

	Cabinet 8 December 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director, Residents & Housing Services
	Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Fleur Donnelly- Jackson)
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Four Appendix 1: Final Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Appendix 2: Homelessness Review Appendix 3: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 (Phase 2 Engagement) Outcome Report Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. Brent adopted its first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2020. That Strategy expires at the end of 2025 (calendar year). The Council now needs to refresh the current Strategy and have a new one in place by the beginning of the 2026 calendar year.

- 1.2. In September 2025, a draft of the refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 was put out for public consultation.
- 1.3. This report sets out the feedback that was received during the consultation period, changes that have been made to the draft Strategy as a result and seeks Cabinet's approval of the final Strategy.
- 1.4. The final Strategy includes five key commitments:
 - **Understanding homelessness:** We seek to fully understand the homelessness emergency in Brent and how it is experienced by different individuals and groups so we can develop informed, person-centred, targeted solutions, and continually improve the quality of the services we deliver.
 - **Preventing homelessness:** We are focused on preventing people from becoming homeless. We offer people the right advice and support they need to ensure housing stability.
 - **Affordable supply of housing:** We work to increase the supply of and access to stable, affordable and quality homes across the borough.
 - **Good quality, affordable temporary accommodation for short spells:** We minimise the use of temporary accommodation, but where a resident needs it, work to improve the quality of accommodation offered, reduce the cost, and keep the stay as stable and as short as possible.
 - **Partnership working:** We work together with partners and communities across the borough to ensure we're doing all we can collectively to address the homelessness emergency.
- 1.5. Once Cabinet has approved the text of this final Strategy, work will be done to produce a public-facing, designed up version of the Strategy. The new Strategy will be shared publicly at the beginning of 2026, to meet the Council's statutory deadline.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet discusses and agrees to adopt the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2030.

3.0 Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1 Homelessness is one of the most significant challenges affecting local authorities in the UK, including Brent. Every week, over 170 households approach the Council as homeless. There are currently 2,400 households and 3,500 children in temporary accommodation. 20 new households enter temporary accommodation each week.

- 3.2 Homelessness is creating significant financial pressures for the Council, but the homelessness emergency is about more than just financial costs. The impacts of homelessness on those who experience it are significant, including impacts on physical and mental wellbeing, ability to access and retain employment and education opportunities, and access to other life opportunities.
- 3.3 Having a clear strategy for how the Council can work with its partners to prevent people from becoming homeless, and reduce the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation where that is needed, is critical to meeting the aspirations set out in the Borough Plan and ensuring that the Council is doing all that it can to support people to live their best lives.
- 3.4 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy closely aligns with four of the five overarching themes set out in the Borough Plan, reflecting how fundamental suitable housing is to every individual's ability to thrive:
- *Prosperity and stability in Brent*
 - *Thriving communities*
 - *A healthier Brent*
 - *The Best Start in Life*
- 3.5 The Borough Plan also sets out several housing specific aims, which are also reflected in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy:
- *More council homes and temporary accommodation provided by the Council.*
 - *More genuinely affordable and accessible homes available for families and residents.*
 - *Achieving the 'functional built to zero' definition, which means there are fewer people moving into rough sleeping than there are being supported out of it.*
 - *More people supported to live in their own home.*
- 3.6 Work to refresh the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been conducted alongside development and delivery of the Council's Preventing Homelessness programme and the overall Embrace Change work.

Preventing Homelessness programme

- 3.7 Officers are now delivering the work plan for the Preventing Homelessness programme, which is part of the Council's wider Embrace Change Portfolio. The programme has three pillars, which are: 1) improving the Housing Needs and Support Directorate, 2) preventing homelessness, 3) reducing the cost and use of temporary accommodation. Within all three pillars of work there is a focus on improving the quality of the services the Council is providing to residents.
- 3.8 In the short- to medium-term, the work that forms part of the Preventing Homelessness programme is intended to act as the means of delivering the Strategy.

- 3.9 Officers conducted the Homelessness Review (which has informed the development of the Strategy) alongside discovery work (including engagement with partners and people with lived experience of homelessness) that informed the Preventing Homelessness programme. This ensures that both the Strategy and delivery programme are underpinned by a shared evidence base. A copy of the Homelessness Review is attached as Appendix 2.

