



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 -2026

November 2023

Foreword

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Hackney is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. The issue of housing affordability is particularly severe in Hackney, where house prices and private rents are amongst the highest in London and the country and it is a top concern for local residents. As average incomes in the borough are relatively low, many households on moderate incomes are unable to take a first step on to the housing ladder within the borough. The sad reality is that more and more Hackney residents are finding themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness. Not having a place to call home impacts on residents' mental wellbeing, it affects children's development and places households under huge pressures.

Despite the current policy climate, we are committed to keeping homelessness on the political agenda in Hackney and nationally, supporting existing services and increasing funding where possible. We also aim to give residents the best possible chance through linking up with our Inclusive Economy and Poverty Reduction agendas.

Hackney Council has been working strenuously to alleviate and mitigate the impact of the housing crisis on our residents. We have had a homelessness strategy in place since 2002, which has been regularly reviewed and updated in light of a period of unprecedented change, including working in a vibrant local property market, managing an increased demand for social housing across the board, and supporting residents through significant welfare reform. The impact of the pace of change within the homelessness operating environment means that it is vital that the strategy is kept up to date and relevant.

The Council has changed the way it works and introduced new initiatives, many of which have made a positive impact despite this challenging landscape:

- **Increasing affordable housing supply:** 1,500 council homes have been started/completed since 2018; we offer Hackney Living Rent homes through the council's housing company; We have been working with social housing providers through the Mayor of Hackney's Housing Challenge funding;
- **Tackling rough sleeping:** Recognising the challenges faced by our rough sleeping

and single homeless residents, the Greenhouse health offer has been expanded; with specialist officers working within our outreach services, access to embedded social workers and housing officers and psychological support, as well as funding secured for new assessment centre and accommodation schemes, and continuing access to Housing First options;

- **Pathway development and multi-agency working:** We know that for many residents, the threat of homelessness is just one of a number of issues they are facing. Working in partnership across agencies can be the key to sustainable solutions. As a council we have built partnerships with hospitals and the NHS, particularly around hospital discharge, with our Young People services and with probation services. Through this we are developing shared plans and pathways;
- **New Allocations and Lettings Policy:** We know the supply of social housing is extremely limited. We have put in place a new allocations policy that targets those homes that do become available to those most in need;
- **Strengthening our homelessness prevention work:** By developing a collaborative approach with residents; this includes putting in place Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE), embedding officers with partners, building on the DAHA accreditation by taking a strong approach to supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse and developing our “Safe and Together” model;

While these are positive actions, the need continues to grow and this new strategy sets out our commitment to continue this work. It commits us to putting in place the advice, support and tools for residents who are at risk of homelessness or who lose their home to ensure everyone has the help they need and that no one in Hackney is left facing homelessness alone. This commitment extends across the Council; we all have a responsibility to those residents facing homelessness and we all have a role to play in supporting them.

To support this approach, this strategy is centred around seven key themes that have been recognised as the most pressing drivers of homelessness and rough sleeping in Hackney and how they can be addressed:

- 1. Maximising access to short and long-term affordable housing**
- 2. Tackling rough sleeping**
- 3. Supporting homeless residents with complex needs**
- 4. Addressing homelessness amongst young people in Hackney**
- 5. Inequality and the Cost of Living crisis**
- 6. Advice and assistance for those with no recourse to public funds**
- 7. Managing the Pace of Change in the Homelessness Environment**

Underpinning this approach is a commitment to be honest with residents about their housing options and to give them the tools and support to identify their way forward. This

extends across the Council, we all have a responsibility to those residents facing experiencing homelessness and we all have a role to play in supporting them.

Without concrete action from the central government there is little prospect of an end to the current housing crisis. This means the following:

- All services working with people at risk of experiencing homelessness in Hackney to have realistic conversations with residents about what assistance Hackney can provide.
- We need to make tough choices around how we allocate temporary accommodation and long-term housing in and outside of the borough.
- There is a need for a new Government joined up response that goes beyond addressing rough sleeping and tackles root causes of homelessness in London, including welfare reform, housing supply, and affordability and the Cost of Living crisis.
- Hackney will continue its role in campaigning for change in housing policy and funding allocations, lobbying central Government, and working with other London boroughs and organisations around common issues as needed.

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Introduction

This refresh of our existing Homelessness Strategy covers the period 2023 – 2025 and builds on the work carried out in our current strategy publication, which ran from 2020 – 2022.

Our previous strategy focused around four themes:

- **Single People** - assisting vulnerable individuals and tackling rough sleeping
- **Customer Care:** Delivering the best possible service to Hackney residents.
- **Early Intervention and Prevention:** Reducing the risk of people experiencing homelessness.
- **Access for All:** Removing barriers and reducing disadvantage, tackling rough sleeping, and assisting other vulnerable single people experiencing homelessness.

Building on the Success of the Current Homelessness Strategy

Our achievements since 2020:

Increasing the Supply of Good Quality, Affordable Housing in Hackney

This has included:

- In May 2018 Hackney made a commitment to deliver almost 2,000 new homes over the following four year period. Despite the challenges caused by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic, by May 2022 the Council had started, completed or received planning permission for 1,984 new homes.¹ In addition, 738 regeneration voids and 6 community flats were brought back into residential use.
- We are delivering an additional 1,000 social rented homes by 2026, including in partnership with housing associations.²
- We have launched Hackney Living Rent – providing affordable homes at below market rent for private renters who don't qualify for social housing.
- Our mandatory, discretionary and selective private sector licensing schemes guarantee minimum physical standards properties across Hackney and help us to tackle illegal evictions.
- Our successful lobbying of Central Government has secured Right to Buy receipts and removed restrictions on Council borrowing for social housing.

The Housing Strategy will outline Hackney's continued approach to increasing the supply of affordable homes, a key dependency in our homelessness prevention and relief.

¹ London Borough of Hackney (2022) New Homes Cabinet Report. December.

² London Borough of Hackney (2022) 1,000 New Council homes for Hackney: Ambitious Social Housing Plans Announced. Available from: <https://news.hackney.gov.uk/1000-new-council-homes-for-hackney-ambitious-social-housing-plans-announced/>

Homelessness Prevention

This has included:

- Developing a collaborative strengths based approach to working with Hackney residents who require housing assistance. We give them the information they need to make informed decisions around their housing options, when appropriate providing support with our discretionary funds for financial assistance.
- Encouraging residents to take a proactive approach to sourcing housing solutions.
- Supporting residents by seeking to maximise their income through debt and welfare benefits advice and by providing access to apprenticeships, other work, and training opportunities in Hackney.
- Introduction of the Money Hub to maximise income for residents. Working with residents in financial crisis the Money Hub can provide assistance to prevent homelessness. In the first 11 months the Money Hub supported residents to a collective increase of over £1 million in their benefit income.
- Strengthening our offer to those fleeing violence and preparing for DAHA accreditation. Our innovative 'Safe and Together' programme for people works with families experiencing domestic abuse to reduce risk and harm to children.
- Implementing Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery), as a pilot to tackle drug use and dependency. Through Project ADDER the Council are working with a number of agencies and charities to provide education and support to people affected by drug use which is often a factor in homelessness and rough sleeping. (In 2021 the number of deaths related to drug misuse fell to 6, the lowest figure since 2012.)
- Ensuring that Service Personnel and their families receive appropriate priority to access social housing through the Allocations Policy.
- Reviewing our Allocations and Lettings Policy and targeting resources on those most in need of social housing.

