

2020 Annual review of Southwark Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2022

Background information

Southwark Council's main goal is to provide a fairer future for all. We remain committed to preventing and reducing homelessness, tackling the main causes of homelessness and supporting those in need.

The primary strategic focus is on finding long term sustainable housing solutions for people threatened with homelessness; offering high quality and innovative services to homeless households and working with homeless households to explore the full range of housing options available to them.

The pressures on local authority budgets and the financial challenges facing the public sector in general, means the design of our services and the solutions available needs to be efficient and with the aim of maximising positive outcomes affordably. At the same time, we know that we deal with some of the most vulnerable households and we will provide a full range of access to our services in consideration of their needs.

Introduction

This year's annual review of Southwark Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy specifically responds to challenges faced as a direct result of COVID-19. The strategy will outline how Southwark will improve their procurement and provision of high-quality temporary accommodation, including additional checks and measures to ensure it meets the good home standards. The annual review will also make reference to any updates within the action plan that will assist us to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic and achieve the overall aim of the strategy.

Prior to the pandemic, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) was described by the government as the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades. It is intended to act as a key lever for reducing homelessness and help towards halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eventually ending it altogether. Southwark Council was advanced with its plans through its status as an – early adopter trailblazer for the HRA. Southwark have made positive advancements in delivering the elements within the act, leading the way with the duty to refer process, improving customer satisfaction and also excelling in providing advice and information and utilising the extended prevention duties. Despite these advancements we are aware that homelessness takes different forms. Rough sleeping is the most visible, however there are many residents within the borough living in temporary accommodation, or are the hidden homeless (including those who are sofa-surfing) relying on help from relatives or friends to have somewhere to stay.

The lack of affordable housing is a central cause and barrier to, resolving homelessness. Welfare reform measures, such as the introduction and subsequent freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates, the overall Benefit Cap, and administration of Universal Credit, has made it ever more difficult for residents, including working households, to secure and retain a home. Similarly, the number of people sleeping rough has reached record highs in recent years, before the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three strategic objectives and five priority areas remain highly relevant as part of the ongoing strategic work in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Below is a table to recap on the overall aim of the strategy, the three main objectives and the five priorities.



Southwark response to COVID-19

In response to the 1st national lockdown the council accommodated over 700 rough sleepers into self contained housing, this response helped save many lives and protected the NHS.

Southwark were the only local authority to be recognised by Homeless Link for an excellence award in relation to a positive response to what was a devastating circumstance in an unprecedented time.

The Housing Solutions service continues to refer the customers and residents to the “Central Southwark community hub who provide a foodbank service to support the most vulnerable.

The impact of the pandemic resulted in a huge channel shift of how the council delivers services to anyone homeless or threatened with homelessness within the borough. In March 2020 the Homesearch centre located in Peckham was forced to close on a temporary basis due to COVID-19. Historically the Homesearch centre received a footfall of 30,000 visits per annum. As a result of the closure the council sought new ways for customers to access the services changing from a predominately face to face service to a majority remote service access through the telephone advice line and online web form enquiries. Despite this change the council is committed to ensure customers and residents are not digitally excluded providing front facing services to the most vulnerable following COVID-19 guidelines.

As a result of the pandemic the council has experienced a significant surge in demand for services and the council predicts that this will continue to rise in the foreseeable future. With the impact of COVID-19, this has been a very different year in comparison to what the council has experienced in the past.

A report was drafted in December 2020 titled the “**COVID-19 impact report on residents approaching as homeless.**” Internal records confirm the surge in homelessness applications during April to the end of October 2020 has increased further to 51% compared to the respective period in the previous year.

