

Appendix 3

Two sessions were held with the Homelessness Forum to gain feedback on each proposed strategy commitment and the group submitted an official response. The below is a summarised version of the response.

Commitment	Feedback
<p>Commitment 1: We seek to fully understand the challenge of homelessness in Brent and how individuals experience it so we can develop informed, targeted solutions, and continually improve the quality of the services we deliver.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed a culture of respect and empathy to reduce stigma and work with front-line officers to drive forward a person-centred approach to our services, improving the experience of those who need to access them. • Build on analysis carried out as part of the homelessness review to fully understand the lived experience of individuals and design effective interventions for preventing and tackling homelessness. • Review our approach to data collection and ensure data quality is maintained so we can monitor any changing trends and more effectively target resources. • Develop mechanisms for gaining insight through surveys and complaints made to the service and ensure this is used to shape and drive improvements. 	<p>The forum would like to see the development of clear service standards for the homelessness service and it is suggested that the council bring these back to the Homelessness Forum and use them as the basis of satisfaction surveys and KPI's to ensure they are met.</p> <p>Would like to see more detail around how this input from service-users will be gathered and how governance arrangements will ensure that the insight is built into service improvements.</p> <p>The forum strongly agrees that more and better quality data is needed in order to deliver improvements to services. Specifically would like to see better use of H-Clic data, benchmarking and peer-to-peer research (Homelessness Impact is a particularly good resource).</p> <p>Crucial to offer alternative options for giving feedback (not just online), ensuring a variety of feedback routes.</p>

<p>Commitment 2: Our services are prevention focused and we ensure the right advice and support is available to those who need it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get upstream of homelessness, enabling earlier and more effective prevention work, including utilising predictive analytics so we can identify risk factors for homelessness. • Ensure online advice and signposting information is accurate and up to date by developing a regular programme for reviewing web pages. • Identify opportunities to support homeless households to access employment so we can better address the issue of affordability. • Consult with central policy teams to consider the impact of Brexit and ensure officers are providing the right advice to those who may be affected. 	<p>The Forum is pleased to see the inclusion of prevention as a key commitment.</p> <p>Ensure that predictive analytics will yield data on the type of need and not just the number of people likely to be affected. Would like to see the inclusion of pre-crisis intervention e.g. joint working arrangements with environmental health services, children’s early help services, court duty advice service etc.</p> <p>Ensure vulnerable people are not funnelled to online advice and services as it can be hard for this group to gain internet access. There should be training and awareness-raising for all council staff on where people can find support. Increased comms around tenant rights is also needed.</p> <p>Standard use of an affordability calculator by homelessness officers so that any property that someone is pointed to will be affordable for them.</p> <p>Strongly hope Brexit planning is happening already. Acknowledging challenges in communicating changes to rights / entitlements, there should be a clear plan for how information is shared with officers and communicated to service-users.</p>
<p>Commitment 3: We work to increase the supply of and access to stable and affordable homes across the borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver our own new build programme, providing new affordable homes across the borough. • Create the conditions that encourage Registered Providers to develop more homes in the borough. 	<p>Would like to see detailed plans on how these home will be delivered, how they will be funded and how they will be quantified by need. Also keen to understand how this commitment will be measured and monitored. Consider inclusion of an annual lettings plan to match anticipated supply of council and HA properties against demand from different groups.</p> <p>Clarity is needed on how Brent defines ‘affordable’ and what standards are acceptable in terms of accommodation. Also need to ensure single homeless people are supported to access a suitable affordable home.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the supply of stable, affordable PRS accommodation through schemes such as Capital Letters & I4B. • Drive up conditions in the private rented sector across Brent through licensing and enforcement processes and work together with local landlords through our Landlord forum to improve standards and access to stable homes. 	<p>A plan is needed for how the social housing sector will be involved in increasing supply, and how does the allocation policy facilitate in move-on from any supported accommodation?</p> <p>Does the allocations policy criteria need to be reviewed? If not, what can be put in place in terms of support for those who no longer meet the threshold?</p> <p>Would also like to see a plan for tackling high rent levels in the PRS, providing deposit support and improving tenure security.</p>
<p>Commitment 4: We minimise the use of temporary accommodation, but where this is unavoidable, work to improve the quality of accommodation offered and keep the stay as stable and as short as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply of council-developed temporary accommodation so we can avoid placing households in Bed and Breakfast or other forms of nightly paid accommodation and to eradicate the need for multi moves households endure in temporary accommodation. • Work with our providers and partners to improve the quality of temporary accommodation offered. • Develop opportunities for temporary accommodation residents to give regular feedback and use this to inform improvements. 	<p>The Forum strongly agrees with the commitment to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and is keen to see more details about how this will be achieved (improved procurement plans?) as well as the TA offer to be developed to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate support for people in temporary accommodation and clarity on what this support will look like. • A clear plan for emergency accommodation e.g. in the event of extreme weather conditions. • A rapid rehousing approach i.e. offering households mainstream housing and relevant support. • Ensuring TA is appropriate for people with specific, complex needs so that, for example, individuals with drug or alcohol problems are not housed together in the same accommodation – link also to commitment 5 and the need for personalised services.
<p>Commitment 5: We seek to personalise our services to individuals' needs, and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure those needs are met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional staff training so officers feel equipped to provide tailored advice (e.g. family mediation, supporting 	<p>The Forum strongly agrees with this commitment, having witnessed clients struggling to access support to end their homelessness that is tailored to their individual barriers and circumstances.</p>

