

Meeting:	Executive
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Council Priority:	A safe place to call home
Wards:	All
Report of:	Executive Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods
Report No.	I028679

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## Islington's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

### 1. Recommendations

#### **Executive are asked to:**

- 1.1. To approve the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### 2. Report summary

- 2.1. Islington's updated Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 replaces our current strategy which ended in 2023. It sets out the council's approach to addressing homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping in Islington including how the council will work with other agencies and stakeholders.

### 3. Details of the proposal

- 3.1. The strategy sets out how Homes and Neighbourhoods meet the council's statutory duties to prevent homelessness and the work that we do across departments including commissioned services and alongside partner organisations to provide more effective support to prevent rough sleeping from happening in the first place, and a tailored offer of support where it does, so people can build an independent life off the streets. For example, it sets out the actions we are taking to support people experiencing multiple disadvantages, the work to support financial resilience for council tenants to sustain their tenancies, the joint working between Children's and

housing to support looked after children and how Residential Environmental Health work to improve conditions in the private rented sector.

- 3.2. The strategy supports the council's commitment to promote fairness and equality and is aligned with related housing policies including the council's Allocation Scheme, Temporary Accommodation Framework and Housing Strategy. It is in synergy with the wider work being developed jointly and undertaken alongside other council departments including new commissioning intentions, the Integrated Health and Care Front Door Service and Housing and Children's protocol.
- 3.3. It is structured around 4 Priorities which frame our work to meet current and emerging housing need in Islington and they are based on our current and programmed work to prevent and relieve homelessness. The Priorities are:
- Priority 1: Preventing and relieving homelessness through early and tailored intervention: Homelessness is not inevitable and can be prevented. We work to provide early help for those at risk of homeless and we believe that everyone who is homeless should have a right to a safe, secure home along with an appropriate level of support to create a good quality of life.
  - Priority 2: Eliminating rough sleeping by helping people into settled housing: We work side-by-side and holistically with our council colleagues and partners to eliminate rough sleeping in Islington
  - Priority 3: Improving housing options available to meet the needs of our residents: We aim to providing every individual accessing our services with a realistic, sustainable good quality housing option where people can feel safe, maintain contact with their family and friends and which support their life choices
  - Priority 4: Providing accommodation and resettlement services to refugees and migrants: Islington Council became an accredited Borough of Sanctuary in 2023. We work ambitiously with our partners to make Islington is a place of welcome, safety & success for all and to integrate new communities, build social cohesion and eradicate poverty.
- 3.4. The development of the strategy provides a jumping off point to look for further synergies and develop joint working and service improvement. It will be kept under review to make sure it adapts to any changes brought about by the new government and progress against our action plan will be assessed after one year.

## 4. Other options considered and the reasons for recommending this proposal

- 4.1. None considered. The council is required to develop and publish a strategy that sets out the work undertaken to prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping in the borough.

## 5. Key impacts and risks of the proposal

- 5.1. The strategy sets out the approach that we will take and the actions to provide statutory services
- 5.2. We are exploring alternative funding streams to enable continued provision of services funded through our Rough Sleeping Initiative allocation which ends in March 2025.
- 5.3. The strategy and action plan are kept under review, including an annual review, to monitor progress and allow changes to be made. The review will include collaboration with service areas and partner organisations.

## 6. Contribution to the Islington Together 2030 Plan

- 6.1. This proposal sets out the work that we do in Homes and Neighbourhoods and across departments to meet our mission that everyone in Islington has a safe, decent and genuinely affordable place to call home.

## 7. Consultation and community engagement

- 7.1. We have undertaken consultation and engagement activity with partners, residents, colleagues and peers. The Let's Talk consultation was publicised in Housing Matters and the documents and links to the survey shared with the Safeguarding Adults Board and sent externally to stakeholders including Islington MPs.
- 7.2. Activities included:
- Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Presentation and dissemination to the Homelessness Prevention Forum and Islington Housing Association Group
- Workshop with colleagues across departments including Children's, Adult Social Care, Community Safety and Resilience, Public Health, Commissioning and Investment and Integrated Care
  - Online survey in Let's Talk
  - Focus group and co-creation session with 14 individuals with lived experience of homelessness conducted by Arts & Homelessness International.

