in Bromley in recent years, it has become even more important to source alternative tenancies for our clients.

We have embarked on the development of Council owned stock and a number of property purchasing schemes with partners. We will continue to acquire and deliver affordable, good quality accommodation to support move on from temporary accommodation.

We will continue to work collaboratively with landlords to review and improve our incentive schemes, ensuring that they remain competitive, and seek to drive up standards in the private sector.

By implementing a new Housing Allocation Scheme, we will ensure that the social tenancies that do become available are allocated to those most in need.

## What we have achieved so far:

- Launched the Council's ten-year Housing Strategy (2019 – 2029), which sets out our approach to meet housing needs across the borough.
- Successfully allocated £37,959,000 grant funding as part of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Affordable Homes Programme 2021 – 2026, which has been used to develop affordable homes in the borough.
- The Council's More Homes Bromley joint venture with Mears between the years 2016 – 2020, accounted for the acquisition and refurbishment of 360 properties, with the majority used to discharge the Council's homelessness duties and let as longer-term affordable housing.
- The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was given permission to open in the summer of 2020, which has opened the door to grant funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) to support the Council's housing supply.
- In February 2021 the Council entered into a limited liability partnership (LLP) arrangement with Orchard and Shipman (now Pinnacle) for the acquisition, refurbishment, and management of 255 residential properties for use as affordable rented accommodation to assist in meeting the Council's statutory rehousing duties and reduce the current reliance on and associated costs of nightly paid accommodation. A secondary phase for the further purchase of approximately 186 additional units of accommodation commenced in April last year (2023).
- The Council has an active purchasing scheme with Beehive that includes the funding, purchasing and, where necessary, the refurbishment of housing association accommodation earmarked for private sale for use as affordable rented accommodation.

- Prioritised the use of Bromley-owned and acquired sites to establish a development programme for new affordable housing supply. This has included identifying sufficient sites through the Operational Property Review in November 2022, to facilitate a development programme, and establishing a delivery, ownership, and management vehicle to enable its delivery. To date 60 homes have been delivered and tenanted in Bromley with further projects already underway.

## **Our objectives and goals**

Provide good quality accommodation that is accessible, affordable, and meets the needs of our customers. We will achieve this by:

- Continue to acquire and deliver new build council homes.
- Effectively managing and delivering property purchasing schemes.
- Ensuring that access to accommodation doesn't delay hospital discharge.
- Implementing a new Allocation scheme.
- Conducting a review of accommodation options for vulnerable groups.
- Working with private landlords to procure properties in the private rented sector.
- Ensuring value for money, spot purchasing of nightly paid temporary accommodation and undertaking block bookings to reduce costs.
- Exploring innovative solutions for particular client groups including single person households under the age of 35 and those with complex needs.

## **Key Measures of Success**

- Maintain a high percentage of reviews upheld when applicants request a review based on suitability grounds.
- Increase the council's new build housing stock.
- Maintain low levels of complaints specifically related to the condition of accommodation.
- Increase level of private rented sector procurement.
- Implement action plan arising from the internal audit of temporary accommodation.
- Increase the number of moves per year into fully wheelchair-accessible properties.



# Priority Four – Reducing Rough Sleeping and Ending Repeat Homelessness

21

Rough sleeping is a dangerous and isolating experience. People sleeping rough are more likely to be victims of crime and almost 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence.

Prolonged periods of rough sleeping have a significant impact on someone's mental and physical health. The longer someone experiences rough sleeping for, the more likely it is they will develop additional mental and physical health needs, substance misuse issues and have contact with the criminal justice system (collectively known as complex needs). The more complex needs someone has, the more help they will need to move on from homelessness and rebuild their lives.

The number of people observed rough sleeping in Bromley borough has more than doubled from 2018 to 2024, with 113 instances of rough sleeping reported in 2023/24. During 2023/24, 91 people were rough sleeping for the first time.

