

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024



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# Foreword

## Everyone deserves a place to call home, and yet hundreds of families are struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

The challenge of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is national and local. Despite Camden's pioneering work helping our residents to stay in their homes, more and more are finding themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Thousands more are temporarily sofa surfing with friends or family, squatting, or even sleeping on public transport. The reasons are many: austerity cuts, a broken housing market, and our location in central London with its key transport hubs.

Only by working together can we achieve better outcomes for people affected by homelessness in Camden. Over the past six months, we have talked to our residents, charity and voluntary organisations, businesses, council staff, housing providers and private landlords. You have told us what you think of our current work, and you have shared with us your ideas on how to improve. Homelessness is different for everyone, so this strategy has been developed with your views and stories in mind. It sets out our refreshed thinking, building on our strong track record and what we know works well.

We need to do our best to minimise homelessness. We will focus on prevention to identify and support those who are at risk of becoming homeless. We will also work within closer partnerships with private sector landlords, voluntary organisations, housing associations, among others, to help our residents to stay in their homes. A third of our residents now live in the private sector and we have made a special commitment in this strategy to improve the conditions, security, and affordability for those who are struggling to rent privately in Camden.

We will work more closely with service users to understand where their strengths are, and we will provide support to all who need it. We are developing a scheme to purchase 58 properties for use as temporary accommodation for

families. In addition we are redeveloping two of our own existing sites in Camden to provide new en-suite accommodation better suited to families' needs. We will also work collaboratively to remove the barriers to employment that homeless residents encounter and we will help them to access the skills and training they need to move into decent and better paid jobs.

Last year, we made significant investments into our fight against homelessness. We also won extra funding for our outreach, reconnection and safeguarding work, for a rapid rehousing pathway and for tackling rogue landlords. Our initiatives have to be sustainable and our work will not stop here. We will lobby Government to be able to build new council homes and genuinely affordable homes and will step up our campaign to achieve better conditions in the private rented sector.

This strategy is our response to our residents' call to action. It gives us the tools to make sure that everyone has a place to call home.



**Cllr Meric Apak** - Cabinet Member for Better Homes



**Cllr Nadia Shah** - Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

# Our priorities and actions

## Preventing

**We want to stop people from becoming homeless.**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Ensuring that information on housing options is easily accessible.
- Supporting residents facing eviction so that they can remain in their existing homes.
- Using data analysis to target our interventions at resident groups at highest risk of homelessness.

## Supporting

**We will support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness, helping them to recover and regain their independence.**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Providing rough sleepers with a route off the street.
- Accessing affordable accommodation in Camden or as close as possible.
- Where appropriate, supporting recovery and independence through a personalised, psychologically and trauma-informed approach.
- Working in partnership with Housing Associations, voluntary and community partners to make the best use of resources.

## Tackling the root causes of homelessness

**We will address the long-term root causes of homelessness in Camden.**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Building, planning and enabling others to build more.
- Working with landlords to find more affordable homes.
- Regulating the private rented sector.
- Using our existing social housing assets more effectively.
- Removing barriers to employment through training and education.
- Supporting voluntary sector and community groups to do more.

## Campaigning

**We will use our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, instability and homelessness.**

**We will achieve this by:**

- Urging Government for further freedom and funding to be able to build more.
- Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector.
- Pressing for changes in the welfare system.

# Leading the fight against homelessness

The London housing crisis threatens Camden’s social mix. It has already forced residents to move out of Camden to areas that are affordable to them while others who have remained are deliberately overcrowding themselves to be able to stay. Some are also living in substandard private rented accommodation rather than complaining for fear of retaliation, eviction and displacement. This threat is a call to action to everyone with the power to make a difference, however small. Camden 2025 and our Camden Plan inspire a new way of working, where Camden’s people, the Council and others come together to work differently to develop new solutions.

We are continuously analysing and reviewing homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough. We are now working with our communities and our partners to find long-term solutions to the housing crisis.

## In 2025, everyone in Camden should have a place they call home and nobody should be sleeping on the streets

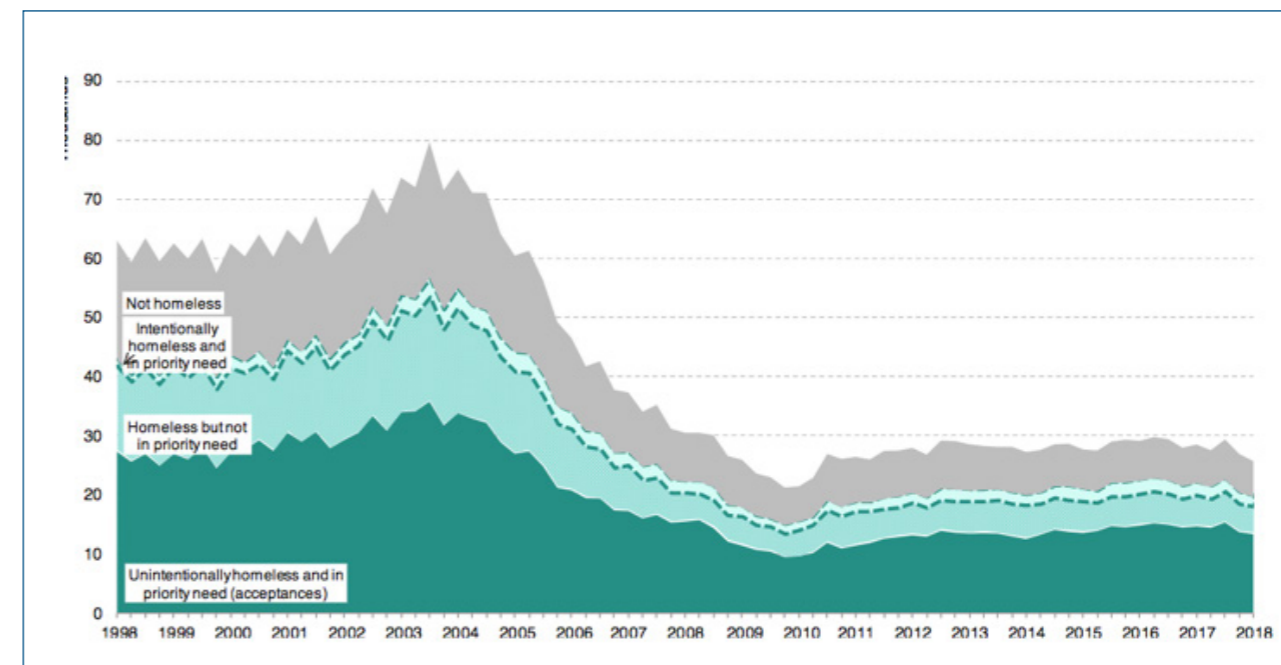
### As a local authority we will:

- Build as many genuinely affordable homes as we can as quickly as we can, and help others to do so as well. We will build more affordable homes than we have done in a generation.
- Make sure that everyone has a sustainable roof over their head or is on a pathway to achieving this, minimising homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Strive to make homes in Camden safe, well-managed and well-maintained, and make sure that people’s homes meet their needs. We will play an active role in shaping a private rented sector that works.
- Do all we can to help young people who have grown up here, or who have strong connections to the borough, to build their adult lives here.
- Support people to live fulfilling, connected and healthy lives, tackling social isolation and unemployment head-on.
- Focus on building communities that are mixed, with well-designed homes and infrastructure that encourage integration, cohesion and active lifestyles.

Camden has long been leading the way nationally in the fight against homelessness and rough sleeping and we will continue our efforts to make sure that everyone has a place they can call home.

**Camden as a local authority is committed to using its resources and creativity to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. We are determined to enable everyone to access a stable, secure and decent home.**

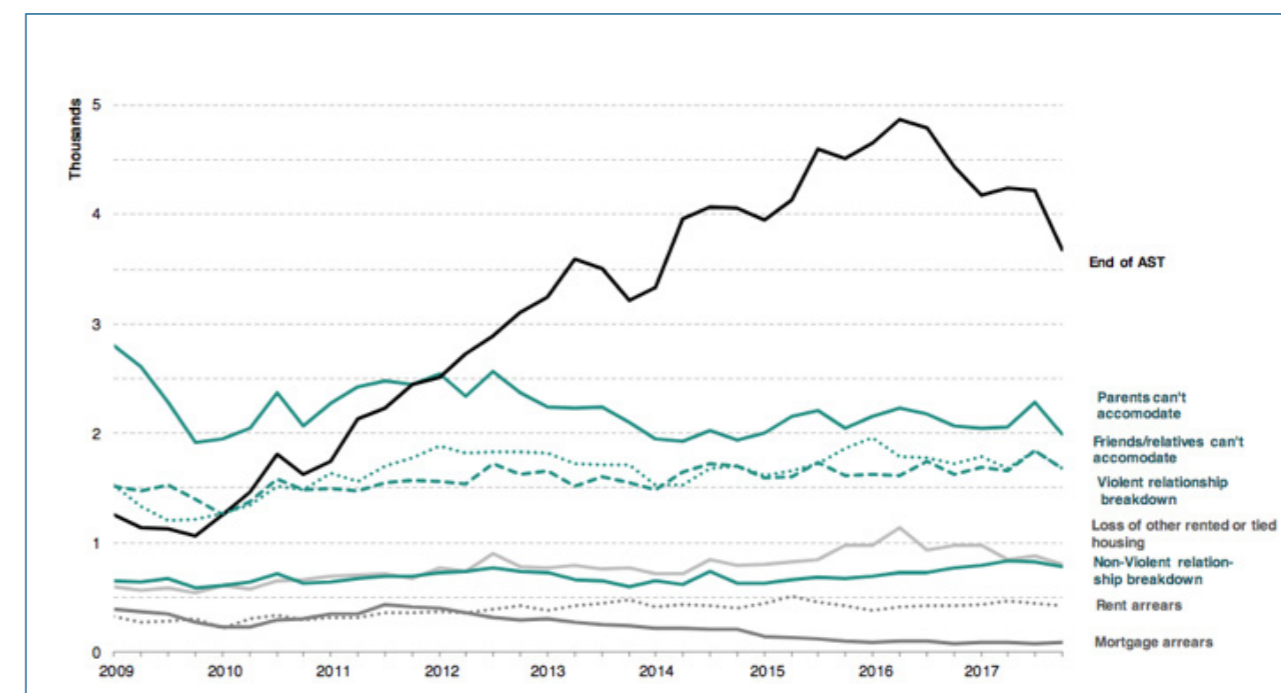
The challenge of preventing homelessness is nationwide, with particular issues seen in all major cities and in particular in London. Whilst homelessness has declined nationally from a peak in 2003/4, the numbers of households housed in temporary accommodation have slowly increased since 2011.



Source: MHCLG Statutory homelessness prevention and relief Quarter 1 2018

This increase can mostly be attributed to austerity and welfare benefit reforms since 2010. The ending of private sector tenancies has become the main single cause of homelessness in England, as the following table shows, and Government welfare reforms have contributed to making tenancies for claimants less affordable.

## Causes of homelessness 2009-2017



Source: MHCLG Homelessness Data Bulletin

## 1.1 Camden's current approach

The Council has the following policies and strategies:

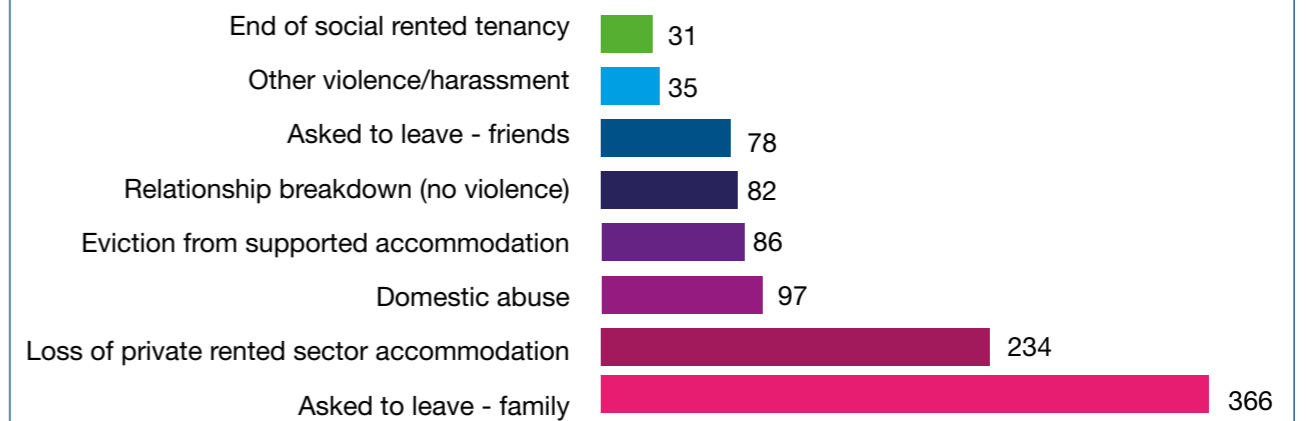
- **Camden's Housing Allocation Scheme 2016** (updated in 2018) sets out who can apply for social housing in the Borough (Council housing and housing association homes) and how we use social housing to help those most in need. The Scheme prioritises households at risk of homelessness who work with us to have their homelessness prevented. The Scheme also prioritises overcrowded households with children and those with a connection to Camden. The first two years of the Scheme had a considerable impact with a 35% reduction in the number of severely overcrowded households with children waiting for social housing ( 666 children in total).
- **Camden's Homelessness Accommodation Strategy** published in 2016 and updated in 2018 sets out the Council's approach to preventing homelessness by providing sustainable housing options (e.g. through suitable private rented sector (PRS) accommodation), reducing the use of temporary accommodation, and prioritising the Council's resources to tackle homelessness in the context of unaffordable housing. The Accommodation Strategy has been updated to align with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and renamed the Homelessness Accommodation Policy (See Annex 1).
- **Camden's Routes off the Streets Strategy** was published in April 2017 as a response to a significant increase in rough sleeping in the borough. The Strategy makes sure that all rough sleepers in the borough can access a service offer which means they no longer have to sleep rough and can start rebuilding their lives away from the street. The Strategy provides the framework for the delivery of street population services in the borough, identifies interdependencies and builds new partnerships to increase the impact, scope and quality of the services the Council is able to offer. It has been updated to align with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and is integrated into this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- **Camden's Homeless Young People's Protocol** was published in 2016 operating across the Council's services describing what support would be made available for 16 and 17 year olds who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. In 2018 the protocol was updated to incorporate statutory guidance in alignment with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 for 'Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.'

## 1.2 Our track record

We have a strong track record of working with residents and partners in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. We place a focus on personalised and holistic approaches to homelessness prevention and support, for example, an element of the support provided to vulnerable people in Adult Pathway hostels is to prepare them for move on accommodation.

Although the national picture points to evictions from the private rented sector as the most common reason for homelessness, in Camden, the most common reason is eviction by family, followed by the ending of private rented sector accommodation, and then domestic violence. The table below shows the most frequent reasons for loss of last settled accommodation before the client became homeless, following assessment - it does not include all reasons.

### Most frequent reasons for loss of settled accommodation in Camden 2018/19



As a result of Camden's prevention and support services, we have relatively few homeless households living in temporary accommodation in comparison to other London boroughs; 515 as of 13 June 2019. Numbers have risen in recent months. However, we continue to make effective use of the private rented sector and work with private landlords to support households at risk of homelessness into sustainable tenancies. Despite Camden being one of the least affordable places in the UK to rent or own a home, we have been able to reduce the use of temporary accommodation since 2005.

In 2018/19, of the 176 households helped to find accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS), Camden was able to help 54 households (42 families and 12 singles) find PRS accommodation in Camden, with a further 119 elsewhere in London. Only 3 households were found PRS tenancies outside of London. This is a significant achievement considering the continuing escalating market rent levels. To maintain this level of prevention and relief, Camden will need to continue to access a significant amount of private rented sector accommodation, and it is likely to become increasingly challenging to source over the next 5 years due to affordability and supply.