Internal data reveals that we are receiving sharp increases in homelessness from different cohort groups below:

- Young people
- Domestic abuse victims
- Friends and family evictions
- Single homelessness

Upgrades to the Housing Solutions service during the 1st National Lockdown 2020

In response to the pandemic the council upgraded its digital system which provides a number of benefits

- Our residents can make contact with us through completing an online web-form
- Our residents now have an option to rate the experience and the quality of the advice the council provide by completing a mini survey at the end of each call.
- From the outset of the call the upgraded telephone advice line now provides a range of options to choose from. Whether customers require advice regarding their private sector housing, financial support (in light of COVID-19 issues) or general advice regarding their housing options, this system now routes their calls to the specialist team required.

Southwark's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic received positive comments from MHCLG, Crisis, Shelter and faith organisations. The redesign of the service came as a result of consultation and information gathering with customers, key stakeholders and staff. Thereafter Shelter completed an independent mystery shop rating the service at 80% **"A Very Good Score"**. We maintained a 'business as usual approach' which was achievable through digitally transforming the service. .

Resources for tackling homelessness in Southwark

The increase in costs from the "Everyone In initiative" meant that even with the funding increase the council is still facing a significant budget shortfall of £8.6m predicted by the end of 2020-21 financial year.

The external funding from grants, including those we successfully bid for, have increased year on year. The funding we require reflects the additional burdens placed on local authorities as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act and national strategy to reduce rough sleeping.

The Funding we receive must cover the cost of delivering the elements within the Homelessness Reduction Act, not just the administrative and processing elements.

The emphasis of the New Burdens Funding has been to support the 'processing' resources of local authorities as opposed to the commissioning or service provision and interventions required to end homelessness.

Local authorities in receipt of the trailblazer and/or Rough Supporter Initiative funding alongside their New Burdens Funding have demonstrated positive impacts. Having additional resource to focus specifically on intervention and practice as well as assessment and process has provided successful outcomes to assist with preventing and relieving homelessness. It will be difficult for the council to deliver sustained and improved outcomes and reduce resources due to budget challenges based on the assumptions made when calculating the New Burdens Funding alone. This needs to be acknowledged and future funding secured on a long-term basis.

The council continues to use the flexible homeless support grant to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation.

Table 1.1 illustrates the funding received this financial year 2020/2021

Government Grants	2016-17 Grant Received	2017-18 Grant Received	2018-19 Grant Received	2019-20 Grant Received	2020-21 Grant Received
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
New Burdens / Homelessness Reduction Grant	-226	-484	-435	-411	-1,127
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	0	-2,670	-3,165	-3,616	-3,616
London Training Academy	0	-690	0	0	0
Prevention Trailblazer	-588	-412	0	0	0
TA Strategy/ Homeless Projects	0	0	0	0	0
Rough Sleeper (Housing First)	-40	-176	-176	0	0
Rough Sleeping Outreach	0	0	-100	0	0
Rough Sleeping Initiative	0	0	-615	-598	0
Rapid Rehousing Pathway	0	0	0	-1,002	-1,754
PRS Access Programme	0	0	-179	-189	0
Cold Weather Fund / Suspension of Derogation	0	0	0	-235	-682
COVID Emergency Support for Rough Sleepers	0	0	0	0	-33
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	0	0	0	0	-1,018
Programme Protect	0	0	0	0	-411
TOTAL	-854	-4,432	-4,670	-6,051	-8,642

Southwark and Brexit

The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020; with the transition period coming to an end on the 31st December 2020 this means from 1 January 2021 there will be new rules for businesses and citizens; that will impact the following.

- The Health and social care sector
- How residents access public services
- Changes to the EU Settlement Scheme
- Community engagement: guidance for local authorities
- Ports and borders rules for importing and exporting
- Regulatory services

The council is monitoring the impact of Brexit and arranging further eligibility training with legal experts to assist with legislative duties to support residents. The will continue to encourage all EU national to

apply for settlement status in order to meet the eligibility criteria. This is a supportive function to ensure all residents are supported.