Developing Accommodation and Support Pathways and Multi-Agency Working

This has included:

- Employing social workers to work alongside officers in the Benefits and Housing Needs service to give specialist advice and support to residents with complex needs.
- Employing a dedicated mental health worker on the Street Outreach Team to support residents access appropriate services.
- Developing accommodation and support pathways, including for care leavers, people leaving prison, and hospitals.
- Establishing multi-disciplinary meetings – such as the monthly Homeless, Health, and Housing multi-disciplinary team, which supports complex needs individuals via shared support plans and links with Adult Social Care, Children Services, Mental Health teams, commissioned providers for substance misuse and neighbourhood health structures and Adult Safeguarding.
- Mainstreaming homelessness prevention work into other teams/services' practice – such as Income Management, Adult Social Care, etc.
- Leading development of homelessness prevention approaches with other London boroughs around young people and ex-offenders.

Tackling Rough Sleeping

We have made successful bids to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC) Rough Sleeping Initiative to support the expansion of rough sleeping services in the borough.

Table 1

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022 - 25 Funding Streams	Total Award £
Rough Sleeping Coordinator	179,700
Hackney Street Outreach Service	1,363,565
Approved Mental Health Practitioner	222,410
Mobile Crisis Intervention Prevention Support	256,815
Pathway coordinator	56,700
Emergency bed spaces	69,700
Assessment bed provision	952,809
Dedicated move-on officer with incentive funding	68,000
Outreach Psychotherapy Service	282,101
Speech and Language Therapy	55,185
Peer Support Worker	51,138
Housing First	662,995
TOTAL	4,221,118

Other specific service provision has also included:

- Our Greenhouse Day Centre (Single Homeless Hub) provides free comprehensive healthcare, housing and welfare support – including full health assessments and GP registration, access to employment, training and volunteering opportunities.
- Developing accommodation schemes through the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme with the GLA.
- The reconfigured multi-disciplinary street outreach team involves navigators, mental health social workers and housing officers working together to help people move into accommodation.
- Under the ‘Everyone In’ programme we made significant progress to ending rough sleeping by housing 219 people.
- Our Outreach Psychotherapy Service supports rough sleepers and outreach workers around trauma issues and trauma-informed practice. In addition, The Rough Sleeping and Mental Health Programme (RAMHP) involves mental health practitioners working directly with street outreach teams, including on joint shifts and carrying out targeted mental health assessments with rough sleepers.
- The Housing First scheme offers long-term accommodation and wraparound support to rough sleepers with complex needs directly from the streets.
- Our collaborative approach with staff from the Antisocial Behaviour team and other estate-based teams means we prioritise support to rough sleepers and only utilise

enforcement when other options have been exhausted or where anti-social behaviour puts other residents at risk.

Regional and Local Context

We have made considerable progress. Our approach to homelessness and rough sleeping meets our duties under the Housing and Homelessness Reduction Acts and goes beyond that, reflecting our successes in preventing and reducing homelessness. However, there have been significant changes in the local, London, and national context which make it ever more challenging for Hackney to sustainably plan services and to meet its ambition of preventing homelessness and support all Hackney residents approaching it for assistance.

House and rental prices in Hackney continue to grow sharply, and supply of new affordable accommodation remains limited. This strategy should be read alongside Hackney's Housing Strategy, [Hackney's Community Strategy 2018-28](#), and the Council's [Local Plan](#), which covers the approach to housing supply in the borough. The COVID-19 pandemic and current cost of living crisis have intensified inequalities for the Global Majority and other vulnerable groups within Hackney. Rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness are rising in Hackney and across London – particularly for some groups, such as young people and people with multiple and complex needs. There are new and competing demands on Hackney's scarce housing resources, including from other boroughs seeking temporary accommodation placements. The increase in Government resettlement schemes also contribute to increased pressure on Hackney's accommodation, especially the availability of larger and lower cost properties.

In addition, most Government funding is provided in the form of Local Housing Allowance, set in 2011 and without any increase to reflect increasing costs of accommodation. Any additional Government funding for homelessness continues to be short-term and limited in nature, this rarely reflects the lead in, and development times needed for quality housing solutions. Whilst support around rough sleeping is welcome, more funding is needed in other areas of homelessness, including for temporary and supported housing, and to ensure accessibility and good standards in all Hackney's private rented housing. The Council is currently developing a Private Sector Housing Strategy. Much more work is needed to join up national policy around homelessness, poverty, and migration.

Our Manifesto commitments set out how the Council will work across Council departments and services. This strategy reflects those commitments and also describes how we will collaborate with health, criminal justice and employment sectors, other London boroughs, and people with lived experience of homelessness to prevent and reduce homelessness in Hackney.

New Priorities for 2023

Our work to refresh this strategy has included the following:

- Review of the local, London, and national policy context.
- Analysis of data relating to homelessness gathered by Hackney Council departments, local health, and mental health services.
- Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders – within the Council, health services, local providers of services for people experiencing homelessness, and commissioners of pan-London services for people experiencing homelessness. This has included: one to

one discussions with 45 managers and staff in within Hackney council, Health services, homelessness organisations and pan-London bodies; two focus groups and individual discussions with five homeless people living in temporary accommodation in Hackney

- People with lived experience of homelessness in Hackney.

This has led us to the following priorities for the new strategy, that complement ongoing activity to address the themes from the previous strategy. Preventing homelessness occurring in the first instance remains a key tenet of the Council's response:

- Increasing the supply of affordable temporary and settled private sector housing.
- Reducing Rough sleeping.
- Increasing access to supported housing for residents with multiple and complex needs.
- Responding to rising homelessness amongst young people.
- Advice and assistance for those with no recourse to public funds.
- Addressing housing inequality, Global Majority homelessness and responding to the Cost of Living crisis.
- Managing the pace of change within the homelessness environment and the need for Government policy change.

Theme One: Maximising Access to Affordable Temporary and Settled Housing

Hackney has a dense population and land values in the borough are extremely high. As of August 2022, the average house price in Hackney was around £700,000 – nineteen times the average local household income (rightmove.co.uk).