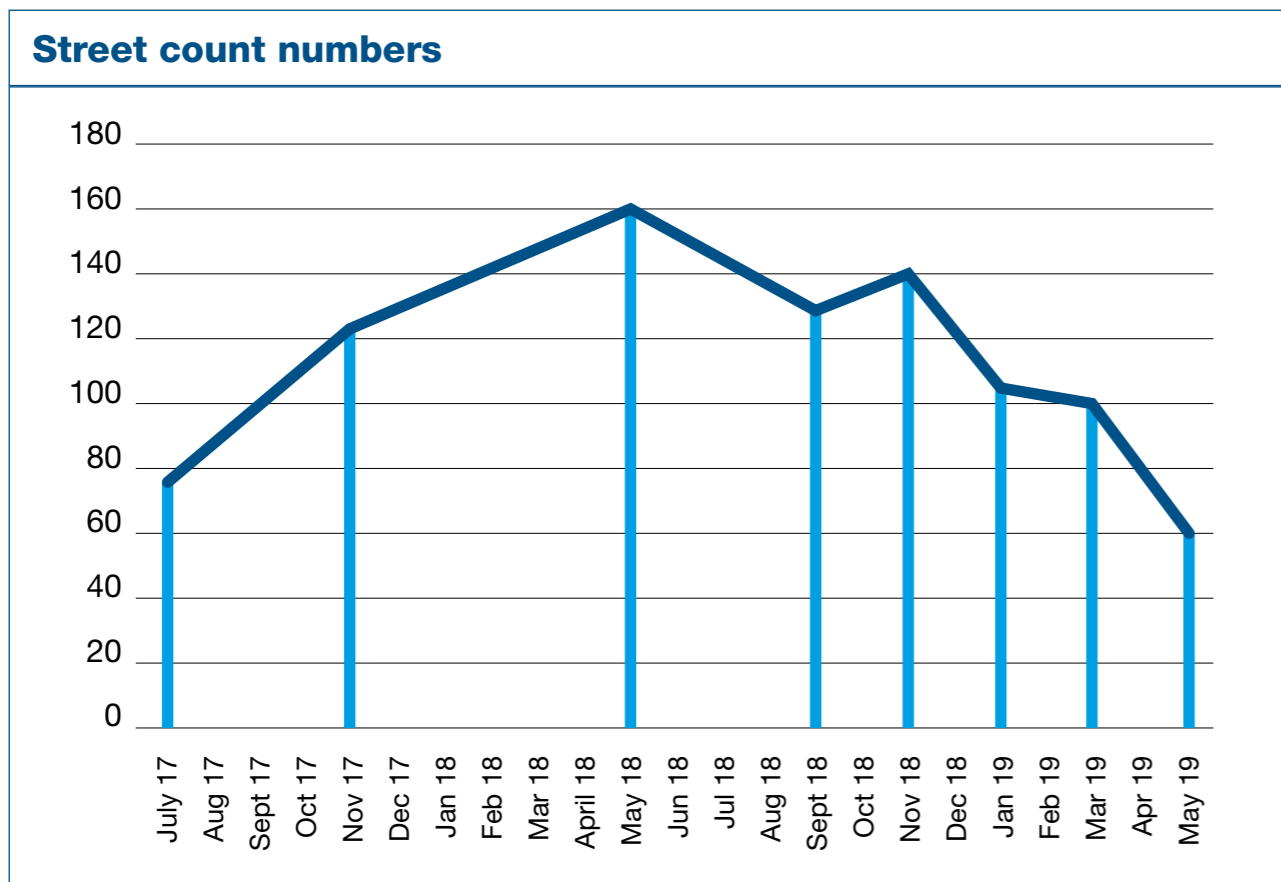
Rough sleeper - outside St Pancras International Station

### Camden's track record of tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

- Camden has so far built more than 862 new homes through our Community Investment Programme, including 351 Council homes. In 2017/18, we built 115 Council homes, more than the 44 we lost through Right-to-Buy.
- To date the Council has built 65 properties to let at Camden Living rent with three-year tenancies to middle-income households on incomes between £30,000 and £40,000.
- In 2018/19 Camden prevented or relieved 360 cases of homelessness. Of these, 71 households were supported to remain in their existing accommodation, and 169 households to access alternative accommodation, including in the private rented sector.
- The Council's Floating Support Service worked with 1,623 residents in 2018/19 and 192 in drop in surgeries. Of these 179 people were supported to access private rented sector accommodation or a social rented home. A further 26 residents were supported to undertake adaptations to their home to allow them to remain in their existing accommodation.
- Since 2010, Camden has reduced its use of temporary accommodation by over 30 per cent and uses bed and breakfast accommodation for families only in emergencies for no longer than 6 weeks.
- In 2004 the Government set a national target to reduce the total number of people in temporary accommodation to 2,000 by 2010. By 2010 Camden had exceeded the target and reduced the number housed to 676. We now have 515 households living in temporary accommodation.
- Camden's Adult Pathway provides 643 beds across 16 services for single homeless people with support needs, rough sleepers, people with substance misuse and/or mental health issues, offenders, and women escaping domestic violence and abuse.
- Each year, Camden's Adult Pathway enables around 200 single homeless people with support needs to move on to independent accommodation.
- Camden's innovative Housing First pilot successfully found tenancies for 12 homeless people with support needs and we will be extending this to 44 placements in 2019/20 from October 2018.
- In 2018 Camden was awarded £870,000 from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative to expand its outreach, reconnection and safeguarding work, the largest single allocation of any of the 83 local authorities which bid for funding.
- Camden works successfully with partners, such as the NHS, Camden's CCG, New Horizon, St Mungo's, housing associations, etc. in and outside the Borough and has a strong level of provision for the homeless within the community, voluntary and third sector services.
- Camden has commissioned a very complex needs (VCN) service to deliver wrap around support in a psychologically informed environment (PIE) for single homeless people with multiple disadvantage.

In 2018/19 2,228 households approached the Council for assistance with their housing. We have 515 households currently living in temporary accommodation (as at 13 June 2019), including 586 dependent children.<sup>2</sup> A further 643 single people live in our supported hostels and we help more than 150 households find their own accommodation in the private sector each year.<sup>3</sup>

Rough sleeping in Camden increased significantly since 2014, peaking in May 2018 with 159 rough sleepers counted on a single night and has decreased in May 2019 to 59 rough sleepers. Street counts are the Government's main measure of rough sleeper numbers and are an indication that Camden based delivery is having a positive impact. The reduction in rough sleeping since November 2018 is due to additional resources deployed under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant awarded to the Council and the recent mobilisation of the new Routes off The Street (RTS) service. Between January and March 2019 additional beds were also funded under the Government's Cold Weather Programme, enabling more rough sleepers to access sustained routes away from rough sleeping.



London Borough of Camden street count July 2017 - May 2019

Rough sleeping data is generated by the Routes off the Streets service working with rough sleepers in Camden on a daily basis and is input into the Combined Homelessness Information Network (CHAIN) database. CHAIN provides the most comprehensive record of rough sleeping contacts and service engagements and is London wide. The CHAIN annual report for Camden 2018/19 shows that rough sleepers continued to arrive in significant numbers, including new rough sleepers (known as 'flow'). In 2018/19 the street population services in Camden engaged with 815 rough sleepers, up from 784 the previous year. The data trend highlights the need for sustained investment to tackle the underlying causes and the long term issue of rough sleeping. Camden, along with its neighbouring boroughs, is uniquely impacted by rough sleeping due to its proximity to main transport hubs and street activity hotspots where vulnerable rough sleepers are quickly drawn into harmful scenarios.

About 45-50% of the rough sleepers in Camden are non-UK nationals, many of whom do not have recourse to public funds. Only 15-18% of rough sleepers have a local connection to Camden. The Council's Adult Pathway provides accommodation to those who have a local connection to Camden and recourse to public funds.

### 1.3 The challenges ahead

Having the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation in inner London means that the Council's services are often cited as examples of best practice nationally, but significant challenges remain from:

- The housing crisis
- Fewer social homes
- Benefit and welfare reforms
- New administrative burdens and duties from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### 1.3.1 The housing crisis

Camden's position in the heart of a global city with thriving economic, social and cultural communities means that it is an attractive place to live and the housing market is highly competitive. The London housing market is broken and property prices continue to rise increasing pressure for our residents in home ownership and the private and social rented sectors.<sup>1</sup>

In December 2017, the average house price in Camden was £819,339 – 3.4 times the average price for England & Wales and 1.7 times the average price for London. The average price for a flat or maisonette in Camden, which make up the bulk of the housing stock, was £740,526.<sup>2</sup> Those in the private rented sector in Camden also face some of the highest rents in the country, ranking 4th highest for median monthly rent (£1,820), after Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and the City.<sup>3</sup>

Around 32,700 households in Camden are private rented sector tenants and currently, around 10 per cent of these households claim housing benefit (3,691 households as of May 2018).<sup>4</sup> This underscores that the significant majority of the private rented sector is unaffordable to low-income households.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Brexit referendum, price increases in the London property market have slowed down, particularly in central London. We do not however expect this to significantly improve affordability in Camden. Uncertainty in the housing and employment market in the medium term has reduced new housing starts in Camden by 53% between 2016/17 and 2017/18.<sup>6</sup> This trend is expected to continue, particularly around buy to let homes bought for private letting. A shortage of private rented sector property is predicted expected which could result in a 15% increase in rents over the next five years.<sup>7</sup> This means that residents would find it more challenging to get into and remain in the private rented sector in Camden. The Council will also find it more difficult to access sufficient PRS accommodation in the Borough, which means that the number of households offered PRS accommodation outside of Camden is likely to increase.



### 1.3.2 Fewer social homes

At the same time, since 1981, 1.9 million council homes<sup>8</sup> in England have been sold under Right to Buy, with the number of homes owned by local authorities declining from 5.1 million in 1980 to 1.6 million in 2017.<sup>9</sup> Social housing lost through Right to Buy has largely not been replaced and many Right to Buy units are now in use in the private sector, much above the rent of social housing tenancies. Often councils have little option but to rent back old stock, as private rented sector units, at these higher rents in order to meet their statutory duties.<sup>10</sup> These increased rental costs are usually met by a combination of housing benefits (which have been reduced and capped), local housing allowances (which have been frozen) or discretionary housing payments, which impact on local authority finances.

Camden welcomes the Government's recent change in policy to lift the borrowing cap for local authorities so that councils can build more new social housing homes. Camden has actively and

successfully campaigned alongside the Local Government Association and other local authorities to achieve this and it is a significant step forward. However, the risk remains that new council homes will be built using public funds, only to be sold off at discount through Right to Buy a few years later. Unless the Right to Buy legislation is reformed or abolished, there will continue to be an ever decreasing supply of affordable housing stock and housing shortage will remain problematic.

The number of social housing lettings in England has continued to decrease. Local authority landlords made 112,600 lettings in 2016/17, decreasing by 7 per cent on the previous year and from 326,000 in 2000/1.<sup>11</sup>

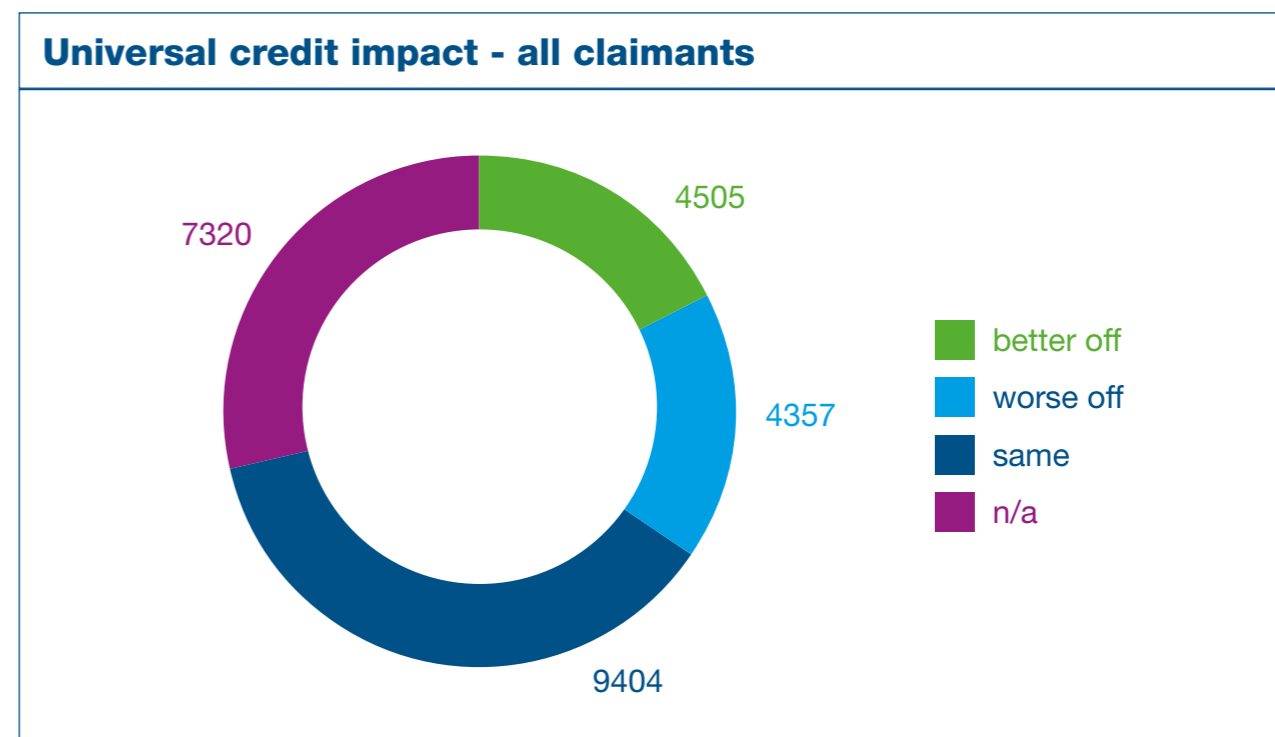
### 1.3.3 The benefit and welfare reforms

Austerity measures combined with welfare and benefit reforms, have had a negative impact on our communities and all forms of homelessness have increased in the UK in recent years. National economic and social policy will continue to have a significant impact on the levels of homelessness expected over the next five years:

**Universal Credit (UC)** is replacing income support, employment support allowance, income-based job-seekers allowance, housing benefit and tax credits. Universal Credit is now fully rolled out across Camden for those who make a new claim or have a substantial change in circumstances. There are now 4,297 UC claimants in Camden with approximately 400-500 new claims each month. The Department of Work and Pensions are aiming to complete the transition for all residents by 2023. However, the Government has to run a pilot and then pass legislation to allow for national migration of existing claimants so there are likely to be delays. Those who make a new claim before managed migration, and as a result are worse off, will not receive transitional protection (except the self-employed), whilst those that move as a result of managed migration will receive protection if they are worse off.

The chart below shows the potential impact of UC based on datasets as at end of March 2019. It is important to note that it assumes people claim UC before managed migration and therefore would not be entitled to transitional protection. This analysis includes the Government's changes that came into effect in April 2019 around new work allowances, tax and national minimum wage levels as well as changes to the way transitional protection will work. Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS) will 'run on' for two weeks in order to help people cope with the 5 week wait. This will be effective from July 2020. Self-employed households who move onto UC will receive transitional protection to cover any loss due to the application of the Minimum Income Floor for the first 12 months of their claims. This potentially affects 1,505 households in Camden and comes into effect in July 2019.

It is estimated that in Camden 4,357 households (17%) will be worse off under Universal Credit and of these 2,652 households with children (36%) will be worse off. The cost of transitional protection required to stabilise households moving onto Universal Credit is estimated to be £7.6m over the four-year period. There are 1533 council tenants on Universal Credit and 73% are in rent arrears. The total amount of rent arrears for tenants on Universal Credit is £1.3m with an average arrears of £1194. This compares to 39.6% of all tenants in rent arrears with an average arrears of £671.



Currently 25% of council tenants on UC are on an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) where their housing costs are paid directly to their landlord due to arrears. There are delays in payment to the Council from The Department of Work and Pensions by up to 2 months after tenants are told that Camden has been paid.

Other areas to note include:

- 1181 self-employed households would be impacted by the minimum income floor. This is where their earnings are below what the Government expects, based on the national minimum wage. Where this is the case, their entitlement to UC is based on what the government believes they should be earning and thus they receive less financial support.
- 2635 households would be subject to in work conditionality – this is where the Government believes they could earn more so they will be required to work with the Job Centre Plus to increase their earnings.

**Council Tax benefit** was replaced with local rebate schemes and local authorities have the discretion to provide help for working age people. Funding for local authorities to deliver these benefits has been cut by 10 per cent.

**Single person private renters** under the age of 35, are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate for Local Housing Allowance. This means that they receive housing benefit at the rate for a single room in a shared house, even if they are living on their own.

**The benefit cap** was set for all benefits excluding childcare costs, discretionary housing payments, one-off payments such as the social fund and free school meals. In Greater London, the benefit cap is currently at £442.31 per week (£23,000 a year) for a couple, or £296.35 per week (£15,410 a year) if single and no children.

