



Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date:	Wards
Executive	21 March 2019	All

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SUBJECT: Islington Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The council's vision is to make Islington fairer and create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. Many local residents face both complex and multiple challenges, such as housing, employment, offending, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 1.2 Being homeless must not prevent people having a secure and dignified existence, or interrupt their employment, education and access to healthcare. Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2023 sets out how the council will:
 - prevent homelessness through partnership working;
 - focus prevention and support for those most at risk of homelessness. The support will extend to the health and wellbeing of individuals, in addition to a place to live;
 - work towards eliminating rough sleeping.
- 1.3 There is well established strong partnership working with voluntary and community sector organisations through the Islington Homelessness Forum (IHF), which has been meeting regularly for over ten years. The strategy reiterates the continuing importance given by the council to a collaborative approach between sectors in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping; this was demonstrated during the recent rough sleeper count.
- 1.4 In recognition of the link between homelessness and health and wellbeing, the 2019-2023 strategy will be sponsored by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board approved the recommendations of this report on 22 November 2018.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the aim, priorities and objectives as set out below.
- 2.2 To note the approach to consultation as set out at Section 4.
- 2.3 To agree the proposed duration of the strategy as set out at paragraph 5.1.
- 2.4 To agree the mechanism for reviewing the objectives and actions on an annual basis as set out at paragraph 5.3.
- 2.5 To note the provisional timeframes set out at paragraph 6.1 below.

3. Aim, priorities and objectives of the strategy

- 3.1 Delivering decent and genuinely affordable homes for all is one of the council's seven objectives, which includes aims to increase the supply of new homes, improving conditions in the private rented sector and preventing homelessness. Additionally, our overriding approach is to help people to build resilience through prevention and early intervention. The objectives of the strategy set out how the council will meet the housing objectives and continue to help those who are homeless or who face homelessness build resilience.

Islington Council's most recent prevention of homelessness strategy ran from 2012 to 2014. We were previously exempt from requiring a homelessness strategy, but since 1 April 2017, that exemption no longer applies.

The aim of the 2012-2014 Homelessness Prevention Strategy was "To find innovative and practical ways to resolve and prevent homelessness through the provision of accessible services to members of the borough's community who need assistance."

- 3.2 It is recommended that the same aim is used for the new strategy, as it fits with the objective in the Islington Corporate Plan 2018-22, to "Prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers".

In recent years, due to the impact of welfare reform and the increasing cost of housing in central London, rough sleeping numbers in the borough have increased, including rough sleepers who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) or who are subject to immigration control. The previous strategy did not encompass rough-sleeping. This strategy will therefore describe the Council's approach to addressing rough sleeping which includes:

- a housing first pilot housing rough sleepers with high support needs;
- creating a new role to coordinate our approach and to work collaboratively with partners;
- a pilot project looking at targeted support for rough sleepers whose immigration status impedes their access to housing.

Islington has for many years championed a proactive approach to homelessness prevention through regular surgeries in the community where advice and assistance is made available to those who need it. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which was implemented in April 2018 now places a greater obligation on authorities to work with residents to prevent homelessness. Learning from the sub-regional Trailblazer project, which was led by Islington, confirmed the value of investing time and resources in upskilling partner agencies and public bodies in the prevention of homelessness and identifying and referring households at an early risk of homelessness.

- 3.3 The above developments are reflected in the priorities for the next strategy, i.e.
 - preventing homelessness through partnership working;

- focus prevention and support for those most at risk of homelessness. The support will extend to the health and wellbeing of individuals, in addition to a place to live;
- working towards eliminating rough sleeping.

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan, Appendix 1. The objectives are separated between those which prevent and relieve homelessness, to mirror the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and key objectives, as follows:

Preventing homelessness

- improve our prevention service for customers;
- work towards eliminating rough sleeping;
- support the development of housing pathways for each customer group.

Relieving homelessness

- increase the supply of secure, affordable homes to ensure sufficient supply of accommodation;
- make better use of the private rented sector;
- review how temporary accommodation is procured and provided.

Other key objectives

- work with partners to ensure that the strategy is based on realistic assumptions;
- ensure that the strategy meets challenges that are likely to arise during its lifetime;
- improve our understanding of the connection between homelessness and health and wellbeing;
- improve standards in the private rented sector;
- improve communications in relation to homelessness.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The responsibility for providing homelessness advice is primarily that of the teams within Housing Needs. However, it is clear that, as part of the Council's objective to deliver decent and genuinely affordable homes for all, the strategy requires a collaborative approach across the Council, and from partners, to prevent homelessness.
- 4.2 Colleagues from departments such as Private Housing Partnerships, Residential Environmental Health, No Recourse to Public Funds, Trading Standards, Public Health, New Homes and Development and Community Safety have been involved in developing the action plan and have committed to contributing to the delivery of the actions.
- 4.3 Colleagues in Homes and Communities, Adult Social Services, Children's Services and the CCG have had the opportunity to comment on the aim, priorities and objectives of the strategy.
- 4.4 This strategy will not substantially affect our secure tenants, and we are therefore not required to carry out a statutory consultation under Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 4.5 However, in order to provide the partner organisations who will help to deliver the strategy with the opportunity to shape the strategy, the IHF were consulted on the aim, priorities and objectives.
- 4.6 The respondents to the consultation were supportive of our aim, priorities and objectives.
- 4.7 As a result of the consultation, we have developed an additional action point, "Update messages for the public to reduce stigma associated with homelessness". Rough Sleeper Initiatives will now be a standing item at future IHF meetings.