Table 2

Change in house prices in Hackney over the last 20 years

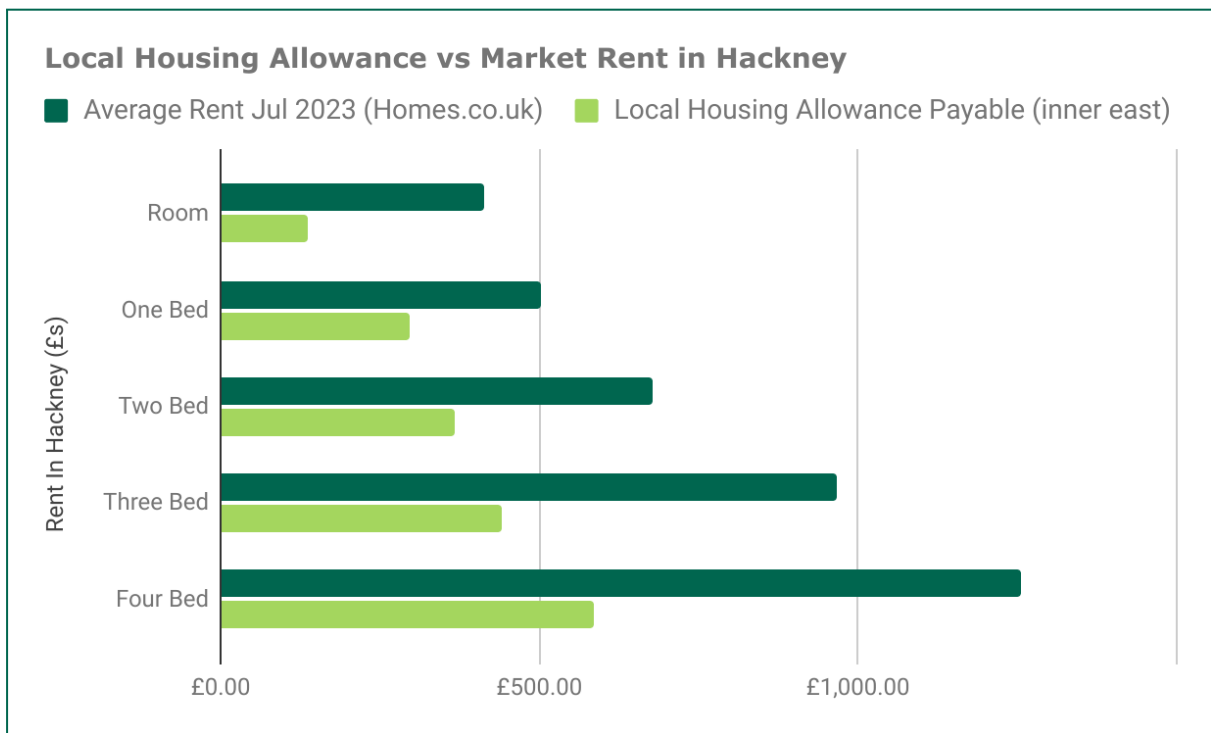


The average rent for a two-bed flat in Hackney in 2022 was £2,600 per calendar month – up 14% on 2021:

Revealed: Hackney has seen fastest rent rise for two-bed homes in Britain over past decade

However, for years Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which supports low-income families in private sector housing, has not kept pace with actual market rents. This means that very few, if any available properties in Hackney, are now affordable to people on LHA.

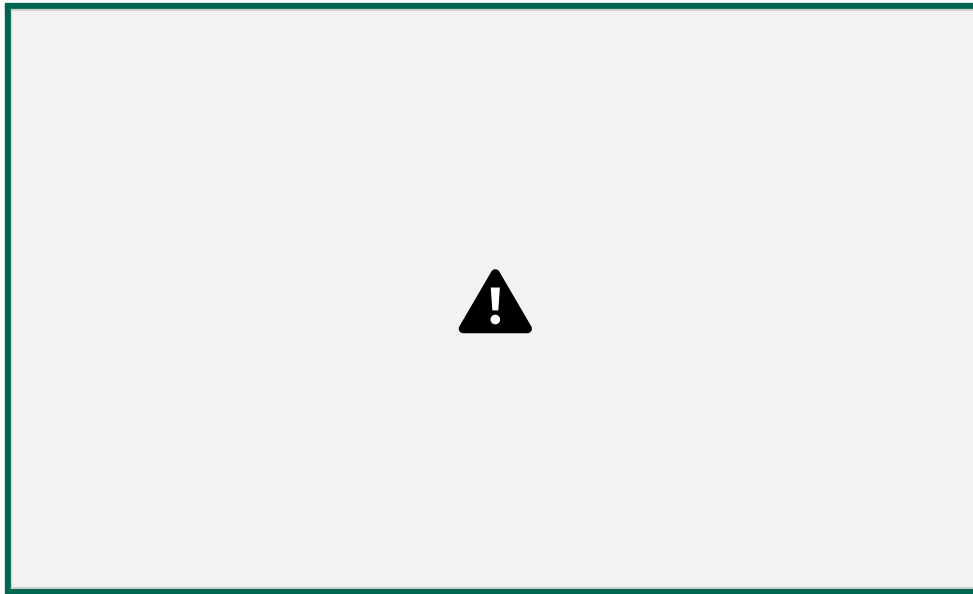
Table 3



There are over 8,500 households on Hackney’s housing waiting list, many of whom are living in overcrowded conditions.³ Reducing social housing stock and lower turnover within social housing in Hackney means we can offer tenancies to only a small proportion of these households (409 in 2019/20).

³ London Borough of Hackney (2022) New Homes Cabinet Report. December.