**The spare room subsidy** ('bedroom tax') was introduced as a housing benefit restriction on social housing tenants based on family bed need. There are currently 909 households in Camden affected



by the bedroom tax, with 155 households experiencing a 25% reduction in their housing benefit for having a property with two bedrooms or more than they need.<sup>12</sup>

**A benefit freeze** was introduced in 2016 on the level of benefits and tax credit amounts until 2020 (including Universal Credit and those benefits being transitioned to Universal Credit). This has had a significant impact. Since 2010 housing benefit levels have not risen in line with private rents and the freeze means that most private rented sector tenants reliant on Local Housing Allowance will have an ongoing and increasing shortfall in their housing costs, an issue particularly acute in central London. The monthly shortfall is £612 for a two-bed home in Camden.<sup>13</sup> The shortfall in housing benefit increases the chances of households being evicted from the private rented sector and becoming homeless, as they are much more likely to enter arrears.

### 1.3.4 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

National governments have increasingly turned to councils to prevent, reduce and relieve homelessness.<sup>14</sup> The latest piece of legislation in this regard, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, places a duty on local authorities to provide anyone at risk of being homeless within a 56-day period with advice and support.

Prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018, around 110-120 formal homelessness applications were made each year – much lower than the London average and for comparable neighbouring authorities.<sup>15</sup> This was largely because of the effectiveness of Camden's early prevention approach and our ability to find suitable private sector accommodation. Camden did not routinely capture information on the numbers approaching the Council for assistance with the prevention of homelessness, prior to the introduction of the Act.

In 2018/19 Camden Council received 2,228 requests for assistance. The largest increase was in single person households who made up 68% of those applying for assistance. In some instances, the households were simply provided with information and advice.

The Council actively case worked 1,600 households in 2018/19, an increase of one third compared to the pre-HRA annual average of 1,200.<sup>16</sup> The Council prevented homelessness for 172 families and 270 single people – this included assisting 55 families and 28 single people to remain in their existing homes, and providing suitable alternative accommodation to 117 families and 242 single people. The majority of the remainder were supported with temporary accommodation.<sup>17</sup>

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) there is a statutory requirement to work with all people approaching the Council to assess and provide for housing support needs and complete a personal housing plan, but options for young people are limited due to the single room rate restrictions of housing benefit and Universal Credit. We are helping people by providing a casework service for advice and guidance on benefit exemptions to the single room rates, access to employment support, and low and intermediate renting, in order to increase affordable housing options.

The duty to refer, which is a statutory requirement within the HRA, has encouraged joint working amongst services where homeless households attend. We are committed to improving hospital discharges for homeless people and have expanded our outreach service so it is now delivering in University College London Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital.

### 1.3.5 Young People

Two-fifths of young people (16 to 25 year olds) have stayed with friends on floors or sofas for at least one night, while one-tenth of young people experienced this form of 'hidden homelessness' for more than a month.<sup>18</sup> However, only 1 in 5 young people present to a local authority about their homelessness.



Sofa surfers are part of the hidden homeless

One potential area for growth in homelessness in Camden is among young adults (over 18s) who entered temporary accommodation or a social rented tenancy as a child and have grown up in their parental homes due to being unable to access affordable housing. They may be living in overcrowded homes with their families and their families may eventually be no longer able to house them. In addition, non-dependent deductions under Universal Credit will mean that households with adult children remaining at home will have their benefits reduced by £70.06 per month<sup>19</sup> – Camden estimates that there are some 3,800 households in this position in the Borough.

### 1.4 Our Priorities

The new strategy consolidates Camden's existing approach to homelessness prevention and refreshes the policy framework to respond to the challenges we may face over the next five years. We have completed a review of the resources available to the Council and its partners to address homelessness, understand future needs and develop our priorities for action. The chapters that follow explore the following priorities:

1. Use prevention as the main principle of our homelessness system, making good quality housing advice available to everyone
2. Provide a full wraparound support to those experiencing crisis, providing them with psychologically informed recovery services that help them achieve and maintain stable housing
3. Understand the root causes of homelessness and deliver creative solutions including building new homes and maximising the supply of affordable housing in Camden
4. Use our voice as a civic leader to advocate for a national response to the challenge of chronic housing shortage and instability

# Priority 1 – Preventing homelessness

We are seeking to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of cases of homelessness successfully prevented.</li> <li>• Encourage interventions from public sector partners, community and voluntary sector organisations who are able to effectively advise households at risk of homelessness to approach the Council.</li> <li>• Work with residents, building on their own skills and strengths to develop their resilience and self-sufficiency in the long-term.</li> <li>• Move away from the need to use ongoing financial support to prevent homelessness by providing affordable sustainable housing options.</li> <li>• Improve the Council’s data and understanding of homelessness and how it is affecting particular groups including rough sleepers, young people, LGBT+ people, the mentally ill, women, and develop targeted action.</li> </ul>

We will achieve this by:	
<b>Ensuring that information is easily accessible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign Camden’s online homelessness webpage</li> <li>• Raise awareness of tenants’ rights amongst residents, regardless of tenure.</li> <li>• Publicise and promote the Council’s prevention services more effectively in an accessible format and encourage residents to contact us early and before a crisis.</li> <li>• Work with our public sector and community sector partners to develop a shared approach to signposting, referrals and homelessness triage.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing residents’ strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strengths-based models to increase resilience and prevent homelessness, based on a personalised approach focusing on social networks, education, employment, skills and training to improve life outcomes.</li> <li>• Use all levers to maintain people in their current homes, with discretionary housing payments being a last resort with an identified review and end date.</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewing the needs of our residents to improve services and target vulnerable groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and strengthen data collection to inform new service improvements.</li> <li>• Work with our partners to develop research and increase our insight into homelessness, including areas where we do not have sufficient data to direct policy and resources, or where the data is not always accurate or consistent. Examples include how homeless and rough sleeper deaths are recorded and responded to, and the pattern and experience of homelessness in the LGBT+ community and the Roma rough sleeper population.</li> <li>• Use the data we have to proactively identify households at risk of homelessness in the future – e.g. households who are transitioning to Universal Credit, young people in overcrowded social housing, etc.</li> <li>• Continue to prioritise prevention services for young people including care leavers, looked after children and unaccompanied asylum seekers.</li> <li>• Work with groups at risk of homelessness to provide them with access to tailored support early, such as BME, those who have experienced domestic or sexualised abuse or violence, people who have experienced slavery or trafficking, LGBT+, those with mental health conditions, travellers and people leaving prison.</li> </ul>

## 2.1 Ensuring that information is easily accessible

Prevention starts with information. Some households are aware of local authority statutory duties to intervene at the point of homelessness but fewer at-risk households are aware of the services the Council could provide to prevent homelessness. They are therefore unlikely to approach the Council before they are at or very near the point of crisis. We will provide accessible information and use a ‘no wrong door’ policy for housing advice in collaboration with our partners in the Borough.

## 2.2 Good practice example - Floating Support

The Council invests heavily in wider services to provide people with information, advice and expertise if they are threatened with eviction or requiring support to maintain a tenancy. Camden’s specialist Floating Support Team worked with 1,623 residents in 2018/19 (including through casework and surgeries). Of these, 82 residents were supported to access private rented sector accommodation and 97 were supported to access a social rented home. A further 26 residents were supported to undertake adaptations to their home to allow them to remain in their existing accommodation.<sup>20</sup>

Families typically receive this wraparound financial advice and housing support for up to 2 years, however this can be extended based on need. As a result of this, tenancy sustainment is high, with Camden achieving over 85% sustainment for those households placed in the final month of 2018/19.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.3 Developing residents’ strengths

Camden has a strong track record of homelessness prevention, including financial and strengths based interventions, such as adaptations and mediation – both with families and between landlords and tenants – to allow people to remain in their current accommodation.

Good practice example - Camden Family Group Conferencing	
	<p>Camden started using Family Group Conferencing (FGC) in 2001 and it is a key tool within the Camden Model of Social Work. FGC is a meeting in which a client and their network are stimulated to find solutions to an identified problem. The family group conference collectively develops a joint plan to address this using the strengths and resources available collectively through the public sector, community organisations and the social networks.</p> <p>Camden uses FGC in particular around children where there is a safeguarding issue and a question as to whether to take the child into care. Camden has very low numbers of children entering care, which has reduced 35 per cent since 2013 against a prevailing upward trend for England as a whole.</p> <p>Camden now also uses FGC with vulnerable adults to promote independence and meet unmet need within the family and community. In some cases this includes addressing homelessness. Family group conferences help improve life satisfaction, decreasing the mental distress associated with major life changes or trauma, reducing anxiety and depression, increasing emotional social support and increasing the social resources available to individuals to address complex issues.</p>

The Council makes significant financial interventions to help households remain in their homes and continue to live in Camden – most significantly through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and

Council Tax Reduction support. The average DHP award per household is £454 per month. Camden receives a grant from the Department for Work and Pensions to administer DHP. In 2017/18 the Council's grant was just over £1m, however this was cut by £114,000 to £886,380 for 2018/19.<sup>22</sup> The Council is awaiting further information on the award for 2019/20.

For those who are transitioning to Universal Credit we will continue to work with Job Centre Plus and the Camden Citizen Advice Bureau to support residents. Camden's Rents team will continue attending Kentish Town Jobcentre, one day a week by appointment to capture new UC claimants as they see work coaches to offer support and awareness of their rent obligations and opportunity to make a payment plan. Camden's Housing Benefit Teams are using the Landlord portal effectively and turning around verification requests daily to minimise any delays in processing claims. The new Landlord Services structure for the north of the Borough was implemented in June 2019.

## 2.4 Using data to improve services and target vulnerable groups

We will make further use of Council and partner data to identify groups likely to be at risk of homelessness to develop targeted action and improve prevention. The CHAIN data 2018/19 shows that 25 people seen rough sleeping in Camden had experience of serving in the armed forces, of whom 15 were UK nationals, 40% of rough sleepers had experience of prison and 12% had experience of being in care. There was no comprehensive data on homelessness among LGBT+ residents in Camden, however now we are recording more data on those who seek homelessness assistance from the Council as we provide everyone with personal housing plans including where Camden does not have a duty to provide housing. The Albert Kennedy Trust estimates that around 24% of homeless young people identify as LGBT and 77% believe coming out to their parents was the main cause of their homelessness.

We are already targeting specific groups, for example young people and those with mental health issues.

### 2.4.1 Young people

Camden has implemented a protocol operating across the Council's services setting an expectation of what support would be made available for 16 and 17 year olds who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our first response is to prevent homelessness by supporting families to stay together where it is safe and appropriate.

#### Camden Young People's Pathway and Looked After Children

Camden has a statutory duty under the Leaving Care Act 2000 to support care leavers, including supporting them to access suitable accommodation. Semi-independent accommodation is provided to looked after children, care leavers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people who are homeless within the Young People's Pathway. Each young person has a key worker who helps them to develop key life skills needed to live independently. When a young person has acquired these skills, their social worker or personal adviser can recommend that they are able to move on to independent tenancies. Camden's Young People's Pathway has been recognised as a model of good practice and our unique provision of accommodation with wrap around services for children and young people generates national and international interest.

There are currently 11 different services providing accommodation for 220 young people. Services cater for young people with mental health and complex needs and young parents. As at March 2019 6.5% of Camden's Looked After Children were in family and foster placements.



We support families to stay together if it safe and appropriate to do so

Status of young people in the Young People's Pathway	
Young People's Pathway (April 2019)	
Type	Number
Looked after children	38
Care leavers	168
Homeless 18+ year olds	11
Source – Camden Council internal data 2019	

A care leaver who was formerly an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minor (UASC) who was looked after by Camden may subsequently lose their leave to remain in the UK and will have no recourse to public funds. In these cases, their personal advisor will carry out a human rights assessment to establish whether withdrawal of leaving care support would breach their human rights. If that is the case the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service will continue to provide accommodation and subsistence for the young person until arrangements are made for settled immigration status or for them to be removed from the UK.

Where families who have no recourse to public funds approach Children's Safeguarding and Social Work services, a social worker will carry out an assessment to establish if the child is in need. Support can be provided to avoid breach of the family's human rights, whilst arrangements are made for the family to settle their immigration status.

There is an increased number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children who present in Camden for accommodation and support. On average 2.5 children each week are requesting a service. At the age of 18 years many of these young people's immigration status has not been resolved and so they remain dependent on the Council for all of their care, accommodation and support needs. Our present group of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people represents 31% of all of those in the Young People's Pathway.

Camden works with the New Horizon Youth Centre where support is given to 16-25 year olds, from hot food, showers, laundry and counselling to finding them accommodation, training and employment. In 2018 it supported 232 young people with a Camden connection or who were sleeping rough in the Borough.

New Horizon Youth Centre leads the London Youth Gateway (LYG) consisting of Shelter, Depaul UK, Stonewall Housing, Albert Kennedy Trust and Galop. The LYG is London Councils' youth homelessness commission, funded by its **Grants Programme**, and delivers services to prevent and tackle youth homelessness across each of the 33 London local authorities.

#### 2.4.2 Mental health

During the consultation respondents told us that more emphasis should be given to mental health in terms of both preventing and resolving recurring instances of homelessness. For example when patients have to be admitted to hospital or they are at risk of admission they can lose their home or hostel accommodation. Challenging behaviour caused by mental health can also make it difficult to provide appropriate supported placements. The action plan in Annex 2 builds on the work already being undertaken in this area.

The Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust will continue to employ dedicated Discharge Co-ordinators who work with people who are fit for discharge but are homeless to identify appropriate accommodation and support. It also funds the Focus outreach service to street homeless people and homeless people in hostels offering assessment, triage, signposting (if appropriate) and treatment for those who are mentally ill. The team offers advice and support to the Routes off the Street Team and hostel staff working with the mentally ill, helping them to formulate treatment and crisis plans. Practitioners can also go out with the Routes off the Street Team to make mental health assessments for rough sleepers.

The Trust will continue to work in partnership with the third sector including Mind in Camden, Mary Ward Legal Centre and Castlehaven Community Centre to deliver courses and tools provided as part of the **Resilience Network** to help residents look after their mental health and wellbeing. This includes services targeted at minority groups who are often underrepresented in mainstream mental health services.

Camden is redesigning the Mental Health Supported Accommodation Pathway which provides housing, support and transition to independent living for adults with severe and long term mental health who have lost their tenancies, and for people who would not be able to live on their own immediately after being discharged from hospital. The Council commissions 201 units in the supported living pathway with two levels of support services: high support, with staff available around the clock; and low support with staff available 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday (as well as weekends, if needed). The new model will also incorporate a more strengths approach to working with residents and make better use of assistive technology, such as smart phones and self-care. A Peer Support Service will be commissioned where people who have experienced mental health illness themselves support other residents, particularly during transition from supported accommodation into independent accommodation.

Camden will also work with partners to review mental health related data to maximise the benefits of collaborative working with a view to sharing anonymised data. The focus will be on prevention to help identify support for those who are homeless and where there is a risk/issue of recurrence.



Mental Health Supported Accommodation Pathway provides housing, support and transition to independent living for adults with severe and long term mental health

## Priority 2 - Supporting

**We will support those experiencing crisis, providing them with personalised independence and recovery services.**

### We are seeking to:

- Ensure that anyone at crisis point is able to access support, advice, advocacy and accommodation as quickly as possible.
- Continue to reduce the number of new households going into temporary accommodation by accessing sufficient affordable private rented sector accommodation.
- Reduce the numbers of individuals and households who are in temporary accommodation.
- Improve specialist services for rough sleepers who experience multiple disadvantage.
- Improve coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to:
  - Recognise the impacts of recurring instances of homelessness (including trauma) and act to prevent these where possible.
  - Make our temporary accommodation and homelessness services a safe and supportive environment for all, including those fleeing domestic violence.
  - Reduce social isolation and help develop resilient community support networks.
  - Help homeless households to make their own informed decisions about their housing options.

### We will achieve this by:

#### Tackling rough sleeping

- Continue the implementation of Routes off the Street
- Ensure the right advice, appropriate options and signposting are provided to rough sleepers when they contact the Council.
- Plan and deliver improved support to reduce rough sleeping using the funding awarded to Camden by central government to expand services.
- Integrate our street presence and police resources under an assertive ‘hotspot’ approach to divert vulnerable rough sleepers away from harmful scenarios and address anti-social street activity.
- Work more consistently with our neighbouring boroughs to tackle cross-border activity, prevent displacement and share information.
- Work at a borough level with charities and voluntary and community sector partners to develop new offers which help the most vulnerable and hardest to reach, especially female rough sleepers.
- Support campaigns which provide ways to give to rough sleepers.

