

# London Borough of Barnet

## Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

**2019-2024**

**(March 2019)**



## Foreword

Everybody needs shelter, but for more than two decades Londoners have found it ever harder to afford a roof over their heads. To a rising generation of Barnet residents, home ownership is a distant dream. Renting has become a way of life instead. Yet renting can be unpredictable and insecure. This challenge is at the heart of our new approach to housing in Barnet.

While most landlords are good, a persistent minority cut corners and exploit tenants. Barnet will insist on raising standards across the board. The Housing Strategy introduces the LEAD agenda: Licensing, Enforcement, Advice and Data. We will look to widen the scope of our existing licensing requirements, increase the pace of enforcement, strengthen advice for both landlords and tenants, and improve our evidence collection so that we can better understand the needs of the growing private rented sector. Responsible tenants expect a fair deal: we are on their side.

Complementing this plan is our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Together with our partner organisation Barnet Homes, we are dedicated to preventing homelessness from occurring, and we work to intervene at an early stage before issues build up. Too many Barnet families continue to live in temporary accommodation: through effective partnerships and innovative approaches we will bring that number down. Rough sleeping must be tackled through specialist staff who can get the right support to the most vulnerable.

In the medium term, Barnet needs more housing that is affordable, safe and secure. We have a development plan to meet demand and we call on developers and registered providers to work with us to get there. And in the wake of the Grenfell fire disaster, we have also put in motion the largest sustained investment in fire safety ever carried out in Barnet. Our integrated strategy is set out in the Housing Strategy 2019-24 and the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24. These documents have been prepared alongside the draft Local Plan 2021 to 2036 which specifies our requirements for housing affordability.

Housing was once described as “the first of the social services”. That remains our vision in Barnet today. Everyone who contributes to the life of our borough should be able to afford to live here, in a home that is fit for the future.

**Cllr Gabriel Rozenberg**

**March 2019**

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## 1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - Executive Summary

Through this strategy, the council aims to tackle all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping in Barnet. This includes those owed a statutory duty and also those who are single, sleeping on the streets, or in other transient arrangements, such as sleeping on a friend's sofa. Our approach to formulating this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy complies with the obligations explained in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Homelessness Act 2002.

The council's statutory homelessness service, including the provision of temporary accommodation, is delivered by Barnet Homes, our Arm's Length Management Organisation. Many of the actions set out in this strategy are commissioned by the council and delivered by Barnet Homes.

In order to formulate this strategy, we carried out a 'Review of Homelessness' in Barnet. The review assessed the levels and patterns of homelessness, and identified gaps in knowledge and services.

The Review found that:

- The number of households approaching the council for housing advice and assistance has remained high, however overall homelessness applications and acceptances fell by a third over the past five years as the Barnet Homes Housing Options Service continued to successfully prevent more households becoming homeless every year.
- The most common reason for applying to the council as homeless was eviction from private rented accommodation, followed by eviction by friends or family and then breakdown of a relationship.
- The council through Barnet Homes has implemented a number of initiatives and more effective ways of working together that have been very successful in securing appropriate accommodation and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by successfully procuring and discharging its duty into private rented accommodation.
- The council needs to continue to increase the supply of affordable housing to meet housing need.
- The council with Barnet Homes needs to work more strategically with partners to tackle and prevent homelessness in Barnet.
- Further work with partner and referral agencies is required to improve the end to end support available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and better tackle the underlying causes of homelessness across multiple services and sectors.
- The number of people sleeping rough on any one night in Barnet has steadily reduced over the past five years. But more work is required to get more entrenched rough sleepers off the streets, address their needs and help them to secure accommodation.

The Review is set out in detail in section 4.

Based on these findings, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy identifies four strategic objectives and associated actions to address the issues identified in the Homelessness Review, as summarised below:

1. **Preventing homelessness**

- Barnet Homes will improve advice and early support to prevent a target of 6,000 at risk households from becoming homeless by 2024.
- By reviewing and remodelling the Barnet Homes Housing Options Service, Barnet Homes will provide tailored support to different households such as singles, families and vulnerable adults underpinned by the integration of the tenancy sustainment team to prevent homelessness.
- All eligible and homeless households approaching the council through Barnet Homes for assistance will be provided with a personal housing plan to better address their individual housing and support needs.
- A review of debt collection processes will be carried out across the council to ensure agencies are working together to maximise support to customers on low incomes, debt or those impacted by changes to their benefit entitlements.

2. **Reducing the use of temporary accommodation and securing suitable accommodation for those who are, or may become homeless**

- By 2024, reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation by over a third, from 2,759 to a target of 1,750. The Barnet Homes Temporary Accommodation Reduction Team will work to move more households into longer term suitable accommodation.
- Barnet Homes will build on the success of its Private Sector Team (let2barnet), to procure a further 3,000 properties to discharge our homelessness duty directly into the private rented sector by 2024.
- The council will use its own surplus land and buildings to deliver an additional 500 affordable homes by working closely with Barnet Homes and other key partners to maximise the delivery of social housing across the borough.

3. **Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are or used to be homeless, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk of them from becoming homeless again**

- The council will improve the strategic focus of tackling homelessness in Barnet by establishing a Homelessness Forum. This Forum will have representation from all key partners, ensuring that a multi-agency approach is being taken to prevent homelessness in the borough.
- The council will work with partners to help households improve their resilience against homelessness for example by working together on providing, employment, welfare and mental health support at the same time.
- The council will support vulnerable adults, victims of domestic abuse, young adults and care leavers at risk of homelessness and those impacted by welfare reform by commissioning a community outreach and mental health floating support service. This service will support people to maintain and maximise their independence and wellbeing.

#### 4. **Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs**

- Barnet Homes will recruit specialist staff to increase outreach and support provided to rough sleepers.
- Accommodation will be procured specifically for entrenched rough sleepers and for those with low to medium support needs.
- Barnet Homes will work with partners to provide advice and support to rough sleepers around health, benefits, education and employment and support those ready for independent living to move into longer term accommodation, with additional support provided to help them sustain their tenancy.

A range of actions have been identified for the council and Barnet Homes, along with other organisations involved with tackling homelessness. Specific actions have been included for people who are more at risk of homelessness. Actions contained in this Strategy take consideration of how the council discharges its homelessness functions. Also considered are the functions exercised by the council's Family and Adult Social Care services. The strategy promotes working across organisations and policy boundaries, to ensure social inclusion and equality of access to services.

## 2. Background

Barnet is the most populous borough in London with a population that is projected to increase from 391,000 in 2017 to reach 466,000 by 2041. This growth is not expected to be spread evenly across the borough, with areas of development expecting to more than double their populations. The largest increase in the population is expected to be those in the age group 65+, with growth rates near three times of those ages 0-15 and 16-64. Much of this growth will be migration into the borough, from other areas of the UK and internationally which is expected to make up 52% of the increase in population.

Barnet is also a very diverse borough, with 39% of the population being Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and over half of all 0-4 years olds from BAME backgrounds. This is lower than the Outer London average of 43% and much lower than neighbouring Brent where 65% of the population are BAME. However, Barnet's proportion of Other, Other Asian, Chinese ethnic groups is larger than neighbouring boroughs. Barnet also provides a home to the largest Jewish population in the country.

In Barnet, home ownership has fallen over the last ten years with more people renting as it becomes increasingly difficult for residents to buy their own homes because of increasing prices and a reducing supply. This trend is set to continue and by 2025 half of the borough may live in privately rented accommodation. As house prices have increased, so have rent levels. The average monthly cost of rent has increased by 25% between 2011 and 2017. Barnet has rent levels higher than the average for Outer London and almost twice that of the average in England. The average rent in the borough is projected to increase by between 3% and 4.5% in each of the next five years, as demand continues to outstrip supply. Over the past five years there has been an increase of around 4% on average in each year.

In Barnet, high rents and relatively high levels of benefit receipt have combined to mean a larger impact of welfare reform than in other areas of the country. These changes affect households in work as well as those out of work. Most significant are the changes to Local Housing Allowance have limited the amount of housing benefit tenants in the private rented sector can receive (9,000 households with an average loss of £55 a week) and the overall cap on benefits affecting 700 households losing an average of £50 a week.

The impact of homelessness is broad and far reaching. The right home is an important factor in a person's health and wellbeing, not only does good housing help a person stay healthy, it also impacts on their ability to sustain a job, care for their family, contribute to their community and better manage their health. It is clear that preventing homelessness has obvious benefits not only for people's housing outcomes, but for reducing health inequalities and improving quality of life.

A recently commissioned Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides an objective assessment of housing need in Barnet and shows that 17,600 affordable homes are needed by 2041. This equates to 704 affordable homes a year.

Barnet's previous homelessness strategy was included in the 2015 Housing Strategy and set the aims of enabling families to remain close to support networks and in more settled accommodation. This was achieved by;

- Increasing focus on early intervention and homelessness prevention measures, such as tenancy sustainment, youth mediation and domestic abuse support services. Homelessness preventions have increased from 832 in the year 2013/14 to 1,140 in 2017/18.
- Formation of a Welfare Reform Task Force to work closely with households affected by welfare reform to minimise the risk of homelessness having supported over 1,100 households in a variety of ways over the last three years.
- Increasing the effectiveness of Barnet Homes private rented sector procurement strategy, including the launch of their let2Barnet team and landlord incentive scheme for private sector landlords, so that the number of affordable private sector lettings to homeless households increased from 328 in 2013/14 to 649 in 2017/18.



### 3. National and Regional Homelessness Context

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is one of the largest changes to housing and homeless legislation in recent times. With this, all local authorities have a duty to prevent homelessness for all residents, regardless of their priority need status. One of the key elements is that authorities have a duty to assist those who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The authority must also clarify what actions are to be taken when someone applies for assistance.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in the borough every five years (from the date of publication of the previous homelessness strategy) and then to produce a strategy based upon this evidence base. The homelessness review should assess:

- The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the borough.
- The activities which are carried out for any of the following purposes;
  - Preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district
  - Securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
  - Providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and,
- The resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined above.

The government have also published a Rough Sleeping Strategy recently with the aim of assisting 6,000 vulnerable people off the streets by providing rapid specialist assessment and support.

Backed by £100 million of funding, the strategy sets out the next steps towards achieving their aim of supporting everyone off the streets and into a home, and to end rough sleeping entirely by 2027. It sets out a three-pillared approach:

- Prevention – understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk
- Intervention – helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances
- Recovery – supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

This system has prevention at its heart, focusing on stopping people from becoming homeless in the first place and providing them with the right support to find work and live independently.

Longer term, those sleeping rough will be rapidly housed and offered comprehensive support to ensure their specific needs are addressed so that they can move into suitable long term accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

## Regional Context

The homelessness review and strategy must align itself with regional strategies, which in the case of Barnet is the Mayor of London's Housing Strategy. The most recent Housing Strategy was published in June 2018, and is currently awaiting approval by the Secretary of State. This focused on reducing the number of rough sleepers in London, increasing the amount of affordable homes and improving the private rented sector. The key components from the strategy are:

- Greater collaboration to increase the number of people in the private rented sector.
- Allowing local authorities to combine their buying power.
- Increase the housing supply for homeless households.
- Increased funding from the GLA to help tackle the problem.

## North London sub-regional Context

The council is committed to working with neighbouring boroughs to compare and review current housing need and homelessness practices, and identify opportunities for coordination and efficiencies wherever beneficial.

Barnet's commitment to such practices is demonstrated through its consistent participation at sub regional meetings, coordinated by the North London Housing Partnership, a strategic umbrella organisation that brings together housing and homelessness managers working within the following six North London local authorities: Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington and Westminster.