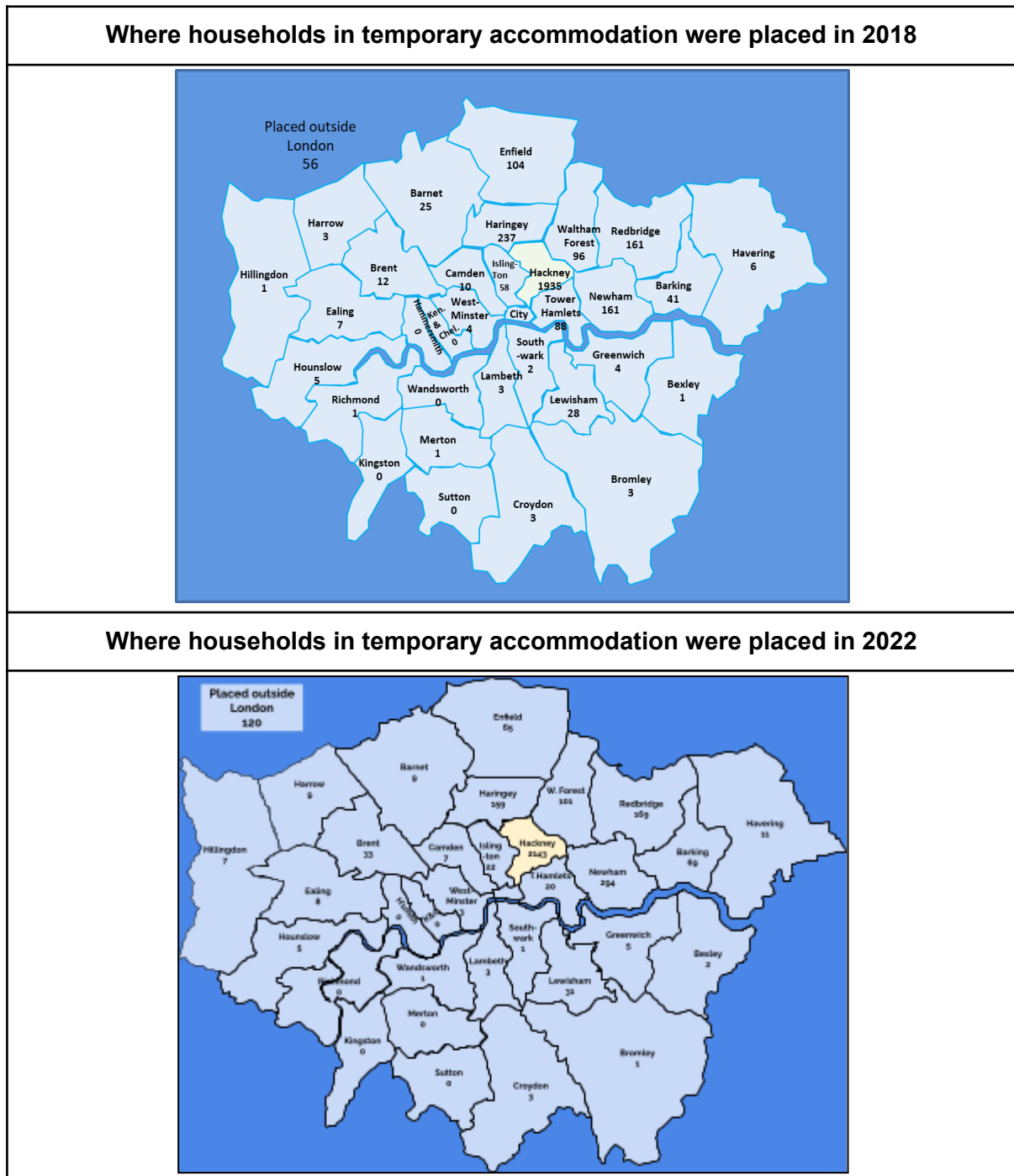
Table 4



Whilst the housing market situation is increasing demand for private rented housing in Hackney, many landlords are less willing to rent to people experiencing homelessness or have left this part of the market altogether. While listings fell nationally by 33 per cent, London has been the worst hit. [A report compiled by Savills and the LSE](#) found listings for one, two and three-bedroom properties had shrunk by about 36%, and there have been even larger falls in listings for four-bedroom properties.

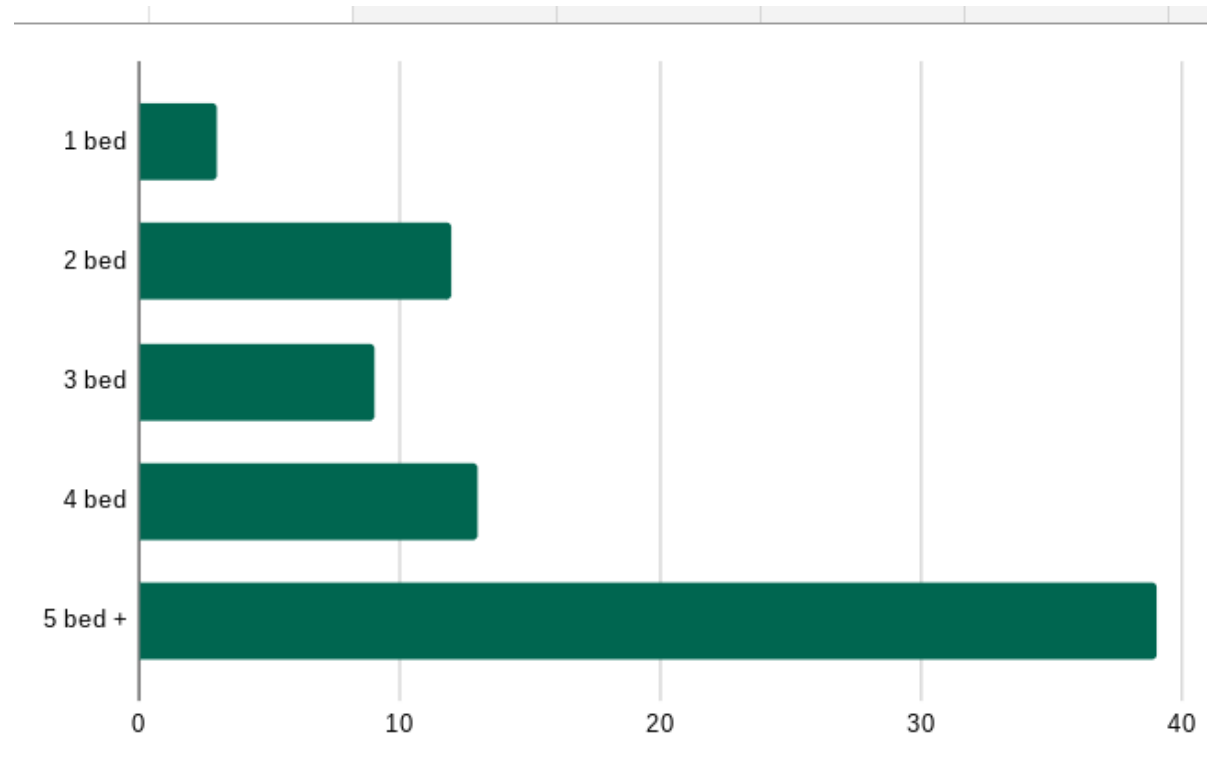
Over 3,000 households experiencing homelessness are living in temporary accommodation in Hackney, and currently 1.5% of all of Hackney's population is a child in this type of accommodation – enough to fill eight primary schools. The lack of access to suitable and affordable housing in Hackney means we have to place some people out of Hackney, away from their support services and social networks.

Table 5



Lack of suitable affordable housing also pushes up the time people have to stay in temporary accommodation. In 2020, people typically waited twelve years for a two-bed flat, with larger households typically waiting much longer than this. This makes the quality of their experience in this accommodation even more important.

Table 6



Overall demand for temporary accommodation and the freeze on LHA rates makes it very difficult for Hackney to keep down temporary accommodation costs. In 2021/22, expenditure in this area exceeded £13m, a 139% increase on that spent on 2014/15. As LHA rates are set by central Government, it is difficult for Hackney to have control over this situation. The withdrawal of private landlords, especially within the buy to let market, is reducing the supply of accommodation. Government resettlement schemes, such as those for asylum seekers, are poorly coordinated, with hotel and private rented accommodation being sourced without proper local needs assessment. This also makes it harder for Hackney to procure sufficient temporary accommodation. Some asylum seekers will need settled private rented sector accommodation, and this also affects affordability and demand for Hackney residents.

To meet these challenges, we will take the following actions:

- Through our needs assessment process, we will help residents to make informed decisions about their settled housing options, including as they move on from temporary accommodation.
- We will support people to live in Hackney where this is feasible but will also clarify the income they are likely to need to live in the borough, using budgeting tools to build understanding of their financial position.
- We will also encourage residents to consider health issues and children’s educational needs.
- We will ensure this is a collaborative and supportive process and that all decisions focus on improving life chances for residents and their children.

Increasing Temporary and Move On Accommodation Provision

Through our Temporary Accommodation Property Strategy, we will:

- Continue to use properties which are owned or leased by the Council where possible. At present, around one third of all temporary accommodation placements are in the borough's own stock. This approach is more cost-effective and means Hackney's spending on temporary accommodation is much lower than the average for London boroughs.
- Ensure we consider all property purchase, refurbishment, and conversion options – including former hostels, hotels, unused schools and care homes, and housing associations and commercial properties.
- Review our understanding of the leased accommodation market in Hackney and explore new ways to work with landlords who are interested in long-term investment in the borough.
- Work with partners to improve resettlement support for people experiencing homelessness, including helping them to build community links.

Working with Hackney Regeneration and Housing colleagues, we will:

- Explore new delivery models for temporary accommodation projects, drawing on work by Common Projects and the Centre for Homelessness Impact.
- Explore housing models, including expanding Living Rent products – aimed at middle income private renters who don't qualify for social housing, buy-back of Council homes lost to private landlords, and modular housing.
- Follow through on Hackney's Local Plan 2033 commitment that all new housing developments of ten or more units will include 50% affordable housing.
- Ensure there is the right mix of family and single person accommodation and more accessible housing.
- Launch an empty property campaign to tackle the 1,000 privately-owned, long-term empty properties in Hackney.
- Use our Asset Review to identify 'meanwhile' sites – areas which are too small or otherwise unsuitable for new-build housing but can be repurposed for temporary accommodation.
- Working closely with other boroughs we will continue our involvement within the pan-London 'Capital Letters' programme, to obtain additional private rented accommodation and reduce use of expensive nightly-paid temporary accommodation. Following recent authorisation from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, this will include exploring out of London procurement opportunities.

