

# Harlow Homelessness & Rough Sleeping (Strategy)

## Feedback from Members Workshop



## Introduction

In July 2019 the council facilitated a Members workshop, to present the findings of the homelessness review, and to discuss and agree the key priorities for action for the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Strategy will be designed to help tackle homelessness issues, specific to Harlow, and sets out how the Council and its Partners will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

The workshop covered the following areas:

1. Presentation of data (published in our review document)
2. Identification of gaps in services
3. Priorities for change
4. Accommodation – call for innovative ideas

The workshop was independently facilitated and was attended by 13 members.

## Outcomes of discussions

### 1. Gaps in services and provision

Members worked in groups to generate list of key gaps in services that the strategy should seek to address. Responses were fed back to the main workshop and were discussed, and agreed.

The gaps identified were:

- Ensuring we have enough temporary accommodation to meet need and avoid the use of B&B;
- Ongoing funding for tackling rough sleeping, after the RSI funding stream finishes – affecting severe weather provision, accommodation at Bromley Cottages and outreach work;
- Inability to compete with London boroughs in securing homes in the private rented sector;
- SWEP only covering winter months of the year, needs to be extended;
- Provision for young people and carers;
- Hostel accommodation for complex clients;
- County funded floating support;
- Knowledge about where to go for support on homelessness and other issues;
- Knowledge on where to go for support for families who need to ask family to leave;
- Ability to harness people's better nature and be kind to, and report rough sleepers so they can get help;
- Information for new tenants on welfare benefits and debt advice;
- Referrals from agencies to housing not coming in early enough;
- Offenders who have not only served their sentences in custody and the community but have little hope of rehabilitation without housing;
- Gaps in our own provision, caused by excessive out of borough placements, particularly Terminus House. Work with MHCLG and London Councils to reduce placements, especially where they are without support.

## 2. Priorities for change

Members were asked to identify key areas for action. There was a discussion about the key themes for the strategy which, as proposed, are:

- Prevention – to stop homelessness and rough sleeping;
- Intervention – helping those as crisis point with swift targeted support;
- Recovery – helping people to rebuild lives;
- Partnerships – collective force to tackle homelessness.

There was a consensus that these themes provided a robust framework for the strategy. Members flagged the following as priority actions with these headings:

- Work to reduce the stigma associated with homelessness;
- Involve those with lived experience;
- Take a holistic approach, help people access benefits, training and employment;
- Ensure those who require family or friends to leave, approach for advice and information at the earliest opportunity;
- Improve the offering to private sector landlords;
- Work to retain services for rough sleepers once RSI funding ceases; help Streets2Homes to deliver self-sufficient services.

## 3. Accommodation – call for innovative ideas

Members were asked to explore any innovative ideas for provision of accommodation for homeless households. The following are drawn from these discussions:

- Shipping containers - learning from other authorities eg Thurrock particularly useful for using plots of land not immediately suitable for housing. Investing to accumulate is one way to regenerate cash to other projects in this case resolving homelessness.
- With focus on climate emergency new styles of quick build, even 'container' homes for those that resolve to use public transport/cycles etc to resolve need for parking spaces linked to some new builds.
- Key worker homes for statutory service employees who are competing with London waiting salaries and cannot afford private rented. Social Services, NHS and Probation are paying additional costs for bank workers due to shortage.
- Supported lodgings type arrangements for homeless people.