Embrace Change Portfolio

- 3.10 The Council's Embrace Change Portfolio is focused on changing how the Council delivers services to residents, to help everyone here live their best lives. It is underpinned by commitments to always do things with residents in mind, develop a deep understanding of local communities and work together across different organisations for the people in Brent.
- 3.11 The new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out several commitments and actions that are consistent with the Council's Embrace Change work. In particular, the Strategy makes commitments around tailoring services to meet the needs of residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and to work with partner organisations to address homelessness in the borough.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy. The strategy must set out how the local authority will prevent homelessness, secure sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) for people who are or may become homeless, and provide satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 4.2 A Homelessness Strategy needs to be informed by a Homelessness Review. The Homelessness Review must detail levels of current homelessness and likely future homelessness; activities that the local authority will carry out to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation for people who become homeless, and provide support for people who are homeless or may become homeless; and the resources available to carry out those activities.
- 4.3 Brent adopted its first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2020. That Strategy covered the period from 2020 – 2025.
- 4.4 While the Council made progress on meeting a number of the commitments and actions set out in the 2020 – 2025 Strategy, the homelessness challenge has developed into a much deeper crisis during that time. The Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing cost of living pressures (both for residents and the Council) mean the situation has become more urgent and the draft strategy reflects that need.
- 4.5 The Council now needs to have a refreshed Strategy in place for 2026 – 2031 by the beginning of the 2026 calendar year.

- 4.6 Officers have carried out work to develop a refreshed Strategy, off the back of engagement with residents and partners. The draft of the refreshed Strategy has been out for public consultation from 19 September – 3 November 2025. The final version of the Strategy that is being presented to Cabinet builds in feedback from that public consultation.

5.0 Stakeholder consultation and engagement

- 5.1 A detailed report on the outcomes of engagement on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is attached as Appendix 3. This section of the report summarises the engagement and consultation activity that has taken place, and key findings from it.
- 5.2 To inform the draft version of the new Strategy, the Housing Community Engagement and Development Team carried out engagement with a range of stakeholders and partners earlier this year (Phase 1 engagement). Phase 1 engagement activity included:
- A workshop with the Brent Homelessness Forum attended by over 30 partners, including representatives from the NHS, VCSE sector and housing providers.
 - Targeted discussions with community and voluntary sector partners, including a Crisis Action Group workshop with nine residents who have lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping.
 - Two workshops (online and in-person) with Brent Council officers who work directly with residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including staff from Housing Needs & Support, CYP and ASC.
 - An online survey open to residents, partners and people with lived experience.
- 5.3 Phase 2 of engagement on the Strategy involved sharing the draft Strategy with residents and partners and inviting their feedback on it (19 September – 3 November). Phase 2 engagement included inviting feedback via the Council's online consultation platform as well as several targeted engagement activities, which are detailed below. Over 200 residents, partners and officers have provided feedback during the Phase 2 engagement/consultation period.
- 5.4 Targeted engagement activity in addition to the online consultation during Phase 2 included:
- A workshop with approximately 40 attendees at the Brent Homelessness Forum on 8 October. Forum members were asked to provide feedback on the draft commitments and actions for delivering on them.
 - Discussion with six Crisis Action group service users with lived experiences of homelessness and rough sleeping.

- Staff workshop – online with Brent Council officers who work directly with residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness, in CYP and customer services

5.5 In addition, consultation on the draft Strategy was promoted to a wide range of partners and residents through a range of channels, including at the Tenant and Leaseholder Open Day, at a meeting of Registered Providers, via e-newsletters and targeted communications, including to partner organisations, elected members and officers.