The group meets monthly with partners where Homelessness Prevention and Housing Needs service heads and managers share best practice, review services and discuss opportunities for coordination around homelessness and housing needs issues. Additional areas include:

- Joint Rough Sleeper Leads Group: a quarterly meeting whereby the borough Rough Sleeper Commissioning leads, Community Safety and voluntary agency stakeholders (i.e. commissioned outreach team managers) meet to share knowledge, learning and best practice on rough sleeping matters, identify areas for coordination and joint working, and oversee sub regional rough sleeping projects.
- Supply and Policy Group – a quarterly meeting for Temporary Accommodation and Housing Policy managers to discuss and coordinate work plans.
- Directors Board – a quarterly meeting for Housing Directors from each borough to provide a strategic steer and oversight for sub regional working.

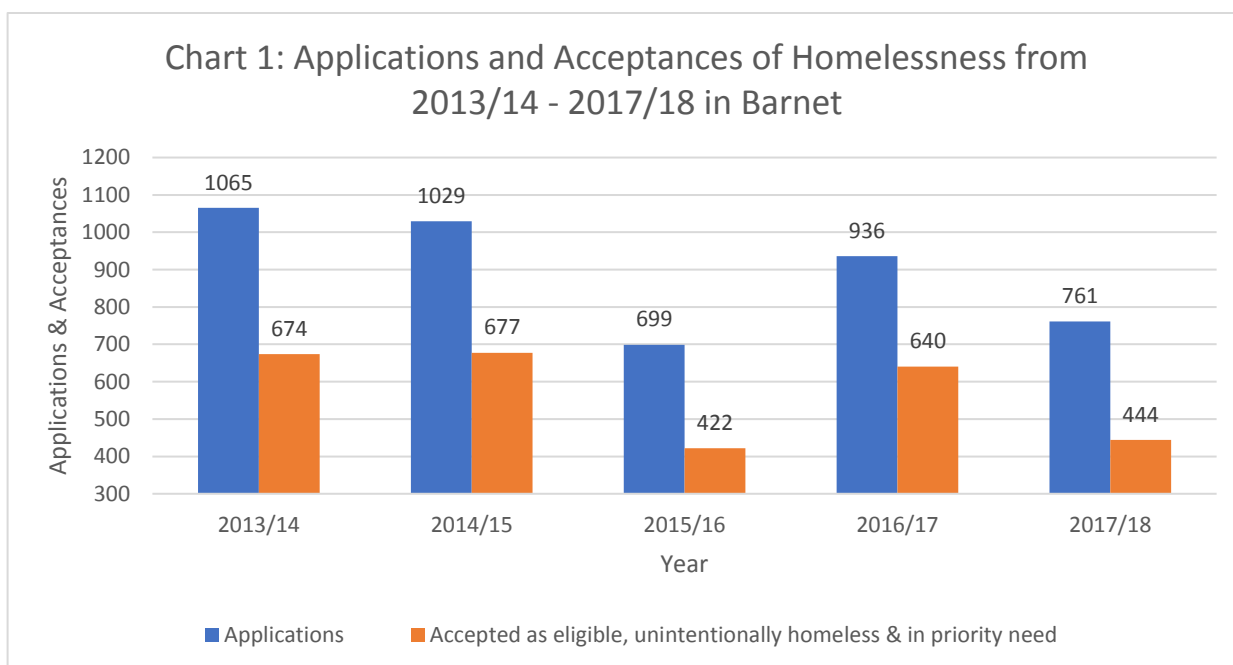
## Local Strategies

A diagram representing the relationship between the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and other key council strategies can be found in Appendix 1.

## 4. Review of Homelessness in Barnet

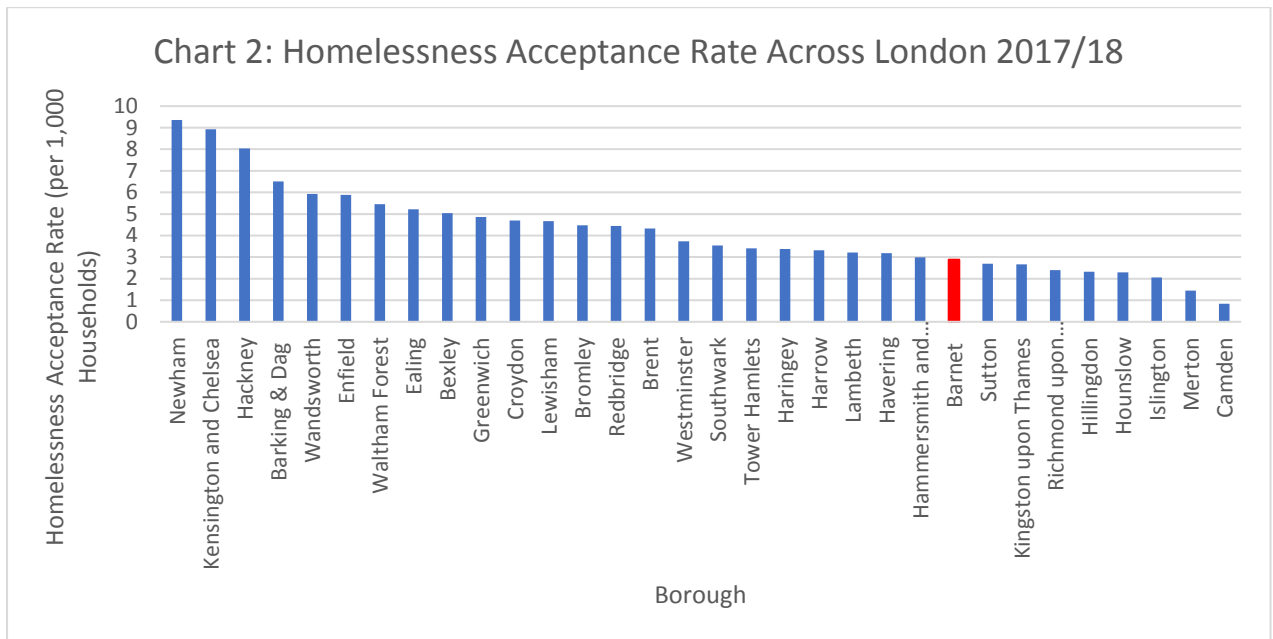
The depth and scope of this review has contributed to a robust and holistic understanding of the key challenges facing the borough. It has enabled us to sensibly predict future pressures and to determine what measures ought to be put in place. It has endorsed our current direction of travel. Our overall approach has been to educate, consult widely and gather evidence to inform a new strategy and delivery plan.

**Levels of Homelessness:** The number of people to whom the local housing authority has accepted the main homelessness (housing) duty varied during the past five years as shown in Chart 1, and has overall reduced by around a third from 674 in 2013/14 to 444 accepted cases in 2017/18. There was an increase in homelessness acceptances in 2016/17 due to a backlog of cases from 2015/16 that were resolved in the following calendar year. There was also a reduction in the number of homelessness applications and acceptances in 2017/18 due to an increased focus by the service on prevention activity.



The majority of homeless applications (58%) resulted in the council accepting the main homelessness (housing) duty compared to 51% for England.

Barnet has the largest population of all London boroughs. To understand the levels of homelessness in relation to the population density, the rate of homelessness acceptances per 1,000 households has been calculated. In Barnet, the rate is 2.88 persons per 1000 population. As shown in Chart 2, this is a lower rate than in two-thirds of London boroughs.



**Homelessness acceptances in Barnet by household type:** In 2017/18 over one third of households accepted as homeless in Barnet were lone parent families, with most being lone females. This has been the largest group in each of the past five years. Apart from female lone parents with dependent children and “other household groups”, the number of households that have been accepted in each category has remained stable over the past five years.

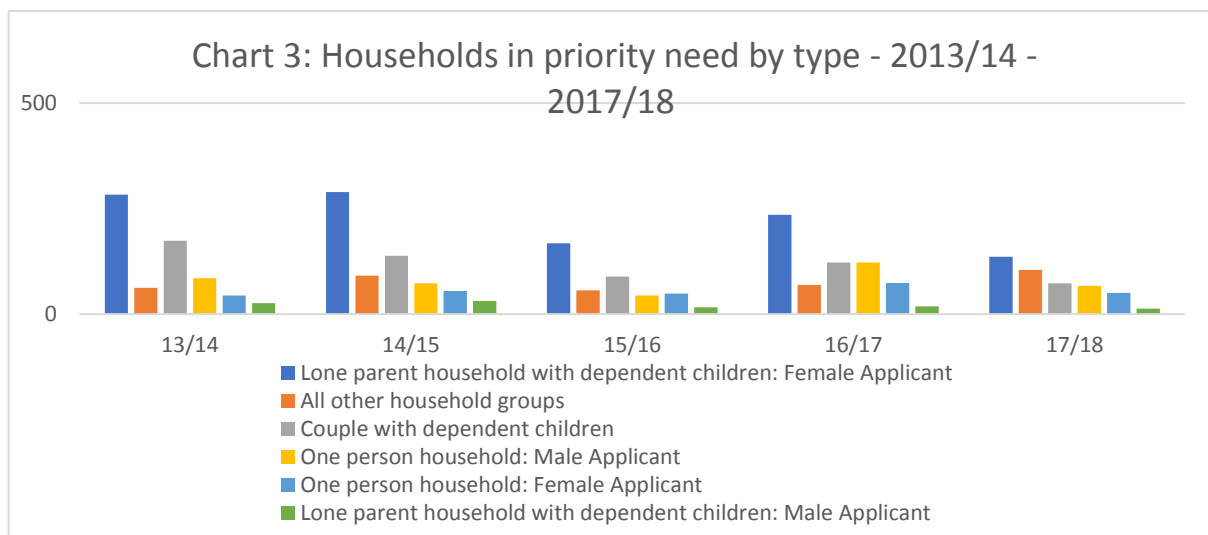
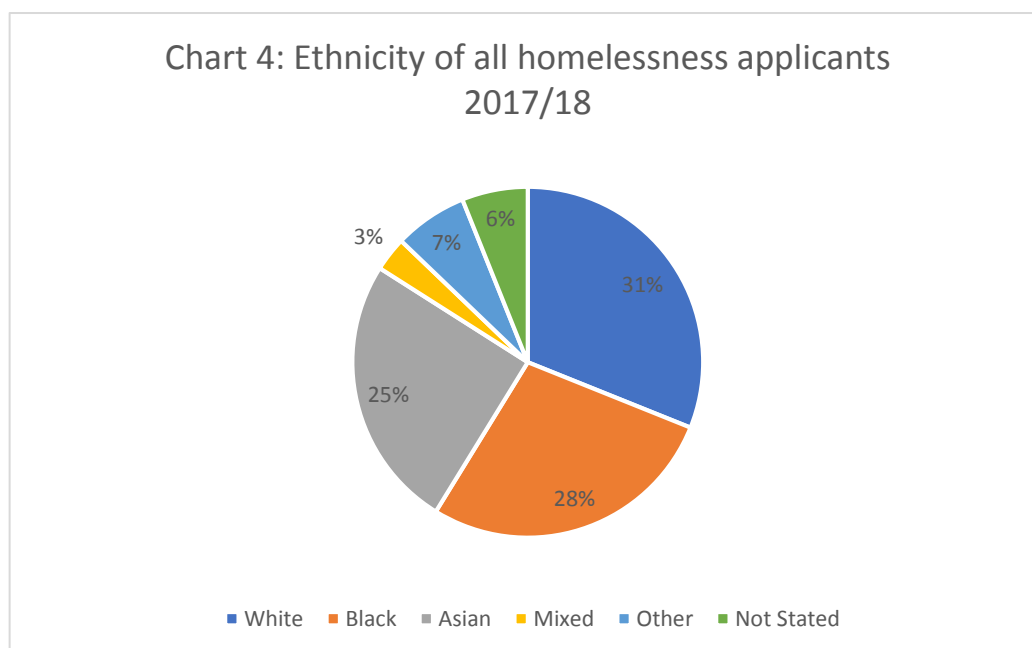


Chart 3 shows that there are more single males being accepted as homeless in Barnet than lone females in each of the past five years, with the exception on 2015/16. The reason for this is not captured in a way that allows meaningful analysis to be carried out. As part of the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, capturing more detailed information is mandatory and going forward the council will use this to help better inform its understanding and inform our approach to tackling homelessness amongst this group.