Developing Temporary Accommodation

To improve the health and wellbeing of temporary accommodation residents, we will:

- Continue to provide bespoke advice and support with regard to housing options and securing settled housing.
- Continue working with public health and NHS colleagues to ensure better health outcomes for residents in Temporary Accommodation.
- Ensure all temporary accommodation residents know how to provide feedback on the support they receive from Hackney homelessness services, including making complaints.
- Explore how we can build-in findings and recommendations from the ongoing Living in Hackney Scrutiny Committee relating to temporary accommodation and upcoming co-production research, which will include temporary accommodation residents.

Improving Private Rented Accommodation

We will:

- Review incentive payments to private landlords to encourage them to continue letting properties to people experiencing homelessness.
- Offer 24-month tenancies as default and work with landlords to offer long-term tenancies where possible.
- Continue to place households into good quality temporary accommodation (Hackney currently makes 87% of placements into registered buildings which meet quality standards – this is much higher than the London average of 30%).
- Continue our participation in the ‘Setting the Standard’ programme, ensuring that all potential temporary accommodation properties are inspected and meet required physical and other quality standards.

Working with colleagues in Hackney’s Private Sector Housing Team, we will:

- Continue to tackle disrepair and fuel poverty through private sector licensing.
- Seek to prevent homelessness through illegal evictions.
- Share information and responses in relation to properties which are marketed as self-contained but are actually unlicensed shared houses.

With London Renters Union, Age Concern, Generation Rent, and Hackney Citizens through Hackney’s ‘Better Renting’ campaign and collaboration, we will work to support greater security of tenure for private rented tenants.

Lobbying Central Government

We will lobby central government to:

- Uplift LHA rates so they are in line with market rents in Hackney.
- Increase resources so that councils can enforce actions against landlords which require them to improve their properties.
- Develop a more equitable approach to resettlement schemes across London boroughs.
- Deliver private sector rent control to ensure affordability and security for low income households.
- Require Private Sector Landlords to be licensed.
- To increase national spending for commissioned providers, to ensure they can attract and retain a skilled workforce. This will support former homeless people out of the supported pathway and into more independent accommodation.

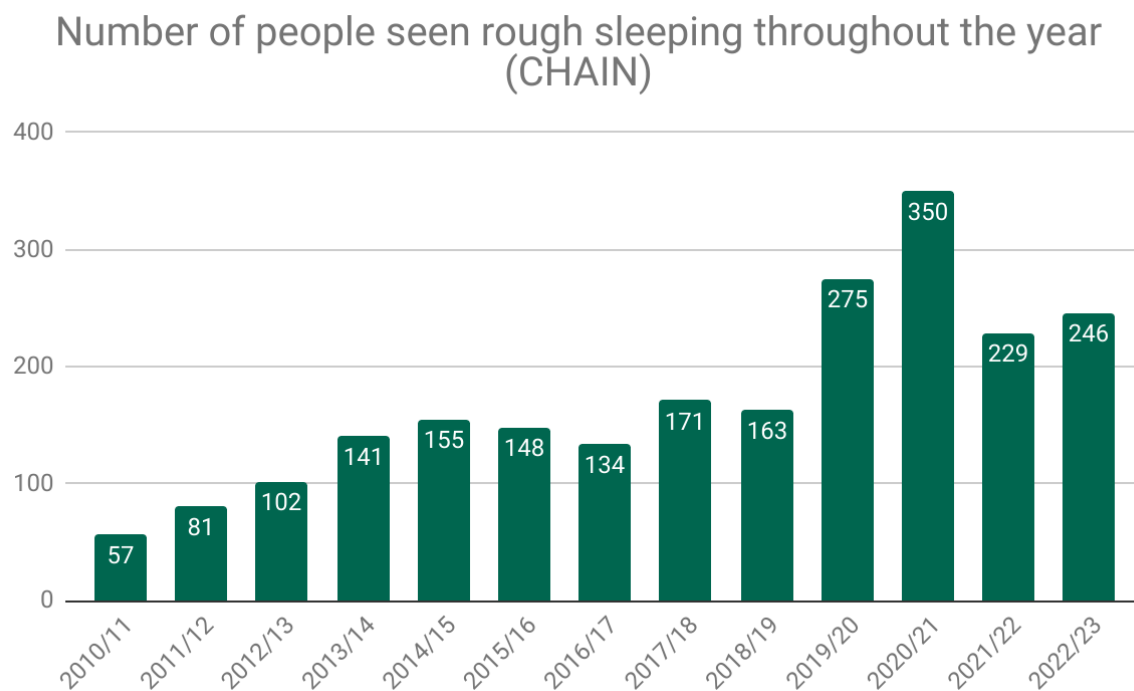
Theme Two: Tackling Rough Sleeping

The Council remains committed to ending rough sleeping in the borough but this continues to be a challenge because Government policies underfund necessary services to support residents and economic conditions mean that suitable affordable housing is out of reach of many.

Under Hackney's 'Everyone In' programme we made significant progress to ending rough sleeping by housing 219 people. However, housing market conditions mean that Hackney, along with many other areas of London, is experiencing rising numbers of people sleeping rough. The Rough Sleepers Initiative, which provides support for people experiencing rough sleeping, comes to an end in 2025 and it is not currently clear what funding will be available after this date.

Hackney has higher than London average figures for people coming onto the street for the first time and people living an entrenched street lifestyle. Lack of clear Government policy makes it difficult for Hackney to develop an effective accommodation pathway for rough sleepers who are non-UK nationals.

Table 7



The Greenhouse provides a single point of contact for rough sleepers where they can access GP services and housing advice. This along with a dedicated Street Outreach Team provides co-ordinated support to Rough Sleepers across the borough to ensure their needs are assessed and appropriate support is provided.

Many Hackney rough sleepers have complex needs. At the moment, it can be difficult for residents sleeping on the streets to access our Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper

Pathway or other temporary accommodation. Some rough sleepers placed in temporary accommodation need greater additional support to stabilise their circumstances than is currently available.

Mare Street is our main first-stage hostel for rough sleepers. We know some groups of people experiencing homelessness, including women and young people, find it more difficult to maintain their stays there. This links to a number of factors, including the hostel's large size and the wide range and complexity of support needs experienced by its residents. Other people are staying longer in Mare Street than originally intended because of a lack of suitable move-on accommodation and support.

The borough has seen increased numbers of rough sleepers who have no recourse to public funds and are excluded from certain services. We are committed to supporting these residents to gain the right to reside or settled status by working with specialist services. We have helped support Hackney Night Shelter by providing premises that have allowed continued provision of much needed bedspaces in the borough.

It is recognised that many former Service Personnel have problems accessing settled accommodation and are at greater risk of rough sleeping. 5% of those recorded sleeping rough in London (2022/23) had experience of serving in the armed forces. (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>). Whilst former service personnel form a smaller percentage of Rough Sleepers in Hackney the council is committed to the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure these residents receive appropriate support tailored to their specific needs.

