

CROYDON COUNCIL

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

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## **Foreword from Cabinet Member Councillor Lynne Hale**

I am pleased to introduce Croydon's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out our plans for reducing the challenge of homelessness in our Borough over the next five years.

At a time when homelessness and rough sleeping are rising across London and the UK, it is vitally important that we as a Council set out how we are going to tackle this growing problem in our borough.

In Croydon, we are committed to fully implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, which places a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity. We recognise that it is so important that we treat all those approaching us for help and support with empathy and respect and that we provide a timely and responsive service to those in need.

For this reason, during the first year of this Strategy, we will be completing the re-organisation of the Housing Needs Structure with a focused view on working to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Timely homelessness prevention advice and support at the earliest opportunity will be critical and we need to make sure that advice is easily accessible to anyone who needs it, as well as being able to provide the accommodation that people need in an emergency.

To reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation, we must manage our housing stock more effectively; reducing the number of empty properties; cutting unauthorised occupations and encouraging those who no longer need larger properties to downsize.

Besides that, we will review our Allocation Scheme to ensure that those who are most in need receive priority for housing.

Such are the challenges with homelessness at present, that we cannot manage this on our own. We must seek to build upon the relationships which we have with the many local landlords and agencies who are committed to providing excellent and affordable housing, as well as working much more collaboratively with our voluntary and statutory partners.

We have some excellent landlords in Croydon who take their responsibilities to their tenants very seriously and we could not manage to meet the very high demand for housing without them. However, where poor practice occurs, we will need to take action.

Many of those who are struggling with homelessness are now facing long periods awaiting re-housing, often in circumstances which are far from ideal, and it is important therefore that we do as much as possible to ensure they have decent living conditions.

We are already working more closely with many of our Housing Association partners through a newly established Housing Association Forum. Part of this new

relationship will be focused on ensuring that the best use is made of social housing assets in our borough.

It is very important that the Council works more closely and more effectively with our many partners in the voluntary sector, many of whom show significant passion and commitment to assisting those who are homeless.

In addition, over the past few years, the Council has not been as effective as it should be in carrying out its strategic and co-ordinating role in reducing homelessness. A key outcome of this report will therefore be to re-instate the Council's formal role in supporting and facilitating the work being carried out by our partners. To that end, I am really pleased to see the burgeoning collaborative approach now emerging with our key partners in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Preventing homelessness should be everyone's business and I very much welcome the important informed contributions and the collective response, which is starting to come through and which, through the newly established Homelessness Prevention Partnership Board, will deliver the Strategy's priorities.

In tackling rough sleeping effectively, we recognise the need to adopt a tailored and multi-agency approach that tackles the prevalent causes of homelessness in our borough, such as poor mental health, alcohol and substance abuse and domestic violence. Ideally, rough sleeping should be rare, brief and non-recurring, but we recognise that much will need to be done in order to make progress with this ambition.

With over 7,000 people awaiting re-housing on the Housing Register, we recognise that we must also plan the future supply of housing in our Borough. Although I would stress that this will not provide a comprehensive solution, our Regeneration and New Homes Strategy due to be presented to Cabinet later this year, will set out how we will progress this important work."

Finally, I would thank all those who have supported the consultation work and given us feedback on the development of this Strategy: residents, landlords, partners, and Members of the Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee. I would like to give every assurance that we have listened and will act upon your views and embrace them in our emergent collaborative response in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in our town.

# 1. A refreshed approach to dealing with homelessness in our Borough

Foreword from Susmita Sen (Corporate Director of Housing) and Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor (Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation)

The 2024-29 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been produced at a time of greatly increased demand for housing needs services across London and the UK. Figures produced by London Councils show a 15% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation across the capital. Additionally, the number of families living in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation has increased exponentially placing great strain on those living in these circumstances. At the same time, rough sleeping has increased significantly whilst the availability of supported accommodation remains static with many living for many years awaiting suitable move-on accommodation.

With its growing population, Croydon has been greatly affected by this increase in housing need and declining housing supply. It is in this context that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been produced.

In preparing this strategy, we have heard the views of over 300 residents as well as many of our statutory and voluntary sector partners. Some of the feedback we have received has been particularly critical about a perceived lack of responsiveness to residents' concerns on the part of our services. Additionally, many of our Voluntary Sector partners have spoken of their belief that the Council is no longer playing a co-ordinating and leading role in facilitating joined up work in homelessness prevention.