<p>LGBTQ individuals, sex workers, BAME households, Eastern European Rough Sleepers).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on successful initiatives such as Brent Shelter of Sanctuary, working in partnership to find innovative ways to create focal points for holistic advice and support, improving health, wellbeing and access to employment. • Consider how we can better share information across our partner organisations and our community hubs so we can deliver a more joined-up approach to providing support, ensure smooth handover of cases, and drive forward a single referral process. • Work in partnership with our Homelessness Forum to develop a better understanding of those with complex needs and pilot an approach to supporting them more holistically. 	<p>The Forum would like to see inclusion of plans to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to mental health assessment and rapid access to treatment for homeless people with complex needs • A pro-active approach to supporting those who dual-diagnosis with services designed to address both needs simultaneously • Ensure Care Act assessments are available to homeless people in a timely manner and that they can expect a tailored package of support • Ensure homeless people are seen by local health and care services within a reasonable timescale and these services are designed to be trauma-informed. <p>More joined up working would also be beneficial so homeless people do not have to make multiple applications throughout the housing pathway. The commissioned emergency accommodation and prevention / outreach services should be able to access the Councils internal referral system for supported accommodation and the single homeless pathway, as if often the case in other boroughs.</p> <p>Given the high level of migrant homelessness in the borough, tackling language barriers should also be a key part of personalising services.</p>
<p>General feedback</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current commitments are missing an explicit cross-departmental corporate commitment to tackling homelessness. Which other departments could help deliver the strategy and can they make a public commitment around this? • An overarching vision should be included and an action plan developed around delivery of the commitments, including clear arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review. Consider a formal role for the Forum in the governance of the strategy’s delivery as well as a service-user forum to feed in to strategy delivery. 	

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- Brent should consider how relevant cabinet and ward members can be directly engaged by sector partners on delivery of housing and homelessness strategies. Possibly via scheduled sessions with the Homelessness Forum, site visits, sharing feedback from peer research etc.
- The Forum would like to hear more about I4B.
- Would like to see more detail around plans to end rough sleeping, including the expansion of the current Housing First model.
- Make better use of the Duty to Refer in order to build stronger partnerships rather than a simple referral process, including working with Jobcentre staff to recognise homelessness and those at risk.
- Given that the review identified a lack of support services for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), the Forum would welcome plans for how Brent will work with migrants who are not eligible for statutory services.
- Would like to see improved access to social prescribing, recognising that it can reduce the isolation often experienced by homeless people, improving health and wellbeing outcomes.