We wait to see how this will impact the residents within Southwark. We are committed to doing everything we can to ensure that our residents and businesses get the best outcome from Brexit and we are working to make sure that the rights of our residents are protected

The Fairer Future vision for Customer Experience (which contains the Housing Solutions business unit) includes the relevant commitments:

‘Standing in our customers’ shoes’ we will design and deliver services in a way we would be happy for a member of our own family to access. We will encourage and enable residents to make their own decisions and stand on their own feet whilst always providing appropriate support for the most vulnerable. We will:

Seek to deliver excellent customer services through all communication channels; electronic communication, telephone and face to face

Develop our on-line service offering, improving end to end self-service tools to enable customers to access services 24 hours a day.

*Work with voluntary sector organisations and private sector landlords to prevent homelessness
Look for housing solutions that consider how children will have the best start in life
Give local residents a say in any new homes being developed on their estate*

This is followed by relevant mission commitments which, in particular, will guide our plans to improve online services to homeless households -

Deliver a customer experience where services can be accessed at a time convenient to residents and businesses

Improve digital functionality so that many more services can be delivered as self service

Manage homelessness and temporary accommodation effectively, leading to better outcomes for residents

Work with partners to provide an integrated housing solution service which seeks to deal with the customer in a holistic way to identify a successful answer to their housing needs.

Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043 refresh

Southwark’s Housing Strategy team hosted a series of workshops to consider new initiatives and plans for elements of its housing strategy. The principles in the strategy will remain the same but service areas within the authority have agreed a number of smart (measurable) actions to strengthen accountability. The actions include a continued commitment to hold quarterly homelessness forums to encourage partnership and collaborative working and reference the aims and plans in this homelessness strategy and wider corporate aims of reducing and prevention homelessness, set out in the Council Plan 2018/2019, 2021/2022.

Local evidence and data analysis

The implementation of the HRA17 led to a shift in the way local authorities collect data for governmental reporting. The new government requirements were for case level data, rather than aggregate data which required far greater detail than ever before on our customer base, their backgrounds, needs, situation and outcomes. This has helped produce far greater detail for us to analyse and over time see trends in how changes to our services impact on our residents, so we can ensure that the changes we make are having positive outcomes for everyone.

An accompanying report, Equality Monitoring Analysis 2020 has also been produced to accompany this report.

Action Plan Progress

This section provides a detailed summary of the action points updated, the Action Plan illustrates that strong progress has been made across all priority areas.

Priority One: Homelessness prevention.

We will deliver a leading prevention service building on our early adopter trailblazer project to meet the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The council continues to deliver a leading prevention service building on the early adopter trailblazer status to meet the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. Latest government data has ranked Southwark 3rd in London for successful homeless prevention outcomes. This is a great achievement as the council was ranked 19th in the previous year.

The council's private sector schemes known as the "finders fees" and "self help scheme" continue to increase in popularity remaining a viable tool to prevent homelessness.

The Housing Solutions services have adopted a new strategy creating 6 new contracted posts titled "**Homeless Prevention Officers**". These officers will be used as a rapid response to assist all residents and customers threatened with homelessness from private sector accommodation and relative and friends.

- The Prevention officer will do the following:

- Take a homeless application at initial contact
- Make enquiries to satisfy homelessness and eligibility
- Issue a personal housing plan and agree reasonable steps using resources from Southwark in-house private sector procurement team.
- Complete an affordability check
- Complete a Health assessment form to ensure we are offering tailored support for each individual.

With this process taking place at the initial contact, it will help provide a wide range of rehousing options and reduce the number of customers accessing first stage temporary accommodation without a homeless assessment recorded.

This is a new initiative which is more proactive in assisting applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days providing more opportunity for mediation to remain in their home or securing alternative housing which is affordable.

The Private Rented Sector prevention officers will be utilising data gathered by the council’s Financial Inclusion Team to identify residents who have sought additional financial support to meet their rent costs.

The private sector prevention officers will strategically target specific geographical areas within the Borough known to have the highest historical approaches as a result of rogue landlords. (In 2018-2019 we found that 32% of approaches were from SE15, 21% were from SE1 and 16% were from SE5.)

