
Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2024 -2029



ISLINGTON
For a more equal future

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Our mission

Our **Homelessness Charter** is a symbol of our mission to end homelessness in Islington by uniting people, organisations and businesses with one shared vision.

Everyone has a role to play in improving outcomes for homeless people and we work with our public sector colleagues, charities, faith and community groups, businesses and individuals to share and adopt the vision and values of the Charter.

Islington Council's commitment is to ensure that by 2030, everyone in Islington has a safe, decent and genuinely affordable place to call home. We are committed to eliminating rough sleeping and preventing homelessness by providing every individual with a realistic, good quality housing option.

Introduction

This is Islington's fifth **Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy**. It sets out how we work with a shared purpose to prevent and relieve homelessness and to eliminate rough sleeping in the borough. It has been produced in consultation with our partners, colleagues and residents and it is informed by the wider landscape of best practice and regulation.



The Housing context

Since the introduction of the **Homelessness Reduction Act** and the lifetime of our previous two strategies¹, the housing crisis has worsened. Despite the council's commitment to build genuinely affordable homes, affordable housing is in short supply in the borough and there are high levels of housing need.

Due to the impact of systemic pressures across factors that affect the housing situation for individuals and households, the residents of Islington are facing housing pressures not seen for two decades. **54%** of Londoners feel that housing affordability is the most important issue facing London today.

Numerous research reports published over the past few years demonstrate the unaffordability of housing across the United Kingdom through rising rents, lack of supply and changing housing policy. Housing Needs Directors from across London are reporting to the All-Party Parliamentary Group every month that the homelessness and temporary accommodation situation is deteriorating and the most recent research from the **Kerslake Commission**² reports that rises are stemming from affordable housing shortages, a lack of statutory support services, and the cost-of-living crisis. London Councils have recently determined that London boroughs' net deficit on homelessness spending is 54% higher in 2023 than the previous year.

The ongoing impact of welfare reform is a further factor affecting housing affordability in the borough and across London and severe homelessness pressures have been compounded by the rapid increase in the cost of essential goods

in recent months. Londoners living in private rented accommodation currently spend almost 40% of their income on rent. This added financial pressure on low-income households in the private rented sector and drop in disposable income is likely to make further rent increases unaffordable and increase the risk of homelessness.

Islington's annual streetcount carried out in November 2023 met 15 people rough sleeping in the borough on one night. Whilst this figure is comparatively lower than other central London boroughs, outreach teams continue to meet people new to the streets, which continues to make up almost half of those met rough sleeping each month. Between April 2022 – March 2023, Islington's outreach team met and supported 337 individuals who were rough sleeping away from the streets.⁴

The UK is also seeing the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine which has led to the creation of the Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family schemes, designed to accommodate Ukrainian nationals fleeing their country. The minimum six month placements are now ending with many sponsors not intending to maintain the current arrangements. Home Office policy towards ending hotel accommodation after refugee status is granted has also led to increased rough sleeping for refugee and asylum seekers.

The Strategic context

Our strategy is underpinned by the **Islington Together 2030 Plan**⁵ that determines the council's priorities, the **Challenging Inequality Strategy** and **Fairer Together** – a strategy for early intervention and prevention in Islington.

It is aligned with related housing strategies and policies including the **Housing Strategy** that sets out the council's priorities for housing in the borough, the **Tenancy Strategy** and **Allocation Scheme** which define the procedures for the allocation of social housing in Islington and govern the operation of Islington Council's Housing Register to ensure that social housing is allocated fairly and to those in the greatest housing need.

We have signed up to the **Mayor's London Charter**⁶ to end rough sleeping and have achieved accreditations including Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA) and Stonewall's HouseProud.

It is aligned with further council strategies including:

- Carers Strategy
- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- Islington Welcomes⁷
- Borough of Sanctuary strategy.

It complies with relevant legislation, and codes of guidance including:

- Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017
- Localism Act 2011
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DLUHC
- 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- North London Domestic Violence protocol and Pan London Domestic Violence Protocol
- Health and Care Act 2022
- NICE guidelines
- Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Housing Ombudsman guidance.

How we work

We deliver our work across **Homes and Neighbourhoods** through the council's **CARE** values and the working practices and principles set out in our 3 Charters – **Homelessness Charter**, **Private Sector Charter** and **Council Tenants' Charter**.

Early intervention

We provide a prevention service to all applicants regardless of priority need, including those threatened with homelessness.

Understanding the adverse effects caused by homelessness, we encourage all housing applicants in housing need to approach our services early so we can find solutions to their housing circumstances.

Wherever practical, we use mediation to keep people in their existing accommodation and our intensive tenancy teams and commissioned floating support services provide support to people at risk of homelessness due to unmet support needs. We also help council tenants to maintain their rent accounts by fostering financial resilience including outreach through which we provide targeted advice to tenants with vulnerabilities.