<p><b>Accessing the right accommodation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelop two Camden owned hostel sites in borough with larger accessible studio/1 bed units better suited to families’ needs.</li> <li>• Develop a new single persons’ hostel at Holmes Road with 59 en-suite rooms as part of Camden’s Adult Pathway.</li> <li>• Purchase 58 properties which are in or have close proximity to the Borough for use as temporary accommodation for homeless families.</li> <li>• Access sufficient affordable private rented sector accommodation to be able to offer an alternative to temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• Continue the effective implementation of a Housing First model for our hostel residents.</li> <li>• Provide suitable temporary accommodation adapted for the needs of people with disabilities, ensuring access to specialist services, as required.</li> <li>• Continue to help people access affordable accommodation as close to Camden as practically possible.</li> <li>• Review accommodation and health support for people with high level mental health or challenging behaviours who can experience recurring homelessness e.g. those who have not been diagnosed, both in temporary accommodation and Adult Pathway hostels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting recovery and independence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a personalised move-on plan with face to face visits for every household that is in temporary accommodation, prioritising residents who moved in before 2016.</li> <li>• Audit of private rented temporary accommodation to ensure accommodation continues to be suitable, in a good state of repair and compliant with requirements.</li> <li>• Streamline and publicise repairs reporting process for residents in private rented temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• Review of temporary accommodation hostel staff roles to include more advice and support to residents in finding long term housing solutions.</li> <li>• Take a psychologically and trauma-informed approach to the delivery of homelessness services</li> <li>• For those with complex needs (including those in hostels and rough sleepers) develop services that are comprehensive and multi-agency, taking an individually-tailored pathway to secure housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working with strategic partners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with partners across the borough to support homeless people and make the best use of our resources and strengths.</li> <li>• Explore the opportunities to use different types of commissioning to improve the delivery of a range of homeless services including four people with complex needs.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for housing associations and strategic partners to offer private rented accommodation to homelessness prevention cases.</li> </ul>

#### Why these actions?

Unfortunately, homelessness cannot always be prevented. Consistent with our wider approach to delivering care to all residents outlined in our adult social care strategy ‘Supporting People, Connected Communities,’ the Council is committed to enabling all homeless residents to access the care that they need, to be independent, to have more choice and control, and be central to any decisions being made about their care.

### 3.1 Tackling rough sleeping – Routes off the Streets



Routes off the Street Hub, Greenland St, Camden Town

Rough sleeping is defined by the Government and for the purpose of rough sleeper counts as those who are sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, derelict boats, stations or ‘bashes’.

The Routes off the Street (RTS) strategy helps deliver the Camden 2025 vision that everyone in Camden should have a place they call home, with no one sleeping on the streets. Our Camden Plan 2018-2025 sets out a clear statement of intent to end street homelessness, address the harm and impact caused by street activity and tackle the inequality and multiple disadvantage experienced by homeless individuals and by those sleeping rough. This aligns closely to the Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy published in August 2018, setting out the Government’s vision to half rough sleeping in the UK by 2022 and end it altogether by 2027. The main themes and developments of the RTS approach are:

- Building new partnerships with VCS agencies to improve the scope and quality of the services the Council is able to offer, especially in relation to hard to reach cohorts including LGBT+ and female rough sleepers.
- Working together to prevent rough sleeping, build closer alignment with the Council’s Homelessness Strategy, and develop new solutions in collaboration with Public Health.
- Improving street based delivery and access to services for all rough sleepers in the Borough, including those with no former connection to Camden and those with no recourse to public funds.
- Developing pan-London services working with and lobbying the Greater London Authority (GLA) and MHCLG to access new funding opportunities for Camden, while ensuring there is a consistent and appropriate approach to tackling rough sleeping nationally and across the capital
- Working with the GLA, the MHCLG and our neighbouring boroughs to access new funding opportunities for Camden; while building a more consistent pan-London approach to rough sleeping with our strategic partners.
- Engaging pro-actively with our communities so people know the services that are available for rough sleepers and how they can help.
- Delivering an annual rough sleeping action plan which engages with community concerns and aligns to the Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

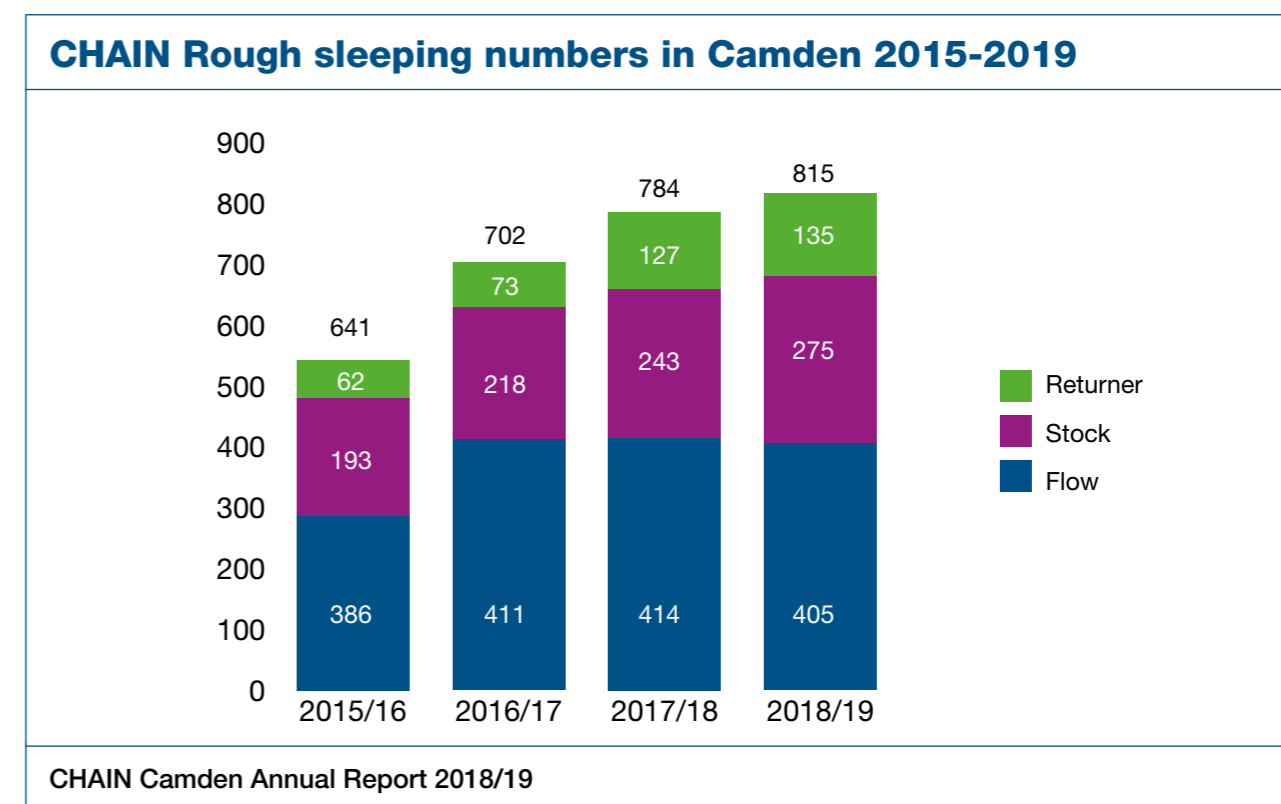
The most recent street counts indicate a 58% reduction from 141 in November 2018 to 59 reported in May 2019. Street counts are currently the Government’s main measure of rough sleeping and one of the ways the Government monitors Camden’s delivery of the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant. Although significant challenges remain, the bi-monthly street count data on page 8 is a strong indication of the inroads being made and the positive impacts of the RTS Strategy.

Additional time limited central government funding of £870,000 through the Rough Sleepers Initiative has provided resources to extend outreach to transport hubs, commission a new reconnection team where more individuals have been re-connected safely to their home area, expand Housing First, and deliver a specialist project for women at risk of rough sleeping. There is also an improved service offered to those with recourse to public funds, including employment initiatives.

However, rough sleeping increased in Camden by 40% between 2014 and 2018, peaking in May 2018 when 159 individuals were found sleeping rough in Camden on a single night and nearly 800 individuals were engaged in street based services over the year 2017/18. This trend is mirrored nationally where rough sleeping across the UK increased by 73%. This is due to a combination of austerity measures including benefits reform, economic migration and because local services across the UK, which help to prevent homelessness, have been cut.

The table below shows the number of rough sleepers seen in Camden from 2015 to 2019 with indications on length of time spent breaking it down as ‘Flow’ representing new rough sleepers, ‘Stock’ representing entrenched rough sleepers and ‘Returner’ representing former rough sleepers returning to the street. The data source is from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network known as CHAIN, a multi-agency database recording information on rough sleeper contacts throughout the year including from Camden’s street outreach teams. CHAIN is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by St Mungo’s. It represents the UK’s most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rough sleeping and published reports can be found on the [GLA website](#)

The two main methods of collating data about rough sleepers provide different indicators of rough sleeping. Street-counts provide single night snap-shots of people bedded down in Camden, while CHAIN data provides a more consistent and comprehensive record of street based contacts over each year. In 2018/19 CHAIN data shows that Camden based services engaged with 815 rough sleepers.



Camden consistently has the second highest number of rough sleepers of any local authority area in London and the third highest in the UK.<sup>24</sup>

**Table showing London boroughs with the highest number of rough sleepers (CHAIN 2018/19)**

Highest Numbers	Borough	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1	Westminster	2857	2767	2165	2,512
2	Camden	641	702	784	815
3	Newham	260	396	418	612
4	City of London	440	379	348	441
5	Southwark	372	318	309	435
6	Ealing	287	243	358	382
7	Lambeth	445	355	279	363
8	Tower Hamlets	395	445	375	316
9	Heathrow	241	200	52	283
10	Islington	158	178	176	276

The proximity of the main transport hubs such as Kings Cross and Euston, is a key factor in attracting new rough sleepers to Camden who continue to arrive in the Borough from parts of the UK and other countries. In addition to this Camden experiences high levels of street based drug activity, drawing rough sleepers into harmful scenarios, generating crime and disorder and negatively impacting on communities and businesses in the Borough. The areas of highest concentration of rough sleepers are the transport hubs, the Euston corridor and Warren Street, Camden Town and the West End.

These significant trends have led to rising demand for borough based services that support rough sleepers and also presents new challenges, particularly where the majority of new rough sleepers arriving on our streets have no former connection to the Borough, and around half of all rough sleepers have no recourse to public funds.

#### Developing and mobilising the Routes off the Street Team

The Camden Routes off the Street service (RTS) was commissioned in May 2019 to provide an integrated specialist outreach service 7 days a week, with the following objectives:

- Ensuring all rough sleepers in the Borough access a service offer which means they no longer have to sleep rough (known as a RTS offer) and can start re-building their lives away from the street.
- Sustaining and developing services which re-connect individuals to their home area or home country in a planned and supported way.
- Delivering the multi-agency RTS hub at Greenland Street, Camden Town, where rough sleepers can access a wide range of co-located support services including housing advice, legal advice, access to employment and training and agree an action plan.



Routes off the Street Hub (for rough sleepers) – Greenland St, Camden Town

- Ensuring drug and alcohol users are able to access treatment services appropriate to their needs and circumstances.
- Improving access to primary health care for rough sleepers.
- Working collaboratively with the specialist Focus mental health team to ensure that rough sleepers who experience mental health issues can access appropriate treatment.
- Reducing anti-social street activity through working in partnership with the Police and the Community Safety partnership.
- Developing new solutions with our strategic partners for those living on our streets with no recourse to public funds, including the transient Roma population.
- Integrating the RTS team, Council patrol and police neighbourhood resources under an assertive location based 'Hotspot' approach, designed to tackle entrenched street activity and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Supporting the delivery of £1.4m of new services for rough sleepers in Camden under the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI).
- Working in partnership with the Adult Pathway to promote the inclusion of hard to reach groups, reduce street activity and prevent rough sleeping.

RTS delivers tailored solutions for all rough sleepers, linking clients to appropriate services and housing in their home area, accessing treatment options where appropriate and supporting those rough sleepers who are seeking employment. The team work with all rough sleeping cohorts including those with a local connection to Camden, those without a local connection to Camden, and those with no recourse to public funds. The RTS team is comprised of the following elements:

- An assertive outreach team working on the streets of Camden 7 days a week, engaging rough sleepers, and diverting them away from street activity.
- A 24/7 hotline to receive reports of rough sleeping in the borough and a rough sleeping reporting APP
- Specialist substance misuse workers, funded by Public Health to engage chaotic drug users rough sleeping in the Borough.
- A Streetsafe community engagement function ensuring that RTS respond to community concerns about street activity and use the information to target resources.
- An Adult Pathway coordination function which promotes inclusion, reduces anti-social behaviour and prevents rough sleeping for clients with complex needs.
- Lead roles within the team for female rough sleeping, young people and LGBT in order to develop support networks with partner agencies.
- A collaborative and flexible resource working alongside specialist services commissioned under the Camden Rough Sleeping Initiative programme, providing specialist outreach workers for the Camden Hotspot Team.
- Working with rough sleepers to prevent them from spending a second night out, in partnership with the GLA funded No Second Night Out project and Camden's Homelessness Prevention Service.

RTS is reliant on information from the public in order to support rough sleepers. Rough sleeping referrals can be made by calling the 24/7 free-phone 0808 8000 005, via email [RTSDuty@cgl.org.uk](mailto:RTSDuty@cgl.org.uk) or via the Camden Streetsafe app which you can [download here](#).

#### Working with partners to target hard to reach cohorts and develop new offers

Only around 15-18% of rough sleepers in Camden have an established connection to the Borough.<sup>25</sup> Rough sleeping in Camden represents a highly transient displaced population, moving between geographical areas and disengaging from services. Of rough sleepers contacted in Camden 45% are non-UK nationals, many of whom do not have recourse to public funds and this trend is mirrored across London. Service offers for those with no recourse to public funds include supporting them to return safely to their home country, working with the innovative Routes Home service funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA). The development of the RTS Hub has also provided new opportunities to offer more support for migrant workers seeking employment in the UK.

A large proportion of rough sleepers are Romanian (mostly thought to be from the Roma community). They currently represent 27% (219) of rough sleepers in Camden. The Council will carry out research to improve understanding of the Roma street population to identify and develop interventions that will reduce rough sleeping, trafficking, exploitation, street activity, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding concerns. Work is underway to create an employment interface, based at the RTS hub which links Roma migrant workers living on Camden's streets to legitimate employers working with the Association of Labour Providers.

New voluntary and community sector partnerships are being galvanised under the MHCLG Cold Weather Fund Programme. During the last quarter of 2018/19 the Outside Project and Somers Town Community Association delivered a specialist LGBT+ night shelter supporting those at risk of rough sleeping to stay off the street and ensured that service users accessed the support they needed. The success of this project led to the funding of a pan-London LGBT+ project in a more sustainable way, based in a former fire station and funded by the GLA for the next 12 months.

Camden's successful participation in the RSI has also enabled the innovative Housing First model to expand in the borough, providing 14 additional homes for former rough sleepers with complex needs.

**Addressing the complex support needs of rough sleepers**

People experiencing homelessness often have multiple complex needs associated with co-morbidity such as poor physical and mental health, substance misuse and contact with the criminal justice system. Those experiencing multiple disadvantage can fall through the gaps between services and systems, making it harder for them to address their problems and lead fulfilling lives.

Not all rough sleepers disclose all the issues and traumas which led them to the streets and in many instances accessing services for the first time is the beginning of a recovery journey. Notably however, around 90% of rough sleepers in Camden have significant issues relating to addiction, 49% have mental health support needs and 46% have support needs relating to physical health.

The Homeless Link Health Needs Audit (2016) demonstrates that rough sleepers are:

- 2.5 times more likely to have asthma.
- 6 times more likely to have heart disease.
- 34 times more likely to have tuberculosis.
- 50 times more likely to have hepatitis C.