A report will be developed in 2021 to evidence the savings against the budget that the Prevention Officers have delivered to assess the value of the roles longer-term.

The Private rented sector team began a joint project with Southwark Law Centre and “Kineara” a support specialist agency who offer focused support to vulnerable households.

This joint partnership provides a holistic approach to homeless prevention as residents can now benefit from a variety of support services such as financial support, legal advice and advocacy including additional support for residents to access wider services if required.

Despite the impacts of the Pandemic the council continues to maintain outreach work, achievable by working in partnership with Thames reach, BEAM and St Mungo’s in order to sustain tenancies for the residents in the borough. It is important that we link in with communities both remotely and face to face to ensure we avoid digital exclusion.

Table 1.2 displaying Internal and External partnership

Southwark continues to invest in partnership working with the aim to prevent homelessness.

Agencies	Benefits
Shelter	Independent high-level professional advocacy and advice in the same location. Less adversarial and reduced litigation (joined up prevention agenda) Objective information on the customer journey and customer insight
Crisis	Crisis provide a strong steer on good practice and a powerful voice to partner with to lobby central government on national and regional issues around rough sleeping and homelessness prevention.
Solace Women’s Aid	Independent high level professional advocacy and advice in the same location. Less adversarial and reduced litigation (joined up prevention agenda)
BEAM / Thames Reach	A wider holistic focus linking employment and housing
Supported housing/Children’s and Adult services commissioned accommodation	Increased pathways and options for customers with support needs that can be focused and developed.
Homeless Link	Objective information on the customer

	journey and customer insight Improve staff culture and values
Shelter	An independent Mystery Shopping and Quality Audit to gain insight and measure customer experience.
Robes	Robes provide night shelter over winter months. Providing a wrap around services to provide shelter, life-skills and food for homeless applicants.

The council is also working with Southwark law centre to help regularize the stay for non eligible applicants assisted through the “everyone in initiative

Strategies to tackle Youth Homelessness

Southwark continue to tackle youth homelessness through partnership work with Children’s services conducting joint assessments. We deliver out reach work and successful mediation working alongside the Youth offending services, children’s services, Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Salvation Army.

This has been on going project further developed through the 16 + one front door working group. The purpose of the working group is to ensure the services listed in the table below 1.3 works collaboratively to support young people who are threatened with homelessness, with the ethos of getting right first time.

See table 1.3 below listing the partners Housing Solutions and Children’s services work with for a success outcome.

Children and adolescent mental health services
Keeping families together – mediation work with the family
Family out reach team
Early help services – provide clinical work and mediation services
Youth offending services
Sunshine house – dealing with applicants with learning difficulties

The project is on going with the idea of having one virtual assessment hub that can build a realistic picture of the young person circumstances. The purpose is to prevent duplication and improve smart communication between services with a common goal to prevent homelessness amongst young people.

Future developments

The council support the development of a renter’s union, future consultation is required to develop a proposal that meets the needs of both the council and private renters.

A report is being drafted setting out the pathway to establishing a Southwark Renters Union in 2021, 2022.

Priority Two: Tackle rough sleeping.

We will use the Rough Sleeping Prevention Trailblazer funding to continue to make even more progress at tackling rough sleeping in Southwark.

We will explore long term partnership working to improve innovation and good practice to eliminate rough sleeping.

A report was drafted in October 2020 “titled **The Homelessness - Rough Sleeping update**” providing a comprehensive briefing of how Southwark responded to the "Everyone In Initiative".