**Demographic breakdown of homelessness acceptances:** In 2017/18, 69% of those accepted as homeless were between the ages of 16 and 44 years old, and 95% of all applicants were working age (16-59). Most applicants are under 45 and there are relatively few applications from older people. This over representation of the younger age groups is not unique to Barnet, with a similar national trend recorded.

Chart 4 shows the ethnic breakdown of those who are accepted as homeless.

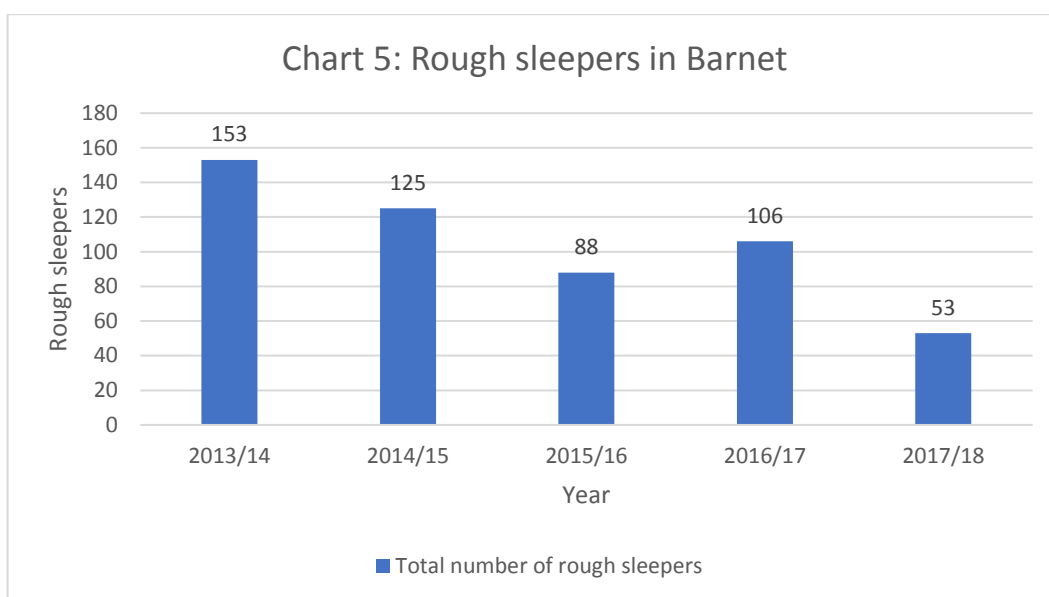


Comparing Chart 4 against the borough’s ethnic profile, the ethnic groups of those that submit homelessness applications and are accepted as homeless is different from the overall make-up of the borough. Here, White ethnic groups are underrepresented with Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) overrepresented. BAME groups make up 63% of those accepted as homeless but only account for 39% of the overall population of the borough.

This data shows that, in Barnet, some groups are more at risk of becoming homeless than others. The most at-risk groups are those that are single parents with dependent children, ethnic minorities and those who are under 45. This is a trend reflected at a national level.

**Rough sleepers:** In 2013/14, there were 153 rough sleepers in Barnet<sup>1</sup> as seen in Chart 5. As the borough has worked with neighbouring boroughs and the Government to reduce rough sleeping in Barnet, this has also reduced by over two thirds over the past five years, and at the last count 53 individuals were sleeping rough in the borough. The definition of rough sleeping provided by the MHCLG is widely recognised as being too narrow and does not capture the full extent of rough sleeping. The definition means that local authorities cannot include verified rough sleepers staying in night shelters on the night of the rough sleeper estimate or count, including rough sleepers sleeping in Barnet’s Winter Night Shelter. Therefore, it is likely that the number of rough sleepers in Barnet is higher.

<sup>1</sup> This information about people seen rough sleeping is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>



**Reason for becoming homeless:** The largest single reason for becoming homeless in 2017/18 was ‘termination of a shorthold tenancy’, as shown in Table 1. This accounted for just over a fifth of all homelessness applications. Over each of the past five years, this has been the largest single reason. The second biggest includes households no longer able to stay with friends or relatives. In 2017/18, nearly one third of stated reasons for homelessness were categorised in the ‘Other’ category. The number of households with this as the reason for homelessness has doubled since last year. The reason for this sudden increase remains unclear, however we do believe this can be partially explained for some vulnerable clients because of alcohol abuse, debts, drug misuse, mental health, loss of employment and/or loss of benefits. As part of the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act capturing this information is mandatory and going forward the council will collect this to help better inform its understanding.

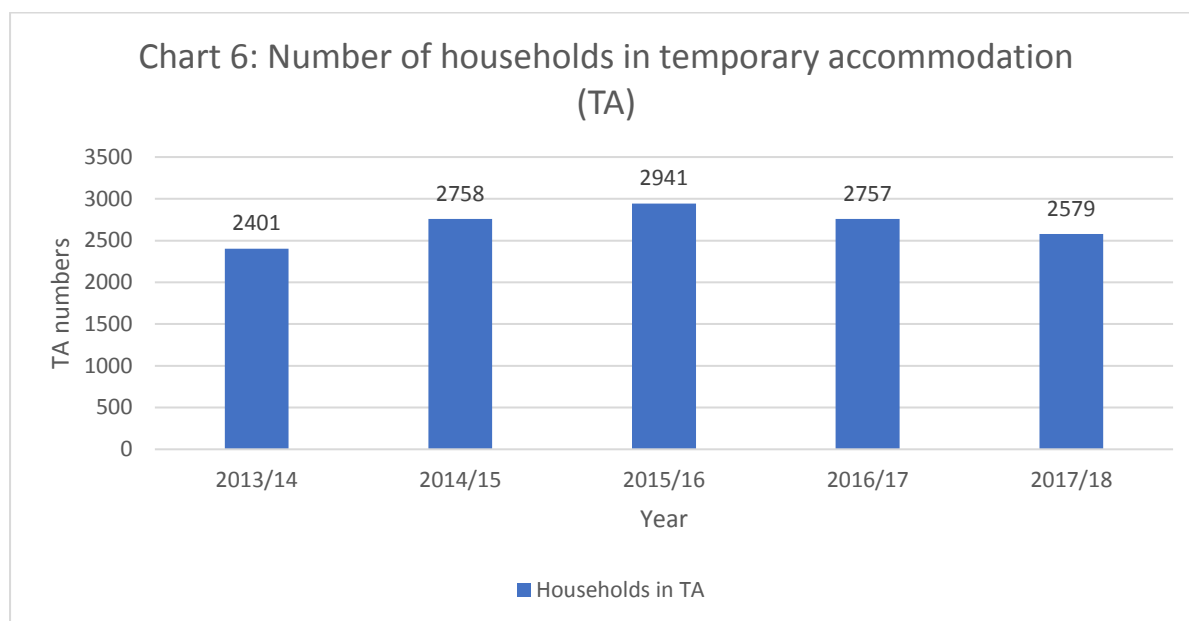
<b>Reason for becoming homeless</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18</b>
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	47	87	46	67	135
Loss of accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy	238	208	111	181	97
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	79	81	46	81	43
Violence	44	49	29	52	40
Loss of accommodation due to reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	100	103	56	73	32
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	94	72	82	109	31
Rent arrears on private sector dwellings	36	22	22	19	24
Left other institution or LA care	5	16	11	30	22
Left hospital	15	5	7	14	7
Left prison/on remand	3	2	2	4	4
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	7	3	2	0	3
Rent arrears on local authority or other public sector dwellings	0	8	1	3	3
Harassment	0	6	1	1	1

Rent arrears on registered Provider dwellings	0	3	0	6	1
Loss of accommodation due to requirement to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	3	8	5	0	1
Mortgage arrears	2	4	0	0	0
Left HM-Forces	1	0	1	0	0
<b>Total applicant households</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>444</b>

Table 1: Reasons for Homelessness

As the loss of a private rented tenancy is the main cause of homelessness, our focus is on sustaining current housing where practical and preventing housing problems escalating to crisis point. This usually means sustaining existing tenancies in the private rented sector. Despite the difficulties with securing private rented accommodation, the sector has a crucial role in the prevention of homelessness. 48% of the successful preventions in 2017/18 involved securing alternative private rented accommodation.

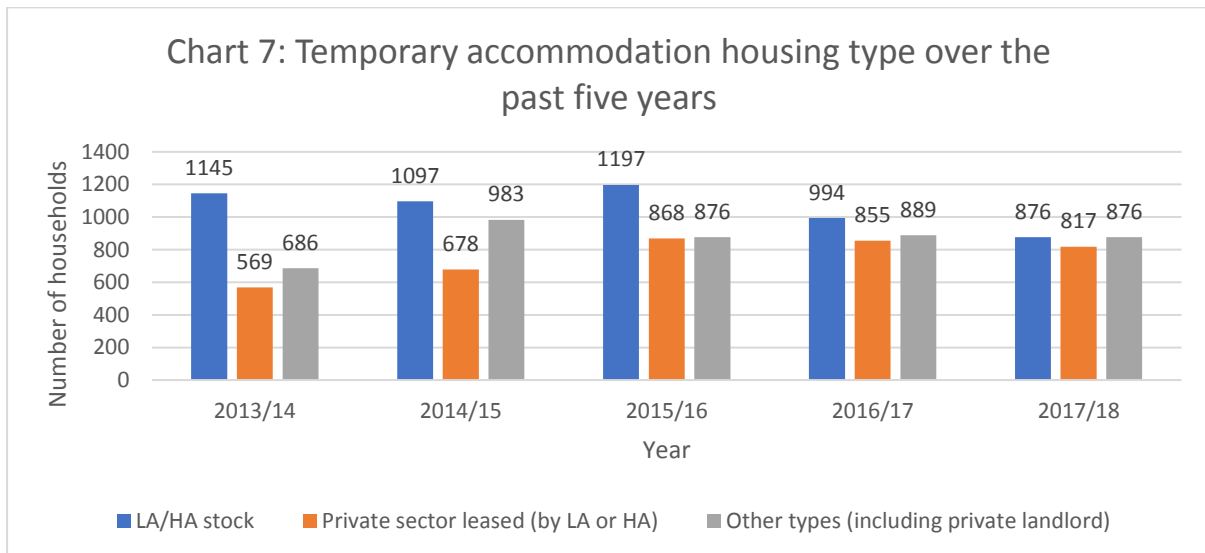
**Activities to securing accommodation for people who are homeless:** At the end of 2017/18, there were 2,579 households in temporary accommodation (TA). Chart 6 shows over the last five years the number of households in TA has increased from 2,401 in 2013/14 to 2,941 in 2015/16, and since reduced by over 10% to 2,579 households at the end of 2017/18.



The decline in households in TA, after the 2015/16 peak is in part due to the success of Barnet Homes let2barnet Team. The team secures long term temporary accommodation at Local Housing Allowance rates which is of a good quality. The team have been successful in procuring around 500 units or more of private rental accommodation every year since 2015/16 which has allowed the council to discharge its homelessness duty more effectively.

Chart 7 shows that between 2013/14 and 2017/18, the number of households living in TA on the councils' regeneration estates (classified as non-secure tenants) has reduced by 25% as the development of the regeneration schemes have progressed. In 2013/14 there was 1,145 households living in TA on council regeneration estates. This reduced to 876 at

the end of 2017/18. As schemes progress, there is less TA available, leading to a reduction in the supply of affordable TA in borough. This has led to the increase in the number of households being placed in private rented sector at a higher cost to the council. Consequently, the number of households housed in private sector and other TA has increased from 569 units in 2013/14 to 817 units in 2017/18, costing significantly more (£3m+ per annum) than what can be recouped by the council through the benefit system. The cost pressure generated is discussed in more detail in the resources section of the strategy.



