

# **Consultation on Lambeth's draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

**End of Consultation Report  
Nov 2019**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district.

Since the last strategy in 2012, there have been significant legislation changes including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Lambeth must now work to prevent homelessness for all individuals, not just those in priority need, but we still only have a duty to provide housing to those in priority need.

These legislative changes have meant that this strategy is the most inclusive yet and puts partnership working more at the heart of the homelessness service.

## **2. The consultation**

### **2.1 Consultation objectives**

[Lambeth's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) sets out the borough's [priorities](#) to prevent homelessness and stresses the importance of working in partnership to address the wide range of issues that can be linked to homelessness.

Homelessness includes people sleeping on the streets, but also those who don't have rights to stay where they are or are living in temporary accommodation. This strategy offers provision for both those who are sleeping rough and those who are homeless but not living on the streets.

Over the course of September and October 2019, Lambeth consulted on the Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and invited members of the public, partners and wider stakeholders to have their say on the matter.

### **2.2 Who we consulted**

Residents, customers, partners and stakeholders in the borough.

### **2.3 When we consulted**

The consultation ran from 16 September to 25 October 2019.

### **2.4 How we consulted**

#### **2.4.1 Digital activity**

We used a survey on the Lambeth consultation web page, promoted via a Love Lambeth blog post and Facebook and Twitter posts. Emails were sent to all residents and partner agencies with monitored responses.

#### **2.4.2 Panel Meetings**

The draft strategy was presented at Informal Cabinet and Equalities Impact Panel and written feedback was collected from councillors and senior officers.

### 3. Responses

#### 3.1 Summary of results

The survey is now closed and a total of 295 responses were received. Overall, feedback strongly supported the main priorities. The main themes that came through were:

- Rough sleeping is a growing concern and more needs to be done to support those with mental health issues and those in crisis
- Concerns that Lambeth could do more to ensure that suitable homes are available and affordable for local households
- 30% of respondents called for better, more integrated, mental health support to be offered by housing providers
- 12.5% suggested that publicity and communications about homelessness and the services available should be improved
- A further 15% called for more lobbying to central government on the supply of affordable housing and 8% said there should be a better commitment to utilise void properties.

In addition, some key points made were:

- **Priority 1: Preventing homelessness by supporting all households in their homes and helping them to find accommodation.**
  - It was felt that more needs to be done to ensure that accommodation is affordable and available for those who need it.
  - Practitioners reported that unsuitable accommodation was fuelling homelessness as placing people in tenancies they are unable to manage leaves them more vulnerable.
- **Priority 2: Establishing effective pathways internally, with public authorities and partner agencies, to prevent homelessness.**
  - Partners agreed that they do know how to refer people in need of council support.
  - It was widely responded that better communications and publicity could raise awareness of the kinds of support available to those facing homelessness.
- **Priority 3: Making sure there is a supply of suitable accommodation for people to move into.**
  - It was suggested that Lambeth should lobby the Government to improve regulation of the private rented sector.
- **Priority 4: Improving the supply and sustainability of Temporary Accommodation while reducing expenditure.**
  - It was suggested that the provision of temporary accommodation must come with mental health support and better tenancy sustainment support.
  - A number of responses indicated that the quality of temporary accommodation should be improved.

- It was felt that more should be done to use void properties in the borough.
- **Priority 5: Ensuring that all people sleeping rough in Lambeth are supported off the streets and assisted in improving their lives and do not return to the streets.**
  - It was felt that better publicity and communications could educate public intolerance.
  - Mental health support was raised as a key support need amongst service users and partners.
  - It was suggested that more needs to be done to address the needs of Eastern European Rough Sleepers.

The feedback taken on the strategy also included comments received during discussion at the Council's Informal Cabinet, at the Council's Equalities Impact Panel and in discussion with stakeholders. These comments have been considered and integrated into the main body of the strategy and the action plan.

The major points coming out of Informal Cabinet regarded expansion on the risks associated with welfare reform, partnership working and the creation of new homes. In response to these comments, the focus of the strategy was shifted to emphasise the importance of the tenancy sustainment team who intervene when tenancy matters arise to prevent rent arrears mounting and eviction occurring as well as working to improve the quality of temporary accommodation and support for these residents. Ongoing partnership working with Health, Early Help and Social Care practitioners was also expanded upon and specific commitments around mental health partnership working were incorporated. In terms of the creation of new homes, new schemes which will introduce more modular temporary accommodation units to the borough, including accessible units, have been highlighted.

The final stage in the consultation programme came via the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group. This new group contains officers from across council services as well as a number of our commissioned providers and was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing. The inaugural meeting reviewed our initial responses to the consultation comments and agreed the draft version to be put forward to Cabinet. Comments from the steering group regarded ensuring the accessibility of new temporary accommodation units, and addressing the Council's response to those with no recourse to public funds. These amendments have been made. The steering group will meet biannually to ensure the action plan is delivered.

#### **4. Next steps**

The next steps relating to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are to present the final document to the council's Cabinet for its approval and to address any issues which may arise. The document will be published by 31 December 2019.