We work through a **Rapid Rehousing** focus, which aims to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact, to ensure an efficient and appropriate customer journey.

We have identified hard to reach BAME groups in Islington, whose risk of homelessness may be exacerbated by not seeking early prevention advice and assistance.

We have established relationships with our partners who have a Duty to Refer and Duty to Prevent including including Department of Work and Pensions, local hospitals, the probation and prison services and and we receive regular referrals from these bodies through developed processes.

Person-centred and trauma-informed

We aim to end rough sleeping in Islington by working holistically, in collaboration with our partner agencies and jointly across council departments and the subregion. We work with statutory services and alongside local community, faith and grassroots groups to ensure that people have access to the support they need and social activities where meaningful connections can develop.

We see beyond immediate housing need by supporting individuals with their health and wellbeing, substance use, employability and personal safety.

We put the person at the heart of our approach across services and work in a trauma-informed way to ensure that people with lived experience of homelessness, including rough sleeping receive integrated, holistic support.

Our approach to rough sleeping is compassionate and supportive, with a focus on the strengths and aspirations of individuals, alongside their support needs, they may need help with.

Islington's Whole Housing approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse

We recognise that domestic abuse devastates lives and we are working to put a stop to it amongst our residents and employees. We do not underestimate the importance of delivering the right response, the first time. Our response can lead to a survivor and their children living a life free from abuse, without detriment to their health, and where they may achieve their educational goals and life aspirations. This, in turn, will contribute to creating connected and thriving communities, free from fear and violence and resulting in a safe space in which to live.

DAHA is the gold standard for housing providers in tackling domestic abuse and keeping our residents safe and feeling safe is a priority for the council. We achieved accreditation in 2021 for our tenancy teams and extended to a **Whole Housing** approach across all of our housing services in December 2023:

- over 70 domestic abuse champions recruited across housing who are responsible for cascading resources, information, learning and good practice to colleagues across the council
- work with our specialist domestic abuse partner **Solace Women's Aid** to provide enhanced training to assist with identifying and responding safely and effectively to domestic abuse
- our outreach worker works with women experiencing homelessness and multiple-disadvantage, who are also affected by domestic abuse
- staff training to understand intersectional issues that affect the experiences of our residents to provide better outcomes, with a particular focus on survivors of domestic abuse
- **High Risk Moves Policy** supports our staff who respond to domestic abuse survivors who may have to move home as a result of abuse
- our **Home Shelter Scheme** allows survivors to remain in their homes through the provision of security measures
- work well within the **Islington Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** strategy and jointly work with Adult Social Care and Children's, "by and for" partners and Housing Associations

Supporting individuals and empowering communities

We provide support for individuals to access skills and employment opportunities through our partnership work with our **Income Maximisation Team (IMAX)** and our floating support providers.

We fund **Single Homelessness Project (SHP)** to run a peer support service for those with lived experience of homelessness.

Through our joint work with the council's **Local Economies team**, we are creating positive relationships with businesses across the borough. We attend Town Centre business meetings to talk and promote understanding about how to best support individuals experiencing rough sleeping. These relationships also enable us to develop opportunities for companies who want to offer social value to their community by participating in our street counts and for people experiencing homelessness such as CV workshops.

Through the Islington Working partnership, the council has provided tailored employment support to priority groups including those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities; people with disabilities; parents; young people (18-25), supporting over 2,000 residents into work since 2020.

As part of our commitment to a more equal Islington, we encourage individuals with lived experience to join our team as trainees and we provide 6 work experience placements for care-experienced young people who are interested in working in the housing sector. We also stipulate that our contractors offer apprenticeship opportunities.

Our **Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme**⁸ aims to improve the lives of our residents through providing funding to a wide range of organisations in the borough. We support a range of activities including community resources, advocacy and capacity building for the community, supporting equalities and cohesion.

A Community Panel with members who have come to Islington as refugees, migrants or asylum seekers will help decide how best to allocate funding received through our Borough of Sanctuary.

We support **Streets Fest** each year in conjunction Streets Kitchen, Haringey Council and Islington Peoples' Theatre. It provides essential health and housing services and information for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Improving health outcomes

Islington Council is committed to providing comprehensive support to individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage, including those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We aim to reduce homelessness, improve the lives of individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage and create a more inclusive and equitable community.

Many people sleeping rough may be experiencing multiple disadvantage. We build trusting relationships and involve people with lived experience in our outreach. Our complex needs navigators work with verified rough sleepers and support people experiencing multiple disadvantage who are in temporary accommodation who have been struggling to sustain their tenancies or experienced repeated cycles of homelessness.

We offer a range of housing-related support services, including supported housing, floating support, and mental health recovery pathway. These services provide individuals with the necessary support to maintain stable tenancies and improve their overall well-being.