We believe that to move forward we must react positively to this feedback and set in place a clear plan for resolving these concerns.

Firstly, we must ensure that those who are threatened by homelessness are given an approachable and humane response which recognises the stress that homeless people are under, and the support needs they may have. It is clear that over the past few years too many residents have failed to receive such a service, often having to wait for long periods to see a Housing Needs & Homelessness Officer.

The ongoing re-organisation of our Housing Needs & Homelessness Service will ensure that those who are homeless on the day are seen and provided with a service and that the specialism exists to tackle the complexity of needs of those who are presenting so that we are able in many cases to prevent homelessness from occurring.

Secondly, our structure will support the re-establishment of the links we need to support the excellent work of our voluntary sector partners as well as colleagues in the statutory sector.

Achieving these objectives will require significant cultural change within the organisation and it will take time to deliver the services that residents deserve but

this strategy and the delivery plan sets out how the identified priorities will be delivered to achieve service outcomes that our residents deserve.

## **2. Factors that determine this strategy.**

This strategy sets out the Council's approach towards tackling homelessness and rough sleeping between 2024 and 2029. It fulfils a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 2002 and will be influenced by the factors set out below.

### **National Context**

The strategy is produced at a time of rising homelessness and rough sleeping across London and the UK. The increased unavailability of low-cost social and affordable housing combined with a withdrawal from the market of many private sector landlords has meant that many councils are increasingly reliant on placing homeless residents in temporary accommodation some of which is unsuitable as well as often being placed far from where the applicant has been living. Since 2022, year-on-year increases in temporary accommodation have exceeded 15%, and the challenge for councils is to combine an approach that manages both the current pressures on its services and plans for the increased delivery of new housing that is so badly needed.

In the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018, the Government set out its strategy for eliminating rough sleeping by 2027 and halving it by the end of the Parliament (then thought to be 2021/22). In 2022, the strategy was refreshed with the Government committing a further £500m nationally to the Rough Sleeping Initiative of which Croydon received over £4m to cover a three-year period to 2025. This sum included the cost of 'somewhere safe to stay' accommodation for rough sleepers, delivery of housing first services to support those moving into accommodation as well as a Rough Sleeping Team and specialist support workers. As the numbers of those sleeping rough rise, the strategy will outline that although Croydon has a good performance in terms of preventing a "second night out", more needs to be done in tackling the often-linked issues of mental health, well-being and poor behaviour often associated with this problem.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA Act 2017) represented the most significant change in homelessness legislation for a generation. Most importantly, it included requirements for local authorities to assess all eligible applicants and take steps to prevent and relieve homelessness. It also extended the period that a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days giving an emphasis to preventing homelessness at the earliest stage rather than waiting for an applicant having an immediate relief need. The need to fully respond to the requirements of this legislation is central to this strategy.

### **Local Factors**

**Councils Financial Position** - In October 2020 the Council's external auditors published a highly critical 'Report in the Public Interest' (RIPI) setting out serious failings in the council's financial management, decision-making and governance. The

scale of the financial and governance challenges highlighted in the RIPI led to the council issuing multiple Section 114 notices and making significant cost savings across the organisation. Since the Executive Mayor's election in 2022, he has worked with the new Corporate Management Team to introduce a council-wide transformation and improvement programme, led by the priorities in his Executive Mayor's Business Plan, to reshape services, reduce costs and put residents first.

Unlike many councils which have issued Section 114 Notices, the government has not instructed commissioners, nor removed any decision-making powers from Croydon. Instead, the council works closely with a statutory Improvement and Assurance Panel (IAP) which provides updates and assurance to the Secretary of State on the council's progress, including on the council's financial sustainability. The council continues to face significant financial pressure, most notably from the costs of servicing its £1.6bn of legacy debt. Like several other local authorities, the council also faces significant increases in those needing homelessness relief which has placed additional strain on council budgets. This strategy will address the costly use and reliance on temporary accommodation which is now affecting many boroughs.

**Intervention of the Regulator of Social Housing** – following events at Regina Road where residents were living in unacceptable conditions, the Council were found to be in contravention of the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard by the Regulator. Though this does not directly impact upon a strategy for homelessness, the Council is committed to the pursuit of better services for residents who are temporarily housed or awaiting rehousing and recognises that the service offered to many has been unsatisfactory.