In 2022, the government published its new Rough Sleeping Strategy, setting out for the first time a clear definition of what the government means by ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

We will work closely with StreetLink, London Street Rescue, health and social care professionals, the police and public protection to identify rough sleepers and support them to secure and maintain accommodation.

## What we have achieved so far:

- Successfully bid for and secured Government grants that have been used to set up the Single Homelessness Team, allowing for the creation of the Single Homelessness Pathway that provides a focus on rough sleepers, hospital discharges and ex-offenders.
- Referrals have been processed in a time sensitive manner that has ensured that vulnerable customers receive the support they require and/ or have been signposted to other agencies, which has promoted partnership working and advocacy when required.
- The Support and Resettlement Team and the Single Homeless Team have supported customers by providing practical support to ensure that clients are able to set up and sustain their tenancy.
- A strong partnership has developed with StreetLink, which is supporting those at risk of homelessness.
- The Council have been allocated funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

## **Our objectives and goals**

Reduce the number of people rough sleeping in the Borough and end repeat homelessness. We will achieve this by:

- Working closely with StreetLink and London Street Rescue to identify and support rough sleepers away from the street.
- Working with partners in the NHS, police, local housing associations, safeguarding and public protection to provide appropriate advice and support to those at risk of rough sleeping.
- Working effectively with social care colleagues and mental health services to ensure the needs of complex cases are met.
- Working in partnership with local support services to increase the amount of support available to vulnerable clients to sustain their tenancy.

## **Key Measures of Success**

- Reduction in the number of people rough sleeping in the borough.
- Reduction in the number of households re-approaching as homeless.
- Reduction in instances of homelessness among individuals with complex needs.

# Priority Five – Reducing the Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation

When it has not been possible to prevent a household's homelessness, it is sometimes necessary to place households in temporary accommodation. Often these placements are a considerable distance from the borough due to affordability and availability. With the increased demand on social and private sector tenancies, households often remain in temporary accommodation for many years.

Temporary accommodation is usually privately rented, and many landlords charge on a nightly basis, which is very expensive. The amount people can claim in benefits towards their housing costs is capped at well below the actual cost of temporary accommodation. The cost to the Council of temporary accommodation over and above the amount claimed in benefit in 2023/2024 was over £15m.

We will maximise referrals to our in-house Money Advice and Support & Resettlement Teams to support clients to reduce their rent arrears in temporary accommodation, ensuring that they are in a good financial position to move on to more secure accommodation.

We will also increase the contact we have with households once they have moved into temporary accommodation, allowing us to tailor our support and advice to changing circumstances and improving their ability to secure alternative accommodation.

## What we have achieved so far:

- Identified best practice for utilising Extra Care Housing, which helped free up the general needs stock of housing.
- In February 2021 the Council entered into a limited liability partnership (LLP) arrangement with Orchard and Shipman (now Pinnacle) for the acquisition, refurbishment, and management of 255 residential properties for use as affordable rented accommodation to assist in meeting the Council's statutory rehousing duties and reduce the current reliance on and associated costs of nightly paid accommodation. A secondary phase for the further purchase of approximately 186 additional units of accommodation commenced in April last year (2023).
- Marketing campaign of PRS for those in TA - Printable PDF "How to find a home in the Private Rented Sector" has been designed, finished document will be distributed via Housing Options Team to encourage PRS take up.

## Our objectives and goals

Reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation. We will achieve this by:

- Minimising evictions from temporary accommodation resulting from rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.

- Maximising support for households in temporary accommodation, empowering them to manage their tenancy and rent payments.
- Ensuring value for money spot purchasing of nightly paid temporary accommodation and undertaking block bookings to reduce costs.
- Increasing contact with households in temporary accommodation.

## **Key Measures of Success**

- Reduction of new temporary accommodation placements.
- Reduction in the proportion of households in temporary accommodation that occupy nightly paid accommodation.
- Implement actions to reduce rent arrears in line with the temporary accommodation rent arrears action plan.
- Maintain level of positive outcomes for clients referred to internal support services.
- Implement the recommendations of the transformation action plan.