- 7.3. Over 40 individuals and organisations have endorsed our Priorities and our Objectives as well as providing their feedback. An additional 32 participants downloaded the documents from the Let's Talk engagement page.
- 7.4. Further to the consultation we have considered feedback:
- 16 respondents to the Let's Talk online survey agreed or partially agreed (with comments) with our Priorities.
  - Approach has been endorsed by Homeless Link and Housing Justice and colleagues across the council
  - Themes and actions developed and clarified through workshopping and consultation feedback
    - o Expand on our advice offer including reference to Access Hubs,
    - o develop actions we are taking to tackle multiple disadvantages including to ensure alignment with new commissioning intentions
    - o expand on the work we are doing with care-experienced individuals
    - o better highlight the partnership work we do across services and across sectors including Front Door approach and critical friends
    - o clarify how housing management work to identify financial abuse and take a compassionate approach to dealing with tenancy issues
    - o include how non-commissioned partners including day centre provision which support our delivery objectives
    - o Include commitment to one year instead of mid-way Review to ensure the strategy is monitored effectively and is fit for purpose by adapting to any changes arising in relation to new government.

## 8. Implications

### 8.1. Financial Implications

- 8.1.1. This report sets out the updated Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 which replaces the current strategy which ended in 2023. It sets out the council's approach to addressing homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping in Islington including how the council will work with other agencies and stakeholders.
- 8.1.2. The priorities that are set out in this report are currently not quantifiable. The measures proposed in this package are designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Housing service's operations. The cost of Homelessness services is met from a combination of departmental budgets, recurring and non-recurring grants.
- 8.1.3. The main area of pressure currently for the Homelessness service is Temporary Accommodation (TA) as the number of people presenting as homeless is rising along with diminishing supply of TA properties across London. There has also been a rise in the average nightly rate paid to TA providers. The current 24/25 Quarter 2 position for TA nightly booked is a £2.225m overspend position.

- 8.1.4. The Council utilises the Homelessness Prevention Grant making sure to fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness. The grant is used to reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention and reduce the use of unsuitable Bed & Breakfast hotels for families. Ensuring service financial viability of services by contributing to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and supporting with the costs of Temporary Accommodation. The Homelessness service is reliant on grants, using £3.782m of grant for funding prevention and relief. If those are withdrawn or reduced the Council may be left with unfunded financial pressures that cannot be reduced easily.
- 8.1.5. There are services that are provided which is fully funded from external grants such as work related to rough sleepers, single household accommodation programme and resettlement support. If these external grants were to end, then the Council would need to seek alternative funding arrangements for these services. If no further funding is secured, then the Council would need to assess the impact on discontinuing existing services. This could potentially impact on other areas such as Temporary Accommodation where number of homeless cases could increase.

## 8.2. **Legal Implications**

- 8.2.1. "Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 ("the Act") creates a duty on a housing authority to carry out a homelessness review for its district and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. Under s1(4) of the Act housing authorities must ensure that a new homelessness strategy for their district is published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.
- 8.2.2. Under s2(1) of Act, 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.
- 8.2.3. 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.
- 8.2.4. 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.

- 8.2.5. The Council shall keep their homelessness strategy under review and may modify it from time to time. 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.
- 8.2.6. Under the Act the Council is required to take its homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of its housing and social services functions.
- 8.2.7. The Council is required to make a copy of the homelessness review and homelessness strategy available at its principal office for inspection at all reasonable hours, without charge, by members of the public.”

### 8.3. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 8.3.1. This strategy draws together the work that is ongoing across the council to prevent homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping in Islington. Individual projects and procurement such as the procurement of specialist medical advice for housing applications or supported housing provision are subject to an individual Environmental Impact Assessment to support the council’s commitment to achieve a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

- 8.3.2. There will inevitably be an increase in carbon emissions associated with providing better housing options for rough sleepers, that can be mitigated by investing in the energy efficiency of the accommodation and switching the heating system from polluting gas boilers to a low carbon alternative or a connection to a heat network.

### 8.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 8.4.1. 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.

8.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed and signed off by the Fairness and Equalities Team. The screening document is attached as Appendix 3.

8.4.3. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the impacts of the strategy are positive as it draws together the work that is ongoing across the council to prevent homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping in Islington. Additionally, individual projects and procurement such as the procurement of specialist medical advice for housing applications or supported housing provision are subject to individual Equalities Impact Assessments.

## 9. Timetable for implementation

9.1.1. Subject to agreement by Executive, the strategy will be implemented by the end of the calendar year.

### Appendices:

- Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
- Homelessness and rough sleeping in Islington – Review
- EQIA – Homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy 2024

### Relevant decisions / reports:

- [None](#)

### Background papers:

- [None](#)

### Report approval:

Authorised by:

Ian Swift, **Deputy Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods**

**Executive Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods**

Date: 14 November 2024

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