

Appendix 1 - Brent Housing Service – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Update January 2021

Commitment 1. We seek to fully understand the challenges 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	
Update – January 2021	Delivery Date
<p>To gain a better understanding of individuals experience when they approach the service, a customer satisfaction survey has been developed and implemented.</p> <p>The first set of results were received in November, and confirmed that the majority of people were happy with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the initial application process via My Account. • the general approach and advice given during appointments • their personal housing plan and the explanation related by officers regarding responsibilities /timescales • they were shown respect and were listened to <p>However, the survey also identified that there is considerable room for improvement around communication with officers and customers experience of making initial contacts about homelessness and how to apply.</p> <p>A Customer Satisfaction Action Plan is being developed to address these concerns, and will include a review of language used (during assessment interviews and letters / any communication) to ensure our approach is person-focused and empathetic.</p> <p>The Customer Satisfaction survey will be integrated into CRM so it is automated at appropriate stages throughout the homelessness process. This will enable appropriate feedback questions to be asked at the right stage within the homelessness process. Insight from this will be used to inform improvements to the service</p> <p>The review of homelessness services identified a weakness around the data held by the service, affecting the ability to target resources more effectively. Current performance monitoring is also restricted, due to limitations in the CRM system to produce performance reports.</p> <p>A CRM review has been completed and enhancements identified that will produce manager dashboards to improve ability to performance monitor. The changes will improve the data quality from initial input from the applicant, as well as required input from staff.</p>	<p>Apr 2021</p> <p>Apr 2021</p> <p>Feb 2021</p>

Commitment 2. Our services are prevention focused and we ensure the right advice and support is available to those who need it.	
Update – January 2021	Delivery Date
<p>The Service is already in a strong position with delivering prevention-focused services. Key initiatives such as, Find Your Home, Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS), and the dedicated Domestic Abuse Service, are all well established, and will continue to be delivered.</p> <p>However, there is expected to be an increase in demand, related to the economic downturn, due to the COVID pandemic. A new project has commenced, to identify families and single people who are experiencing financial hardship so the service can proactively approach them, rather than waiting for them to approach at crisis point.</p>	
Identify Resident Support Fund Applications from households seeking financial support, where rent arrears have been highlighted.	Feb 2021
Cross matching data records, where there are known arrears i.e. HB overpayments/council tax arrears and applications for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP).	Feb 2021
New roles established within the homelessness teams to proactively contact these households and prevent homelessness at earliest point.	March 2021
Provide training to identify threats of homelessness at an early stage to officers working in the Hubs.	March 2021
A spike in demand from Single Homeless people has already occurred during the first lockdown. A COVID homelessness working, made up of key agencies working together to share knowledge and prevent homelessness was established in March.	
<p>The Service needs to ensure online advice and signposting information is accurate and up to date, so that people can easily access advice and information about housing and homelessness support, to prevent homelessness. .</p> <p>Review of current website content and develop a regular programme for reviewing web pages</p>	Apr 2021
One of the main factors driving homelessness is the overall benefit cap and affordability of accommodation. Households therefore need to be supported to access employment opportunities that allow them to sustain their tenancies.	

<p>The Employment and Skills Team have produced information for frontline homelessness officers about the different employment support schemes available in Brent.</p>	
<p>Commitment 3: We work to increase the supply of and access to stable and affordable homes across the borough.</p>	
<p>Update – January 2021</p>	<p>Delivery Date</p>
<p>The Council has one of the most ambitious Council Homes building programmes in London, to deliver our own new build programme. The new affordable homes delivered will help meet local need.</p> <p>As at December 2020 there are 610 new homes on site following the handover of 93 during the previous 9 months of the financial year.</p> <p>The Council has also developed good partnerships with Registered Providers across the borough to encourage the development of more homes in the borough.</p> <p>The Council is on track to deliver 5672 (inc Council supply) new homes over the period 2019-24 thus exceeding the manifesto commitment of 5000 new homes over this period</p> <p>Schemes which have already been delivered this year are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manley Heights (Peabody) Chesterfield House (MHT) Callier House (Catalyst) Cottrell House (Tamil) Amexx House (Home Group) Vantage House (Legal & General) <p>The delivery of these new build units, has contributed to a forecast of 722 social housing lettings being made in 2020/21. This is a 52% increase on the number of properties let last year (474) and a 33% increase on the year before (542)</p>	
<p>As well as increasing the supply of social housing, the council is also working to maximise the supply of stable, affordable private rented accommodation, through schemes such as Capital Letters and i4B.</p> <p>Prior to the Council joining Capital Letters, the average number of properties that were being procured in the Private Rented Sector was 360 per year. A target for Capital Letters to procure 400 properties was set for this year, and it is currently being forecast that this target will be met.</p> <p>The service continues to work with i4B to meet demand and specifically utilise i4B for people who require adapted properties or properties that are suitable for adaptation. The target number of properties to be acquired in 2020/21 was 60, however Covid has impacted this. To date, a total of 29 properties have been acquired, with another 6 likely to be purchased in January.</p> <p>The forecasted out turn for 2020/21 is therefore 40.</p>	