5.6 The Phase 2 engagement outcome report in Appendix 3 sets out in detail the feedback that was received on the draft Strategy. The key themes that emerged from both the online survey and more targeted engagement activity can be summarised as follows:

- The importance of partnership working with a range of partners and need for more of it. To support this, many respondents suggested a need to recognise the importance of partnership working across each of the Strategy's commitments.
- The importance of regularly engaging with residents with lived experience of homelessness to make sure that their feedback, and how homelessness is impacting them, is informing service design and improvements.
- Trauma-informed and empathetic approaches to dealing with homelessness are essential.
- The importance of ensuring that there are ways to measure and communicate progress on the Strategy, to ensure accountability for delivery.
- There was a strong emphasis on preventing homelessness before it occurs, through early intervention and support. In response to the question 'which of the commitments should be Brent's top priority', *Commitment 1 - Understanding the homelessness emergency* was rated as top priority (29% of responses).
- The importance of ensuring that the support and advice the Council is providing to different individuals and groups is appropriate and meets their needs, rather than taking 'one size fits all' approaches.
- Strong levels of support for the Council's approach of meeting residents face-to-face and finding ways to enhance this.
- Better joining up services so that residents only need to tell their story once. Related to this is feedback that there is a need for better sharing of data across the Council and partner organisations.
- An urgent need to set clear and realistic expectations around the limited availability of social housing and long wait times for it.
- The importance of the Council continuing to invest in affordable and social housing and working with private sector partners to secure more affordable housing.
- That the Council could play a stronger role advocating to the government for policy, legislative and funding changes to address the homelessness emergency.

- Strong feedback around the need to minimise the use and cost of temporary accommodation, but where this is not possible, the importance of improving the quality, safety and standards of temporary accommodation.
- The need to better support people who are transitioning into housing – whether it is temporary or more stable and permanent – given how hard that can be for someone who has been homeless.

5.7 Section 6.0 below details how officers have proposed integrating this feedback into the new Homelessness Strategy.

6.0 Final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031

6.1 Following the above consultation and engagement activity, officers have made several amendments to the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, to take account of feedback. A copy of the final version of the Strategy, that incorporates and addresses feedback, is attached as Appendix 1.

6.2 The key changes that have been made to the draft Strategy to take account of feedback are:

- To address feedback around the importance of partnership working, officers have strengthened reference to partnership in the Strategy's vision and have included specific references to and actions around partnership working in each of the Strategy's commitments, as well as maintaining a standalone commitment around partnership working. The standalone commitment around partnership working now includes a specific action around the Council finding ways to better support and enable partner organisations to continue and enhance the important work that they do.
- Officers have strengthened commitments around regularly engaging with residents with lived experience of homelessness and using that engagement to inform service improvements/design and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy, to address feedback around the importance of engaging with people who have experienced homelessness.
- To address concerns around accountability for delivery of the Strategy, officers have introduced, early in the Strategy, a number of commitments around developing key results to measure progress on the Strategy; reviewing the Strategy regularly in partnership with the Homelessness Forum; and regularly publishing updates on progress.
- During the consultation, several submitters suggested that the Strategy should name specific groups (such as care leavers, ex-armed forces and LGBTQ+ communities). Much of this feedback focused on the unique support and advice these groups need. To avoid highlighting some groups while overlooking others, officers propose that the Strategy doesn't list

specific groups and instead have proposed stronger commitments around providing support and advice that is tailored to the needs of different groups and individuals, rather than using a one-size-fits all approach.

- Introducing a specific action around continuing to build on the Council's approach of meeting residents face-to-face, given strong levels of support for this.
- To address feedback around the importance of ensuring that residents don't need to tell their story more than once, officers have introduced new actions around improving data sharing across Council services and between the Council and its partner organisations. Officers have also introduced a new action around improving handovers where there is staff turnover.
- Introducing specific actions around creating clear expectations as to the limited availability of social housing and long wait times for it, to address feedback that there is still a misunderstanding of this.
- To address feedback around the Council's role in influencing the government on the factors that are outside its control, officers have introduced an action around advocating to the government for the support and legislative and policy changes that local authorities and communities need to address homelessness challenges.
- The Strategy contains a number of commitments around continuing to improve the availability of affordable and social housing, including by working with private sector partners. Officers suggest that there is a need for elected members to have a broader conversation, outside of the development of this Strategy, on the challenge of providing more affordable and social housing. The Strategy also contains commitments around continuing to drive up the standard of temporary accommodation, including by continuing the Council's commitment to the Setting the Standard Scheme, which is a London-wide inspection regime of temporary accommodation properties.
- To address points around improving the quality of temporary accommodation, added a specific action around continuing the Council's commitment to the Setting the Standard Scheme, which is a London-wide inspection regime of temporary accommodation.
- Introducing a specific action around supporting people to transition into temporary accommodation, and subsequently into more settled accommodation, to address feedback that it can be difficult for residents who have been homeless to move into new accommodation.
- Officers consider that there is strong emphasis throughout the Strategy on identifying people who are at risk of homelessness early and taking appropriate and coordinated action to prevent people from reaching crisis point.