Since the start of the pandemic, Housing Solutions has successfully rehoused rough sleepers into a number of different tenures such as social housing, supported accommodation and private rented accommodation. During this period across all forms of rough sleeping and homeless prevention, Southwark prevented or ended 864 people from sleeping rough.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

SWEP is an emergency response where there is a risk to life due to extreme weather. London Winter Night Shelters opened in November 2020 as the temperature drops. These facilities often offer communal sleeping space in buildings such as night shelters, churches and community hubs making them unsuitable with complying with COVID-19 rules. The council will not use communal night shelters and will focus on working with hoteliers and landlords to provide self-contained emergency accommodation to reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks. From November 2020 to January 2021 the council has assisted 92 customers using the SWEP protocol, 21 customers housed through the Crisis at Christmas accommodation, 31 housed through the robes project and 36 housed through the Rest up Hotel with the remaining 4 customers housed through St Mungo’s and other support services such as Great Guildford Street and Grange Road.

Housing First Performance

The strategic focus of the housing first model is to find long term sustainable housing for people homeless or threatened with homelessness. This had previously proved difficult to achieve for those customers with multiple complex needs where the traditional homeless interventions for this cohort usually requires them to complete a series of step to make them housing ready. Where some customers may struggle to meet these strict requirements they were falling out of services, losing supported placements and creating revolving door homelessness.

Housing first has been an effective response for homelessness for single people who have experienced rough sleeping with multiple complex needs. However, homelessness can be recurrent or sustained for those who may not have a history of rough sleeping and their circumstances due to their needs may not have been resolved by existing services due to their complex needs. Housing first may be a more efficient use of resource for this cohort.

The Rough Sleepers initiative funding for 2020-2021 gave us the opportunity to extend the service to offer accommodation and support to more customers in Housing First including targeting ex-offender, women and care leavers. We would like to continue the momentum of the success of this service and aim to extend this provision to all singles who present with a housing issue.

During the Pandemic, the Housing First teams have successfully accommodated 10 new cases into settled accommodation.

See break down below in table 1.4

Housing First Customers	Type of Tenancies
2	Housing Association
6	LBS Council tenancies

The council is working in partnership with the police and Southwark anti-social behavioral unit SASBU to address street population anti-social behavior. We are also working in partnership with the Robes project to provide support and care packages to single customers accommodated in our hotel provision.

The Homelessness Forum which takes place on a quarterly basis continues to provide regular liaison between the commissioned Street Population Outreach Team and partnership services. This ensures that services are rightly held to account and provide best value for money and reduce rough sleeping across the borough.

Future developments

The council has joined “Crisis” local authority practice network.

The purpose of the network is to explore good practice with a number of local authorities in order to plan ahead of the COVID-19 second wave.

The partnership involves net working with a number of Local authorities across all the nine regions of England aiming to encourage partnership work helping remove silos within and between organisations. The overall aim is deliver projects that support local and national efforts to end homelessness and improve the development, sharing and implementation of evidence-based practice.

Street Storage Partnership

The council is in the consultation stage of partnering with Street Storage, a charity working across London to support rough sleepers store their belongings free of charge. The partnership will provide flexible access and security for the homeless community and the vulnerably housed. The strategic advantages that rough sleepers will gain from this initiative are both direct and indirect. The direct impact will include providing additional services for rough sleepers to store their belongings, not limiting their options to first stage temporary accommodation. This can be used as a rapid response to assisting rough sleepers before they are assessed by a housing officer and provided first stage temporary accommodation. The aim is to provide enhanced freedom of movement without the necessity to carry their personal belongings. These help rough sleepers to attend health services, places of worship, and job interviews. The indirect impact of this initiative will provide the opportunity to gain and maintain employment, attend rehabilitation facilities and assist in securing longer term accommodation.

See some statistics below from Street Storage, operating currently in Camden

Out of the 100 clients currently using this service in Camden

- 25% are currently working
- 30% are actively seeking work.
- Approx. 20% have secured longer term accommodation leaving first stage temporary housing
- Approx. 15% have reengaged with education
- 10% currently in active rehabilitation programs

Priority Three: Vulnerability and Health.

We will ensure our services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse and heavily reliant on the health sector. We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equip them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur. We will end the use of nightly rate (bed and breakfast style) temporary accommodation with shared facilities for homeless families.

