

Homelessness Strategy, 2019-23: *Joining the fight to end homelessness*

Definition of homelessness:

Homelessness describes being without a place to call home – whether that means sleeping on the streets, a friend’s sofa or in a squat, or occupying accommodation which is temporary, unsuitable, or in which it is not safe to remain.

Why homelessness matters to the City of London Corporation:

The City Corporation is committed to a flourishing society, where people are safe and feel safe, and where they enjoy good health and well-being as outlined in our Corporate Plan for 2018-23. Our commitment is backed by a legal duty to prevent and relieve homelessness for some groups, and to secure a home for others. Its delivery draws on our public, private and charitable roles – and the strength of our partnerships across those sectors. Consequently this strategy commits to tackling all forms of homelessness.

Who we will work with:

Operational and strategic partnerships across and beyond the City Corporation are essential to realising the ambitions of this strategy. Internally this includes the work of the Department of Community and Children’s Services, the Department of the Built Environment, Town Clerk’s Department, the City of London Police, the Safer City Partnership and City Bridge Trust. Externally, we will work with our resident and worker population, businesses in the City, the health sector, services and policy makers in local, regional and central government and the charities, philanthropists and good causes we work with to tackle homelessness.

Our Vision			
<i>Homelessness is prevented, and where it does occur its impact is minimised and the resolution is rapid and sustainable</i>			
Our Aim			
<i>To provide the interventions, services and cross-sectoral partnerships to tackle the causes and impacts of homelessness in the Square Mile, and to deliver the range of effective and rapid responses necessary to secure a sustainable end to homelessness</i>			
Our Outcomes			
Homelessness is prevented <i>Links to Corporate Plan outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4</i>	Everyone has a route away from homelessness <i>Links to Corporate Plan outcomes: 1, 2, 3</i>	The impact of homelessness is reduced <i>Links to Corporate Plan outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10</i>	Nobody needs to return to homelessness <i>Links to Corporate Plan outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10</i>
Our Activities			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver specialist advice and prevention services Support social and private sector tenancies at risk Increase supply of and access to homes Address trigger points – e.g. hospital and prison discharge, domestic abuse (DA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of specialist outreach services Safe connections to places where homelessness can be resolved Provision of a pathway of emergency, hostel and other temporary accommodation Lobby government re unmet need (NRPF etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current service provision to ensure it is relevant and a commissioning approach is used to meet unmet need Lower the threshold for access to substance misuse treatment Health services are relevant and accessible Provide alternative giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specialist accommodation Ensure employment support Ensure tenancy sustainment
What success looks like			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No-one who seeks our support when at risk becomes homeless All those who are homeless on our streets have an offer that will end their homelessness No one has to live on the streets of the Square Mile Advice, information and support services enable prevention and access to secure homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well-resourced strategy delivered in partnership with a range of internal and external partners Improved health and mental health outcomes, including access to drug and alcohol services Better public awareness, understanding and engagement with homelessness and the City’s approach 		

Introduction

The purpose of this strategy

This strategy sets out the City of London Corporation's (City Corporation) vision, approach and commitment to tackle homelessness in the Square Mile in all its forms.

It aligns to and delivers the aim of our Corporate Plan 2018-23 for a flourishing society in which people are safe, enjoy good health and wellbeing and can enrich their lives and reach their full potential.

The strategy defines the outcomes we will deliver, and these will shape our decision making, service design, partnerships and resourcing. It will ensure our focus – and that of our partners and providers – remains on our vision that:

Homelessness is prevented, and where it occurs its impact is minimised and the resolution is rapid and sustainable.

The homelessness context

Homelessness describes being without a place to call home – whether that means sleeping on the streets, a friend's sofa or in a squat, or occupying accommodation which is temporary, unsuitable, or in which it is not safe to remain.

It is experienced by single people, couples and families with children. It can be a consequence of personal circumstances such as ill health and family breakdown, or wider issues such as unemployment, housing shortage and high housing costs.

It can have significant negative impacts on employment, education, health and wellbeing. In its worst manifestation – rough sleeping – homelessness can result in lasting damage to physical and mental health, and premature death. Homelessness also has significant costs to society and the public purse.

Homelessness presents most obviously in the City of London among those seen sleeping rough on the streets. However, our services also support those at risk of homelessness or who have lost their homes and who seek our help.

The scale and nature of homelessness in the Square Mile is driven by and echoes the issues beyond its boundaries. Many of those who seek our help are connected to the City of London through their employment. Those who sleep on our streets have invariably come to the City – whether from other parts of London or the UK, or from outside of the UK.

The opportunities to prevent and resolve homelessness, and the factors that drive this issue often lie outside of our direct control. Many of the solutions – most notably affordable housing – remain scarce.

