

City of London Corporation

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2027

OUR VISION

When homelessness occurs - or is threatened - the strength of our response ensures it is brief, it does not re-occur, its impact on the individual and our communities is minimised, and it is prevented where we can act to do so.

The City Corporation's services and partners work to prevent or resolve the homelessness of those seeking our help – many of whom come to the Square Mile from other areas. Issues leading to homelessness may have arisen beyond our boundaries or ability to influence before we are approached for help, giving focus to our response to act with urgency and prevent crisis. Our services also respond to those who are homeless on the streets of the Square Mile – focused by a shared ambition with government to bring rough sleeping to an end. Whichever route brings people into our services, we aim to act swiftly and effectively with compassion, fairness and respect.

A PICTURE OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY

- With London's smallest population, the City Corporation also deals with the lowest number of approaches for homeless assistance – having a duty to assist 25 households in 2021/22 - and has the lowest number of households placed in temporary accommodation
- With 450,000 day time workers, it is unsurprising that the majority of those seeking homelessness advice, information and assessment are connected to the City through work
- In 2021/22 428 people approached the City Corporation for help because of the risk of experience of homelessness – an increase of 26 per cent on 2020/21
- 45 households were placed into temporary accommodation – an increase by a quarter from the previous year
- In the same year, 372 people were recorded sleeping on the streets of the Square Mile – the seventh highest level among London's local authorities
- Half of those sleeping rough are new to the streets – having no record of street homelessness anywhere in London
- 38 per cent of those street homeless have long term histories of rough sleeping, with some being very resistant to service offers and engagement
- 14 per cent of those sleeping rough had returned to homelessness
- The profile of those sleeping rough moved towards a younger, more complex cohort with higher support needs

OUR STRENGTHS

- A commitment to deliver comprehensive services that has been backed by a significant growth in funding by the City Corporation
- Quality services, co-located with social care, that deliver advice, guidance and assessment that is accessible through an inclusive range of channels
- Spot purchasing of interim accommodation allowing us to search in or as close as we can to the areas where a homelessness applicant last resided to help maintain links with support networks and services where possible
- Provision of specialist and enhanced services – such as a dedicated homelessness social work, enhanced tenancy sustainment and “Housing First” accommodation
- Integrated and tailored response to street homelessness that goes beyond accommodation to support those who sleep rough to sustain a life away from the streets
- The learning and success of our “everybody in” approach during the pandemic evolved into “an in for good” approach to prevent a return to the streets
- Successfully securing external funding and partnerships to strengthen our approach and expand services
- Committed partnerships with neighbouring local authorities, the City and Hackney Health and Care Board, City of London Police and the voluntary sector

OUR CHALLENGES

- Housing insecurity and homelessness is increasing, and the wider economic context would suggest this will continue in the period ahead
- Increasing demand places pressure on our services and budgets, and is increasing London wide competition for - and the cost of - temporary accommodation
- The diversity of need we respond to – including from those fleeing domestic violence, those from the LGBTQI+ community, those with uncertain migration status and youth homeless - is growing and more evident
- Secure, affordable housing options are severely limited and constrain the timely move-on from our hostel and interim accommodation provision
- Many of those homeless on our streets are very transient – moving across service boundaries and interrupting service interventions
- Housing solutions are predominantly beyond the boundaries of the Square Mile and the statutory remit of our wider services
- Access to primary care for those homeless on the streets is limited by location of provision
- Some of those homeless on our streets can be associated with anti-social behaviour or other criminality – as victim or perpetrator – causing concern to those who live, work in or visit the City
- Services that play a vital role in preventing homelessness and sustaining life away from the streets – including mental health services and voluntary sector services – are facing significant pressures

OUR OUTCOMES

The outcomes needed to bring about the vision of this strategy are:

1. **Rapid, effective and tailored interventions** minimise the duration of and prevent homelessness
2. Access to **suitable and affordable accommodation** is increased
3. **Collaboration and partnership** is strengthened and reaches across traditional boundaries
4. **Support beyond accommodation** secures wellbeing, improves employability and supports recovery

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The objectives below are those things needed to achieve the outcomes of this strategy

Rapid, effective and tailored interventions

- Work with those with lived experience of homelessness to review our services and design and implement service improvement
- Open a dedicated Rough Sleeping Assessment Centre in the Square Mile to provide emergency accommodation, and a safe place of rapid intervention and assessment
- Deliver a clear, consistent approach to protect those sleeping rough, our communities and our services from ASB and criminality ensuring our community feels safe for all
- Strengthen our communication to better support self-help, access to services, signposting and early intervention

Suitable and affordable accommodation

- Increase access to safe and suitable accommodation for specific needs groups including those fleeing domestic violence
- Develop a temporary accommodation procurement framework to secure a better and consistent quality of interim housing
- Deliver an attractive and supportive private rented sector offer increasing options and supporting move on
- Mobilise the high support hostel to deliver support to those with complex needs
- Expand the City's Housing First offer
- Develop new affordable homes to increase opportunities for those in housing need

Collaboration and partnership

- Strengthen system wide approaches – including health, policing, neighbouring authorities, outreach and accommodation providers – to manage complexity and vulnerability, and develop solutions around complex and transient clients sleeping rough

- Work with the City’s Business improvement Districts to better engage and inform the business community about the response to street homelessness and shape their potential to support our work
- Refresh our Youth Homelessness Protocol and implement a “positive pathways” approach focused on holistic support for the young person
- Strengthen engagement with health partners to ensure continuity of support and intervention for those most vulnerable
- Maximise the contribution commissioned drug and alcohol services, the City Advice service and psychology services to prevent and resolve homelessness
- Work with partners to make sure non-UK nationals with restricted eligibility for public funds have a clear pathway off the streets
- Work with the City & Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure partners co-operate and collaborate to safeguard vulnerable adults that are street homeless

Support beyond accommodation

- Secure a clinical space providing front door access to primary care in the City for those homeless on the street
- Enhance the scale and reach of tenancy sustainment to provide help when and where needed regardless of tenure or landlord
- Unlock the potential in the City to employ and train those who have or who are experiencing homelessness
- Utilise pan-London services to support those with complex substance misuse issues
- Strengthen and widen feedback opportunities to ensure the voice of service users shapes improvement and service development

WHERE THE STRATEGY SITS

This strategy is delivered in the context of legislative change – particularly the government’s commitment to fully imbed the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and its commitment to prevention, and the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

It aligns with the government’s strategy “Ending Rough Sleeping for Good” and with the City Corporation’s participation in the Mayor of London’s Life of the Streets Taskforce and its framework to address the wider determinants of rough sleeping with partners across the capital

In its delivery it supports the City of London Corporation to meet the objectives of its Corporate Plan, and is supported by the delivery of the Housing Strategy, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Safer City Partnership Strategy.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is agreed, renewed and monitored by the City of London Corporation’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Subcommittee. A detailed action plan will support the delivering of this strategy and refreshed annually.