

Consultation and Engagement Report

Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029 Consultation Summary

February 2024

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 Consultation and Engagement Report

The Homelessness Strategy 2024 - 2029 has involved an extensive consultation and engagement process which has consisted of online meetings with residents and partners, an online survey as well as a programme of outreach meetings with our key partners. In addition, we considered 160 comments made in the recent Housing Strategy consultation around issues relating to homelessness and housing supply.

In total, we have canvassed the views of over 400 people during this consultation. It is stressed that the dialogue with our partners is an ongoing one that is key to improving joint working and delivery of services over the next 5 years.

Prior to producing the strategy, we are required to conduct a Homelessness Review which examines the Council's performance over the past 5 years and compares outcomes with other providers. Having identified key themes for improvement from this research, we then tested these findings by seeking the views of residents and partner voluntary organisations.

The finalised Strategy was influenced by feedback we received from our residents and stakeholders.

1. Feedback from partners

Meetings with Partners

One to one meetings with the following organisations: Family Justice Centre/ Evolve Housing/ St Mungo's Housing Association/ Croydon University Hospital/ South London and Maudsley Housing Trust/ Thamesreach/ Nightwatch/ Crisis Skylight/ South London Law Centre/ Southern Housing/South Norwood Community Kitchen.

Online meetings with Croydon Communities Consortium (26 respondents) and the Private Sector Landlord Forum (approximately 60 respondents).

<u>Comments</u>
<i>Closer partnership work needed/ Need to re-instate partners and Single Homeless Forum/ Need for the Council to engage with partners/. No Joint working with Council.</i>
<i>Greater presence of Homelessness staff during application process/re-instate floating Shelter/Street link not responding</i>
<i>Council not adhering to commitments.</i>
<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need/. Difficulty in getting referrals to the Council/GP concern re response</i>
<i>Housing not involved in strategic partnerships. /Need for preventative approach to homeless to curtail hospital stays</i>
<i>Lack of responsiveness by the Council-it is estimated 90% of patients require housing. /Cost of failing to discharge amounting to 1.2 million a year for NHS/Develop</i>

<i>mental health/single homeless pathways into housing. /Impact of Afghan refugee situation</i>
<i>Single homeless cases not being accepted/responded to by the Council</i>
<i>Not sufficiently linked in with Council contacts in terms of referring cases or for SWEP cases</i>
<i>Work with the Council to improve housing supply/Improve empty properties</i>
<i>Issues in terms of service provision for those housed in temporary accommodation</i>

2. Survey Consultation Report - 188 respondents

In the tables below comments are either paraphrased or direct comments quoted (i.e. with speech marks.)

Priority One: Deliver good and responsive service to all those who require it.
This was not included in the survey but inserted as an outcome following feedback that was received.

See Section 3 – Change No 4

Priority Two: Prevent homelessness and provide relief efficiently where it occurs.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 94%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 2%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 4%

Comments received on this objective.

Area of concern.	No. of text responses	Comments
<i>Street homelessness</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>75% registering concern and 25% calling for stronger action against ASB</i>
<i>Council response</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Too complex/confusing/unresponsive /Not accessible/Gap in dealing with residents with complex needs/Acting as a 'gatekeeper'</i>
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>No strategy or joined up working</i>
<i>Housing Supply/Insufficient resources</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>More affordable homes/Use Vacant office space /' Stop Taking on other Boroughs homeless.</i>
<i>Prevention of homelessness</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Not working/Impact on children</i>

Priority Three: Reduce reliance on the use of temporary accommodation.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 94 %
- Strongly disagree or disagree 3%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 3%

Comments received.

Area of Concern.	No of text responses	Comments
<i>'Need for stable homes as well as temporary'/'More social homes needed'</i>	11	<i>Need to focus on both/ Build complexes of temporary accommodation/Buy hostels</i>
<i>'Provide less service'</i>	2	<i>The problem will persist whatever the investment</i>
<i>'Homeless not part of the community'/'Mental health impact'</i>	1	<i>Lack of long-term housing affects mental health</i>
<i>'Speed of investigation'</i>	1	<i>Poor case management</i>
<i>'Better use of existing stock'</i>	1	<i>Use of Brick-by-Brick properties</i>

Priority Four: Providing services to rough sleepers.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 79%
- Strongly disagree or disagree-15%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 6%

Area of concern	No. of text responses	Comments
<i>Withdrawing support</i>	12	<i>'Review support offer after refusal'/ Stop begging/Deal with ASB. 'Force them into accommodation'/ 'Leave them on the street'. '15% a high number-withdraw support but provide right accommodation' /'Nobody should prefer to be on the Street'/'Impact on businesses.'</i>
<i>Reasons Rough sleepers refuse accommodation</i>	15	<i>Linking rough sleeping with ASB-not always the case/Complex reasons/People not feeling safe in hostels/Mental health</i>

		<i>support needs/Lack of outreach/More Tailored services/Decent housing solutions needed.</i>
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Priority Five: Managing our stock and encouraging new affordable and social housing.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 87%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 9%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 4%

Comments received.