**Social Housing:** Chart 8 shows in 2017/18 404 council properties became available to let, a decline of just over 200 from the previous year. All bedroom sizes saw a decline in the number of lettings in 2017/18, with a significant reduction in the availability of one-bedroom units. This was generally due to less turnover in the stock as tenants stayed longer in existing accommodation.

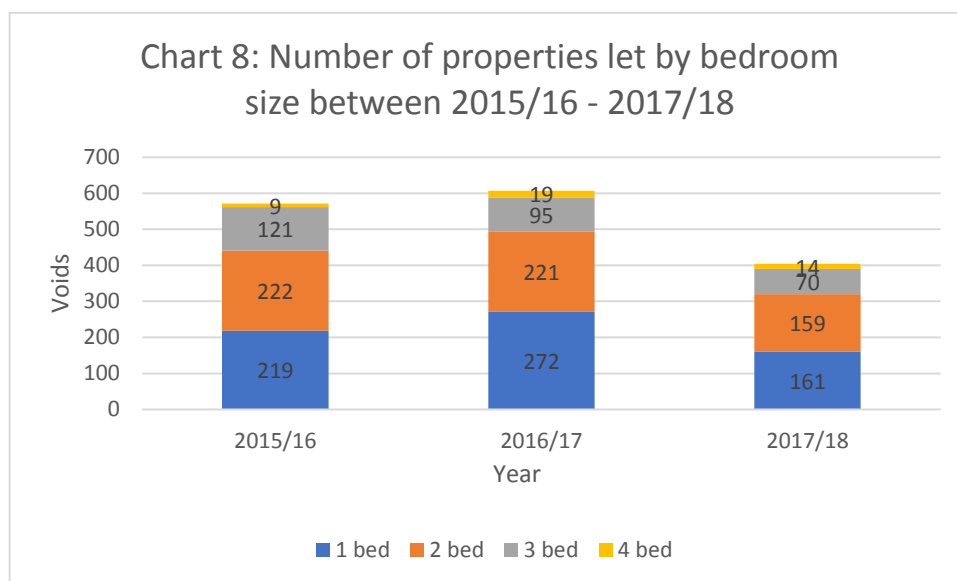


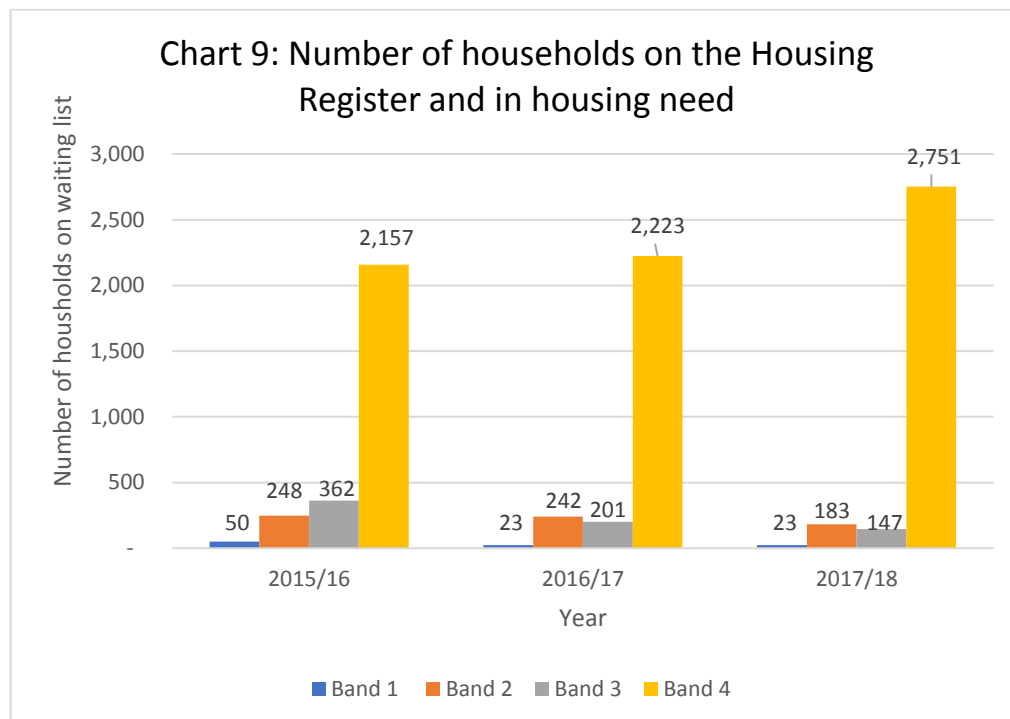
Chart 9 shows Barnet currently has over 3,100 households registered as being in some form of housing need (as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018). The chart below shows a comparison between



the number of households on the register across the different bands in each of the past three years. Due to a change in IT systems and data integrity issues, the data available only goes back three years and not the preferred five.

Band 1 deals with those with an urgent need to move and represents a relatively small number of households who are provided accommodation as quickly as possible. Households in Bands 2 and 3 have seen a decrease in the overall number of households waiting for social housing as they receive more priority and therefore have successfully been allocated housing.

The number of households allocated Band 4 status was stable in 2015/16 and 2016/17, but increased significantly in 2017/18. This is due to a large number of homeless households lacking a local connection of 5 years or being housed in suitable long term temporary accommodation (as set out in the council's Allocations Policy), a strong property market, a competitive private rental sector and an increase in cases presenting with housing related debt.



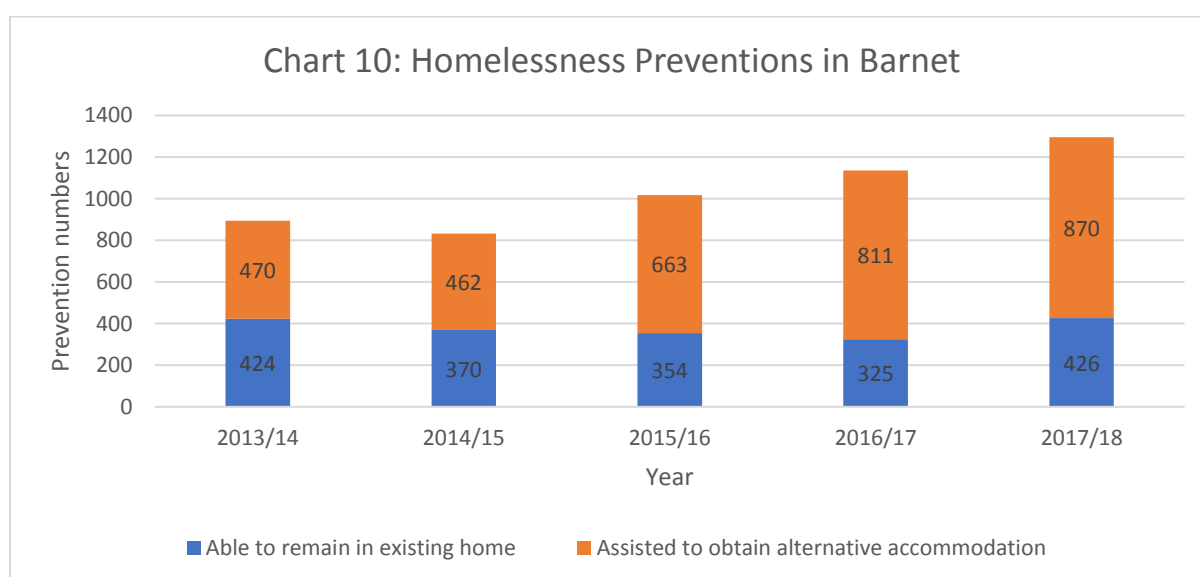
## 5. Tackling and Preventing Homelessness in Barnet

### Objective 1 - Preventing Homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act aligns with Barnet council's efforts to prevent homelessness. The new prevention duty ensures that holistic homelessness assessments are completed earlier – providing greater opportunity for early intervention to resolve an applicant's housing need. Holistic assessments consider the needs of every household member including children and including those with disabilities, and recommendations from these assessments consider all household members.

In its broadest terms, a 'homelessness prevention' is where the council takes positive action to provide housing assistance to a household who has approached the council and considers themselves to be at risk of homelessness in the near future, and as a result the household is able to either remain in their existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation, providing a solution for at least the next six months. Objective 3 in this strategy looks at building household resilience to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness and thus minimise the risk of homelessness materialising.

**Prevention performance:** Chart 10 shows that in 2017/18, 1,296 households were prevented from becoming homeless. This included 426 households who were supported to remain in their existing home, and 870 households who were supported to obtain alternative accommodation. The council's continued focus on preventing homelessness has resulted in a steady increase in preventions since 2014/15.



As shown in Table 1, the main causes of homelessness in Barnet are the loss of a private rented tenancy, eviction from family or friends' accommodation, and violence or the threat of violence respectively. The section below presents effective approaches for preventing homelessness caused by these issues.

**Loss of private rented tenancy:** Barnet Homes' Tenancy Sustainment Team works with households to try to keep them in their current home, or to help them move to alternative accommodation if staying is not an option. The Team provides a high standard of housing

advice to households around complex landlord and tenant disputes, disrepair, mortgage and rent arrears and welfare benefits. The team negotiates with landlords, and where staying is not an option, helps households to find accommodation in the private rented sector or where appropriate to access other accommodation.

Mr J was an assured shorthold tenant, living in a block of flats, and he approached Barnet Homes for help when his landlord sought possession of his accommodation. The landlord intended to complete major renovation works at the block, and insisted that Mr J vacate his property to allow this to take place. On top of this, the landlord actively harassed Mr J - threatening to send in builders to carry out works without making provision for Mr J to move elsewhere. Barnet Homes' Tenancy Sustainment Team intervened; after ensuring an end to the harassment and working to prevent the eviction, the Team negotiated with the landlord to provide alternative accommodation for Mr J within the same block. At the same time, the Team put Mr J forward for sheltered accommodation - on the grounds of Mr J's disability.

As a result of these efforts, Mr J secured two genuine housing options; the landlord agreed to offer Mr J a short-term license within the same block, and an offer of sheltered accommodation became available. Mr J chose the latter, and has since moved into sheltered accommodation.

**Eviction from family or friends' accommodation:** In these cases, trained mediation officers engage with family and friends to seek resolution to the issues causing the eviction and refer to other support services to help build better relationships. There is often the misconception from applicants that they need to go into temporary accommodation before

A single woman with low level mental health problems had been living at the family home all her life. She provided written notice from her parents stating that things at home were becoming more and more tense and unstable, and that they were asking her to leave. The Housing Needs Team arranged a meeting with her and her parents at the family home to discuss her housing options. The property was a large five bedroom house occupied by the customer, her parents and two lodgers. Her parents described the situation and stated that they were getting to the point where they were unable to cope. While speaking to the family altogether there were many issues that the daughter stated had caused her frustrations which her parents were unaware of. The parents questioned why she hadn't told them about them before and she stated she felt uncomfortable talking about such things to her parents as she felt they might be ashamed of her. They told her that this would be the furthest thing on their minds and were happy that the issues were being discussed in the open. The daughter and parents however still felt that she should have her own place. The daughter was 31 years old and was in receipt of Personal Independence Payments, and was therefore exempt from the single room rate for Housing Benefit. The family were unaware of this and were very happy with this new information as their daughter could find her own place to live. After Barnet Homes provided support and information to find a property, the parents were happy to keep their daughter at home while she looked for her own place and were happy to assist with paying the deposit.

they can access social housing. Barnet Homes' Housing Needs Officers explain the realities of housing in Barnet and that many people face long periods in Temporary Accommodation and may never access social housing. These difficult conversations help families to understand the choices that are available to them.

**Violence or the threat of violence:** Good quality advice is key to preventing homelessness and helping households to make informed decisions on the choices available to them. The Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop is an excellent example of how quality advice at the right time can lead to better outcomes for victims of domestic abuse. Coordinated by Barnet Homes, the One Stop Shop brings together a range of specialists in one place to enable close partnership working and a range of choices around housing, refuge places, Sanctuary safety measures, legal advice and support. The council also participates in the 'Pan-London Housing Reciprocal Agreement', which is a housing pathway for people with a social housing tenancy in London who are at high risk of harm where they live and includes those suffering from domestic abuse, other types of violence against women and girls (such as sexual violence and exploitation), gang related crime, serious youth violence, hate crime and other serious reasons relating to community safety.