The council have expanded partnerships with stonewall housing to support LGBTQ community and continue to be a trusted partner for advocating equality in the community.

Domestic abuse bill updates

From April 2021, the Statutory Domestic Abuse Bill will be in place which includes creating a statutory definition of domestic abuse, and the provision of safe accommodation services for all victims.

Since April 2020 the council have implemented the Priority Need status for all Domestic Abuse victims to protect the most vulnerable households in our society.

In preparation for the new law, Southwark Council has continued to assist all customers fleeing domestic abuse providing accommodation and ensuring no customer will return to the place they fled from. We are proud to confirm that all non priority customers are treated exactly the same way as a priority need customer. The Homelessness Reduction Act trailblazer work certainly assisted the service to change the culture and to place the customer at the centre of everything we do.

During the height of the pandemic Southwark accommodated 23% of all women fleeing Domestic Abuse from the Greater London Authority (GLA) funded COVID-19 Domestic Abuse hostel. This dates back from the 23rd March to the end of October 2020 further highlighting our commitment to protect the most vulnerable residents within the borough tackling vulnerability and health during these unprecedented times.

Methods to reduce the use of Temporary accommodation

The councils housing stock available to use as temporary accommodation within the borough has been declining. In addition to this, the advancement of the regeneration scheme on the Aylesbury Estate has meant there have been fewer properties we can use as temporary accommodation.

A target was agreed in June 2019 to eliminate the use of all nightly rate temporary accommodation by 1 January 2021. The service has produced weekly reports to its strategic director to track the progress. Prior to the pandemic performance was ahead of target and numbers had reduced by 38%. However with the "Everyone In Initiative" there has been a rise in the usage of first stage temporary accommodation and the use of hotels. During the COVID-19 outbreak the council moved 278 homeless households from all forms of shared living arrangements.

The council is committed to eliminating the use of shared living arrangements for homeless households and the actions taken during COVID-19 are positive and imaginative with the using of accommodation located on the Ledbury Estate, with properties also used through the acquisition at Churchyard Row and the temporary use of accommodation at Sumner Road. Although we have significantly reduced the use shared hostels and nightly paid first stage temporary, there is currently a £9 million temporary accommodation budget overspend. The council aims to reduce this overspend using a number of strategic approaches which are currently in the consultation phase. A number reports have been drafted to support this approach such the "**Private Rented Sector Accommodation Policy**" this aims to

access affordable accommodation outside the borough.

The council is still consulting on how to tackle the temporary accommodation overspend and understand that it is necessary to improve the supply of suitable and good quality accommodation. The council aims to ensure that all forms of accommodation meets the needs of the resident in terms of size, location, structure and affordability (complies with the requirements of Chapter 17 of the Code of Guidance for local authorities).

Southwark housing choice and supply team have drafted a number of reports “**Housing allocations Overcrowding and under occupation report**” and the “**Out of Borough Placement – Policy and benefits**”). These reports provide the details of how the council will ensure our residents and families of whom we are unable to prevent homelessness gain access to affordable housing that meet individual needs.

It is important to ensure the safety and security of the accommodation meets the required standards, the council will increase spot checks and implement additional compliance enforcement processes, including contract termination where standards are not met.

Table 1.5 below illustrates the average waiting times in temporary accommodation for social housing in 2019-20 including all bedroom sizes.

Bedsit	Q1	Q2
No of lettings	116	136
Average Time	23 months	20 months
Maximum Time	10 years, 7 months	5 years, 4 months

Why is this important

While homeless households are waiting for social housing, they are living in temporary accommodation which can also involve a number of moves between properties. Evidence suggests that for some families, living in temporary accommodation can have a serious impact on health and wellbeing in the long-term and disrupts family life, relationships and education.

A better understanding of the possible implications of going into temporary accommodation may help some households make better decisions about their options as they may consider settling for private sector accommodation that is more affordable and offers long term stability.