Area of Concern	No of text responses	Comments
<i>Temporary accommodation</i>	6	<i>'Too many hostels and HMOs in Croydon'/ 'Closer monitoring of HMO's'/'New blocks appear empty-should be powers to occupy after 6 months'/'Protect people from dodgy private renters.'</i>
<i>Maintaining housing supply</i>	6	<i>'Investigate those who do not look after properties' /maintenance of affordable homes/'Properties should be let more swiftly'</i>
<i>Provide new homes</i>	6	<i>Need to build affordable housing/ More social as opposed to affordable housing. 'Avoid ill thought-out infrastructure'.</i>
<i>Opposing new homes in Croydon</i>	5	<i>'Everyone should provide for themselves'/ Rehouse out of London-Croydon is overcrowded/Plan reduction of people in Croydon</i>

Priority Six: Partnership working.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 87%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 11%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 2%

Area of Concern	No of text responses	Comments
<i>Partnership working</i>	9	<i>'Disabled people No 1 Priority'/ 'Invest more in mental health and social care'/ Multi-agency approach</i>
<i>Against approach</i>	2	<i>'Council should not transfer their responsibilities to the Private Sector'</i>

Other Issues/ Further Issues raised in Housing Strategy consultation.

The Survey offered the chance for responders to provide any further comments they wish to comment on. There was a total of 86 messages left many of which touched upon the priorities listed above. Listed below are comments not fully covered under the previous questions as well as issues raised in the Housing Strategy consultation.

Subject	Comments
<i>Respect for residents/Relationship building</i>	<i>Improve relationship with Key providers/ 'No suitcases here'- signposting disrespectful/ Staff -training on treating people with dignity/ Improve relationship with the newly homeless/ 'Involve residents in key issues'/ Lack of response from service/'Can never get through'/ 'People cannot get on waiting list'</i>
<i>Support</i>	<i>Tackle health inequalities/More support needed. Rise in Mental Health/Physical health/Drugs issues/ Improve social care initiatives/collaboration with health services/Increase in young homeless</i>
<i>Private Sector residents</i>	<i>'Stop No fault evictions'/ 'Prevent Families going through the Court process'. Early intervention to avoid eviction. /'Tackle rogue Private Landlords'/Impose Rent control in the Private Sector/ 'Do not jeopardise supply of homes by imposing Landlord Licencing'/ No follow up after Council Private Sector Team Inspection</i>
<i>Housing Supply</i>	<i>More homes for Single homeless/ 'Enforce downsizing for those under-occupying'/ 'Means test provision of social housing'/ 'Refurbish existing property'/ 'Need to increase not maintain stock.' /Stop RTB/'Use prefab housing'/ 'Too many empty properties'/ Buyback Council properties/More development needed/'Not enough social housing'/Need for more family size homes/'Use old garage sites'/New homes not affordable/Use prefab housing.</i>

Responses from those who have experienced homelessness.

When asked of the 188 respondents.

- 18% (34 respondents) had experienced homelessness, rough sleeping or have been at risk of homelessness with 82% having no such experience.

A sample of the comments received.

'When you are homeless, there are normally a range of other psychological issues you are facing. Mental Health, Other Psychotic Issues, Alcohol dependency. Drug Dependency, Personality disorders. someone should be there to support/ help you'.

'Council support was not as helpful as needed. Offered rehousing in entirely different area of England at critical points of childhood. House was not fit for purpose. Temporary stay accommodation condition was in West Croydon and in terrible condition which worsened the experience for children'.

'I didn't feel supported, staff were very abrupt. Not what you need when you're in a vulnerable position. Passed from team to team with not much information. Told one thing by one team and a different thing by the next team. No support with finding private renting as the eligibility criteria is hard'.

3. Changes to the draft priorities and objectives following engagement and consultation with residents and voluntary Organisations.

CHANGE NO 1

Priority Three: _Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation

With the levels of homelessness rising in London by 14% over the last year, these changes apply caution to the aspiration to lower the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.

CHANGE NO 2

Priority Four: Providing services to rough sleepers.

This involved changes to wording around tackling anti-social behaviour. Representations received stated that there were many reasons that people remained 'in a revolving door' of homelessness and this does not necessarily infer anti-social behaviour. Additionally, it should not always be assumed that the anti-social behaviour is from rough sleepers. However, there was also requests from respondents that the Council should act on persistent anti-social behaviour from rough sleepers.

CHANGE NO 3

Priority Four: Managing our stock and encouraging new affordable and social housing.

This change was influenced by responses received during the Housing Strategy consultation around providing more affordable accommodation. This was also reflected in the final objectives of the Housing Strategy

CHANGES NO 4

Many representations from residents were received with regards to a lack of customer care and responsiveness in the Housing Needs and Homelessness service. Given the commitment to Service Excellence in the Mayor's Business Plan and the Housing Strategy a specific priority with regards to embedding these principles will be contained in the final objectives.

CHANGE NO 5

Removed "partnership working" and replaced with "*Re-instate partnerships with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to reducing homelessness*"

Comments received about need for proactive action to reducing homelessness.