**Care Leavers:** It is important that Children in care are appropriately prepared and supported to live independently and do not find themselves unnecessarily homeless and living in temporary accommodation due to the lack of suitable accommodation available upon them reaching adulthood (18+). The council will increase the supply and range of housing options available for care leavers, in particular for those ready to move into independent living, by working closely with colleagues in Family Services to develop a 'Placement Programme' to better meet care leavers housing and other needs.

**Promoting resilience:** Despite their strong track record in preventing homelessness, Barnet Homes' Housing Options Team has over 2,500 households a year approaching them for housing advice and assistance. This number is projected to increase because of rising housing costs, the impact of welfare reform and population growth. To prevent homelessness, supporting households to become more resilient to economic changes will be key through helping households access better employment and more affordable housing options.

Despite the approaches above, there are instances where a household has made themselves homeless intentionally - for example by wilfully not paying their rent or by refusing a reasonable offer of accommodation from Barnet Homes that results in the housing duty being discharged. To avoid this duty from being discharged, it is important that work is completed earlier to ensure that households access the right advice and support from partners at an earlier stage.

There are also households that are not eligible for housing assistance under the Act due to their immigration status. Where this is the case, advice will be given on their housing options, and if there are vulnerable members in the household such as dependent children or adults with significant mental or physical health needs, referrals will be made to Family Services and Adult Social Care. Family Services will assess whether they owe any duties to the household under section 17 of the Children Act 2004 and Adult Social Care taking into account sections 22-23 of the Care Act 2014.

**The council through Barnet Homes aims to prevent around 6,000 households from becoming homeless between 2019 and 2024 by:**

- Establishing dedicated teams to provide targeted support to singles and families, preventing on average 1,200 households every year from becoming homeless.
- Providing specialist advice and support through the Barnet Homes Tenancy Sustainment Team to enable more households to remain within their accommodation. This will include a 'Personal Housing Plan' developed with 100% of applicants to address their individual needs.
- Being clear on the advice on the different accommodation options available which may include placements outside the borough and in some cases London where properties are more affordable.
- Commissioning a review of debt collection across the council to ensure agencies are working together to provide maximum support to customers and provide support for households on low income, debt, or impacted by benefit changes through the Barnet Homes Welfare Reform Task Force. This will include reviewing the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy to better support households at risk of becoming homelessness.
- Improve multi-agency working between housing and partners to ensure care leavers at risk of homelessness are identified early and appropriate action taken to improve their outcomes and success into adulthood by providing advice and support for example through ongoing money management and tenancy support.

## Objective 2 - Reducing the number households living in Temporary Accommodation and securing sufficient accommodation for those that are at risk and those that are homeless

Temporary accommodation (TA) can include housing available in the short term on our own regeneration estates; short-term housing leased from private landlords; or hostels and hotels.

Temporary accommodation in Barnet is initially provided as interim emergency accommodation in properties whilst a homelessness application is assessed. After assessment, longer term suitable accommodation – including long term TA - is provided to households where a homeless duty has been accepted. However, due to the shortage of this accommodation, Barnet Homes also procures self-contained flats rented from private landlords on a nightly basis or for a fixed term, which is known as block-booked TA.

Despite an increase in the number of successful prevention cases, and reduction in homelessness acceptances over the past five years, the number of households in TA is reducing but remains high at 2,579 households at the end of 2017/18. There is a shortage of temporary accommodation generally and it is difficult for the council to find affordable, suitable temporary accommodation within Barnet. Most temporary accommodation is in the private sector, and some of it is located outside the borough. This is mainly due to a strong property market operating in London where demand has outstripped supply, a freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates and the rise in private rents which has not kept pace with wage inflation. This has meant that the Council has had to procure more expensive temporary accommodation for households approaching the Council as homeless. TA volumes are provided in Table 2 below.

Period	Total TA	Long Term TA	Block booked TA	Nightly paid TA
End 2017/18	2579	1716	619	244

To support customers to move from TA into longer term accommodation, Barnet Homes set up a 'Temporary Accommodation Team'. Since April 2016, this team has reduced numbers in TA by 14 units per month on average. This year, to avoid new placements into

A single mother of one, Ms B approached Barnet Homes for assistance as she faced eviction from her private rented accommodation. To prevent her becoming homeless, Barnet Homes had to place Ms B into emergency temporary accommodation. However, this studio property was both expensive and small for Ms B and her child.

Barnet Homes' Accommodation Solutions Officer took on the case, to move Ms B on into more suitable long-term accommodation. At her interview, Ms B informed the Officer that she had family in another borough. The Officer located a suitable property in that borough that was both affordable and larger than the studio, and Ms B was happy to accept this option. Barnet Homes supported Ms B with the move by assisting with removals, paying for travel and ordering a bed and sofa for the new property.

TA, Barnet Homes have piloted an 'Accommodation Solutions Project' and secured additional placements into the private rented sector and council stock. The council continue to monitor average length of time in TA, and we are moving on households who have spent longest in TA into longer term housing.

The great difficulty of securing good quality temporary accommodation in London, particularly at prices within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap, has created a significant financial burden for the council. Providing more housing that people can afford will be important in helping to reduce the number of households living in TA.

The council agreed a Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy in 2016. This will mean placing households out of borough and in some cases, out of London in more affordable locations, subject to criteria. We have to take these steps and will do so in a fair and sensitive way, mitigating the potential impact on homeless households as effectively as we can and working closely with household members to ensure this.

Ms M is a single mother with 2 children. She faced eviction from her private rented property because the landlord could no longer afford the mortgage payments. Ms M approached Barnet Homes for assistance. Because Ms M has limited income, she could not afford another private rented property within Barnet, or within many areas of London. Barnet Homes' Accommodation Solutions Officer took on the case, and sought to resolve Ms M's housing issue and to avoid the need for emergency temporary accommodation. The Accommodation Solutions Officer located a suitable, affordable property for Ms M in another town where Ms M has family. Ms M has accepted the property, and Barnet Homes is paying for the removals and supporting Ms M with the move. Due to the Officer's efforts, Ms M has not needed emergency temporary accommodation.

In order to reduce the use of temporary accommodation the council will need to increase the supply of all forms of private and affordable housing available across the borough.

With the loss of private rented accommodation still one of the largest drivers of homelessness in Barnet, it is important that the council supports responsible tenants and ensures that landlords provide a good quality offer. A fresh approach to the private rented sector will be adopted by the council as detailed in our Housing Strategy, with a focus of **Licensing, Enforcement, Advice, and Data**. Our **LEAD** agenda will include consideration of the case for selective licencing, which means that all landlords in some areas would be required to obtain a licence, additional resources for the private sector enforcement team and improvements to the information and advice available to tenants on their rights and obligations. By improving housing conditions, we hope to prevent the risk of homelessness materialising.

On-going pressure on the housing market means that it is important that the number of properties remaining empty in Barnet is kept to a minimum. This is also to the benefit of the property owners as their property would provide a rental income if it were made available for letting. Improving standards in the private rental market alongside bringing more empty properties back in to use would help increase the supply of housing available to households at risk of homelessness in Barnet.

**Our overall aim is to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by a third from 2,579 in 2018/19 to 1,750 by 2024.**

We aim to do this by:

- Expanding the remit of the Barnet Homes Temporary Accommodation Reduction Team to help move more households directly into suitable long-term accommodation, avoiding new placements into TA and consequently reducing the overall number of households in TA by 150 units each year.
- Work with Family services to develop alternative pathways for some care leavers to ensure they are placed in suitable accommodation, such as supported lodgings rather than temporary accommodation by supporting the development of their 'Placement Programme'.
- Making greater use of assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector to discharge homelessness duty by Barnet Homes procuring 600 properties in the rental market at LHA levels every year.
- Working with The Barnet Group and its subsidiary Opendoor Homes to build an additional 500 units of affordable housing by 2024 by making better use of council assets to build more affordable housing in Barnet.
- Using our own surplus land and buildings across the borough to provide more housing. Our current development pipeline includes building:
  - new mixed tenure homes, with the affordable homes funded by private sales
  - new homes for affordable rent on existing council land
  - extra care schemes and wheelchair accessible units improving the housing offer for older and vulnerable people and thereby reducing demand for care
  - private housing for rent, and
  - acquisition of housing for affordable rent and temporary accommodation
- Acquiring homes on the open market for use as an affordable form of temporary accommodation and some homes for affordable rent in London. The council has plans in place to acquire an additional 300 properties all of which will be in London. The council will continue to acquire properties as part of its strategy for providing homes that people can afford, as well as providing a cheaper alternative to paying private owners to provide temporary housing.
- The council will assist empty property owners in bringing their property back into use through a combination of advice, and financial assistance in the form of Empty Property Grants. All Empty Property Grants will be administered in line with the council's Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy. The council will gain nomination rights through this funding for homeless households.



### **Objective 3 - Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are or used to be homeless, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk of them from becoming homeless again**

Homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse 'structural' factors outside their direct control. These may include unemployment, poverty, lack of affordable housing, domestic abuse and so on. These problems can build up over years until the final crisis moment when a person becomes homeless.

Tackling these problems is a complex business and normally requires supporting the individual or household in trouble to build their resilience in order to prevent them reaching a crisis point and being at risk of homelessness. Support includes helping them into employment, providing advice, counselling, training or provision of alternative accommodation where appropriate.

The council wants to improve the support available to these households who could be at risk of becoming homeless in the future. We strongly believe that all partners have a role to play in preventing homelessness and addressing the underlying issues that are the root cause of homelessness such as poverty, unemployment, poor physical and mental health, and family breakdown. In order to do this, the Council will invite key partners to sit on its **Homelessness Forum** (see Appendix 2). Through this Forum, partners will oversee the delivery of a joint action plan which will look at tackling the underlying causes of homelessness and rough sleeping in Barnet.

#### **Through the Homelessness Forum the council and Barnet Homes will aim to:**

- Using predictive analytics to identify people at greatest risk of becoming homeless and directing resources to improve resilience of identified households.
- Improve resilience against homelessness through strengthened partnership working arrangements.
- Work with key agencies to make it easier for them to refer people to the Housing Options Service by developing clear referral routes to and from partners.
- Meet public bodies on a quarterly basis to measure progress on the duty to refer.

The Homeless Reduction Act introduces a duty to refer households who are threatened with homelessness to housing options services. This duty is placed on defined public bodies who include, social care, Job Centre Plus, prisons, youth offending, probation and hospitals. Barnet Homes already has some good working relationships with these organisations and sits on a range of partnership boards and groups. To facilitate the duty to refer Barnet Homes has procured the software that enables referrals to be made via an on-line portal. A dedicated email address [dutytorefer@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer@barnet.gov.uk) will give directions to the portal. The duty to refer will lead to closer worker relationships and will help early intervention work to prevent homelessness whilst also fostering better understanding of the issues facing partner organisations.

Vulnerable adults, victims of domestic abuse, younger adults and households impacted by benefit changes tend to be at higher risk of homelessness. Working holistically with agencies in these areas will help the council take a more strategic approach to tackling

homelessness in Barnet. Key to preventing the duty from being discharged in the first place is ensuring households access the right advice and support from partners at the right time, and the Forum will bring better understanding and focus of the need for early intervention and the realities of available housing supply.

## Vulnerable Adults

The council funds a short-term support service that works with people who have housing related needs. The service helps to maintain accommodation by providing support that promotes independence and empowerment. The council also has a contract with Citizens Advice Barnet and Homeless Action in Barnet who provide both general advice and advice for people with support needs and disabilities. The most common enquiries relate to benefits, housing and debt.