- 6.3 Officers are now seeking Cabinet's feedback on the final version of the Strategy, and Cabinet's approval to adopt it as the Council's new Strategy.

7.0 Next steps

- 7.1 Officers will build any feedback from Cabinet into the final Strategy, before it is publicly released.
- 7.2 Officers are proposing to publicly release the Strategy on Monday 5 January 2026, the first working day of the new calendar year. This will ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations to have a new Strategy in place by the beginning of 2026.
- 7.3 Following Cabinet's approval of the text of the final Strategy, it will be fully worked up into a designed version for sharing publicly.

8.0 Financial Considerations

- 8.1 The Housing Needs and Support budget overspent by £15.3m in 2024/25 due to an extremely high level of demand for this service and a lack of affordable Private Rented Sector (PRS) offers. In 2025/26, with an additional £3.4m of funding allocated through the main Homelessness Prevention Grant and £10.6m of growth built into the base budget, there is an increase of £14m in the service budget in comparison to the previous financial year to deal with continuous pressures and demand. However the demand continues to grow and the associated costs are high. Assuming the current monthly net expenditure continues without intervention, the total cost to the council for the financial year could reach £18m, resulting in a £5m overspend.
- 8.2 The creation of the strategy does not have any costs associated with it. Once the strategy is finalised, one of its main purposes will be to reduce spending related to homelessness. A 5% reduction in the total number of households in Stage 1 accommodation would result in a £960k decrease in net expenditure.

9.0 Legal Considerations

- 9.1 Under Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, it is a legal requirement for the Council to review, formulate, consult on and publish a homelessness strategy every five years or the local authority can choose to do this more frequently if circumstances in the district have changed. Section 1(5) requires the local housing authority to take their homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
- 9.2 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance states that an effective action plan should be developed to ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved.

- 9.3 The amended Homelessness Code of Guidance published in February 2018 (updated July 2025) under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 states that additional duties introduced through the 2017 Act should be incorporated into a local authority's homelessness strategy including the involvement of all relevant partners for earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness and establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements with agencies to facilitate appropriate duty to refer referrals.

10.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 10.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The council also internally recognises care experience and socio-economic status as protected characteristics.
- 10.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 10.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and is attached as Appendix 4
- 10.4 The Equality Impact Assessment shows that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will impact a number of different protected groups who experience the impacts of homelessness in different ways. The overall impacts should be positive, given the Strategy makes specific commitments around ensuring that the Council is regularly engaging with different groups of residents who have lived experience of homelessness to ensure that the services and support they are provided with meet their specific needs. The Strategy also makes commitments to improve data collection to build a better understanding of the different groups experiencing homelessness, and help inform actions designed to prevent people from becoming homeless.
- 10.5 To ensure that progress is being made on the Strategy, and that it is having a positive impact on the people experiencing homelessness, the Strategy sets out specific commitments around monitoring progress with people with lived experience of homelessness.

11.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 11.1 The Council has developed an exemplary Sustainable Environment and Development Supplementary Planning document to support the delivery of new homes in the borough and to ensure that environmental sustainability is considered holistically within the planning process. This document should be considered alongside the objectives of Commitment 3 of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 11.2 When seeking to 'drive up conditions in the private rented sector', as stated within Commitment 3, this should also include consideration of minimum energy efficiency standards legislation, to support people to live in warm, energy efficient properties.
- 11.3 All other aspects of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy should be undertaken with due consideration of the key environmental themes of the Council's climate and ecological emergency strategy wherever possible.

12.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 12.1 None relevant to this report.

13.0 Communication Considerations

- 13.1 Officers will communicate with relevant stakeholders following the release of the new Strategy to make sure they are aware of it and the commitments and actions set out in it. As part of this, officers will identify ways to work with partners to support the Council to deliver on the Strategy.

Report sign off:

Thomas Cattermole

Corporate Director of Residents & Housing
Services