<p>Officers and Members are working to drive up conditions in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) across Brent through licensing and enforcement processes and work together with local property owners through our landlord forum to improve standards and access to stable homes in the private sector.</p> <p>Future of London have been commissioned to engage with PRS stakeholders to produce a summary report with practical interventions that will help shape the our approach to the improve access and conditions in the PRS. A Client workshop will be held in May 2021, after which a long list of interventions will be presented, to officers and Members to consider and prioritise. We will then prioritise the top five interventions based on their ownership, impact, feasibility and urgency.</p> <p>In July 2021 a final report will be produced, which will include all interview data and client workshop, with short listed practical interventions for improving support for vulnerable PRS tenants, mapped against Poverty Commission recommendations. Interventions will indicate likely timescale, ownership, cost and key stages required to implement</p>	<p>July 2021</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 short as possible.</p>	<p>Delivery Date</p>
<p>When a household initially becomes homeless, it is necessary to provide emergency temporary accommodation, while officers complete their enquiries. Historically, the council has relied upon privately owned, bed and breakfast accommodation, some of which is not self contained (own kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities) and is not always with-in Brent.</p> <p>To 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 use of non self-contained accommodation, the Council is developing the site of a former care home, Knowles House, in Harlesden. The development will deliver 100 self-contained rooms, and is due to be completed in December 2021.</p> <p>As a shorter term solution a report is going to Cabinet in January, seeking authority to tender for 200 self contained emergency temporary accommodation rooms, in Brent. These rooms will be used to accommodate the non-eligible single homeless people, currently be housed in emergency TA, as well as demand from business as usual homeless households (singles and families) Following a tendering process a contract is expected to be in place by June, with a provider to supply good quality emergency temporary accommodation, which is self-contained and in Brent</p> <p>In the meantime, the service continues to work with our providers and partners to improve the quality of temporary accommodation offered and ensure individuals with specific or complex needs are provided accommodation through Housing Related Support Services. The Council are part of the 'setting the standard' initiative, led by London Councils, which means that all nightly accommodation in London is inspected to ensure it is meeting agreed standards. We have acquired the Network Homes TA portfolio, which are being inspected bi-annually, the rest of the Temporary Accommodation stock is inspected quarterly.</p> <p>We will also re start the Temporary Accommodation Forum Meetings, which provided an opportunity for Temporary Accommodation residents to give regular feedback and voice concerns in a constructive way. The feedback received was then used to inform improvements. These meetings were suspended during the Covid lockdown, and will recommence once lockdown restrictions allow.</p>	<p>Dec 2021</p> <p>June 2021</p> <p>August 2021</p>

Commitment 5: We seek to personalise our services to individual's needs, and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure those needs are met.	
<p>We will provide additional staff training so officers feel equipped to provide tailored advice (e.g. family mediation, supporting LGBTQ individuals, sex workers, BAME households, Eastern European Rough Sleepers) and ensure tools are in place to tackle language barriers when they arise.</p>	<p>Oct 2021</p>
<p>The review of the customer portal and CRM will improve the quality of the data we hold and therefore allow us to make better use of it in terms of identifying key groups within our cohort. When we can identify key groups accessing our services, a training plan will be developed to build staff knowledge and skills around specialised support</p>	<p>Oct 2021</p>
<p>The COVID homelessness-working group and the Homelessness Forum work effectively and provide opportunities to ensure information and knowledge is shared. A data sharing agreement is now in place, so information can be shared safely and securely with key partners.</p>	
<p>A Complex Case Panel has been established to bring together multiple services around people who need multi-disciplinary support. The Panel is still in pilot stage and its use is being monitored</p>	
<p>The SMART Team has been established in ASC, a multi-disciplinary team led by social care to help identify and meet the support needs of single homeless people. The targeted group of service users supported by the SMART service are frequent users across the 'system'. Presenting to A&E for physical and mental health crises, frequent callers to Paramedics, Fire Service and Police, known to Community Mental Health services (CNWL), Single Homeless team, Westminster Drug Project, Probation Services and Children's Services. In addition, many are known to voluntary Charitable agencies working in the Brent area. A major focus has been understanding where prior engagement has failed and where a Multi Disciplinary Team approach may be able to deploy a reflective/creative approach towards personal outcomes. The SMART service are currently working with 20 Service Users on an assertive outreach basis of engagement. Each service user has a primary worker identified according to their assessed need. Housing and other homeless network agencies, work closely with the SMART Service. This joined up working between has meant that we are able to put the person at the forefront of assessments and decision making. This is ensuring that there is increased expertise in assessing service user's mental health needs and potential to manage and identifying a housing.</p>	
<p>There has been effective increased joined up working between housing services and health services as a result of COVID. A report is due at the Health and Wellbeing board in January around the health needs of homeless people.</p>	<p>Jan 2021</p>
<p>We are part of a pilot with MHCLG around prisoners being released, aiming to ensure there is a clear pathway for prisoners who have housing needs. This is any project which has been delayed due to COVID, however will recommence in 2021</p>	<p>Apr 2021</p>