5. Duration and review

- 5.1 It is recommended that the strategy has a duration of five years, to be consistent with other major Islington Council strategies, such as the Housing Strategy.
- 5.2 The government has advised that they will work with local authorities so that by winter 2019, local authorities report progress in delivering homelessness and rough sleeping strategies, and publish annual action plans.
- 5.3 It is recommended that each year a review of the objectives and actions is carried out, and the findings are reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board would agree to any changes to the objectives and actions as required. This would provide a safeguard that all actions and strategic aims remain relevant to the law, prevailing conditions and best practice in the homelessness and housing advice sector.

6. Provisional Timeframes

- 6.1 The planned stages in the development of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are set out below.

Action	Timeframe
Strategy agreed by Executive	February 2019
Publication	Spring 2019

7. Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

- 7.1.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.
- 7.1.2 Any plans or strategies derived or agreed in relation to this report should use existing available resources and therefore not create a budget pressure for the Council.

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 ("the Act") creates a duty on housing authorities to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy. The Council was previously exempt from this statutory requirement by virtue of the Local Authorities Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) Order 2009 but the exemption expired on 1 April 2017.
- 7.2.2 Under the Act the Council is required to carry out a homelessness review for its district and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. The review should consider the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough, the activities which are carried out to prevent homelessness and the resources available to the Council to secure accommodation and provide support and assistance to the homeless. The Council will also need to take into account the additional duties introduced through the HRA to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants, including those who do not have priority need or may be considered intentionally homeless.
- 7.2.3 In formulating or modifying its homelessness strategy the Council is required to have due regard to the statutory guidance published by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Council should also have regard to its allocation scheme, its tenancy strategy and the London housing strategy.

- 7.2.4 The homelessness strategy should set out the Council's strategy for preventing homelessness in their district, securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless and securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 7.2.5 There is no formal consultation required by the Act but before adopting or modifying its homelessness strategy the Council should consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as it considers appropriate. The MHCLG guidance provides that housing authorities will wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the borough.
- 7.2.6 Under the Act the Council is required to take its homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of its housing and social services functions.

7.3 **Environmental Implications**

- 7.3.1 The production of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will not have any significant environmental impact beyond that associated with standard office usage. There may be impacts associated with some of the actions outlined in the strategy, and these will be assessed when the strategy is finalised.

7.4 **Resident Impact Assessment**

- 7.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 7.4.2 A Resident Impact Assessment was completed on 8 August 2018 and the summary is included below.

Analysis has shown that a number of protected groups are over represented in homeless applications in comparison to the borough profile:

- a higher proportion of females are making homeless applications especially those in lone parent households;
 - a higher proportion of younger people (25-44) are making homeless applications;
 - a higher proportion of people with disabilities are making homeless applications;
 - a higher proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic groups are making homeless applications;
 - a higher proportion of lesbian, gay and bisexual people are making homelessness applications.
- 7.4.3 The strategy will have an overall positive effect on these protected groups, through tackling and preventing homelessness and meeting housing need. We will respond to the identified impacts as follows:

Action	Responsible team	Deadline
Enhance our existing mediation service to reduce homelessness caused by family and friend exclusions, and private sector tenancy terminations.	Housing Needs	Annual review
Continue to provide support by finding employment opportunities, through the council's iWork and partner organisations.	Housing Needs iWork	Annual review
Produce advice and guidance to people with No Recourse to Public Funds, and disseminate to BME groups via the voluntary sector.	No Recourse to Public Funds	Spring 2019
Provide additional mental health input and support too hard to engage rough sleepers.	Housing Needs	Annual Review
Review programme of housing advice outreach surgeries.	Housing Needs	Quarterly
Become an accredited landlord for Domestic Abuse, which will include evaluating how the current services we provide meet the housing needs of domestic abuse victims	Housing Strategy, Improvement and Partnerships Homes and Communities	Spring 2019
Implement recommendations from the behavioural change research to help people to downsize in order to release existing social housing which can be let to overcrowded families.	Housing Needs	Spring 2019
Establish an evidence base of approaches and failed preventions to better understand the issues, such as ethnicity and gender.	Public Health	Annual Review
Explore available data on the connection between health, including mental health, and homelessness, including rough sleeping, including the factors that increase the risk of homelessness.	Public Health	Winter 2019

8. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 8.1 There is a legal requirement for us to have a homelessness strategy. The aim, priorities and objectives of the strategy will prevent homelessness, and will have an overall positive effect on protected groups
- 8.2 An annual review of the strategy will provide a safeguard that all actions and strategic aims remain relevant to the law, prevailing conditions and best practice in the homelessness and housing advice sector.

Appendices:

Action plan – Appendix 1

Resident Impact Assessment – Appendix 2

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Appendix 3

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

8 March 2019

Diarmuid Ward.

Signed by: Executive Member for Housing and Development

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