To meet these challenges, we will take the following actions:

- Open a new 15-bed assessment centre. This will provide short-stay accommodation (6 – 8 weeks) for people who need further needs assessment and/or support to stabilise before moving into longer-term accommodation. The assessment centre will offer support, reconnection to another area, or an emergency bed for the most complex cases.
- Explore options to re-model Mare Street, including creating sub-hostels within the building for different groups experiencing homelessness to improve feelings of safety and to facilitate recovery.
- Ensure support provided to residents within the Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Pathway is fully trauma-informed and recovery-focused – supporting staff with training as needed.
- Increase focus on move-on from the Pathway, including enhancing the use of personal budgets, ensuring all residents have a move-on plan and access to independent living skills support.
- With colleagues in Regeneration and Housing, explore how we can expand accommodation supply for Housing First. We will also review the current Housing First support and progression model so more tenants can 'graduate' from the service and free up units for new referrals.
- Continue to improve links with Hackney's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Streetlink, and other services working with rough sleepers, so information can be shared, and support provided as soon as possible.
- Continue to work in partnership with ELFT (East London NHS Foundation Trust) to support work with the RAMHP (Rough Sleeping and Mental Health Programme).

RAMHP involves mental health practitioners working directly with street outreach teams, including on joint shifts and carrying out targeted mental health assessments with rough sleepers. The team's expertise has increased awareness of how rough sleepers' mental health and psychological needs impact on their engagement with homelessness services and has significantly increased their access to accommodation and mental health services.

- Explore options to relocate The Greenhouse to larger accommodation to bring existing services together in a single location to deliver a more joined up customer focussed service.
- Ensure staff working with rough sleepers understand the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and the additional support available.
- Work with London Councils, GLA, and Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to improve the coherence and consistency of data on rough sleeping, including changes to the CHAIN database and a new national performance indicator set, which includes managing flow of people onto the streets.
- Work with DLUHC to develop a tool which identifies people at risk of rough sleeping – making it easier to take preventative action to avoid this outcome.
- Lobby Government for a longer-term strategy to ensure gains made during the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) programme are sustained and support recommendations from the Kerslake Commission. This will specifically include longer-term funding for Housing First.

Theme Three: Supporting people with medical or intersecting support needs

An increasing proportion of residents who approach Hackney for housing assistance have complex medical or intersecting support needs, which may relate to their mental health, drug/alcohol misuse, or traumatic life history. Whilst we continue to support residents to reduce harm through initiatives such as Project ADDER they remain on the 'Edge of Care' because they are at risk of exclusion from homelessness services but are not eligible for statutory funding or support from statutory mental health or adult social care services.

Severe pressures on budgets for adult social care and mental health services and the short-term nature of much Government funding – commonly 12 or 24-month cycles – make it very difficult to provide this group of people with all the support they need to exit homelessness.

At present Hackney does not have enough choice of supported housing. This means some people with a physical health issue or other long-term condition are not able to live independently. Others may have to live outside of the borough, away from their current social networks, and this may place them at increased risk of experiencing homelessness again in future.

It is important for Hackney to forecast how many residents in the future are likely to have complex needs, so it can plan responses for this group. However, estimating this is currently difficult as local data systems relating to housing, homelessness, health, and other issues are not sufficiently joined up.

At the moment, not everyone who approaches Hackney for housing assistance receives the same messages from all Hackney services about their likely housing options and support. This can cause delays in offering support, confusion for residents and reduce trust in the Council's services.

To meet these challenges, we will take the following actions:

- Continue to develop tailored accommodation and support pathways for people with complex needs, including young people and people leaving hospital or prison. This will include:
 - Providing in-reach support within supported housing.
 - Developing a new approach for people on the Edge of Care which enables support to follow the person throughout their journey out of homelessness.
- Improve coordination of housing-related support by bringing together all homeless contracts within the Benefits and Housing Needs Service and establishing a new Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers Task and Finish group, involving Council departments, Health, housing associations, and support providers to commission additional schemes.
- Review the overall capacity of floating support services and explore the value of specialist floating support schemes for different groups experiencing homelessness. Ensure the floating support offered is holistic and outcomes based – including independent living skills development as well as practical support at move-in.
- Ensure all staff working directly with people experiencing homelessness with complex needs have the right skills, including around psychologically-informed and trauma-informed responses and which are gender and LGBTQI+-informed.

Working with colleagues in the Council and other partners, we will:

- Explore possibilities to develop additional supported housing in Hackney via the Government's Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP).
- Utilise specialist drug and alcohol funding to offer a holistic service involving clinical and therapeutic interventions, including for people with a dual coexisting mental health and substance use support needs.
- Use Hackney's Neighbourhoods structure to promote early intervention and support for complex needs residents from voluntary and community sector and mental health services.
- Work to streamline access processes for Adult Social Care and Substance Misuse services and explore the potential of a Common Assessment Form to coordinate work between services.
- Develop a more data-driven approach to identifying and engaging with people on the Edge of Care, for example those with rent and/or Council Tax arrears. Ensure there are up to date estimates of Hackney residents with medical conditions which impact on their housing needs and recognise this within new build and refurbishment programmes in Hackney.
- Promote shared responsibility across the Council through:
 - Relaunching Hackney's quarterly Homeless Partnership Board, which includes partners in the Council, Shelter, and other homelessness organisations.
 - Developing joint messages about housing supply and support and ensuring the full participation of all partners within multi-agency meetings – including Adult Social Care, Mental Health, and Financial Inclusion staff.

- Ensuring our Inclusive Economy strategy recognises the links between employment, income maximisation, and successful tenancy sustainment. Explore new models, such as community-based therapeutic support, to Hackney residents with additional support needs who have opportunities to access employment schemes in Hackney.
- Work towards a whole system approach for people experiencing homelessness with additional support needs within the new North East London Health and Care Partnership.
- With other London councils, lobby the Government for increased, long-term funding across housing, social care, public health, and NHS services.

Theme Four: Addressing Homelessness Amongst Young People in Hackney

The COVID-19 pandemic and Cost of Living crisis has particularly affected young people in Hackney, increasing strain on family relationships and making it more difficult to manage on relatively low incomes.

It can be challenging to offer timely help to young people at risk of homelessness because they are more likely to approach the Council for housing assistance when they are already in a housing crisis and because many young people do not consider themselves as experiencing homelessness unless they are rough sleeping. Similarly, young people sleeping rough are more likely to be in less visible, more out of the way locations and tend to utilise different support networks to adults.

Table 8

Homeless Approaches from 17 - 24 year olds										Total approaches
	Age									
Year	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
2018	0	0	0	0	0	11	28	38	42	119
2019	0	0	0	0	14	47	49	49	52	211
2020	0	0	0	4	47	71	91	74	96	383
2021	0	0	11	54	56	84	85	86	83	459
2022	2	5	40	50	63	96	91	90	95	532

Consultation with young people, including for our Resident Participation Strategy, indicates many young people want to stay in Hackney, but can lack realistic knowledge of available housing options.

Some young people experiencing homelessness need specialist supported accommodation, but this is difficult to provide within the current funding environment and when available supported accommodation is also sought by other groups of people experiencing homelessness.

A visit in 2022 from Government's specialist Youth Homelessness Adviser highlighted many areas of good practice in Hackney, including our commissioned pathway for young people

and care leavers, our trauma-informed approach, and Edge of Care service. We will continue to address recommendations from the visit in the new strategy.