## **Transforming the Council**

Since May 2022, the Executive Mayor has set out a programme of service improvement to correct historic poor performance in parts of the Council.

These priorities are shaped by the Executive Mayor's Business Plan 2022 and the Local Plan 2019-40.

Outcome 4, Priority 3 of the Executive Mayor's Plan states that the Council will:

*Prevent homelessness by providing advice, guidance, and appropriate support.*

*Review procurement of nightly paid temporary accommodation for homeless people to obtain Value for Money.*

An overall theme of the Executive Mayor's Plan is to treat residents with respect and ensure their issues and complaints are responded to promptly and effectively and this clearly also applies to those who are homeless or rough sleeping.

The strategy also considers other priorities in the Executive Mayor's Plan relating to health recognising that homelessness is a significant factor in poor mental and physical well-being.

## Housing Strategy

Sitting with other key strategies under the Housing Strategy 2023, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy also complements strategies developed in other Council's departments such as Community Safety and Joint Children's Services Protocol.

### 3. Demographics

Croydon is London's most populace borough, with approximately 390,800 residents (Census 2021) with a projected growth of 3.6% between 2021 and 2025 and 10% up by 2031 (GLA 2020 based housing led projections).

Age	Croydon		London	England
	Population	% of population	% of population	% of population
Under 16	80,089	20.5%	19.2%	18.5%
16 – 64	257,001	65.8%	68.8%	63.0%
65 +	53,416	13.7%	11.9%	18.5%
All Ages	390,506	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- The 9% increase in 0-14 age group is tied to the 11% rise in the 30-44 age group (the largest age group at 23%) and the under 19 population in Croydon is now the highest in London leading to projections of increased demand for general needs housing up until 2040
- From 2011 to 2023 there was a rise of 23% in the over 65 population with projected increase of 58% between now and 2040

**PROJECTION** The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2023 points to a 'clear and acute need for rented affordable accommodation for lower income households'

### Disability

28% of Croydon households contain one person with a disability against the London average of 26.6%.

Projections made about disability in Croydon (Iceni SHMA) predict the following.

Disability	Age Range	2021	2040	% Change
Dementia	65+	3,553	5,969	68.0%
Mobility problems	65+	9,413	15,342	63.0%



Autistic Spectrum Disorders	18-64	1,986	2,147	8.1%
	65+	473	763	61.2%
Learning Disabilities	15-64	5,356	5,748	7.3%
	65+	1,073	1,688	57.3%
Impaired mobility	16-64	10,940	11,938	9.1%

**PROJECTION:** Identified need for more supported and extra-care units needed between 2021 and 2040 for disabled and elderly people (see Key Challenges) General needs units to be “accessible and adaptable homes”

## Ethnicity

The table below demonstrates disproportionate over representation of the Black community in terms of homelessness applications which are well above the London average.

%	London	Croydon	Rest of England
<b>White</b>	31%	26%	75%
<b>Black</b>	29%	45%	6%
<b>Asian</b>	12%	12%	5%

Far higher numbers of Black and Ethnic Minority communities are recorded as living in the more deprived areas of North Croydon associated with social and private rented accommodation (included House’s in Multiple Occupation) such as West Croydon, Selhurst and Thornton Heath.

## 4. Key challenges for our service

The production of our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 comes at a time of significant challenge for local authorities particularly those across London.

As a part of this process, we are required to carry out an assessment of homelessness in the borough which is featured in supporting documents to the strategy. Identified below are the most significant findings which involved analysis of homelessness statistics provided to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Mayor of London and London Councils and a benchmarking process with other providers.

### Homelessness prevention benchmarking.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a requirement on councils adopting a preventative approach to homelessness. When comparing London councils, it appears from figures provided in June 2023 that those who have adopted this model are achieving better results in terms of homeless prevention although the numbers owed a relief duty have increased London-wide.

2022/23	Prevention duty owed	Of which owed relief duty	% owed relief duty
London-Wide	57,159	31,620	55%
Barking	1,299	550	42%
Ealing	2,958	1,242	41%
Greenwich	2,589	1,490	57%
Hackney	2,320	1,416	61%

An analysis of performance in Croydon in the calendar year 2022 showed the following.

- That of 2,272 cases owed a prevention duty, 1,500 cases or 66% were offered a relief duty suggesting a need to prioritise a more preventative approach to homelessness in Croydon as demonstrated in the above table.