Ms H had been living in supported accommodation for over four years due to a combination of physical and mental health vulnerabilities. After consistently making good progress and complying with the terms of her tenancy, she was nominated to move on to independent accommodation. Due to her mobility issues, Ms H requires a ground floor property with level access shower. As these properties are in short supply, Barnet Homes' Support Officer facilitated the necessary adaptations to an existing property; this included installing level access shower facilities and levelling out the front door step.

The Support Officer negotiated for a reduced notice period from the previous accommodation to prevent any rent arrears, and she supported Ms H to make a dual Housing Benefit claim and negotiated to have her council tax payment covered. Ms H's new accommodation is fully decorated and she has received furniture vouchers to outfit her home.

### **The council and Barnet Homes will aim to support Vulnerable Adults by:**

- Working with Adult Social Care services to ensure the provision of floating support for households with health and housing related support needs is appropriately commissioned and is helping to keep them independent and sustain their tenancies.
- Increase the provision of supported and wheelchair accessible housing to meet demand, particularly for those with mobility needs.
- Enable residents to move through supported housing pathways in a planned way will prevent homelessness and avoid the use of temporary accommodation.
- Commissioning a new community outreach and mental health floating support service to better enable people to maintain and maximise their independence and wellbeing.

## Substance Misuse and Mental Health

We know that substance misuse and poor mental health can be causes of homelessness and are often reported in people who are long term rough sleepers. There are a range of services commissioned by the local authority and Barnet CCG that offer a range of mental

health and substance misuse services. As we know, there isn't a single intervention that can tackle homelessness, therefore improved partnership working with these services and wider health services will help to:

- Identify the risk of homelessness among people who have poor health, and prevent this.
- Minimise the impact on health from homelessness among people who are already experiencing it.
- Enable improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness so that their poor health is not a barrier to moving on to a home of their own.

## Domestic Abuse (DA)

Domestic abuse is one of the biggest reasons why victims (mostly women) become homeless. A range of services are offered to victims of domestic abuse by the council and Barnet Homes, which helps keep victims and their children safe. Service include the provision of four refuges in the borough, the Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop which is a weekly drop-in service for male and female victims and for those at risk of domestic abuse, and the Barnet Sanctuary Scheme which enables survivors to remain in their homes by providing extra security measures to make homes safe and secure. These schemes involve partnership working between Barnet Homes, Solace Women's Aid, Victim Support, Solicitors, Police, Fire Brigade amongst others to keep victims of domestic abuse safe. The Council also commissions the Solace Advocacy and Support Service to provide an Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service. The service provides independent advice, information and advocacy support to victims of domestic abuse.

Ms G was living with her daughter and ex-partner. She attended the Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop and was supported so she could flee her violent ex-partner. The following week she was offered accommodation.

A very emotional Ms G recently came in to the One Stop Shop to leave a letter of thanks for the members of staff who supported her. She informed her that her daughter is thrilled to have her own bedroom for the first time. Ms G has already found a neighbour in the block who is helping her settle in. Her daughter is due to start her new school in September.

Ms G writes, *"I don't have enough words to describe the outstanding service that One Stop Shop has provided me and my daughter during this hard process. Thanks to them I have felt safe and confident. Thank[s] to their support I'm being able to have a safe place to live and have all the support to go forward with my life."*

### **The council and Barnet Homes will support victims of domestic abuse by:**

1. Adopting a "no wrong door" approach; meaning staff can identify issues relating to DA through improved screening, and take a more systematic approach to help meet the victim's needs.
2. Continue to deliver advice and support for survivors and those at risk of domestic abuse at the Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop, refuges, through the Barnet

Sanctuary Scheme and through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).

3. Continue to award the highest priority within its allocation scheme to victims of domestic abuse and where appropriate move them into alternative accommodation.

## Youth Homelessness

All young adults leaving the care of the local authority are provided with detailed housing options advice and are supported into suitable accommodation. Family mediation for young people at risk of parental exclusion, including those aged 16/17 years old helps them and their families to resolve problems using trained housing needs officers. There is a joint protocol between housing and Family Services which sets out the approach which officers take to safeguard young people with the aim of returning them home when safe to do so. When homelessness cannot be prevented young people will be explained the options open to them and suitable accommodation placements are sort with the aim of avoiding the use of temporary accommodation.

Barnet Family Services fund Centrepoint to run Barnet's Foyer. They provide 24 bed spaces of supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds who are homeless with low to medium support needs. Barnet Homes also refer clients into Barnet Foyer. Officers at the Foyer provide key worker support to young residents and advisors assist young residents with advice on employment and education; provide support plans which include financial management; support with access to health and other appointments and help with benefits and access to charitable bursaries. The service also includes counselling. Barnet Homes' close working with Barnet Foyer & Housing Needs Officers' successful mediation work has reduced placements into temporary accommodation for young people 16-24.

Homeless Action in Barnet also support young adults (aged 18-29) through their day centre which provides direct services to single people who are or at risk of homelessness and often refer young adults into the North London YMCA.

Vulnerable young adults (19+) that have higher needs or are highly vulnerable due to drugs/alcohol and gang's affiliations are supported through specifically commissioned services provided by the council, Community Safety, Family Services as well as the Adults and Public Health Teams. The teams work closely with Barnet Homes staff and external agencies to support individuals with their housing and other related needs.

## Care Leavers

The Housing Options Team work closely with leaving care services to ensure that the transition of care leavers to independence is coordinated and provides the best possible start in their new home.

For those young people who go into care there is a risk that when they move into independent living that they are not able to cope and they struggle to sustain their tenancies. To support this transition, and to help limit the risk of homelessness in the future, Barnet Homes provides a training flat to Family Services so that care leavers have an assessment of how they can cope living independently. There are also partnership meetings between Barnet Homes and Onwards and Upwards, with dedicated officers working together to support the needs of care leavers in their homes.

Barnet Homes sit on the Corporate Parent Officers Group to ensure that processes are in place that support care leavers into suitable accommodation when their placements come to an end. A key objective is to ensure that appropriate accommodation options are worked through with care leavers well in advance of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, minimising the possibility of them being placed into temporary accommodation.

To further support care leavers, the council offers 'council tax relief' to care leavers up to age 25 for their first two years of independent living. Care leavers experiencing financial difficulties after the initial period will also be eligible for relief. Financial help is also available to care leavers living outside of Barnet. This is help care leavers to better sustain their tenancies and not become homeless due to financial difficulties when living in a more independent setting.

The number of children leaving care is expected to increase significantly by 2020, making it a priority for the council to ensure that appropriate housing options and support are in place to cater for this.

**The council and Barnet Homes will continue to work closely with Family Services to ensure a continued focus remains on young adults at risk of homelessness by:**

- Improving the provision of family mediation to provide a more tailored service for young people (18-24) who are at risk of becoming homeless and continue to operate protocols to ensure 16-17 year olds and care leavers facing homelessness receive appropriate support and avoid placements into temporary accommodation.
- The Council will ensure suitable housing options are identified in time for care leavers to avoid them going into temporary accommodation by increasing the supply and range of housing available for care leavers, in particular for those ready to move into independent living.
- There is a recognition that homelessness can have an impact on children/young people's mental and/or physical health. Ways to strengthen support for homeless families in temporary accommodation will be reviewed with the intention of providing support where necessary.
- The council through Barnet Homes and other partners will provide support to people in deprived areas with a focus on employment, income maximisation and housing sustainment. The teams are based in Burnt Oak and Cricklewood and comprise staff from Barnet Homes, Barnet Council Job Centre and Future Path. There are extensive partner networks also offering support through BOOST, including Shelter, MIND and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The BOOST team will focus on supporting more young adults into education, employment and training programmes.

## Welfare Reform

The Barnet Homes Welfare Reform Task Force was established in August 2013 to support residents who are affected by welfare reform. The team is made up of staff from Jobcentre Plus, the Housing Benefit service, the Barnet Homes housing needs service, welfare benefits advisers and the voluntary sector. The team have been effective at engaging with residents affected by the Benefit Cap and helping them move into work and more

affordable accommodation. The Task Force successfully engaged with 96 per cent of Barnet residents affected by the Benefit Cap (around 3,700) and helped a third into work.

Since 2013 the team have supported 36% of impacted households effectively so that they are no longer capped. The team have used Discretionary Housing Payments strategically, as an incentive to change behaviours. Together these teams have supported 1,171 into work between April 2015 and July 2018.

Universal Credit Live Service has been available for single claimants since 2015 and the full digital service has been available in Hendon and Barnet Job Centres since 16th May 2018. The council worked with Barnet Homes to support those moving onto Universal Credit by providing Personal Budgeting Support, Digital Support and to help manage the benefit cap. In July 2018 there were 2,558 people in Barnet claiming UC and it is estimated that there will be almost 30,000 claiming Universal Credit once roll out is complete. The council is aiming to support over 1600 people in 2018/19 to manage the transition to Universal Credit, find work and sustain their tenancy.

Table 3 shows the support that has been provided to residents by the team over the past three years.

Support offered	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Supported to move into affordable housing	60	70	116
Homelessness prevention	88	89	132
Supported into employment	115	165	182
Supported to manage Universal Credit	181	288	245
Awarded Discretionary Housing Payments	850	1,027	1,185
Supported to claim correct benefits	74	130	169

Table 3: Number of households supported in different ways by the Welfare Reform Task Force

**The Barnet Homes Welfare Reform Task Force aims to prevent homelessness and support households impacted by welfare reform by:**

- Developing information pathways with partner organisations to determine which households are impacted by the Benefit Cap and are receiving Universal Credit, and establish a baseline to enable setting of targets up to 2024.
- Provide advice and support around benefits, debt advice and employment - including from Welfare Reform Taskforce, BOOST, and the Discretionary Housing Payments Team.
- Engaging with individuals who are impacted by the Benefit Cap and are receiving Housing Benefit in order to improve outcomes for households at risk of homelessness.

## Objective 4 - Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs

There has been a reduction in the number of visible people sleeping rough in Barnet, as recorded by St Mungo's, who collate this information on behalf of the Greater London Authority, over the last five years.

With more rough sleepers from Central and Eastern European countries, the Government has been focussed on working with agencies on supporting reconnections. It remains too early to determine the impact of the UK deciding to vote to leave the EU in terms of rough sleeping.

Rough sleepers may experience a range of multiple and complex needs which are often not addressed by single services. Greater partnership working will be required to understand how their needs could be met.

There are currently several support services that help single homeless people and those with complex needs. However, many rough sleepers may not be able to access those services due to eligibility.

Mr P is a single man with substance misuse and mental health issues who had been sleeping rough for more than 3 years. In the past, Mr P had refused to engage with support workers or with medical services, or to access support from the Homeless Action in Barnet Day Centre. Although he had previously lived in accommodation provided by Barnet Homes, Mr P did not want to re-approach Barnet Homes for additional support.

However, the support workers at Thames Reach built a positive working relationship with Mr P. They persuaded Mr P to re-approach Barnet Homes, and they accompanied him to his housing appointment. Thanks to their efforts, Mr P accepted an offer of in-borough accommodation in May 2018. Moreover, even though Thames Reach can close cases after a client has been housed, due to Mr P's high level of need, Thames Reach continue to provide Mr P with intensive support around substance misuse and accommodation issues. As a result, Mr P continues to make progress; he has started to engage with medical services, and he has entered volunteering.

The following support is currently available to rough sleepers:

- **Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB)** is a day centre that provides significant support alongside a range of services to around 700 clients annually which includes access to GPs, tenancy support, care of address, meals, washing facilities, access to drug and alcohol support. Rough sleepers must have a local connection to Barnet to access the support. Barnet Homes provides a grant of £30,000 per annum towards the running of the day centre and commissions a support worker for the Foundation Project (Friern Barnet Hostel). The Project houses 19 clients in 3 shared houses (owned by Barnet Council) who are mostly rough sleepers with the aim of helping them secure more settled accommodation by offering a key worker to help address their support needs.
- **Together in Barnet (TiB)** is a charity run night shelter for rough sleepers in Barnet. The night shelter runs from October to March each year. 15 venues, currently all churches, synagogues and mosques, with the help of lots of volunteers, provide

dinner, bed and breakfast for rough sleepers referred to them by HAB. A significant number of clients using the shelter have no recourse to public funds.