Housing Solutions are working in partnership with Finance directorate to develop a revised incentive offer to encourage Private Rented Sector moves at an earlier stage.

With the growth in young and single applicants approaching, the council will continue to review the service provided and offer quality and affordable accommodation options.

Future Developments

The Housing Solutions service has agreed to work in collaboration with “The Partnership Southwark recovery plan project”.

The Partnership was established within the health sector in May 2019, building on work to integrate care through local care networks.

The partnership integrates organisations across health and care in the borough to work in unison to tackle the trickiest issues our population is struggling with by sharing and intertwining strategies, operational plans and priorities. The partnership linked together a range of health and care organisations with a view to working together with non-statutory providers. This also involves service users/carers in our communities to better join up services and support; tackle the causes of inequality; improve the health and wellbeing of Southwark residents.

The North and South General Practices (GP) have access to funding of 5k -10k to support the homeless population. The aim is to link local health (GP surgeries, Community nursing services, mental health services) and care organisations (Voluntary and community sector services, council, local businesses) and professionals at a very local/neighbourhood level. The North and South General Practices have specifically selected the Housing Solutions service to invest their funding and together we have agreed to combine our resources to create a new job role of a (Health partnership officer). This is a vital role that will link Housing Solutions with the Social prescribing link workers (who receive referrals directly from all GP practices related to non medical need).

The Health partnership officer will lead a whole system approach to support residents recover from the lock down measures related to COVID-19, by learning to work in a 'COVID-19 world' as well as working together to prevent or manage outbreaks over the next 18 months. The officer will ensure that all medical patients with a housing issue have direct access to support from Housing Solutions with the aim of preventing homelessness.

Critically, the role it seeks to set out how we will seek to address the exacerbated health and social care inequalities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. The new role will link in well with the Partnership Southwark's approach to COVID-19 recovery and the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities in outcomes and support the Black Lives Matter approach. The new role aims to improve joint working together with the health sector during the Planning for recovery from COVID-19 across our population groups – building on strengths and lessons learned.

Priority Four: Responding to the local housing market.

We will respond to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to households and landlords to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.

The Private Rented Sector team and Housing Supply Team will use the landlord forums to strategically developing stronger relationships with private sector landlords to achieve two aims:

- Better performing landlords and to attract new business from private landlords to increase the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation.
- Encourage support for tenants

According to the HomeLet rental index the average rental price in London fell by 3.7% in the year to October 2020. Despite this slight dip the average UK rental price has increased up by 2.2% year-on-year. The data shows that the average rental value in London was noted at £1,603 in October 2020, 95% higher than the average across the rest of the UK at £821.

The first virtual Landlord forum was held on the 9th December 2020. This event was very well attended with a total 60 participants 75% landlords and 25% agents. The event was partnered with the department of work and pensions (DWP), National Landlord association (NRLA) and the Environmental Health Service. The council received positive feedback to take forward and will now organise miniature landlord focus groups to be held in the near future focusing on different topic areas such as rent issues, incentive structures and HMO licensing consultations.

The Housing Supply service focused on the following points below:

- Reduce numbers in Temporary Accommodation usage by 10 % each year
- Strengthening our relationships with Registered Providers (housing associations), in order to maximise the number of affordable social lets.

Help2Rent

Southwark's Housing Solutions service continues to work with Help2rent, providing a self service property finding platform for residents faced with homelessness. Between April 2020 – December 2020 the Help2 rent platform accounted for 78 properties (28%) procured by the service.

The Help2rent partnership further developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in which further support was provided to residents placed into Hotels on an emergency basis. This included the provision of furniture and essential utensils required once a move was achieved. Members of staff further attended the hotels help promote the work they completed and provided workshops on property matching. Help2rent are growing in profile and therefore the service will be able to benefit from this partnership in the acquisition of properties over a wider geographical area. There are over 1,800 residents registered on the website which further attracts on average over 1,200 visits per month. The number of residents listed on the website has also increased over the last 6 months with an average on 108 new applicants added to the self help system.