**OUR CHALLENGE** The Council has completed and must now implement the review of its Housing Needs Service with a view to having the flexibility to respond earlier to the many causes of homelessness and to better engage with our partners.

### Rise in the use of temporary accommodation

Whilst many councils are still seeking to embed the principles of preventing homelessness set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, there have been significant increases in demand for temporary accommodation brought about by the economic downturn. Rising housing costs and a diminishing supply of affordable housing both in the social and private sector has meant that currently in Croydon, over 3,000 families are housed in temporary accommodation or in unsuitable bed and breakfast facilities and commercial hotels.

The council will make strenuous efforts not to split families in different units. The decision to do so will not be taken lightly and will be very carefully considered. Where the Council is not able to avoid this, the Council will strive to reduce the length of time families spend in such accommodation.

**OUR CHALLENGE** We will aim to set out an approach for more effectively managing and reducing Croydon's reliance on temporary accommodation.

### Increases in rough sleeping

Like many boroughs, Croydon is experiencing rises in those who are rough sleeping, and the services are increasingly stretched in delivering the London Mayoral target that nobody sleeping rough should spend a '2<sup>nd</sup> Night Out'. The complexity of needs of those presenting as homeless or sleeping rough often require a tailored response

that may involve intervention from mental health or drugs and alcohol services to prevent applicants from becoming stuck in a cycle of homelessness.

Despite a challenging environment, Croydon has continued to perform strongly in delivering on “No Second Night Out “and despite having amongst the highest number of rough sleepers within outer London boroughs, over 80% are identified and prevented from sleeping on the streets.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has written to Local Authorities identifying three key areas to act upon in 2024/25-the need for early action in preventing new rough sleepers, targeting long-term rough sleepers as well as working with those who are returning to rough sleeping.

The procurement of the Rough Sleeping Provider contracts offers the chance for the Council to revise the service it requires so that it more comprehensively covers all the issues faced from the need to provide everyday support to resolving issues of those who do not engage with the service or persist in causing anti-social behaviour.

**OUR CHALLENGE** With the likelihood that the increases in rough sleeping will continue, the Council will aim to deliver the Government's objectives, re-procure a responsive outreach service and tackle those who cause anti-social behaviour.

## Supply of Social and Affordable Housing

Croydon has the highest number of households in London with nearly 153,000 homes according to the 2021 Census. 56% of homes are owned or pay a mortgage, 26% rent in the Private Rented Sector and only 18% pay social housing rent.

With up to 7,000 residents awaiting rehousing on the Housing register, the recent Strategic Housing Assessment (SHMA) has identified the need for over 1,200 additional ‘low cost’ rental homes per annum above the current supply between now and 2040. It recommends the following mix of dwellings to meet future needs within this category.

Bedroom size	%
1	15%
2	30%
3	35%
4	20%

With a projected 58% increase in the over-65 population between 2023 and 2040, it is anticipated that in addition to the need for genuinely affordable accommodation 3,800 sheltered and extra-care accommodation will be needed.

The identified need to maintain and increase the current supply of housing is also critical through achieving a quicker turnaround of empty properties, tackling

unauthorised occupation, encouraging under-occupiers to move to smaller homes, and supporting tenancy sustainment.

**OUR CHALLENGE** To set out how the Council will manage its stock and work in partnership to deliver new homes

## Private Sector

Private Sector Landlords provide a significant contribution to housing within Croydon. Even with recently readjusted Housing Allowance rates much of this accommodation is not affordable to many although nearly 1,000 houses are in Multiple Occupation. Increases in mortgage costs for those who buy to let, tax changes and a perception of increased governance (such as the Renter's Bill) have all contributed to a minimum of 10% of landlords withdrawing from the market over the last year with projections that this will continue. This and increased competition from Inner London Boroughs seeking to procure Croydon properties will continue to affect the supply of housing from this sector.

In addition, following recent stock condition surveys, nearly 24% of private sector properties have been identified as having at least one serious 'Category A hazard'. This strongly suggests that we have a significant number of poor landlords, and the Council will need to consider using its powers, including landlord licensing to act upon this to maintain standards and prevent further homelessness from occurring.

**OUR CHALLENGE.** Support and maintain landlords who provide good housing whilst using our powers to tackle poor practices.