- The **Assessment Bed Protocol** is an agreement Barnet Homes has with certain agencies in the borough allowing them to refer customers who do not appear to be in priority need to be accommodated for 15 days. This allows for them to engage with relevant support services and facilitates a move-on to more settled accommodation. To be accommodated under this agreement, customers must be eligible for assistance and have a local connection to the borough.
- **Thames Reach** are a street homeless organisation that verify rough sleepers and provide support through night time outreach (Street Link) to move rough sleepers on to more settled accommodation (<https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>).
- Under the **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol** (SWEP), all rough sleepers including those who are ineligible for assistance can access accommodation when temperatures drop below zero degrees with the main referral point being made through HAB.
- **Outreach Barnet** is a support service currently being delivered by Notting Hill Genesis through HAB. They provide housing related support to enable people to maintain their tenancy or to find more suitable accommodation and also support people who are in danger of losing their home.
- The **North London Rough Sleeper Leads Group** is a joint initiative between Barnet, Westminster, Haringey, Islington and Enfield, to deliver partnership working to reducing rough sleeping. From this group, **St Paul's Staging Post** and **Hope Worldwide** initiatives were developed to increase the number of bed spaces for rough sleepers in the area. St Paul's Staging Post is a 7 bed Hostel in Islington that provides assessment beds for 28 days, and Hope Worldwide procures accommodation in the private rented sector and provides support to rough sleepers
- No Second Night Out was first adopted in London before being rolled out in London and has proven effective in reducing the number of times seen more than once on the streets.

### **Further funding for reducing rough sleeping in Barnet**

The council with Barnet Homes support successfully placed a joint bid as part of the North London Housing Partnership, which sits above the North London Rough Sleeper Leads Group, to the Government's controlling migration fund. Barnet, along with Haringey and Enfield, are disproportionately affected by 'encampments' where groups of Central and Eastern European migrants create temporary structures to live in, while funding cash-in-hand work from outside big box retailers on the A406. Thames Reach has recently completed some research to better understand this group and found that:

- The majority of them are Romanian males aged between 18 and 50 years old, who come to work in the UK and send money home. They are often working in the 'grey economy' and do not pay taxes.
- Many of those in encampments have previously held legitimate employment and lived in accommodation which they lost when they lost their job.
- This group does not have significant support needs, and would be willing and able to take up legitimate work and end rough sleeping if appropriate help was available to help them find a job and a place to stay.



The proposal submitted is based on the findings from this research, which recommends that individuals living in encampments could be provided with an offer of support in order to assist them to legitimise their status in the UK by accessing regularised employment and low cost shared accommodation. The funding has been used to fund two new post holders to work across those North London boroughs:

- *An Employment and Outreach Link Worker* to a) identify and sign employers who need entry level posts with an emphasis on those who provide 'tied accommodation', and b) support clients to complete CVs and match them with employer vacancies. These roles are likely to be in recycling, warehouse work, agriculture, construction or food preparation.
- *An Accommodation and Outreach Link Worker* who will work within the private rented sector to identify suitable low-cost shared room accommodation and identification of hostel/ backpacker accommodation to move people sustainably off the streets.

This year, Barnet Homes has been awarded £190,556 by the government to reduce rough sleeping in the borough. The award will fund a dedicated Rough Sleeper Coordinator to bring together existing service provision and produce a targeted approach to help some of the most entrenched rough sleepers. In addition to this, funding was provided for three outreach and floating support workers to engage with rough sleepers and help them transition from the streets into temporary accommodation and then longer-term housing options. Alongside the funding, Barnet Homes will continue to work closely with Homeless Action in Barnet who the council recognise as a as a key partner to help support the reduction of rough sleeping in Barnet.

To support the transition, personal budgets will be provided to rough sleepers to help with deposits and more simple items such as haircuts, clothes and medical treatment. The Ministry has funded the costs of three temporary accommodation units to help move rough sleepers with limited welfare options off the streets and into a supported accommodation setting where future options such as getting into legitimate work or supporting them to return home can be addressed.

A provisional funding allocation of £270,396 for 2019/20 has been made by the government which will allow for a complex mental health support worker to be recruited to provide additional support. The recruitment process has started for these roles and it is hoped that successful candidates will be in post during 2019/20.

**The council and Barnet Homes aim to reduce rough sleeping by 2024 by:**

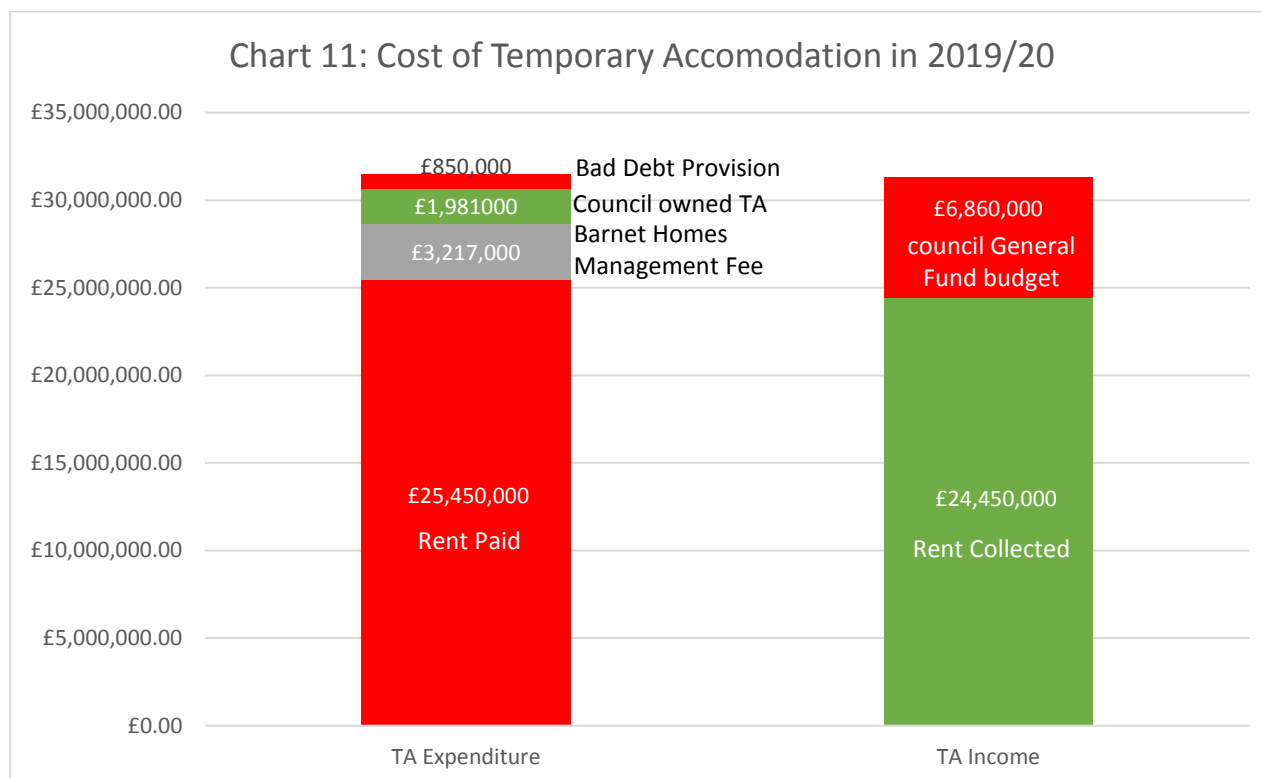
- Recruiting specialist staff to oversee all rough sleeping cases in Barnet and to work closely with partners to support individual rough sleepers.
- Increasing outreach and floating support for rough sleepers.
- Creating new housing pathways for hospital discharge and prison discharge to tackle repeat rough sleeping.
- Supporting rough sleepers who are ready for independent living to move into longer-term accommodation and to sustain their tenancy.
- Develop and monitor an Annual Rough Sleeping Plan to reduce rough sleeping across the borough.

- Ensure all rough sleepers have a full assessment of health needs, are supported to be registered with a GP and have access to primary care services in Barnet.
- Working with Community Safety to develop a communications plan for rough sleeping which will inform partners and concerned members of the public on how they can help. This will include clear procedures for reporting rough sleeping via Street Link which will be publicised on the councils and Barnet Homes websites.
- Working with partners such as HAB to provide advice and support to rough sleepers around health, benefits, education and employment.
- Setting up a task and targeting group with partners to focus on the most entrenched rough sleepers.
- Conducting four rough sleeping counts in 2018/19 to better understand the pattern and locations of rough sleepers. The responses will feed into the targets for the number of rough sleepers that are moved off the streets and into more settled accommodation.
- Work more closely with services such as the Parking and Green Spaces Teams to provide outreach support across rough sleeping hot spots in Barnet.
- Procure 9 temporary accommodation units specifically for entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs.
- Deliver 19 units of accommodation through the Foundation Project for rough sleepers with low to medium support needs.

## 6. Delivering the Strategy

### Resources

The net General Fund financial resources available for funding of homelessness services provide for staffing, the provision of accommodation, incentives and commissioned services from 2019/20 are shown in Chart 11 below.



The base budget includes provision for the procurement of private sector properties to prevent homelessness, avoid placements into TA or to discharge the council's housing duty. The council acknowledges that some of the approaches and activity proposed in this strategy are subject to the ongoing availability of resources which will be agreed through the council's budget setting process on an annual basis and consequently inform the annual action plan that will be delivered.

Each year local authorities receive a separately identified sum that is not ring-fenced from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in respect of homeless prevention activities. The new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) came in from 1 April 2017 and is a replacement of funding that was given to source and manage temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and their families. The funding has been allocated according to a formula which reflects relative homeless pressures. The council was awarded £3.4m in 2017/18, £3.2m in 2018/19 and £4.2m in 2019/20. Although the majority of the grant is allocated to paying for the management of TA, the flexibility of the grant allows the council to spend some of the grant to fund additional mitigations to help prevent homelessness.

The FHSG in Barnet has been used to train officers in family mediation to support households approaching as a result of parental, family or friends eviction, setting up a TA

reduction project to work with households who have been in TA long term on accommodation solutions appropriate to meet the needs of that households and initiating a customer ready model building the capacity of specialist officers to deliver more prevention work alongside directly procuring more private rented accommodation.

Local authorities receive an annual grant settlement from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with the aim of helping housing benefit recipients whose benefit award does not cover their full rent costs. In recent years, both the allocation and expenditure of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) has become more targeted around mitigating the impacts of the Government's welfare reform policies, although awards are not strictly limited for this purpose.

Barnet Council's DHP award for 2017/18 was £1.7m with 1,366 claims paid. The social sector size criteria affecting council and housing association tenants accounted for 75 claims paid, 490 related to the benefit cap and 278 to reform of LHA. There were 85 claims paid that related to two or more welfare reforms and 438 claims paid were not related to welfare reform. Barnet Council's DHP award for 2019/20 is £1.7m.

## **Equality and Health Impact Assessment**

An equality and health impact (EIA) assessment has been carried out on this strategy. The overall impact of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy on the protected groups from the Equality Act 2010, as well as the Barnet Fairness Agenda, is positive.

## **Conclusion**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is one of the largest changes to housing and homeless legislation in recent times. By working more effectively with our partners we will provide a greater variety of housing options and pathways to households to prevent them becoming homeless. Delivering homes people can afford will be fundamental to managing demand and through the Housing, Homelessness and Regeneration Strategies we will work to increase the supply of affordable housing in Barnet.