Allocations Scheme

The draft housing allocations was approved by cabinet on the 8 December 2020 to go for consultation before full implementation in 2021. The proposed scheme has been designed to promote greater housing options including the option of private accommodation for residents in a housing need. This includes the ability to be accommodated in the private sector, but still remaining on Southwark's Social Housing register, a huge incentive to residents whom wish to move from temporary accommodation and seek accommodation in the private sector independently.

Council home delivery (wider picture)

Southwark Council has made one of the most ambitious commitments to council home delivery in the country, with plans to build or purchase 11,000 new council homes by 2043. Southwark agreed a long-term housing strategy for the borough in January 2015. This included specific commitments to increase housing supply: 11,000 new council homes for social rent by 2043 – and at least 2,500 of these built or under construction by 2022. 1,251 of which have been completed leaving a balance of 1,249, left to deliver. The council is already building new homes with 677 delivered, 574 under construction and a further 1,252 council homes with planning permission. A further 1,823 are in various

stages of design development. In addition, initial consultation is underway on a number of further potential development opportunities to add them into the programme. This is positive news for Housing Solutions as the positive developments achieved from the housing strategy will have an impact on how well Housing solutions service can respond to the local housing market by providing longer term housing for residents.

Future Developments

The council is now planning a remote road show scheduled for early 2021 to engage with accepted homeless households in nightly paid temporary accommodation. The aim is to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation by promoting the benefits of securing long term Private sector housing that is truly affordable through the help to rent scheme and other external letting agents. The council wants to increase customer knowledge around the bidding system and options moving forward from Temporary accommodation as well as gaining insight to whether the current standard of temporary accommodation meets customer needs.

The council continues to monitor its arrangements with Capital Letters, with the aim to increase the supply of accommodation we can offer within London if this option proves value for money.

Southwark's homelessness strategy set out clearly to not simply respond to national policy but to challenge, lobby and campaign for a system that can end homelessness for good. This is why the council is in the process of forming a 10 year working partnership with Crisis to press for change in response to the affordability and access to local housing.

Southwark are collaborating with the West Midlands project to access accommodation outside of the borough to tackle the affordability with accessing private rented accommodation.

Priority Five: Responding to the Welfare Reforms.

We will work closely in partnership with support agencies and local services to offer solutions that ensure households are able to maintain tenancies and their homes sustainably.

Southwark has agreed a partnership with Beam commencing August 2019 to launch an innovative approach to helping homeless people get the training they need to access skilled jobs. Beam crowdfunds employment training for individual homeless people through its website. Southwark will provide 50 households as part of an initial pilot.

Due to the success of the pilot, which was due to last for 18 months and complete on February 2021, the project has used up all 50 spaces for crowd-funding campaigns.

Currently, 97 Southwark residents are on Beam's waiting list since the partnership paused in August 2020.

Beam has proved a highly cost effective way to reduce the harm to local marginalised communities caused by the pandemic

The financial inclusion team helps tenants cope with housing costs and do their utmost to ensure 100% of Discretionary Housing Payments budget is spent and managed throughout the year.

The budget is set at £1.3 million, the spend year to date (April to end of December 2020) is £964,537.06; comparing this figure to the same period in 2019/2020 the team spent £909,082.07.

The increase in expenditure is a result of the impacts of the pandemic as 40 thousand residents have been

furloughed in Southwark with a huge increase in universal credit claims from 21000 to 41000, 100% increase. The financial inclusion team has spent 6% more of their budget in comparison to the same period last year. All households affected by welfare reform are linked in with Beam, Thames reach and the Job Centre Plus to provide housing assistance as well as financial solutions.

Future developments

The council has formed a partnership with Crisis and will continue to lobby government to increase the Local Housing Allowance rate to help minimise the affordability issues within the private sector. Despite this effort the benefit cap provides a significant challenge for the council as it provides a barrier for customers who are willing to move further a field.