Homelessness has increased nationally and regionally with the number of families and individuals approaching their councils for help because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. At just over 59,000, the number of annual homelessness acceptances were some 19,000 higher across England in 2016/17 than in 2009/10. With a rise of 2 per cent over the past year, acceptances now stand 48 per cent above their 2009/10 low point.

Due to the City of London's small resident community the number of applications for statutory support are few in comparison to other boroughs. In 2018-19 there were 87 approaches made to the City Corporation. Three households were prevented from homelessness and 4 households were

relieved of homelessness by ensuring they had suitable accommodation with a reasonable prospect of it being available for 6 months. There are currently 21 households living in temporary accommodation (TA)¹.

The number of people who sleep rough has also increased. The MHCLG Autumn 2018 Rough Sleeping Statistics report estimated 1,263 people sleeping rough across London on a single night – an increase of 13% on the previous year.

CHAIN² data reported that within the City of London there were 212 people sleeping rough in the quarter three of 2018/19. This is an increase of 41% since the first quarter 1 count.

Homelessness and safeguarding

It is important that the risks of living on the streets are not compounded by agencies failing to provide a timely and appropriate service response in the locality where a person is sleeping rough and is at risk of harm or abuse. There are a range of risks experienced by people living on the streets that expose them to a higher level of vulnerability to harm and abuse, these include: self-neglect, human trafficking and modern slavery.

People who sleep rough may have tenuous links with the locality where they sleep rough and if they have been moving around for some time, or are non-UK nationals, may not be able to evidence that they are ordinarily resident³ in any particular local authority. However, this does not detract from local authority responsibilities under the Care Act to make safeguarding enquiries irrespective of ordinary residence. Further, it is unlawful to refuse to assist a person who for reasons of immigration status may not be eligible for Local Authority services without undertaking a human rights assessment.

What we will do

Working in partnership

The City Corporation can only tackle homelessness by harnessing the strength of its relationships across public, community, charitable and private sectors. Therefore, in pursuing the delivery of our outcomes, the “we” refers to City Corporation services, outreach services, health services, the City of London Police, businesses and others. The City of London Corporation is uniquely positioned, as the financial and commercial heart of the UK, to extend our influence outside of the Square Mile’s boundaries. Where the City Corporation can use its influence to bridge gaps between organisations to support the City Corporation in fulfilling the strategy outcomes, it will do.

However, the work in delivering these outcomes must also be set within regional and national actions being undertaken. The Mayor of London’s aim set out in the London Housing Strategy for 2018 - 22, is to ensure ‘*a route off the streets for everyone who sleeps rough in London*’. The Mayor runs an £8.45m core programme of services, as well as major new services funded by £4.2m of additional investment secured from the Government in late 2016, and a further £3.3m in 2018⁴. These complement the services, including outreach and hostels, provided by many local authorities, and the work of those from the charitable, community, and faith-based sectors.

¹ Figure accurate as of May 2019.

² CHAIN is a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London.

³ Ordinary residence is not defined under the Care Act 2014, but usually means where a person lives. Sometimes a person is deemed to remain ordinarily resident in the area where they previously lived.

⁴ Mayor of London, Rough Sleeping Plan of Action, 2018, Appendix 2.

The 2018 Government Rough Sleeping Strategy underpins the national target to halve rough sleeping during this parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027. The Government's initial funding of £30m (of which London has secured over a third) and £100m secured in total for the next two years is a welcome step. The Government's strategy recognises the need to look beyond rough sleeping to ensure the entire system is working to prevent all forms of homelessness. This has been demonstrated so far through the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This Act fundamentally changes the way local authorities work to support homeless people in their areas, giving them new prevention responsibilities towards more people⁵.

The Mayor of London has also used the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action to call on Government to look again at some of its policies and legislation, such as welfare reform, and also to address funding gaps in services that are not specific to rough sleeping but have a significant impact on it.

Where the City Corporation is responsible, it will lead on the delivery of actions, and where partners are responsible, then it will work to co-ordinate and support delivery where necessary. The City Corporation will lead on monitoring the implementation of this strategy and reporting its progress.

We will also work with our local and regional partners to develop shared messages on homelessness in London, to inform public attitudes and understanding and to influence national policy.

Our outcomes

Outcome 1: Homelessness is prevented

Prevention ranges from early identification and intervention to crisis responses. Identifying those at risk can be challenging, as some may not approach specialist services or recognise the potential to lose their home. For that reason, it is imperative that the partners collaborating in the delivery of this strategy are able to identify risk and respond or signpost appropriately as early as possible.

It also requires the delivery of the enablers of prevention – stable and affordable housing, improved and increased employability, the ability to afford services such as transport, better health and wellbeing, and access to timely and effective information and advice.

This acknowledges that mental ill health, drug and alcohol support needs, prevalent within the rough sleeping community, can also be the reason a person faces homelessness to begin with.