The delivery of the strategy requires close working between the council, Social Care, Public Health, Homeless Action in Barnet, the community and voluntary sector, housing associations and Barnet Homes. Social landlords are under a duty to assist local authorities with their homelessness functions. They are expected to play an active role in the delivery of the strategy. Throughout the duration of this strategy, the local authority will seek to build stronger relationships between departments and agencies, by establishing a Homelessness Forum to foster a multi-agency commitment to deliver the strategy. The council will be especially keen to ensure involvement from housing associations and the voluntary sector, along with co-operation with a wide range of public authorities. The council will also confer with people who have lived experience of homelessness, to get their views about what works, any barriers to service and any suggestions for improvements.

Progress towards tackling homelessness and achieving the objectives of this strategy will be reported to the council's Housing Committee. Annual delivery plans will have clear

responsibilities for tackling homelessness, linked to senior officers, and progress will be discussed at the Housing Partnership Board.

This document presents high level actions and measures to be delivered over the lifetime of this strategy. A more detailed action plan will be developed and monitored by the Homelessness Forum on a regular basis.

## 7. Action Plan

<p><b>Preventing Homelessness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing dedicated teams to provide more targeted support to singles and families, preventing on average 1,200 households every year from becoming homeless.</li> <li>• Providing advice and support from a specialist Barnet Homes 'Tenancy Sustainment Team' to enable more households to remain within their accommodation. This will include a 'Personal Housing Plan' developed with 100% of eligible and homeless applicants to address their individual needs.</li> <li>• Being clear on the advice on the different accommodation options available which may include placements outside the borough and in some cases London where properties are more affordable.</li> <li>• Commissioning a review of debt collection across the council to ensure agencies are working together to provide maximum support to customers and provide support for households on low income, debt, or impacted by benefit changes through the Barnet Homes Welfare Reform Task Force. This will include reviewing the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy to better support households at risk of becoming homelessness.</li> <li>• Improve multi-agency working between housing and partners to ensure care leavers at risk of homelessness are identified early and appropriate action taken to improve their outcomes and success into adulthood by providing advice and support for example through ongoing money management and tenancy support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reducing the use of temporary accommodation and securing accommodation for people who are homeless</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding the remit of the Barnet Homes Temporary Accommodation Team to help move more households directly into suitable long-term accommodation, avoiding new placements into TA and consequently reducing the overall number of households in TA by 150 units each year.</li> <li>• Work with Family services to develop alternative pathways for some care leavers to ensure they are placed in suitable accommodation such as supported lodgings rather than temporary accommodation by supporting the development of their 'Placement Programme'.</li> <li>• Making greater use of assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector to discharge homelessness duty by Barnet Homes procuring 600 properties in the rental market at LHA levels every year.</li> <li>• Working with The Barnet Group and its subsidiary Opendoor Homes to build an additional 500 units of affordable housing by 2024 by making better use of council assets to build more affordable housing in Barnet.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Using our own surplus land and buildings across the borough to provide more housing. Our current development pipeline includes building:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ new mixed tenure homes, with the affordable homes funded by private sales</li> <li>➢ new homes for affordable rent on existing council land</li> <li>➢ extra care schemes and wheelchair accessible units improving the housing offer for older and vulnerable people and thereby reducing demand for care</li> <li>➢ private housing for rent, and</li> <li>➢ acquisition of housing for affordable rent and temporary accommodation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Acquiring homes on the open market for use as an affordable form of temporary accommodation and some homes for affordable rent in London. The council has plans in place to acquire an additional 300 properties all of which will be in London. The council will continue to acquire properties as part of its strategy for proving homes that people can afford, as well as providing a cheaper alternative to paying private owners to provide temporary housing.</li> <li>• The council will assist empty property owners in bringing their property back into use through a combination of advice, and financial assistance in the form of Empty Property Grants. All Empty Property Grants will be administered in line with the council's Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy. The council will gain nomination rights through this funding for homeless households</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using predictive analytics to identify people at greatest risk of becoming homeless and directing resources to improve resilience of identified households.</li> </ul>

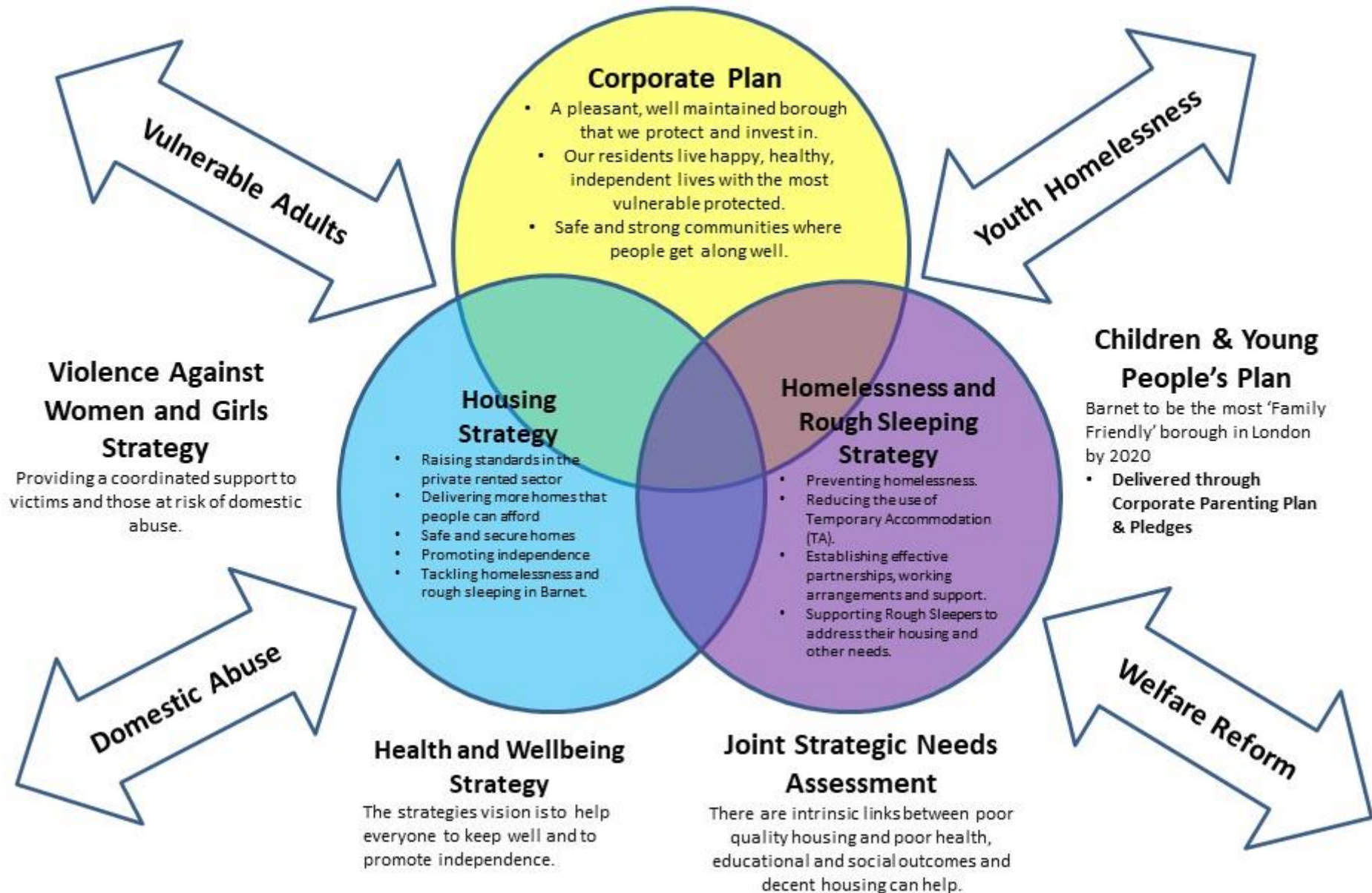
**Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are or used to be homeless, to improve resilience and reduce the risk of them from becoming homeless again**

- Improve resilience of households against homelessness through strengthened partnership working arrangements.
- Work with key agencies to make it easier for them to refer people to the Housing Options Service by developing clear referral routes to and from partners.
- Meet public bodies on a quarterly basis to measure progress on the duty to refer.
- Working with Adult Social Care services to ensure the provision of floating support for households with health and housing related support needs is appropriately commissioned and is helping to keep them independent and sustain their tenancies.
- Increase the provision of supported and wheelchair accessible housing to meet demand, particularly for those with mobility needs.
- Enable residents to move through supported housing pathways in a planned way will prevent homelessness and avoid the use of temporary accommodation.
- Commissioning a revised community outreach and mental health floating support service to better enable people to maintain and maximise their independence and wellbeing.
- Adopting a “no wrong door” approach; meaning staff are able to identify issues relating to DA through improved screening, and take a more systematic approach to help meet the victim’s needs.
- Continue to deliver advice and support for survivors and those at risk of domestic abuse at the Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop, refuges, through the Barnet Sanctuary Scheme and through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).
- Continue to award the highest priority within its allocation scheme to victims of domestic abuse and where appropriate move them into alternative accommodation.
- Improving the provision of family mediation to provide a more tailored service for young people (18-24) who are at risk of becoming homeless and continue to operate protocols to ensure 16-17 year olds and care leavers facing homelessness receive appropriate support and avoid placements into temporary accommodation.
- The Council will ensure suitable housing options are identified in time for care leavers to avoid them going into temporary accommodation by increasing the supply and range of housing available for care leavers, in particular, for those ready to move into independent living.
- There is a recognition that homelessness can have an impact on children/young people’s mental and/or physical health. Ways to strengthen support for homeless families in temporary accommodation will be reviewed with the intention of providing support were necessary.
- The council through Barnet Homes and other partners will provide support to people in deprived areas with a focus on employment, income maximisation and housing sustainment. The teams are based in Burnt Oak and Cricklewood and comprise staff from Barnet Homes, Barnet Council Job Centre and Future Path. There are extensive partner networks also offering support through BOOST, including Shelter, MIND and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The BOOST team will focus on supporting more young adults into education, employment and training programmes.
- Developing information pathways with partner organisations to determine which households are impacted by the Benefit Cap and are receiving Universal Credit, and establish a baseline to enable setting of targets up to 2024.
- Provide advice and support around benefits, debt advice and employment - including from Welfare Reform Taskforce, BOOST, and the Discretionary Housing Payments Team.
- Engaging with individuals who are impacted by the Benefit Cap and are receiving Housing Benefit in order to improve outcomes for households at risk of homelessness.

<p><b>Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting specialist staff to oversee all rough sleeping cases in Barnet and to work closely with partners to support individual rough sleepers.</li> <li>• Increasing outreach and floating support for rough sleepers.</li> <li>• Creating new pathways for hospital discharge and prison discharge to tackle repeat rough sleeping.</li> <li>• Supporting rough sleepers who are ready for independent living to move into longer-term accommodation and to sustain their tenancy.</li> <li>• Develop and monitor an Annual Rough Sleeping Plan to reduce rough sleeping across the borough.</li> <li>• Ensure all rough sleepers have a full assessment of health needs, are supported to be registered with a GP and have access to primary care services in Barnet.</li> <li>• Working with Community Safety to develop a communications plan for rough sleeping which will inform partners and concerned members of the public on how they can help. This will include clear procedures for reporting rough sleeping via Street Link which will be publicised on the councils and Barnet Homes websites.</li> <li>• Working with partners such as HAB to provide advice and support to rough sleepers around health, benefits, education and employment.</li> <li>• Set up a task and targeting group with partners to focus on the most entrenched rough sleepers.</li> <li>• Conducting four rough sleeping counts in 2018/19 to better understand the pattern and locations of rough sleepers. The responses will feed into the targets for the number of rough sleepers that are moved off the streets and into more settled accommodation.</li> <li>• Work more closely with services such as the Parking and Green Spaces Teams to provide outreach support across rough sleeping hot spots in Barnet.</li> <li>• Procure 9 temporary accommodation units specifically for entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs.</li> <li>• Deliver 19 units of accommodation through the Foundation Project for rough sleepers with low to medium support needs.</li> </ul>
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# Appendix 1: Relationship to other Council strategies



# Appendix 2: Partnership Working