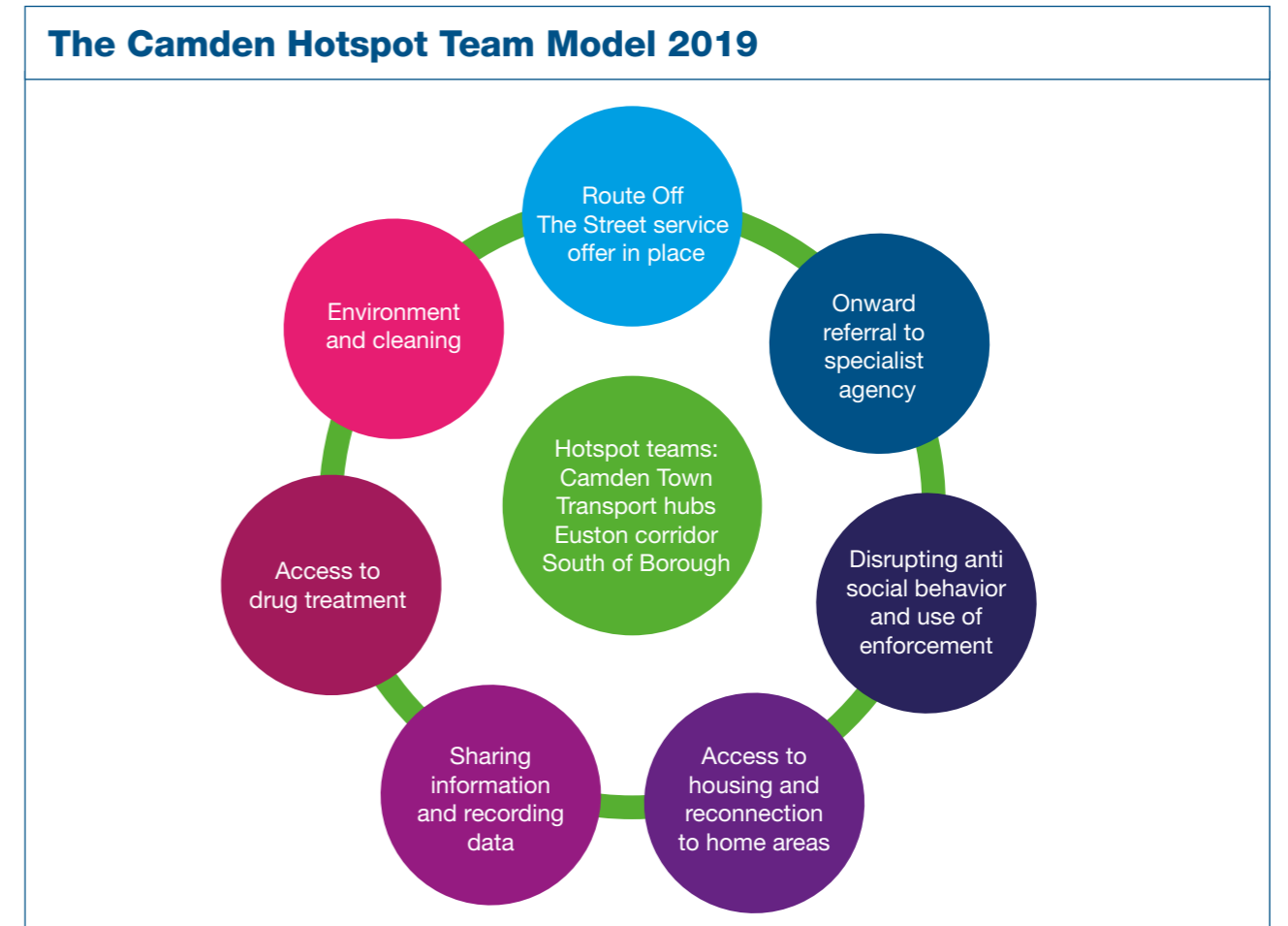
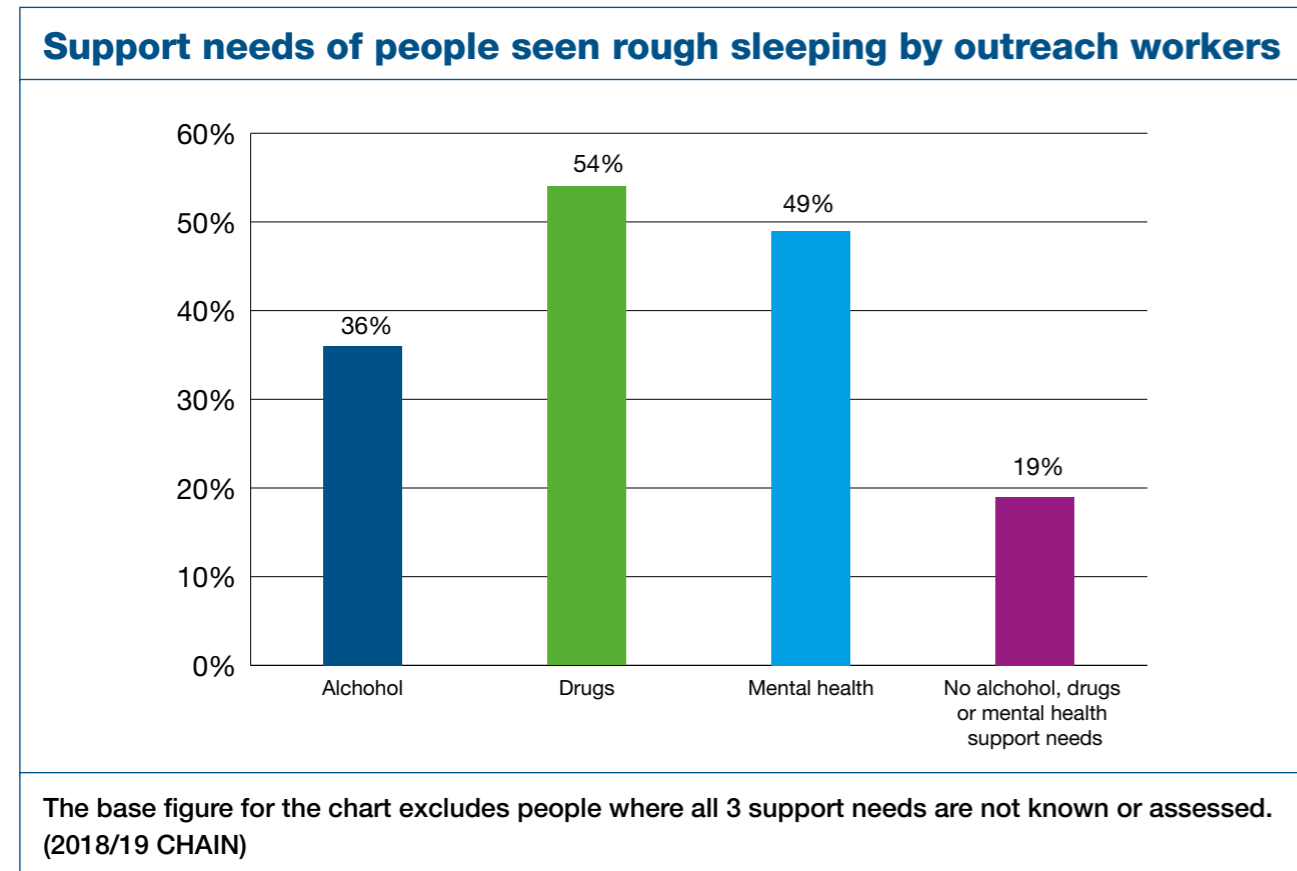
Substance addiction tends to be higher in Camden than in other boroughs due to the availability of drugs on Camden's streets. This presents a significant challenge to service delivery due to the propensity for new rough sleepers being drawn quickly into harmful scenarios and for returning rough sleepers to become entrenched at known hotspots across the borough.

The development of the RTS Hub in Greenland Street provides a safe and stable environment for co-located partner agencies including:

- Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) – rough sleeping service navigators.
- Groundswell – Health advocacy and support to attend appointments.
- Camden Health Improvement Practice (CHIP) – GP and nurse.
- Integrated Camden Alcohol Service (ICAS).
- Access to treatment Pathways for class A drug addiction via the Margarete Centre.
- Podiatry and dental clinics.

In addition the RTS Hub will offer support for the following needs:

- Support to access employment, including support for the Roma community.
- Praxis- Legal advice particularly tailored for migrants.
- Connect Forward- intensive support for those re-connecting to their home area.







King's Cross Station

Rough sleeping is concentrated at geographical hotspots in Camden and across central London, due to the proximity of the main transport hubs, the prevalence of class A drugs on our streets and the opportunities for begging due to the high footfall. The principle areas of concern are:

- The transport hubs.
- The Euston Corridor and Warren Street.
- Camden Town.
- The West End.

Increased street activity in these hotspots has had a negative impact on the lives of residents and businesses in the Borough as well as on the individuals themselves.

The Council responded to this challenge by investing around £1m over 2 years in the assertive Camden Hotspot Team (CHT) model from April 2018, following a 3 month pilot project. The investment enabled 3 new assertive multi-agency hotspot teams to be formed comprised of Police, Community Presence Officers and specialist outreach workers. A further investment of £340,000 was received under the Council's Rough Sleeping Initiative grant, endorsing the innovative approach being taken by Camden and creating a new team intervening at transport hubs where street activity is highly concentrated and new rough sleepers are at immediate risk.

In recognition of the innovative approaches being taken by Camden Council to tackle rough sleeping, in June 2018, the Council was awarded £870,000 from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to expand its outreach, reconnection and safeguarding work, the largest single allocation of any of the 83 boroughs which bid for funding. In addition to this the Council was recently awarded £420,000 as early adopters of the Rapid Re-Housing Pathway (RRP) model. New resources being made available under the RSI and RRP schemes are as follows:

- A specialist hotspot team working at transport hubs in partnership with British Transport Police.
- Expansion of the Camden Housing First service.
- Expansion of the safe-space approach to supporting women in the Adult Pathway.
- A specialist re-connection team, 'Connect Forward.'
- A personalised budget fund for complex cases requiring bespoke support.
- Additional floating support officers working with rough sleepers referred to PRS schemes.
- Additional resources to secure PRS properties to increase the through put of individuals through the Re-Housing Pathway scheme.
- Rough sleeping navigators working with complex cases in partnership with Islington Council.

In 2018/19, 25 people seen rough sleeping in Camden had experience of serving in the armed forces, of whom 15 were UK nationals. Time spent in the forces could have been at any point in the person's life, and it is not necessarily the case that the person has recently been discharged. Members of the armed forces (or ex-forces) must not be disqualified from local authority housing registers by any local connection criteria. Camden ensures members of the armed forces are exempted from such disqualification and receive "additional preference" through the awarding of 50 additional points under the Council's allocation scheme.

The average age of a rough sleeper at death was 43, nearly half the UK life expectancy.<sup>26</sup> Safeguarding Adult Reviews will be conducted when a person who sleeps rough dies or is seriously harmed as a result of neglect or abuse, whether known or suspected. In 2018, the Government highlighted that across the UK there were no Safeguarding Adult Reviews conducted into deaths. Part of the reason was that there was no consistent method of counting rough sleeper deaths. Although Camden has its own process for counting rough sleeper deaths, it is proactively working with partners to improve consistency of approach and is piloting internal reviews (not SARs) on all hostel and rough sleeper deaths.

### 3.2 Accessing the right accommodation

To identify housing that it is stable, decent, affordable, accessible, and as close to Camden as possible, the Council needs to be able to approach private sector landlords with a compelling offer. The Council also needs resources to address rent shortfalls where households have a need to remain in their current home or in Camden. As budgets are cut, the Council's ability to find suitable accommodation locally will become more and more challenging. Although the Council will continue to seek to place people in or as close to Camden as practically possible, it is envisaged that due to a lack of affordable housing supply, private rented sector tenancies will increasingly have to be made out of borough as is currently the situation, and in some cases out of London (see Homelessness Accommodation Policy at Annex 1).

#### Good practice example - Camden Housing First

In 2011, the Housing First model was piloted in Camden – the first of its kind in England. The model developed in Camden was aimed at people with multiple disadvantage who had been living in hostels for 3 or more years and were unable to sustain independent living without intensive support. Housing was sourced first, followed by indefinite support to sustain it. These residents usually had extremely high rates of problematic drug use, mental health problems and poor physical health. The Housing First model uses scattered ordinary private rented accommodation and a mobile team of specialist support workers to provide intensive case management. The housing was usually small one-bedroom or studio flats.

The outcomes of the pilot were independently reviewed by York University who found that of the original 13 placements, only one tenancy failed. There was clear evidence that the pilot was delivering housing sustainment for chronically homeless people who had never or only rarely lived independently. The tenancies were directly held by the individuals, and there was improved engagement with mental and physical health services. There was also a reduction in anti-social behaviour amongst the Housing First cohort.

The Council's current Housing First service is provided by St Mungo's and delivers housing and tailored support to a complex cohort of 30 individuals with multiple needs and a rough sleeping history. The service works with individuals over a longer term (2 to 3 years minimum) towards an objective of independent living and due to the intensive case-work model this entails, is operating at full capacity. Funding awarded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to the Council in June 2018 has enabled us to increase the capacity of Camden Housing First by 14 beds.

Strong tenancy sustainment statistics demonstrate the strength and appropriateness of the Council's approach of assisting people to find private rented accommodation. 81 per cent of households supported to find accommodation in the private rented sector in 2016 remain in these homes in 2018, with the largest reason for leaving the tenancy being accessing a social rented home through choice-based lettings.<sup>27</sup>

Camden has a higher proportion of households who have lived in temporary accommodation (TA) for longer periods than the London average. 29% of Camden's households are 'long stayers' who have been in temporary accommodation for 5+ years (150) (though this has reduced from 45% (230) in September 2014). Fifty three households have been in temporary accommodation for 10 years or more, and 97 for between 5 and 10 years.<sup>28</sup> Temporary accommodation is not an effective replacement or alternative to a social or private rented tenancy. In some cases, it is more expensive to the household than those options.

The London School of Economics was commissioned to research the experience of families in temporary accommodation, their barriers, aspirations and priorities to inform how we can improve our services and develop a flexible offer to households that meet their needs. The findings showed that many homeless people, including long stayers, did not always understand Council processes, housing options and the likelihood of accessing social housing. As a result each household in temporary accommodation will have regular face to face visits, with interpreters where appropriate, to explain their points and housing options available (with some direct offers of council property being made when appropriate). The roles of temporary accommodation hostel staff are being reviewed to explicitly include more focus on long term housing advice to support residents. An audit of temporary accommodation private sector annexes will be conducted and the process for reporting repairs will be streamlined to ensure that temporary accommodation is suitable and continues to be suitable for those placed in the private sector, particularly for those who have lived there for a long time.



Belmont Hostel

Respondents to the strategy consultation and those families who participated in the temporary accommodation research expressed concern about TA placements out of borough and the impact of confined space on their children's development. There is a strong preference for temporary housing options to be in Camden with good access to local schools and family networks. The following strategic initiatives respond to these concerns.

The Council's current portfolio of temporary accommodation for homeless families has an oversupply of small units, resulting in a high rate of unoccupied rooms and spot purchasing of expensive nightly paid annexe units outside of the borough. Camden will develop temporary accommodation in the borough so that it better meets the needs of homeless families. A proposal to end a costly lease on a large hostel and redevelop two of the Council's existing hostel sites has been approved by Cabinet as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The new 90 studio/1 bed units will include wheelchair accessible units and be better suited to families' needs as they will be larger than existing hostel provision.

We are also developing a new single persons hostel at Holmes Road with 59 en-suite rooms as part of the Camden Adult Hostel Pathway which is due to open in 2020.



Holmes Road Hostel

In addition the Council will purchase 58 properties up to a value of £22.1m using a combination of 30% applied Right to Buy receipts (the maximum permitted under Government rules) and 70% HRA borrowing. These 1, 2 and 3 bed units, targeting former Right to Buy properties, will be in or have close proximity to the borough for use as temporary accommodation for homeless families, and rented at rates covered by Housing Benefit/Universal Credit.

As part of Camden's Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme, there may also be opportunities within the Council's stock to refurbish long term void units in serious disrepair for use as TA where it would be uneconomic to do so as General Needs stock. Refurbishment of voids will also be considered provided that the cost of refurbishment does not exceed the purchase price.

Camden is continuing to place a high proportion of households in Camden or in neighbouring boroughs. This is a significant achievement considering the continuing escalating market rent levels and will be an increasing challenge to maintain in the next five years.

There is an established community of travellers in Camden that have lived here for over 20 years and we recognise this community has longstanding connections with local social networks and services. The Council will protect the sites we provide from change to alternative uses, unless they are replaced by equivalent or improved sites, plots and/or pitches in suitable locations, or are demonstrably no longer needed. The Council will also seek to plan for the existing and future accommodation needs of Camden's established traveller community.



Therapy Room Arlington Road Hostel

### 3.3 Supporting recovery and independence

For residents supported to find accommodation in the private rented sector, the start of their tenancy includes a period of floating support to help them settle, access broader income maximisation and be referred into wider services.

For some households, homelessness cannot be entirely prevented or addressed through the provision of accommodation. Many will require a range of support services to sustain tenancies, recover from traumatic experiences including domestic violence, address financial hardship, access therapeutic mental and physical health care, ensure they are obtaining the correct benefits and welfare support and help engage with training, skills and employment provision. Therefore, within a complex system of support, with generalist and specialist services available for homeless and rough sleepers, advocacy and casework support will be important, particularly for those who might have difficulty engaging with mainstream services. Camden has a number of key advocacy and support organisations working to support vulnerable individuals and households, including our Camden Advice Partners and Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC).

Camden has high quality psychologically informed crisis intervention and support services for vulnerable households, including floating support and Camden Safety Net (domestic violence) services. There is, in particular, an ongoing need to coordinate support around the person, rather than viewing separate needs through separate professional lenses. Camden is already pioneering the development of psychologically informed service environments and strength-based approaches across its Adult Pathway. This now includes a specialist complex needs service with a psychologist within the staff team.