To meet these challenges, we will also take the following actions:

- Reintroduce our mediation scheme to reduce homelessness due to family breakdown.
- Develop our accommodation pathway, to include young people aged 21+ who do not have a statutory right to housing.
- Develop youth-specific housing advisers in the Benefits and Housing Needs Service to improve consistency of information-sharing and advice.
- Review the Allocations Policy to enable care leavers to register from age 18, improving access to affordable social housing.
- Encourage young people at risk of homelessness to engage with our services and support early intervention with their housing needs through:
 - Working with young people to co-produce material for Hackney's website and develop our use of social media.
 - Strengthening links with local youth organisations, building on those established via Hackney Works, our Supported Employment Service.
 - Working with Hackney's Resident Participation Team around the new Young People's forum. This will offer young people opportunities to be involved in estate management.
- Work with Hackney Children's Services to support care leavers' transition to adult services.
- Develop a homelessness prevention programme in schools – to give young people realistic expectations of housing options and what it means to live independently.
- Continue work with other boroughs to develop sub-regional and pan-London protocols, to improve the consistency of responses for young people experiencing homelessness across London.

Theme Five: Inequality and the Cost of Living Crisis

We know that around 80% of preventable health issues relate to social determinants. Global Majority residents are more likely to live in overcrowded and otherwise poor housing conditions, negatively affecting their health and wellbeing.

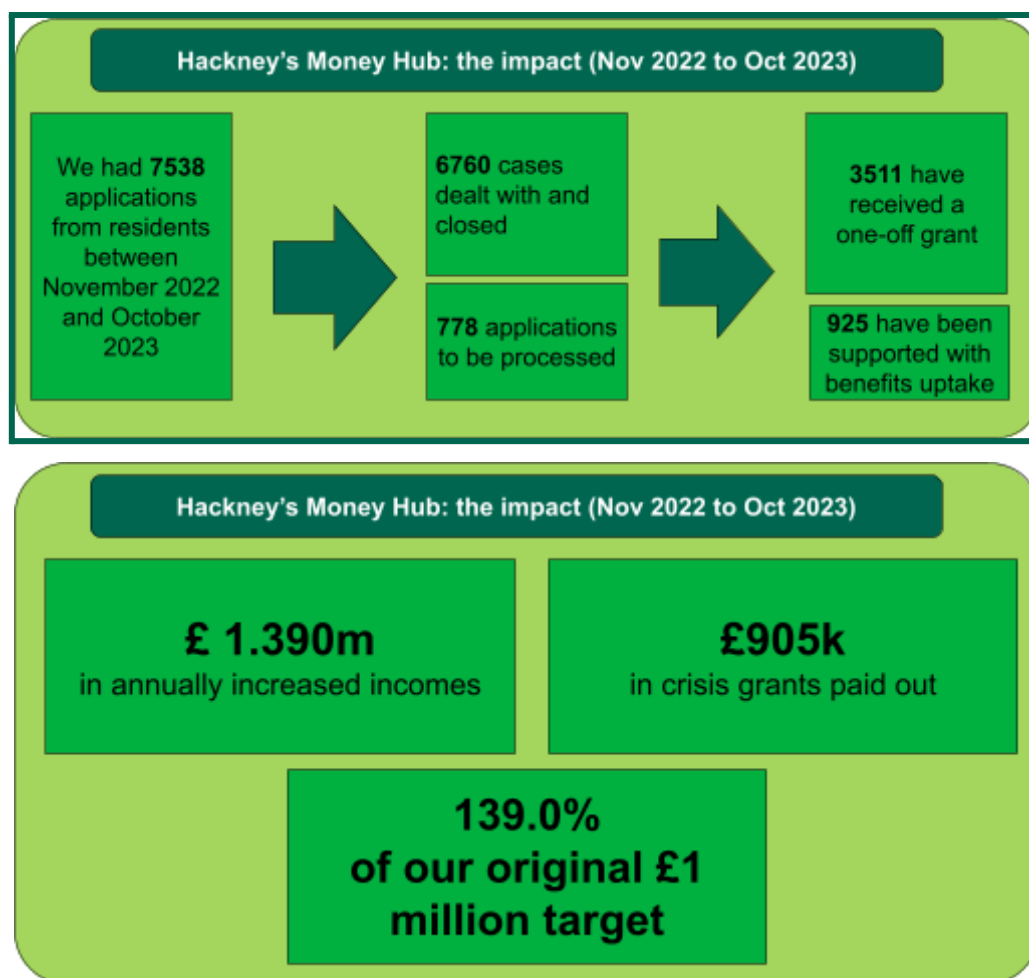
LGBTQI+ residents face significant challenges in accessing affordable and secure housing compared to non-LGBTQI+ residents, with transgender individuals particularly experiencing higher levels of discrimination and risk of homelessness. This discrimination can create or exacerbate housing instability for LGBTQI+ residents throughout their adult lives.

COVID-19 and the Cost of Living crisis have intensified inequalities, plunging more low income households into financial hardship, rent arrears, and risk of homelessness – with private rented tenants especially under threat of eviction. Hackney is having to deal with the consequences of these circumstances, including through increased demand for its services. Although Central Government has intervened through the Household Support Fund and funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, this is not sufficient to address inequalities in the housing market and to counter the impact of Local Housing Allowance rate freezes.

It is very difficult for the Council to tackle inequalities and poverty caused by increased costs of living, as their causes are almost wholly out of its control. However, we will seek to mitigate impacts through taking the following actions:

- Continuing to support residents around meeting their immediate material needs, This will include financial advice, warmth, and security grants for private renters via our Private Sector Housing Grants policy.
- Seeking to intervene early in people's problems before they reach crisis point. This will include using data held by the Council and local voluntary and community groups to target the most vulnerable households in need of support through our Household Support Fund.
- Utilising our new Hackney Money Hub service to combine crisis, Discretionary Housing Payment, and other funding into a single process, making it easier for residents to apply for financial support and to prevent homelessness.
- Increasing our engagement with Black and Global Majority residents and groups who do not engage as regularly with the Council – including Turkish, South American, and Orthodox Jewish communities, to better understand their needs and aspirations. This will include outreach and language support.
- Making better use of data to understand housing and homelessness issues for specific Black and Global Majority communities, including why they are over-represented within the population experiencing homelessness, so we can intervene earlier and prevent their homelessness in future.
- Ensuring that our service delivery is tailored to the needs of different communities – helping them to access homelessness solutions.
- Reviewing our new Lettings Policy and other policies to check their Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity impacts.

Table 9



Working with colleagues in the Council and other partners we will:

- Ensure all frontline staff working with people experiencing homelessness actively use anti-racist practice – drawing on learning around culturally-sensitive practice from other Hackney services, such as SWIM, which works with older Afro-Caribbean ex-offenders, and ADDER, which tackles drug use and dependency by ensuring that more people get effective treatment, with enhanced treatment and recovery provision, including housing and employment support, and improved communication between treatment providers and courts, prisons, and hospitals.
- Align actions with Hackney's Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Economy Strategies, including creating job opportunities for residents from disadvantaged communities; developing residents' groups and neighbourhood panels which consider how factors such as health and education access affect homelessness. We will support this via grant funding where possible.
- Collaborate with North East London Health and Care Partnership around inclusion health approaches which seek to reduce health inequalities for the most deprived Hackney residents through improving their access to services and treatment outcomes.
- Ensure all frontline staff working with people experiencing homelessness understand and are sympathetic to the challenges and discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ residents. We

will work with stakeholders and partners to identify housing solutions that meet the needs of LGBTQI+ residents who are homeless or at risk homelessness.