## Health and Well-Being.

Considerable numbers of those rough sleeping or households requiring homelessness assistance experience health or social care challenges such as mental or physical ill-health, social care issues, learning difficulties and harmful drugs or substance use. With over 40% of Croydon residents classified as being within the CORE 20 (20% of most deprived communities) health inequality statistics show that up to one-sixth of people in this category (many of whom face homelessness or are placed in interim accommodation) are living with a mental health condition and up to 10% have long term depression. Growing numbers of people are presenting with drug or alcohol problems with surveys carried out in Croydon in 2020 showing that 80% of the known 5,300 dependent opiates and drugs and alcohol abusers have received no treatment. In addition, analysis shows that disproportionately high numbers of applications are from younger residents.

The Council recognises the need to liaise closely with adult social services and statutory health authorities to respond to these increasing challenges.

Additionally, University College of London research carried out in 2021 also pointed to the damaging impact that living in temporary accommodation has to children particularly those under five with many vulnerable to childhood illnesses and missing key milestones.

Finally, threefold increases in domestic violence incidents as recorded by the Family Justice Centre since 2017 have placed further strain on homelessness services.

**OUR CHALLENGE** Working in liaison with other providers, the Council needs to adopt a tailored approach that tackles the issues that cause homelessness

### **Partnership work**

The preventative approach to homelessness requires a reactive and holistic response and agile joint working is necessary both within the Council and through partnership working – including the Voluntary Sector - to achieve the best outcomes. The evidence of the review is that much of this partnership work needs to be re-developed following a reduction in co-working and that there is a need to facilitate new ways of working. The recent development of the Joint Protocol with Children’s Services defines how such an approach can work in the Council and this approach is now being extended to Adult Services. The linking up with voluntary sector providers will involve discussions with our partners to establish their preferred way of working and determine how the Council will fully re-engage in the delivery of the services.

**OUR CHALLENGE** The Council cannot resolve every issue on its own and will reinstate and prioritise partnership work in the borough.

### **Data collection**

The review has confirmed areas of weakness in the collection of information regarding our homelessness service particularly with regards to issues of vulnerability. As well as putting the Council’s credibility at risk, providing inaccurate information about our services increases the risk of losing vital funding that would be used to provide prevention and relief services to our residents.

**OUR CHALLENGE** To provide accurate and credible service information

## **5. Our consultation with residents and key partners**

As a part of the Council’s legal obligation to produce a Homelessness Strategy, we have carried out a consultation to ensure that the findings of our review are consistent with the views of residents and key partners. We have considered returns from over 180 people who responded to our homelessness survey of whom 20% had an experience of homelessness as well as over 160 comments received about the subject during the Housing Strategy consultation.

## Survey response.

Residents were asked to agree or disagree the main themes outlined below and to comment if they wished.

Theme	Agree %	Disagree %	Comments
Preventing homelessness	94	2	<i>'Current system too complex and confusing'</i> <i>'Service Unresponsive/Not accessible'</i> <i>'Gap in dealing residents with complex needs.'</i> <i>'Acting as a 'gatekeeper'</i>
Reduce reliance on the use of temporary accommodation.	94	3	<i>'Build hostels or complexes of temporary accommodation'.</i> <i>'Homeless not part of the community/Impact on Mental health.'</i>
Provide services to rough sleepers	79	15	<i>'Nobody should prefer to be on the street.'</i> <i>'Review support offer after refusal of service.'</i>
Manage our stock effectively and providing new and affordable social homes.	87	9	<i>'More social as opposed to affordable housing.'</i> <i>'Poor maintenance of existing affordable homes'</i>
Increase partnership working	87	11	<i>'Multi-agency approach needed.'</i> <i>'Invest more in mental health.'</i>

\* Remainder neither

### Comments from those who had experienced homelessness include the following:

*'When you are homeless, there are normally a range of other psychological issues you are facing. Mental health, other psychotic issues, Alcohol dependency. Drug dependency, personality disorders. Someone should be there to support/ help you'.*

*'Council support was not as helpful as needed. Offered rehousing in entirely different area of England at critical points of childhood. House was not fit for purpose. Temporary stay accommodation ..... in terrible condition which worsened the experience for children.'*

*'I didn't feel supported, staff were very abrupt. Not what you need when you're in a vulnerable position. Passed from team to team with not much information. Told one*

*thing by one team and a different thing by the next team. No support with finding private renting as the eligibility criteria is hard.'*

*Charities should not be the first point of contact and help. Homelessness and vulnerable people (within reason and understandably different if there are drink/drug issues) should be able to approach the Council 24/7 and receive help when it is truly needed.'*

## **Meetings with Partners**

The following meetings also took place.