Camden has women-only provision within the Adult Pathway and works with partners to support single homeless women. If Borough resources are exhausted or not suitable, Camden's street based outreach service will refer single homeless women to the Green Room, a pan-London emergency

### Good practice example – Camden's Adult Pathway

Camden provides hostels and supported accommodation for single homeless vulnerable adults through its Adult Pathway. Camden is a borough with a historically high level of hostel and supported housing provision – we provide 643 beds across 16 services for single homeless people with support needs, rough sleepers, people with substance misuse and/or mental health issues, offenders, and women escaping domestic violence and abuse. The services are delivered by housing associations, voluntary organisations and the Council itself. Each resident has a dedicated key worker supporting them from assessment to move-on on their journey to independence.

Each year, Adult Pathway services enable around 200 single homeless people with support needs to move on to independent accommodation and these services have been an essential part of the Council's homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategies for over 10 years. As well as accommodation, Pathway services provide support that is tailored to meet the individual and increasingly complex needs of residents, who are helped to progress towards independence. This is done by engaging with the services relevant to their needs and taking up opportunities or pathways to employment, training and education.

service funded by Government and currently provided by St Mungo's in Westminster. Camden also supports the WiSER project, again funded by Government, which is a partnership of charities specialising in working with women and girls experiencing violence or abuse and severe or multiple disadvantage. Typically the women they work with will have been excluded from mainstream services and are challenging to engage. The aim is to provide assertive outreach to 20 women across four boroughs, including Camden, in a gender and trauma informed way.

In partnership with St Mungo's, Camden has developed Women's Safe Space, a gender sensitive and trauma informed approach to supporting women with multiple disadvantage living in Adult Pathway hostels, based on a project initiated in 2015 to help women exit street sex working.



St Mungo's Therapy Room, Endell St - also used as part of Women's Safe Space

Women at the Well is a third sector self-referral drop-in service based at King's Cross, dedicated to supporting vulnerable women whose lives are affected by or at risk of being affected by sex work. It provides specialist support to women seeking to exit sex work such as outreach, signposting and advocacy services with independent sexual violence advisers. Most women who use the service have multiple and complex needs including cyclical drug and alcohol abuse, mental health support needs and sleeping rough. They are involved in street based sex work, trafficking or modern slavery or have experience of domestic abuse, sexualised violence and exploitation. Many women have experienced problems with the criminal justice system and have no recourse to public funds. It offers hot meals, showers, laundry facilities, arts and crafts activities, health and wellbeing treatments, and supports access to training and employment. The charity works closely with Camden's Adult Pathway and homelessness services.



Women at the Well garden



Women at the Well arts and crafts room



Women at the Well wall hangings

As part of a cross-Council review of domestic violence support, partners in the community and voluntary sector stated that housing and accommodation concerns are one of the major challenges for victims as they seek safety. Safe refuge accommodation is becoming more difficult to access due to overstretched refuge providers, and this challenge is more pressing for migrant women and women with insecure immigration status or no recourse to public funds.

In 2018/19 there were 2,339 domestic violence related crimes reported in Camden (Camden MOPAC 2018/19). This does not include non-crime related incidents. Camden's Safety Net service provides support services for anyone experiencing domestic violence in Camden. The Adult Pathway commissions a 25 bed refuge service for women and children within Camden as well as outside of the Borough.

Camden has dedicated staff working with prisons and the Probation Service to identify suitable housing options depending on individual circumstance and risk for ex-offenders when they leave prison. The primary housing option for those with support needs is the Adult Pathway, accommodation and for those with low support needs, suitable private rented accommodation will be

offered. In 2018/19 136 housing referrals or enquires for offenders were processed from a variety of sources.

There is not a prison within the London Borough of Camden, although HMP Pentonville is in neighbouring Islington. The prison employs two full-time 'no fixed address' workers to support



St Mungo's IT Room, Endell St

prisoners approaching release who would not have a home to return to. They also employ one specialist staff member to support anyone who has a tenancy sustainment issue whilst they are in prison. The Council has good relationships with the resettlement staff.

In response to requests, Camden Human Resources service is using a tailored jobs and application/interview approach similar to the approach used for people with disabilities to recruit homeless people into Camden Council jobs. Camden employs an Education Training Employment Coordinator for the four in house single person hostels, three of which are part of the Adult Pathway, who signpost and support service users to employment and training opportunities. The Adult Pathway external providers also have an employment and training offer. There have been some very positive success stories with job outputs such as an NHS nurse who completed training and is working in a hospital and a chef who qualified as a professional trainer and is now teaching others.

Further research will be carried out into understanding the barriers and the nature of demand for education, training and employment.

### 3.4 Working in partnership

Camden's priorities and actions align with the London Housing Strategy.<sup>29</sup> Camden is a member of the North London Housing Partnership, a strategic umbrella organisation that brings together housing and homelessness managers working within 6 north London local authorities. The 6 boroughs look at how to make best use of their housing stock and have a strong track record in successfully applying for funding to deliver front line services where service gaps have been identified.

Housing associations play a significant role in addressing homelessness by making nominations to vacant properties available to the Council and providing hostel accommodation and services as part of the Adult Pathway.

Camden has joint and integrated commissioning arrangements with NHS services. We have also established the Homeless Health and Care Network to address health related challenges identified by local providers and commissioners, and have oversight of all the work being undertaken in this area. Progress of the network's action plan is monitored at the monthly Camden Cross Council Street Population Working Group, which also identifies opportunities for joint working. Additionally, Camden and Islington's Clinical Strategy 2016-21 promotes health and wellbeing by considering mind, body,

family, friends, community and environment. It is recognised that housing is an important part of environment and impacts on both mental and physical health. The strategy also seeks to tackle substance misuse and mental health issues – which are common to many people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Camden has a range of vibrant health, community, voluntary third sector and social enterprise services, providing support to homeless households including both those in temporary accommodation and rough sleepers and those experiencing housing instability:

- Camden Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) based in the Margarete Centre offers primary health care sessions and dental care. It provides assistance to people sleeping out or living in temporary accommodation, including asylum seekers and refugees.
- UCH Find and Treat service – providing medical treatment and vaccinations to the street population.
- Groundswell Homeless Peer Advocacy focusing on physical and mental health issues.
- Focus Mental health outreach and care coordination service to support street homeless people and those in hostels.
- Routes off the Street Hub (formerly known as the Spectrum Centre), an assessment and referral centre for single rough sleepers also creating new pathways to employment.
- Camden drug and alcohol services: provide outcome-focused and person centred drug and alcohol treatment to support recovery.
- Fulfilling Lives in Camden and Islington, to support those with complex needs.
- Barka UK working on reconnection with Eastern European rough sleepers.
- Doorstep Homeless Families Project delivering space and resources for children to play located in the Abbots and Levine Hostel.
- London Irish Centre providing care and community support to the Irish community.
- The London Pathway providing an integrated health service for rough sleepers at UCL Hospital.
- C4WS – network of churches providing shelter, food, mentoring, housing, welfare and immigration advice, jobs club and drop in.
- New Horizon Youth Centre - supporting homeless 16-25 year olds, from hot food, showers, laundry and counselling to finding them accommodation, training and employment.

- St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre – championing the role of community centres using buildings to help the homeless and chairs the cross sector Urban Alliance.
- Change Please – social enterprise providing housing, training and employment for homeless people.
- Holy Cross Centre Trust, a day centre for vulnerable and marginalised adults, including refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Studio 5, Arlington Road Hostel – Creative Arts Workshop open to adult pathway homeless people.

Camden has a strong track record in supporting people to leave acute hospital care into their homes or an appropriate residential placement. Camden works closely with the largest hospitals – University College Hospital (UCH) and the Royal Free. Camden also supports a dedicated post which provides outreach within St Pancras and Highgate Hospital Mental Health Units. This supports people transitioning out of in-patient mental health care. The Homeless Prevention Team attend regular pathway discharge meetings with University College Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital to provide patients with a temporary home and support to help prevent them being discharged onto the streets.

SHP, a specialist voluntary sector organisation, has clients who have reported that they are unable to access mental health support when they present with multiple issues including insecure housing, complex trauma, substance misuse and mental health. Consequently, when in crisis they present at local hospitals – but often may not be admitted or are admitted only for short periods and then discharged with relatively low on-going support. This creates a revolving door and can put people at risk of homelessness. SHP is piloting and evaluating a dual diagnosis model aiming to reduce Accident and Emergency presentations and linking people into coordinated support in the community, focussing on prevention.



Camden works with Job Centre Plus centres, through a trailblazer project supporting people to access housing advice alongside employment support. This includes taking referrals directly as part of employment coaching to holding weekly outreach services with housing options services.

Camden Citizens Advice Bureau has been delivering 'Universal Credit Smart Money' since just before the borough-wide roll-out of universal credit in December 2018. Between

November 2018 and March 2019, they supported 177 people through a dedicated helpline, evening sessions and outreach at 5 Pancras Square, Kentish Town Jobcentre and Kentish Town Library with appointments available at main CAB offices as a pilot. From April 2019, Camden CAB are offering a new service – Universal Credit Help to Claim. Whilst they are now only being funded by the Government to support the claims process, they are connecting claimants with wider issues (debt, money management, housing etc.) into CAB and other organisations' services to ensure a holistic support offer. They are continuing outreach at key locations and have developed effective referral mechanisms for other advice workers to use to ensure people can connect with CAB support.

The Urban Alliance is a collaboration of businesses, Central St Martins University, transport, voluntary sector organisations and Council representation and is chaired by the Director of Somers Town Community Centre. The group came together with the aim of delivering research, projects, services and opportunities for homeless people around Kings Cross, in response to the increasing numbers of homeless people. They will be working proactively to get more businesses involved in delivering activities by active networking. Their work can help Camden to redesign services where appropriate, improve outcomes and promote effective use of funding for homeless services and interventions.



The Margarete Centre – South Camden Drugs Service, Camden and Islington NHS



St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre & Studio 5 creative arts, Arlington Road, One Housing

# Priority 3 – Tackling the root causes of homelessness

**We will address the long-term root causes of homelessness in Camden.**

**We are seeking to:**

- Increase the supply of Council, housing association and Camden Living rent homes in the Borough.
- Increase the supply of private rented sector homes at rents at or below the local housing allowance level.
- Play an active role in shaping a private rented sector in Camden that works for tenants, landlords and for the community.
- Help homeless or residents at risk of homelessness to work (or develop in their current roles through training and skills), to access decent work that helps them remain or access affordable accommodation in the long-term.

**We will achieve this by:**

<b>Building, planning and enabling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to maximise the amount of genuinely affordable housing in the Borough through working with developers and through our Community Investment Programme.</li> <li>• Explore the use of prudential borrowing to build new social housing.</li> <li>• Continue to invest in our hostels and to improve the quality and support in our Council-owned and commissioned temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• Expand the Council's Camden Living (local authority housing company) rent offer.</li> <li>• Encourage Local Lettings Plans on new developments to include the allocation of social housing to homeless households.</li> </ul>
<b>Working with landlords</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with private sector landlords and owners to bring empty homes back into use.</li> <li>• Start the Compulsory Purchase Order process when a home has been left empty for 2 years, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Encourage more landlords to make affordable accommodation available to households in receipt of benefits including through advice and support.</li> <li>• Encourage landlords to increase length of tenure to provide stability and security to tenants.</li> </ul>

<b>Improving the private rented sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to review, renew and continue the Council's Additional Licensing scheme.</li> <li>• Continue to work with representative groups and structures that allow tenants and landlords to voice their concerns and provide a key communication channel for the Council e.g. the Camden Landlord Forum and the Camden Federation of Private Tenants.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with government, the GLA, Valuation Office Agency and other organisations to get a fit for purpose and reliable public dataset on private rents and annual rent uplifts, to seek to influence national future rent policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Using our existing social housing assets more effectively</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve void turnaround times in the Council's housing stock.</li> <li>• Continue engagement with tenants under-occupying Council homes, to ensure that we are making the most effective use of our housing stock to address overcrowding.</li> <li>• Engage with residents about their housing aspirations and what support the Council could provide to assist people that may want to move on.</li> </ul>
<b>Removing barriers through education training and employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research into understanding the barriers and demand amongst the homeless for employment, education and training support.</li> <li>• Work to create a bespoke approach to getting those with complex needs into work or pathways to employment focussing on residents in temporary accommodation, rough sleepers and our tenants.</li> <li>• Support homeless households in work to access skills and training that might help them develop or increase their income.</li> <li>• Continue to intervene in the local labour market and use our relationships to ensure jobs are accessible to local residents and are paid at least the London Living Wage.</li> <li>• Camden Council to explore the use of a tailored jobs and application/interview approach to recruit homeless people into Council jobs.</li> <li>• Improve and evaluate monitoring on education, training and employment outputs for homeless people, using lessons learned to inform more effective ways of working.</li> <li>• Map employment and training initiatives which can be accessed by homeless people together with support available and improve information and publicity.</li> <li>• Continue project delivery with Job Centre Plus centres supporting people to access housing advice alongside employment support.</li> </ul>
<b>Driving innovation and best practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners across the homelessness and rough sleeping sector in Camden to develop new and innovative approaches to addressing complex issues.</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities to bid for funding to trial innovative approaches.</li> <li>• Assess options for providing management and lettings function to empty home owners.</li> <li>• Continue piloting and refining the psychologically informed environment approach to supporting people with complex needs.</li> </ul>

## Why these actions?

Using the levers at the Council's disposal, we are seeking to address the lack of affordable housing and a market-driven private rented sector.

### 4.1 Building, planning and enabling

Camden has carried out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment that has objectively assessed housing need and found that between now and 2031 Camden will need an additional 16,800 new homes of which 10,200 should be affordable.<sup>30</sup>

There is very high demand for social housing in Camden but limited affordable supply. There are 5,900 households waiting for council homes (including 200 sheltered homes) with approximately 970 homes to let each year (including 70 sheltered homes). The demand is highest in absolute terms for 1 and 2 bed homes but the demand for 3 and 4 bed homes is proportionally more challenging. Demand for genuinely affordable housing outstrips supply in both the social housing and private rented sectors.

Camden is seeking to deliver new council homes as part of its Community Investment Programme (CIP) and in 2017/18 for the first time in a decade built more new Council homes than were lost through Right to Buy; Camden built 115 Council homes and lost 44 through Right to Buy.

#### Good practice example – Camden's Community Investment Programme



Mount Pleasant Adult Pathway Hostel

In 2011 Camden began building new council homes as part of the 15 year Community Investment Programme (CIP), alongside investing in schools, community centres and leisure and sports facilities. In total the programme aims to build 3,050 homes including 1,100 genuinely affordable social housing and 300 affordable homes. In recent years, Camden has received less than 2 per cent of its capital budget from Government, meaning that in order to fund the building of new social rent homes, the Council has built homes for sale. CIP delivery has helped Camden to meet and exceed our housebuilding targets. In the 3 years from 2015/16 to 2017/18 the Council was responsible for 15% of all additional new homes built in the Borough.

To date, Camden has built 862 homes as part of the CIP, including 351 council homes (188 additional/153 replacement), 78 intermediate affordable homes (13 for shared ownership), and 433 homes for sale which include 70 units returned to the Council for residents displaced by High Speed 2. Currently we have 120 homes under construction with planning permission and Cabinet approval for a further 1,250 homes, aiming to prioritise 2 bed and 3 bed homes to reflect need. We are committed to building 390 new council homes and circa 100 Camden Living homes on these approved projects. We're also undertaking feasibility on sites with potential for another 2,000+ homes including at Wendling and West Kentish Town Estates and Camley Street. The Council has already built 65 Camden Living intermediate rent homes that are let to middle-income households earning between £30,000 to 40,000. These are high quality new homes where the Council is providing longer fixed term tenancies (3 years) to provide security and stability to tenants. Mount Pleasant hostel has been refurbished to provide modern studio units and improved education and training facilities.

### 4.2 Working with landlords

Our Camden Plan states, '...we will play an active role in shaping a private rented sector that works.' Our strategy of working with the private rented sector has three themes:

- Strong tenant voice.
- Improved quality of homes and better regulation.
- Increased supply of affordable homes.

Camden has a long tradition of giving tenants a voice and we have provided long standing support for the Camden Federation of Private Tenants (one of the longest established private tenant groups in the country). The Council will continue to fund this independent organisation as the voice of Camden's private renters. They work to create a better and fairer relationship between tenants, landlords and agents, to strengthen legal rights and protection.

Landlords also have a voice in our Borough as we recognise the role they play in providing a third of the housing in the borough. We engage with landlords via our landlord forums and licensing events and will pilot breakfast meetings to encourage more detailed discussion.