- Continue to act as a referral partner with the London Youth Gateway consortium to provide advice and signposting to LGBTQI+ specific housing schemes.

With other London boroughs we will campaign for Central Government to develop a national Cost of Living response strategy. This will include updating welfare benefits in line with Cost of Living increases and a fairer funding settlement for councils.

Theme Six: Advice and assistance for those with no recourse to public funds

The number of non-UK nationals rough sleeping in Hackney is increasing. CHAIN data indicates that of a total 229 rough sleepers in the borough during 2021/22, 51% (117 people) were non-UK nationals – up from 47% (164/350 people) in 2020/21.

Hackney has a long and proud tradition of welcoming refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, especially those fleeing conflict or harm in hope of a better life. In recent years the Council and its residents have housed and helped hundreds of individuals and families, including those from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine, who have fled some of the most devastating conflicts of our generation. The Council is committed to our refugee and migrant communities and has resolved to support the initiative to make Hackney a recognised 'Borough of Sanctuary,' welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution and offering them safety.⁴

The new Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeker team is establishing a targeted resettlement and housing support service for those who receive asylum status and have 28 days to vacate the Home Office contingency hotels, however, the Government policy refugees is fragmented and inadequate and this makes non-UK nationals vulnerable to poor outcomes around homelessness, health, and wellbeing.

The Council recognises that Government policy of housing asylum seekers in hotels across London and the rest of the UK poses a risk to local authorities that there will be increased demand for homelessness advice and assistance as their asylum applications are processed. This will increase demand in an already restricted market.

To manage these challenges, we will take the following actions:

- Continue to support applications to the EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme) where possible, utilising available Hackney data to identify people experiencing homelessness who are eligible for the scheme.
- Develop an advice and assistance service to meet the needs of residents in Home Office asylum hotels in Hackney that have been given leave to remain or are likely to receive leave to remain through Streamlined Asylum Processing.

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<https://hackney.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g5663/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2024-Jul-2023%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>

- Develop a pathway for non-UK nationals that considers other options alongside reconnection to their home country. This will include a Hardship Fund and adviser role to support evidence-gathering of residence and work history in the UK.
- Consider ring fencing beds at the new assessment centre to enable non-UK national rough sleepers to receive full assessment of their needs, alongside access to welfare benefits and immigration advice and support.

Working with colleagues in the Council and other partners, we will:

- Ensure all Hackney services maximise the use of available immigration funding, including the sub-regional fund delivered by Praxis.
- Ensure we maximise use of opportunities to support people with eligible care and support needs via the Care Act..
- Develop a Council-wide view around the drivers of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) homelessness, to inform appropriate homelessness prevention responses.
- We will develop services that support the Council's commitment as a Borough of Sanctuary.
- Put pressure on the Government to reverse the Home Secretary's plans to abandon key Commitments on the Windrush Compensation Scheme
- With other London boroughs, we will lobby the Government to provide fair access to welfare benefits for people awaiting immigration status, increased funding for immigration advice and employment support and a better developed model for resettling asylum seekers across London.

Theme Seven: Managing the Pace of Change in the Homelessness Environment

The pace of change within the housing market and homelessness environment in London continues at an astonishing rate. Genuine commitment from Government is urgently needed in many areas, particularly to address the Cost of Living crisis, insufficient rates of Local Housing Allowance, temporary accommodation procurement, and fragmented policy and support for non-UK nationals who are experiencing homelessness. Without this commitment, there is virtually no prospect of Hackney being able to prevent homelessness for all its residents who seek its help with housing. We will continue to lobby the Government for change in these areas.

We will continue to ensure that Hackney services are flexible to changing needs within the local homeless population, so we can intervene as early as possible in people's problems. To do this, we will:

- Adopt flexible procurement strategies, so we can meet the need for family and single person accommodation, and which meets people's complex and medical needs.
- Make best use of our day to day contact with residents as opportunities to learn, build their confidence and trust in Hackney services. We will support this by:
 - Continuing face-to-face working across Benefits and Housing Needs services.
 - Ensure all frontline staff working with people experiencing homelessness receive training about trauma-informed services and apply this throughout our policies and procedures.
- Review Hackney website information to provide residents with a realistic picture of current housing options and support their decision-making. This will include who is

eligible for homelessness support, who is likely to be offered social housing and private rented accommodation, typical waiting times in temporary accommodation, and transfer and downsizing opportunities via the Lettings Policy. We will also publish statistics on Hackney's performance in key areas.

- We will seek to collaborate wherever possible - with other Hackney departments, voluntary and community services, and other London councils to improve our services and lobby for wider change.
- Promote a collective response across Hackney services which avoids unnecessary internal challenging and mixed messages for residents about their housing and support options.
- Promote active participation by all partners at relevant multi-agency meetings, so full perspectives and action planning can take place.
- Use Social Value clauses to require our suppliers to provide opportunities for jobs and use of community spaces and improve how we monitor this activity to test effectiveness.
- Develop our data systems to more accurately forecast changes in demographics and demand for homelessness services. We will also use behavioural insights data to identify residents at possible risk of homelessness so we can offer appropriate responses, including around income maximisation and mediation.
- Fully participate in Government programmes which provide funding to specific groups, such as the Probation CAS3 programme for ex-offenders experiencing homelessness and the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP), developing accommodation for rough sleepers and young adults.
- Continue to participate in sub-regional and pan-London services and programmes, including around young people and prison leavers, highlighting Hackney innovation and good practice.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Council considers that the next few years will pose significant challenges in all aspects of the housing market and will place wide ranging demands on the council to meet the needs of residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The volatility of the housing market and short term nature of government funding necessitate that this strategy only looks to the medium term. Whilst we have maintained some consistency by carrying forward themes from the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, we recognise that our future direction requires a level of flexibility to meet the challenges ahead.

This strategy has outlined the key themes where the council will focus attention and activity to deliver key outcomes. In order to achieve our ongoing objectives the Council will develop an Action Plan detailing the proposed actions, expected outcomes, performance targets and achievements. The Action Plan will develop over the duration of this strategy to enable the Council to react to external pressures and best meet the needs of residents and the council.

The Benefits and Housing Needs Service will present the Action Plan to the Homelessness Partnership Board and will report annually on progress.



Hackney is proud to be working with the following organisations.



This Strategy has been produced in partnership with Homeless Link. The council would like to thank Helen Lewis, Homeless Link Associate, Sally Caldwell, Consultant and Sophie Price, Consultancy Manager.

About Homeless Link

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness In England. We aim to develop, inspire, support, and sustain a movement of organisations working together to achieve positive futures for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Representing over 900 organisations across England, we are in a unique position to see both the scale and nature of the tragedy of homelessness. We see the data gaps; the national policy barriers; the constraints of both funding and expertise; the system blocks and attitudinal obstacles. But crucially, we also see – and are instrumental in developing – the positive practice and ‘what works’ solutions.

As an organisation we believe that things can and should be better: not because we are naïve or cut off from reality, but because we have seen and experienced radical positive change in the way systems and services are delivered – and that gives us hope for a different future.

We support our members through research, guidance, and learning, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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**Let's End Homelessness
Together**