- Croydon Communities Consortium – Online meeting with 26 residents in attendance
- Private Landlords forum - Two public events with 60 people in attendance
- Direct meetings with voluntary organisations including Family Justice Centre, Evolve Housing Association, St Mungo’s Housing Association, Crisis Skylight, Nightwatch and South London and Maudsley Trust.
- Council departmental meetings with Adult and Children Services

### **Summary of feedback from Voluntary Sector Partners**

<b>Health</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Single Homeless</b>
<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need.</i>	<i>Need to re-instate partners and Single Homeless Forum</i>	<i>Need to re-instate Single Homeless Forum</i>
<i>Need for the Council to engage with partners.</i>	<i>Council not adhering to commitments</i>	<i>Difficulty in getting referrals to the Council.</i>
<i>Housing not involved in strategic partnerships.</i>	<i>Give consideration to co-location/working of Council staff to ensure a more co-ordinated response.</i>	<i>Not sufficiently linked in with Council contacts in terms of referring cases or for SWEP cases</i>
<i>Need for preventative approach to homeless to curtail expensive hospital stays –costing 1.2m a year</i>	<i>Need for regular liaison- No Joint working with Council</i>	<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need.</i>

As a part of this consultation, three briefings were also held with Councillors.

## **Summary**

This strategy accepts the feedback it has had from those contributing to the review that it needs to reinstate the facilitating and co-ordinating role it should be taking in preventing homelessness and work effectively with its partner agencies.

Many representations from residents and partners were received with regards to a lack of customer care and responsiveness in the Housing Needs & Homelessness

service. Given the commitment to service excellence in the Executive Mayor’s Business Plan and the Housing Strategy, a specific action with regards to embedding these principles will be contained in the final agreed objectives.

## 5. Our Key Priorities

<b>PRIORITY ONE</b>
<b>Listen to our residents and provide good and responsive services</b>
We will extend the principles of the Residents Charter into the Housing Needs & Homelessness service.
<p><b><i>This includes...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop and agree customer standards for service users.</li> <li>◆ Complete and embed the Housing Needs Service structure including appointment to key posts.</li> <li>◆ Develop and deliver a comprehensive training programme to cover customer service, legal, technical, personal effectiveness, interpersonal and systems.</li> <li>◆ Review the quality and consistency of the advice offer-improve access to information and services for those threatened with homelessness in Croydon.</li> <li>◆ Develop and implement key performance indicators and a performance management culture.</li> <li>◆ Ensure those in temporary accommodation are regularly updated with regards to their housing situation.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Why is this important?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Our feedback during this consultation has been that the service is unresponsive to customers.</li> <li>◆ We need to set clear standards with regards to the services residents can expect to receive.</li> <li>◆ We will ensure that we embed a service culture in our re-organised service.</li> </ul>

<b>PRIORITY TWO.</b>
<b>Act at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness from occurring.</b>
Data provided to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shows that Croydon Council currently do not prevent homelessness from occurring enough compared to many other London Boroughs resulting in proportionately more residents being accommodated.



***This includes...***

- ◆ Consider how the advice offer in relation to the top three causes of homelessness (Private sector evictions, family and friend evictions, domestic abuse) can be strengthened and to enable greater resilience against homelessness. To include rights and signposting available help.
- ◆ Deliver Joint Housing/Social Care protocol for Care Leavers and review the local transitions offer.
- ◆ Review pathways and consider specialist support for homeless people with dual diagnosis of substance misuse and poor mental health.
- ◆ Develop protocol with hospital and review referral arrangements between Housing and South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust.
- ◆ Review the online customer form to improve accessibility.
- ◆ Review pathways and consider specialist support for homeless people with dual diagnosis of substance misuse and poor mental health.

***Why is this important?***

- ◆ Even in circumstances where homelessness is rising, Croydon is accepting proportionally more applicants into temporary accommodation than other boroughs.
- ◆ Effective advice needs to be available in community buildings for residents facing homelessness.
- ◆ We need to act as early as possible to prevent homelessness from occurring.

**PRIORITY THREE**

**Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation**

Homelessness is on the rise across London with some councils experiencing 15% increases in those needing accommodation. The cost of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast is high, and residents are often housed here for extended periods of time. We will use every endeavour to reduce the numbers of those housed in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast to ensure residents are provided with stable homes.