We will continue to administer and host the London Landlord Accreditation Agency that has accredited 20,000 landlords and agents in London and the South East. Its aim is to help landlords and agents achieve recognition that they meet agreed standards of competence and knowledge about the business of letting a private rented home. There are 1,118 landlords accredited in Camden; one of the highest rates in London, and 27,249 accredited landlords across London.

Research from the National Landlords Association's (NLA) Quarterly Landlord Panel in 2017 found that just two in 10 landlords say they are willing to let to tenants in receipt of housing benefit or Universal Credit.

The NLA research also found that the proportion of landlords who said they were willing to let a property to housing benefit claimants had fallen to just 20%, down from 34% at the start of 2013. There are a series of regulatory elements of welfare benefit reform including delays in rent payment and disability assessments made by unqualified staff, which have had the unintended consequence of reducing landlords' willingness to rent to benefit recipients, exacerbating an already challenging system for accessing private sector tenancies.

Landlords should be willing to consider letting to any household, regardless of where rent is coming from and Camden will campaign to ensure that residents on benefits do not experience delays which make them vulnerable to homelessness.

### 4.3 Improving quality and regulation of the private rented sector

We also believe in the regulation of the private rented sector to fight homelessness and raise standards. We have been campaigning for longer-term tenancies in the social and private rented sectors and already provide longer term tenancies – 3 years – through Camden Living to ensure security and stability to families.

The Government will shortly launch a new consultation on proposals to remove the ability of landlords to use 'no fault' evictions under Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act. The Council already supports the abolition of no fault evictions to strengthen the role of the private rented sector in providing more settled long term housing to tenants. We know that landlords have some concerns, such as time and costs, associated with taking legal action against tenants who are in rent arrears, exhibit anti-social behaviour, or those who would like to live in the property themselves, refurbish or sell. Therefore we

plan to consult further with landlords to inform Camden's response to the consultation and will listen to tenants, landlords and others.

Camden also expanded its licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) in December 2015 to cover all accommodation with three or more people forming more than one household. Licenced properties are required to meet Camden's minimum standards for HMOs, which covers room sizes, cooking and bathroom facilities and maximum occupancy. As at 4 April 2019, 3,838 applications have been received for licences. It is clear from the data that the scheme is having a positive impact on raising standards within HMO accommodation in Camden.

The Private Sector Housing Team also utilises the full range of statutory powers at its disposal to tackle substandard properties within Camden. This ranges from serving notices on landlords to removing category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to serving civil penalty notices of up to £30,000 on landlords and letting agents for failing to licence HMOs and poor management practices. New powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 are being utilised. In 2018/19 177 Civil Penalty notices were served on landlords, 36 improvement notices and 13 prohibition notices.



Camden Trading Standards is the most proactive borough service in London ensuring that the letting agents are operating in compliance with the law. Our Fair Lettings work started in 2015 and we estimate that 80% of the market in Camden is now compliant. See Camden's website [page](#) about our Fair Letting enforcement work which will continue.

These approaches help prevent homelessness as we know that such schemes improve conditions without the tenant having to ask for improvements. PRS tenants can be afraid of 'retaliatory evictions' if requests for repairs or improved standards are made, but with our licensing scheme, improvement is not reactive to complaints and becomes part of the natural cycle of our work to improve the PRS.

It is estimated that 7000 properties in Camden are currently used for Short Term Letting (STL), some of these lawful and being used for less than 90 days a year, but many are unlawful.

This results in the loss of permanent housing at a time of significant need in our borough and often leads to amenity issues for residents. Year on year since the Deregulation Act (2015) came into force, the borough has seen a steady increase in the number of enforcement complaints about this issue. It has risen from just 35 in 2016 to 123 in 2018. The reality is that the number of cases reported is probably a fraction of the unlawful STLs in the borough. The Council's planning enforcement team seek to take robust action but the legislation can make this difficult. We have lobbied the Government with a number of other London boroughs to seek a mandatory register which would significantly improve our ability to address this issue for the benefit of our residents.

The rogue landlord checker set up by the GLA is an excellent tool to gather and share intelligence and we were pleased to be one of the 5 boroughs to pilot it. Camden has loaded 40 prosecution records onto the database which is the second highest in London. This is a first step towards making the private rental market in London operate in a fairer and more transparent way for tenants, and the naming and shaming of rogue landlords is also of benefit to those landlords who are operating quality accommodation within the law.

### 4.3.1 Supply of private rented accommodation

The Council has significantly increased communications and activity to promote its offer to landlords, who offer their housing to homeless families. Websites such as RightMove and Zoopla are monitored for available properties and agents and landlords called proactively. The Council also regularly exhibits at property auctions to target landlords. The self-help PRS scheme provides a range of materials for applicants sourcing their own accommodation including information for prospective landlords.

Camden launched its own company Camden Living and is providing intermediate rented accommodation to those who are unable to afford to buy and who find it difficult to rent privately. This is increasing supply of private rented homes in Camden and there are proposals to expand it further. The Council has set up an Intermediate Housing Register of Interest to capture details of those interested. Housing associations who build shared ownership or have properties with intermediate rent in the borough have also agreed to market their homes via the Intermediate Housing Register of Interest.

WISH Plus, with Age UK Camden's Care Navigators Service and Voluntary Action Camden community links service, is part of Camden's social prescribing model that launched in October 2018. People can access around 30 different services through one WISH Plus conversation. The service is overseen by Camden's housing service. During 2018/19 WISH received 2,211 referrals and made 7,690 links to partner service providers. Although WISH Plus is tenure neutral, council tenants make up 69% of referrals. We will improve the marketing of this service to PRS tenants and review resources available. The team work closely with Public Health who are highly supportive of WISH.



### 4.3.2 Empty homes

In 2018 approximately 950 homes had been empty for longer than six months and some had fallen into disrepair. Over the last five years, Camden has brought 449 properties back into use. Where possible, they have been used as accommodation for homeless families. Over 80 previously homeless families or single households are housed in once empty properties that have been made available through Camden Council's intervention.

Council tax premium flexibilities were introduced by The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings Act 2018). Camden subsequently introduced increased council tax charges in 2019 to discourage owners from leaving their property empty. Homes left empty for 2 years and over will be charged

a 100% levy (i.e. double the council tax) from April 2019, those left empty for 5 years and over will be charged 200% (triple) by April 2020 and owners who leave homes empty for 10 yrs and over will be charged at a rate of 300% (quadruple) council tax by April 2021.

In addition the Council will continue, where appropriate, to make use of enforcement powers and start the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) process after 2 years when homes are left empty. Bringing empty properties back into use remains a priority for the Council and it will seek to investigate further models to achieve this aim, such as creating a management model for potential landlords who have empty homes but do not want to manage properties.



## Priority 4 – Campaigning

### 4.4 Using our existing social housing assets more effectively

In 2016, Camden revised its social housing allocation policy with the priority of maintaining its diverse and mixed communities. Those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are given preference and in 2016/17, 27% of Camden social housing lettings were to households that were at risk of homelessness.

### 4.5 Removing barriers through education, training and employment

2.2% of economically active Camden residents of working age have no qualifications and 16.7% have no or low-level qualifications, significantly disadvantaging them in the London labour market.

We will encourage a strengths-based approach to housing support in temporary accommodation and to households in the private rented sector at risk of homelessness – providing the structures and skills to enable resident independence in the long-term. 34% of households living in temporary accommodation in 2018/19 have either the applicant or their partner in employment.

As part of our commitment to publicise services available to homeless people there will be a mapping of all employment and training initiatives which can be accessed by homeless people. In addition there will be further research on future types of employment and training demand and improved monitoring on outputs with lessons learned informing more effective ways of working. By working with our partners we will seek to remove barriers to training and employment and help homeless residents, or those at risk of becoming homeless, to get decent sustainable jobs and access the skills and training that will help them increase their income.

We will promote and look to support good practice initiatives such as the Halifax in New Oxford Street which hosts a Change Please café within its branch where homeless people are trained as baristas making coffee, work for a minimum of 16 hours a week for 6 months, who are paid the London Living wage and receive housing support. Afterwards help is provided to find long term jobs. We will use our intelligence to disseminate examples and encourage businesses and employers to provide opportunities for homeless people.



Change Please Café hosted by The Halifax, New Oxford St branch

**Volunteer Centre Camden**'s online volunteer database has many homelessness related volunteer roles. These can be accessed via their webpage. Their matchmakers are trained to match volunteers including homeless people to roles. Volunteers include homeless people living in temporary accommodation or those trying to get experience to progress into other work areas.



Employers can also give employees a chance to volunteer and volunteers may have a skill they would like to share with organisations in Camden to provide sustained support. Businesses often team up with organisations to provide employment guidance, painting and decorating, or arts and crafts activities. Employment or other associated skills can be added to the newly launched **Comoodle Camden** website which allows organisations to shop for particular skills. Alternatively a skill can be advertised on social media with a tag to the Camden Volunteer Centre who will retweet a response.

**We will use our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, instability and homelessness.**

#### We are seeking to:

- Champion the role of local authorities in delivering a functional housing market including access to direct funding for housebuilding.
- Advocate for an affordable stable and secure private rented sector that provides high-quality long-term housing as an option for households of all incomes.
- Ensure that private rented sector landlords do not discriminate against households on benefits.
- Ensure that welfare benefits reflect the true cost of living, and do not exacerbate exclusion or multi-generational poverty and instability.

#### Building and enabling

- Continue to seek additional funding and financing flexibilities to allow the Council to build new social rented homes.
- Work with developers and providers to achieve objectives set out in the Camden Local Plan.

#### Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector

- Press for the creation of longer tenancies in the private rented sector so that tenants have more stability and security.
- Challenge the persistent discrimination against housing benefit claimants by landlords within the private rented sector, calling for Government to restrict tenancy refusals on the basis of rent source.
- Promote regulation of the short-term lettings sector which is removing homes from the affordable housing market.
- Support the Short Term Letting Bill requiring householders to notify local authorities of an intention to register accommodation for short or holiday lets.
- Continue to campaign to achieve rent certainty in the private rented sector, including against the use of Section 21 no fault eviction notices.

### Influencing national policy

- Lobby Government for a fair and equitable approach to Local Housing Allowance now and following the end of the rent freeze in 2020.
- Urge Government to slow the pace of implementation of Universal Credit.
- Make housing element payments to landlords opt out, instead of opt in.
- Improve processing times so that Universal Credit recipients receive the correct payments during the first assessment period and a more efficient system for escalating and responding to issues.
- Health and disability assessments are carried out by someone who is suitably qualified.
- Housing element payments to continue to be paid where appeals have been lodged.
- End the shared accommodation rate of housing benefit/Universal Credit housing costs for single private renters under 35 yrs.
- End the restriction on the child element of Universal Credit to the first two children only.
- Work with Government to ensure that those with no recourse to public funds are able to access the support and advocacy they need.
- Work in partnership with the Local Government Association, London Councils and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce and simplify the additional administrative burden on local authorities created by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Code of Guidance.
- Lobby Government to start the Living Wage at 18 yrs and end discrimination against young people who are not eligible until 25 yrs.
- Lobby in the medium term for councils to keep 100% of Right to Buy receipts so they have the freedom and flexibility to use them in a way that best meets local needs, with no time limits for spend, no conditions to return receipts to the Treasury and no financial restrictions on combining receipts with additional funding.

### Why these actions?

Significant change needs to occur to ensure that no individual or household has to experience homelessness, and to enable all local authorities to deliver services that relieve homelessness in both the short and the long term.

Government has acknowledged the scale of the homelessness challenge in England and the need for concerted and coordinated action to tackle this. However, the approach continues to be targeting homelessness as an acute, rather than a chronic, issue. We need a national preventative intervention and Camden, as a local authority both at the forefront of the challenge, and innovation, is seeking to lead a national debate about the structural issues that have both increased the number of households that are homeless and made it more challenging to help them back on their feet. We are seeking to positively influence the national debate and national action to improve the lives of households in Camden and across the country.

### 5.1 Building and enabling

We also need sufficient funding and financing flexibilities to allow us to build new social rented homes and we have already shown in previous sections how we have had to find innovative ways to build more, with a small proportion of this housing allocated to homeless people. It is a significant step forward that the Government has announced its intention to lift the borrowing cap on local authorities. However, this alone will not address the long-term social housing shortage.



Young person showing income and expenditure challenges.

### 5.2 Creating a functional and accessible private rented sector

We also want a more accessible and affordable private rented sector. Longer term tenancies for example could provide better security for tenants and help reduce homelessness, as we know that eviction from the PRS increases significantly the chances of becoming homeless. In Camden, we are already working to encourage longer tenancies where we help residents find private rented property. The Council's own housing company, Camden Living, offers three year tenancies which are genuinely affordable. We also believe that regulation of the short-term lettings sector is needed. Rooms and homes are removed from the affordable housing market to be let with a premium to tourists and workers in search of a short-term accommodation in central London.

We will urge Government to consider legislating to require longer tenancies in the private rented sector to bring us into alignment with many other European countries, with no break clause which diminishes security of tenure further. We will join callings to scrap the so-called 'no fault' evictions in order to give renters greater power and security.<sup>31</sup>

Camden will lobby Government for a compulsory national register of landlords who need to be accredited to register, which already exists in Wales. There is no evidence that supply of homes to rent has reduced as a result of the registration scheme.

### 5.3 Influencing national policy

Welfare benefit reform has had a strong and negative impact in Camden. As more families transition to universal credit, this will only continue. It is concerning that welfare benefit reform has significantly impacted families and particularly larger family households. We are looking to have a constructive dialogue with Government about the implementation of universal credit to mitigate its effects, and ensure that it does not make households more vulnerable and more dependent on support from the state in different ways.

The Homelessness Reduction Act has created an additional administrative and financial burden and we will work in partnership with the Local Government Association, London Councils and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce and simplify the different process and procedures we now have to follow.

Right to Buy reduces genuinely affordable social housing supply for those most in need. Currently local authorities cannot replace housing which is lost on a like for like basis. Less housing has resulted in longer waiting times for many people who are vulnerable and on low incomes. Scotland and Wales have already abolished Right to Buy for these reasons. Legislative changes to Right to Buy would take time and so in the medium term, Camden will seek permission to retain 100% of Right to Buy receipts so the receipts can be used in a way that best meets local needs with no time limits, financial constraints or conditions to return money to the Treasury. Currently, if money is not spent within 3 years it must all be returned to the Treasury with interest.

Camden will support alternative campaigns which provide safe ways to give to rough sleepers. Finally, about 45-50% of the rough sleepers contacted in Camden are non-UK nationals, many of whom do not have recourse to public funds. The majority of these non-UK nationals cannot be placed in our Adult Pathway due to limitations on housing benefit claims. A number of the UK and Irish nationals sleeping rough in Camden will also not be eligible for assistance from Camden as their local connection is to another local authority. Individuals without a local connection to Camden are offered a reconnection service to their local authority. This is usually offered through the 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) provision which acts as a triage service for identified rough sleepers. Reconnection is refused in the vast majority of cases. For example of the 43 European nationals that Camden have placed in NSNO since January 2014, only 8 accepted reconnection to their home countries. Of the 120 reconnections offered in 2015, only 10 were successful.<sup>42</sup> In 2017/18 5 people were reconnected; 4 in the UK and 1 in Europe. We will continue to lobby Government to remove barriers, for example to employment, and look for alternative solutions.

Camden has an action plan to accompany the strategy which will be updated annually and monitored quarterly.

A key ambition for the Council is to assist homeless households to secure accommodation that is affordable and within Camden, or as close as is practical. This document sets out how this will be achieved in practice.

## ANNEX 1 Homelessness Accommodation Policy

This policy accompanies the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and should be interpreted in the context of that strategy and the associated action plan. For some groups of homeless households there are also separate joint protocols, such as for 16/17 year olds and these are all available on request. The **Homeless Young People's Protocol** can be found on the Camden website.

The Council currently provides accommodation to meet a range of housing needs:

- Temporary accommodation for homeless households or those waiting for a homelessness decision.
- Accommodation to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Accommodation in the private rented sector to end the Council's main homelessness duty under the Localism Act 2011.
- Social housing is allocated via the housing allocations scheme, with reasonable preference given as required by law to homeless households.

The Council also commissions housing-related support services for single homeless people with support needs that are delivered in hostels and supported housing.

This policy relates to accommodation provided by Camden Council, under the duties set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### Allocation of social housing tenancies

Councils must allocate social housing in accordance with their allocations schemes. Camden's housing allocations scheme sets out its priorities for allocating social housing. The scheme grants reasonable preference to homeless households and additional priority to families engaging with the Council to prevent or relieve their homelessness in the form of an additional 100 points to households where homelessness has been prevented or relieved for a period of six months.