Our activities

- provide a free, confidential and independent advice and information service for residents, workers and students in the City who need support with issues such as employment, relationships, benefits and housing.
- support and deliver approaches that address the risks of homelessness arising from safeguarding issues, hospital discharge and leaving care or prison.
- work collaboratively to support those with complex and multiple needs.
- support people to stay in their homes – whether in the social or private sector, including help to mitigate the impact of welfare reform.
- support investment, such as through the Local Plan delivery of s106 monies, to deliver new and affordable housing.
- increase access to housing of other tenures.
- increase availability of and access to a range of accommodation options to prevent homelessness.
- improve and increase employability through training, volunteering and employment opportunities, and providing specialist support to those most distant from the labour market.

⁵ See Homelessness Strategy 2019-23 Supplement for details on the HRA.

Outcome 2: Everyone has a route away from homelessness

For those whose homelessness is not prevented, it is imperative there is an offer of service and support that ensures homelessness is a temporary crisis. This requires rapid assessment and identification of the needs and circumstances of individuals and families in order to identify a relevant and effective response.

Not all of those who approach the City Corporation for assistance, or who end up on the streets of the Square Mile, will be able to access our long term services or accommodation. Their homelessness may be best addressed in an area where they have entitlement and connections. In all circumstances we will be clear about the support we can and will offer to provide a route off the streets, and ensure our partners work with us to enable that outcome.

Our activities

- improve access to and increase the range of assessment and temporary accommodation options.
- support reconnection into local services, and develop a clear service offer and approach focused on voluntary reconnection for those from European countries.
- collaborate with the charitable, community and voluntary sectors to maximise the range and impact of services to support those who are homeless.
- deliver local responses to prevent new rough sleepers spending a second night on the streets and work proactively and co-operatively with City of London assessment service and the pan-London No Second Night Out service.
- work with the business, faith and resident community to improve their knowledge of services, provide opportunities to support services, and develop shared solutions to rough sleeping and other homelessness.
- promote Street Link to provide an opportunity for the public and business to report concerns about rough sleepers.
- provide outreach coverage in the City with the capacity to respond every day of the week.

Outcome 3: The impact of homelessness is reduced

Those who find themselves homeless on the streets are intensely vulnerable to crime, drugs and alcohol and at high risk of physical and mental illness, and premature death (these can also be issues for those living in temporary accommodation for long periods of time). Rough sleeping can also have negative impacts on the wider community.

Individuals and households in temporary accommodation can be separated from formal and informal support networks. It can impact negatively on schooling, employment and access to health and support services. For local authorities the cost of temporary accommodation often far exceeds the financial support available to deliver it.

Our activities

- collaborate with partners to deliver physical and mental health services, substance misuse services and adult social care designed around the needs and challenges of those sleeping rough.
- deliver an accommodation pathway, including move-on options, with the capacity and ability to meet the varying and complex needs of rough sleepers.
- maintain an assertive and consistent approach to outreach working.

- discourage and disrupt begging and other behaviours that may sustain people on the streets, and those that cause nuisance.
- support those in temporary accommodation to participate fully in their community and access the support and services they require.
- commission temporary accommodation that provide quality, support and value.

Outcome 4: Nobody needs to return to homelessness

For people with specific needs (mental health or substance misuse), being away from their support system – whether that is formal or informal networks – can be a driving factor to return to the streets.

Good health, employment, social networks and community can contribute to the resilience that ensure people do not return to homelessness. As does the ability to secure and maintain a home that is affordable - especially for those on low incomes, or in receipt of welfare.

Our activities

- work with partner services, including local day centres, to ensure that those who have slept rough develop the skills, such as those focused on employment, to sustain life away from the streets.
- deliver a “housing first” pilot providing a route straight into housing for those entrenched on the streets.
- deliver on-going support through appropriate resettlement services, day centre provision or other interventions.
- work with faith groups and other communities to develop support structures.

Implementation

The City’s Homelessness Strategy will govern our approach until 2023. However, in a period of emerging policies and economic change, it is vital that it remains responsive. For that reason it will be underpinned by a separate action plan that will be refreshed annually.

It’s implementation will be overseen by the Rough Sleeping Strategy Group and reported to the City Corporation’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee.

There is a Commitment to data collection to develop baselines and measures to track progress against. We aim to measure the impact of this strategy over the short and long term, by collecting real-time feedback and high-quality data from those we work with, in order to assess fully their experience and perceptions of the quality of the interventions and activities they have been involved in.

Links to other strategies

This strategy is a key driver through which the City of London Corporation can fulfil its vision, as outlined in our Corporate Plan for 2018-23, of a ‘vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK’. The Homelessness Strategy will make key contribution to delivering the following outcomes of the *City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23*:

1. People are safe and feel safe.
2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
5. Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible.

This strategy also links to the following City Corporation strategies: Housing, Social Mobility, Joint Health and Wellbeing, Social Wellbeing, Alcohol, Safer City Partnership and the Local Plan.