***This includes...***

- ◆ Challenge the acquisition of accommodation in Croydon used as temporary or settled accommodation by other boroughs.
- ◆ Develop clear standards and expectations in terms of move on from supported accommodation.

- ◆ Develop and agree a Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy which sets out the Council's approach in placing homeless households in various locations.
- ◆ Deliver the benefits of the dynamic purchasing system for procuring nightly paid temporary housing.
- ◆ Complete review of supported housing accommodation as part of the re-commissioning process.
- ◆ The Council will make strenuous efforts not to split families into different accommodation and where this is unavoidable every endeavour will be used to ensure that such periods are brief.

***Why is this important?***

- ◆ In a climate of rising homelessness, we need to obtain the best possible value for money when procuring temporary accommodation.
- ◆ We need to work with other Councils to prevent the procurement of temporary accommodation by other London Boroughs
- ◆ We need to be clear to applicants as to where they are likely to be situated when agreed for temporary housing

**PRIORITY FOUR**

**Reduce the numbers of people who are rough sleeping in Croydon.**

Approximately 15% of the rough sleepers assessed in the borough remain living on the streets after intervention, and it is key that we continue to provide them with support services. We will also work with partners such as Safer Streets to deter the minority of rough sleepers who cause anti-social behaviour.

***This includes...***

- ◆ Produce annual 'Ending Rough Sleeping Plan' targeting:
  - New rough sleepers
  - Long-standing rough sleepers
  - Returners to rough sleeping.
- ◆ Maintain performance on 'No second night out' – currently at 80%
- ◆ Re-tender service contracts funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant
- ◆ Work with Safer Street Partnership in reducing anti-social behaviour among some rough sleepers
- ◆ Agree protocols for how and when enforcement action regarding rough sleeping may be used

- ◆ Develop joint funding bids and initiatives to improve services to people sleeping rough

***Why is this important?***

- ◆ Croydon has the highest number of rough sleepers amongst outer London Boroughs.
- ◆ We are committed to tackling the rise in rough sleeping within the timescale of the strategy.
- ◆ We need to deter the minority of rough sleepers who are causing anti-social behaviour.

**PRIORITY FIVE**

**Managing stock and facilitating affordable, private rented and social housing.**

We need to manage our own stock effectively to ensure properties are re-let swiftly as well as intervene to maintain tenancies in the social and private sectors. In addition, we will work with our housing association partners to increase the supply of new affordable and social housing in the borough.

***This includes..***

- ◆ Achieve London Mayoral targets 2019 to 2028 - 2,079 per year /20,790 over 10 years and maximise affordable homes.
- ◆ We will develop a Regeneration & New Homes Policy which will set the strategic vision for borough-wide regeneration.
- ◆ Review and agree a revised Housing Allocations Scheme
- ◆ Carry out annual tenancy audits of Social and Temporary Housing and increase recovery action against fraud – 10% of council and 100% of temporary tenancies.
- ◆ Complete the regeneration of Regina Road.
- ◆ Drive up property and management standards in the private rented sector

***Why is this important?***

- ◆ Our projections show that there are insufficient affordable homes to house those on the housing register and that the supply of housing needs to increase.
- ◆ We will work to ensure that the borough's housing stock of all tenure is safe, fit-for-purpose and managed effectively.
- ◆ The younger age profile of our population means that we need a long-term strategy for delivering more homes.

## **PRIORITY SIX**

### **Re-set our partnership relationship with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to reducing homelessness.**

We need to work more effectively with partners to assist vulnerable residents so as to prevent homelessness.

#### ***This includes...***

- ◆ Restoring borough-wide liaison/communication with the voluntary sector.
- ◆ Increase joint working between partners including co-location between Council and voluntary sector staff.
- ◆ To develop the Housing Association Liaison Group
- ◆ Establishing a Private Renters' Forum and development of a Charter for Private Renters.
- ◆ Compile and keep up-to-date information regarding the organisations and services relating to homelessness in Croydon, including contact details and referral routes.

#### ***Why is this important?***

- ◆ Feedback from the voluntary sector, residents and staff is that the Council has disengaged from its co-ordinating role in tackling homelessness.
- ◆ In a time of reducing resources, we need to maximise the potential of a partnership approach.
- ◆ We need to improve upon the responsiveness of our services to residents and our Voluntary Sector partners.