But the demand for social housing tenancies from residents with a wide range of housing needs far outstrips supply in Camden, so that we need other accommodation solutions for homeless families.

The Floating Support Service works with families at risk of homelessness and in temporary accommodation and assisted bidding is offered where appropriate to ensure that all are able to access the council's housing allocation scheme.

### Priorities for private sector accommodation

The Council's homelessness prevention approach is aimed at reducing the need to place households in temporary accommodation and instead moving them on to settled and sustainable accommodation to meet their housing need. The approach means that families should spend little or no time in temporary accommodation and should not face repeated moves and the disruptions. It also minimises the amount of temporary accommodation the Council has to provide, which is costly, and instead secures long term, sustainable private rented accommodation.

Private rented accommodation is made available to eligible households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, likely to be in priority need and with a local connection to Camden. A supportive

assessment process ensures applicants are able to sustain a tenancy and a “good tenant’s training session” is provided. Where people have become homeless intentionally, we will take into account the reasons for their homelessness when considering if we can assist with another offer of private rented accommodation.

The Council has various statutory duties to provide support to those at risk of homelessness within a set time period. For applicants owed the statutory homelessness prevention or relief duty and who are assessed as being able to sustain a tenancy, a maximum of three reasonable offers of affordable private rented housing will be made. Individual circumstances are considered in making these offers, including time scale, affordability, household preferences and needs. If a household is actively engaging with the Council but a choice of suitable offers has not been available but is expected to be, we will consider extending the statutory relief casework period. An acceptance of any suitable offer will end the Council’s statutory duty. Ultimately a final suitable offer will be made and the household will be notified in writing and the Council’s statutory duty will be formally ended, whether the offer is accepted or refused. Where we have not been able to prevent or relieve homelessness, and a household is owed the main homeless duty, we will usually bring our duty to an end with one suitable offer of private sector accommodation. We will generally look to offer private rented sector supply as near to Camden as possible (taking account of individual circumstances and the availability of property), with the priority being to ensure a sustainable letting is achieved.

#### **Private rented sector accommodation standards**

All accommodation must comply with basic minimum standards:

- Physical standards – documentary checks will be completed to ensure that electrical and gas equipment is safe and a fire risk assessment will be carried out. Properties will have an Energy Performance Certificate and a valid Gas Safety Certificate. Properties let through the private rented scheme will be required to meet our Camden Lettings property standards, as defined in our Camden Lettings Property Standards document. An assessment will be carried out under the housing, health and safety rating system (HHSRS) to check for any relevant hazards.
- Good management and the role of the landlord - landlords will be expected to demonstrate that they are a fit and proper landlord (for example through commitment to membership of a landlord accreditation scheme) and provide a written tenancy agreement.

When deciding if a property is suitable for a particular household, we will complete a suitability assessment, adhering to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (s.206 and s.210), Chapter.17 of the code of guidance, and the following factors will be taken into consideration.

- Affordability - where a household is claiming housing benefit or Universal Credit, we look for properties that meet a household’s bed need that are in areas where the LHA rent is affordable. In the current climate of rising rents and caps on benefits, such properties are likely to be out of borough, and increasingly out of London, particularly for larger properties. We will consider a household’s income and their ability to meet any shortfall between the housing benefit paid and the rent. In some cases, such as when they are housed temporarily, households may be eligible for a discretionary housing payment (DHP). However, DHP will only be considered as a short-term ‘stop-gap’ and not as a long-term solution for housing affordability. Ensuring that accommodation is affordable and sustainable is central to the success of our strategy.
- Location - where accommodation is procured outside of Camden, we will consider the travelling distance of the property from Camden or where the family was previously living, if not in Camden and how the location of the property affects family members. This includes, as far as possible, the impact of location on the factors listed below. Where we make placements outside of the Borough, we will notify the host local authority.

- Services, amenities and transport - we will consider the proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to local services, amenities and transport.
- Employment - the type and hours of employment will be taken into consideration alongside the cost and ease of any potential commute. The possibility of taking up new employment will also be considered.
- Children - in accordance with section 11 of the Children Act 2004, we will consider the needs of any children in the household and how to safeguard and promote those needs. We will always try to provide housing options within Camden, but if households with children known to Children’s Safeguarding and Social Work as Children in Need accept housing out of borough, then they will be transferred to the appropriate new-borough support service. The new local authority’s children service will be notified by Camden and a period of joint working will ensure the needs and welfare of the children are safeguarded.
- Education - the age and stage of education of children will be taken into account, including any public examinations the children will be taking. The cost (particularly for over 16 year olds where travel costs will be incurred), ease and distance of any potential commute to existing schools will be considered, along with the possibility of relocating to schools closer to the property offered. Children of primary school age may need to move to schools closer to their new home. Where a child or young person has special educational needs and/or a disability, an Education Health and Care Plan and in a specialist placement we will take into account the impact of a move on their access to specialist provision.
- Childcare and other caring responsibilities - existing childcare arrangements are considered as well as any other caring responsibilities, including the nature of the care provided, and the feasibility of maintaining these or making other arrangements.
- Medical and health issues - any medical or health needs will be taken into account, including any current ongoing treatment and support and the possibility of transferring to new healthcare providers closer to the property. Where a household needs accessible accommodation, this will be taken into account.
- Family and community support - as far as possible, family support and community links will be taken into consideration. Where there is social worker involvement with a family, they will be involved in any discussions about moving the family to alternative accommodation to ensure their needs can be met.

#### **Bedroom standard in the private rented sector**

The following household members are expected to share a bedroom:

- Adult couples.
- Two children aged under 16 years of the same sex.
- Two children aged under 10 years regardless of sex.

The following household members should have their own room:

- A single adult (aged 16 years or over).
- A child that would normally share but shared bedrooms are already taken, for example if the household has three children and two already share.
- Children who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition.

We will offer couples and lone parents with a single child of up to 5 years old at the start of the placement a one-bedroom property or where applicable a suitably sized room in a family hostel where the overall size of the accommodation is sufficient for the needs of one or two adults and one child.

### **How private rented sector accommodation will be allocated**

We anticipate needing to place around 150-250 households into private rented scheme (PRS) accommodation per year. These numbers can change significantly as demand is difficult to predict. When a property is made available, suitable applicants will be identified. Allocating accommodation procured in the private sector is often time-critical, as landlords want to minimise lost rents due to void periods and we need to limit the risk of the property being let elsewhere. Due to the short time frames involved in the allocation of private sector properties, potential applicants will be contacted directly by the Council to arrange a viewing. Where an applicant cannot be contacted another potential applicant will be contacted.

The final decision to accept or reject a household will usually rest with the landlord. If the landlord refuses a nominated household, the offer will be withdrawn and a further offer will be made when a suitable property becomes available. If the refusal is due to behaviour of the applicant, this may result in them being withdrawn from further offers whilst we work with them to address any issues raised.

Once both the applicant and landlord accept, an assured short-hold tenancy with a minimum fixed term of 12 months will be signed.

### **How temporary accommodation is allocated**

We can anticipate needing to place around 300 households into temporary accommodation (TA) per year. We can also anticipate needing to transfer around 120 placed households from one TA placement to another, for reasons such as household composition changes, changing medical needs, risk of violence and other reasons.

Temporary accommodation is usually allocated on the day the household will need it. The same factors in deciding what accommodation will be offered will be taken into account as is the case for procuring privately rented accommodation, though we normally secure our TA supply through different procurement methods and TA providers.

Due to affordability, the Council's main source of in-borough temporary accommodation is our hostel stock. Where a Camden hostel is not suitable due to the household size, medical, disability or other circumstances, or a hostel would be suitable but is not available, and no alternative supply is available in borough, then we will normally procure nightly rated "annexe" accommodation which is a self-contained flat or house in the private rented sector. Assessments of suitability of offers of temporary accommodation take into account the current legislation on suitability of accommodation, case law, and the Pan London Inter Accommodation Agreement (IBBA) which places responsibility on the placing authority to accommodate vulnerable households in their own area.

Once temporary accommodation has been identified, the household will be given an offer letter and advice about their responsibilities and the Council's role whilst living in the temporary accommodation. In placing households in temporary accommodation the Council will take account, as is reasonably practicable, the placement grid (below) in deciding which households to select for accommodation in, or at various distances from Camden.

### **Priority for housing locally**

All properties will be included in a zone as follows:

- Zone A1 – located in the London Borough of Camden.
- Zone A2 – located in a nearby London borough (e.g. Brent, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Newham, Southwark, Westminster, Waltham Forest).
- Zone B – located in another London borough.
- Zone C – located near to London (within 50 miles, including the Home Counties).
- Zone D- located beyond Zone C.

Although our search for available accommodation will always start within Camden borough, households that have a relatively low level of need are more likely to be offered accommodation in zones B, C and D. However, even if a household is considered to have a lower level of need, they could be allocated available units in Zone A1, A2 or Zone B if these units are available and not suitable for higher priority households.

Before an offer of PRS accommodation is made, an affordability assessment will be carried out to ensure that the offer is suitable for the household. This will take into account local LHA levels and the applicant's current and likely future circumstances. Households in receipt of welfare benefits may be subject to restrictions on the amount of benefit they can receive, which may affect their ability to pay rent. Offers of accommodation in Camden or nearby boroughs are subject to suitable accommodation being available and affordable in these areas.

The placement summary grid below is for guidance to help officers decide on whether a property could be suitable for an individual household. It will also depend on the availability of property. The individual circumstances of each household will be taken into account when determining the suitability of a property.

**Placement Summary Grid:**

Property Zone	Household Description
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households with at least one child who is subject to a child protection plan.</li> <li>Households where Camden's Social Services have serious concerns about one or more children and are working intensively with the household.</li> <li>Households with one child (or more) who has an Education Health and Care Plan, and where the move would be seriously detrimental to the child's wellbeing.</li> <li>Households with an applicant who has severe and enduring mental health problems who is receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by local community health services and has an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact on their ability to engage with treatment and care plans.</li> <li>Households where at least one member is in receipt of a significant care package provided or sponsored by Camden's Social Services which cannot be transferred.</li> <li>Households including a person who is terminally ill and receiving care or significant support in Camden.</li> <li>Households where there is a risk to be managed such as those with a history of anti-social behaviour, prolific and persistent offenders and those housed through MAPPA and other projects.</li> </ul>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households with one child (or more) in secondary school in their final year of Key Stage 4 (generally Year 11).</li> <li>Households where at least one member is suffering from a life threatening illness, or is severely disabled and is receiving regular (at least fortnightly) treatment at a hospital in Camden.</li> <li>Care leavers moving on in accordance with the Council's pathway plan.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is in permanent and settled employment in or near to Camden and this employment will be lost should the member be unable to commute to their place of work.</li> <li>Households receiving care, which would be disrupted or cease if the registered care provider is unable to commute to fulfil their caring duties.</li> <li>Households where a member of the household is caring for another person in the borough who falls into one of the following categories and they would be unable to commute to meet their caring duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 75 years old and living alone, or with no other member of the household under 75 years of age, or in receipt of the medium or higher rate of the care component or the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or War Disablement pension.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household with one or more child in secondary school or further education college in Camden or neighbouring borough (other than those in the final year of Key stage 4 - see Group A above). This group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance of the school or college.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is in permanent and settled employment and this employment will be lost should the member be unable to commute to their place of work. This group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance of their workplace.</li> <li>Households where one person (or more) is receiving medical treatment that can only be provided by a specific medical facility: this group will be prioritised for housing within reasonable commuting distance to the medical facility.</li> </ul>

C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households not falling within A and B above where one person (or more) has a need to be within reasonable commuting distance to London.</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All other homeless households will be offered private rented sector accommodation wherever the borough is able to procure it.</li> </ul>

In the event of multiple households having equal priority for a particular property the urgency of the family's need to move, including the suitability, continued availability of and length of time spent in their temporary accommodation will be taken into consideration.

Whilst the Council will continue to attempt to secure accommodation as near to Camden as possible, affordability considerations are making this more and more difficult. It is forecast that placements into private rented tenancies may be made in each zone in the following proportions, though this data must be treated with caution as this will depend on the outcome of many factors that will affect supply and demand:

Zone	Forecast as in 2016 Homelessness Accommodation Strategy	Outturn for 2017/18 (from 170 placements):	Forecast for 2019-24
Zone A1 – in Camden	5%	39%	20%
Zone A2 – in a nearby London borough (Brent, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Newham, Southwark, Westminster, Waltham Forest)	40%	52%	40%
Zone B – another London borough	40%	8%	25%
Zone C – near to London (within 50 miles)	10-15%	1%	5-10%
Zone D – beyond Zone C	0-5%	0%	0-5%

**Communication**

Households approaching the Council due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness are informed, in writing, of the options available to them. The Council encourages families threatened with homelessness to work with the Council early to prevent their homelessness. A Personal Housing Plan is provided when a casework service is required.

Households are informed of any housing duty owed to them and any decision to house them in temporary accommodation in writing. An offer of accommodation will include a copy of the household's 'Suitability and Disruption form'. This form considers the individual circumstances of the household in relation to the property being offered to them and any necessary mitigation to its suitability.

## Review

Applicants have a right to request a review of the suitability of accommodation offered to them under the homeless legislation. The review will be carried out by an officer who has not been involved in the original decision who is senior in grade to the decision-making officer.

## Keeping this policy under review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

# Footnotes

There are different types of homelessness with rough sleeping being the most visible form of it. It is crucial to understand these so that tailored prevention and support can continue to be provided:

- The **legal definition** of homeless refers to those who do not have accommodation that they are entitled to occupy which is accessible and physically available to them, or they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to occupy this accommodation.
- **Rough sleeping/street homeless** refers to people who can be seen sleeping or bedded down in the open air such as doorways, parks, cars, bus shelters, derelict boats, sheds/garages, buildings or other places not designed for habitation.
- **Hidden homeless** refers to those staying temporarily with family and friends, sofa surfing or, living in unsuitable housing such as squats.
- **Non-statutory/non-priority homeless** refers to single homeless or childless couples not in priority need for assistance from a local authority. This group is often included within the term 'hidden homeless'.
- **Statutory homeless** refers to those who have made a homelessness application to a local authority and have been assessed as homeless and in priority need and accepted as eligible for local authority assistance.

To qualify for the **main housing duty**, an applicant must meet 5 criteria: to be legally homeless; to meet immigration and residence conditions; assessed as having a priority need; to be unintentionally homeless; and to have lived in Camden for 6 of the preceding 12 months or 3 of the preceding 5 years. To be in priority need, an applicant must meet one of the following criteria: to have dependent children living with them under 16 years or under 19 years in full time education; to be pregnant, to be aged 16 or

17 years who will be referred to Social Services; to be care leavers aged 18-20 years; to be vulnerable due to old age, physical or learning disabilities, mental health problems, fleeing domestic violence, time spent in care, prison or the armed forces, or emergency due to fire or flood.

Homelessness affects a wide variety of people, but some are more vulnerable to homelessness.

People most at risk are people who are:

- Leaving home for the first time or leaving care.
- Pregnant with nowhere to stay when the baby comes.
- Struggling to live on benefits or a low income;
- Coming from abroad without the right to claim benefits.
- Leaving prison.
- Asylum seekers or refugees.

Local authorities have up to 56 days to prevent someone from losing their home as homeless if they are threatened with homelessness. For example, the Council must take action if a landlord has secured a bailiff warrant to evict someone from a rented property. The Council has a duty to help different people in different ways – some people are owed a duty for the Council to find them housing, other people are owed advice and housing options support.

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- 3 LB Camden Strategy & Change Service, Camden Profile July 2018 (2018).
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- 5 For a helpful summary see: LB Camden, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016).
- 6 LB Camden, Camden Homelessness Data Review (2018/19).
- 7 Ibidem.
- 8 MHCLG, Table 671: Social Housing Sales: Annual Right to Buy Sales for England: 1980-81 to 2016-17.
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- 10 Inside Housing, Councils spend millions using Right to Buy flats (27 April 2018).
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- 13 **“Briefing: Local Housing Allowance Freeze”, Shelter, 2018 ([https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/briefing\\_who\\_is\\_affected\\_by\\_the\\_lha\\_freeze](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/policy_library_folder/briefing_who_is_affected_by_the_lha_freeze)).**
- 14 The main pieces of legislation outlining Camden’s statutory responsibilities are: The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 requires local authorities to prevent homelessness and respond to it by assisting people under imminent threat of homelessness (and classed as “in priority need”); Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duties owed by local housing authorities to someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness; The Homelessness Act 2002 places a specific requirement for local authorities to produce and implement a Homelessness Strategy; The Localism Act 2011 enables Councils to discharge their duty permanently by making use of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.
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#### FURTHER REFERENCES

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3. For more information on welfare reforms and PRS see: House of Commons Library, **Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?** (2018).
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