We recognise the unique needs of young people and provide tailored accommodation pathways to support their transition into independent living.

We are currently developing commissioning intentions to enhance the integration and coordination of housing-related support services for individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage. This will ensure that commissioned services are aligned with the Strategy and deliver optimal outcomes.

Islington's **Integrated Health and Care Front Door Service** is a new health and care model that was developed jointly by Whittington Health and Islington's Adult Social Care Services. The service is designed to act as a single point of access for all adult social care, urgent community health and hospital discharge referrals for Islington residents. It offers a coordinated approach to delivering prevention and early intervention to our residents through supported self-care and building personal strengths as well as timely de-escalation of emerging health and care needs. It also allows for a timely identification of residents in crisis that require urgent attention and support to avoid further deterioration. This will be delivered through an integrated multidisciplinary team of health and social care professionals responsible for holistic assessments, personalised care planning and risk management.

We maintain good links with Islington's **Public Health team** to encourage more effective connections with frontline health services, looking for opportunities to improve access to preventative care, including but not limited to screening, vaccination, and GP registration. Housing and commissioners coordinate with health services to ensure drug and alcohol treatment services are genuinely accessible for people experiencing homelessness.

We support the work delivered under the **Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant** and during **Severe Weather Emergencies** we work with the local libraries and community centres for example, to provide water and suncream and ensure outreach provision is available at these locations during the day.

We commission a physical health outreach nurse who offers district nursing through outreach, meeting the needs of those rough sleeping, as well as providing in-reach clinics into supported accommodation and day centres. This service is vital in meeting immediate health needs and providing a link for individuals with primary healthcare. Islington's **Integrated Care Board** also funds a health inequalities project for people experiencing homelessness, which offers flexible GP provision for people with health needs, which includes visits to supported accommodation schemes.

Islington's Drug and Alcohol Community of Practice

Drug and alcohol use have a considerable impact on the health and wellbeing of Islington's residents and lead to significant health inequalities impacting socially excluded groups. A **Drug and Alcohol Community of Practice (CoP)** comprising public health and support providers was established in December 2023. The CoP seeks to enhance working relationships across agencies by offering an open forum for agencies to share service updates, concerns, or emerging trends. Current local priorities include access to treatment, access to harm reduction and reduction in drug-related deaths, recovery and training for partners.

Accessing our services

We want to ensure that our residents have access to the information, advice and support that they need and to be able to access the right services at the right time. We focus on achieving equal outcomes for our residents through recognising them as individuals who have different experiences, circumstances and changing needs, and providing services that meet those needs.

We provide detailed signposting information for residents in housing need who are able to self-help on our website. **Access Islington Hubs** are 'one stop shop' services in each locality offering help and support in person at Upper Street, in Finsbury Library and Manor Gardens. The Hubs offer a combination of drop in advice and support surgeries, as well as booked advice and guidance sessions. for individuals who may need more support.

We launched a **Young Black Men and Mental Health Programme** in 2023 designed to improve access to council services and mental health wellbeing outcomes for young black men.

To improve access to housing advice for residents from minority ethnic backgrounds, we are working with the Islington BAMER Advice Alliance to provide co-located housing surgeries. IBAA is a group of community centres in Islington that provide advisory services for BAME and refugee communities in Islington – such as the Islington Somali Community, Islington Bangladesh Association, Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation, Eritrean Community UK, and others.

Making best use of our housing stock

Less than 7% of households on the Housing Register will be rehoused each year. **Over 15,000 households** are waiting for homes, **only 1,000 homes** per year become available for letting and less than half of re-lets have more than one bedroom.

The predominance of one- and two-bed housing within our stock leads to an imbalance between the family sized housing available and that which is required and leads to issues with overcrowding and high housing need.

We build new social rented housing for low income and vulnerable families so they can live in the borough in decent, affordable housing. The council approved a refreshed new homes programme in March 2024 with funding in place to deliver around 174 new council homes across 4 schemes.

We proactively make the best use of our existing housing through our mobility schemes which promote opportunities for people underoccupying their homes to move within the borough or outside London. In 2023, we assisted 69 tenants to move to smaller homes. 53 properties were re-allocated to overcrowded households on our housing list and 16 were matched with existing tenants through our **Smart Move** scheme.

We carry out audits of our tenanted properties and work to recover properties and any associated unlawful profits. We also provide tenancy fraud investigations for our housing association partners across the borough in return for nomination rights. We have recovered 36 properties since January 2024.



Working in partnership

We are committed to building a fairer Islington and this strategy is supported corporately across council departments.

We administer the **Homelessness Prevention** and **Rough Sleeping Forum**. The Forum meets regularly, is chaired independently by Islington Law Centre and consists of 80 partner organisations. We work with Shelter and Crisis as critical friends.

The work of the **No Recourse to Public Funds team (NRPF)** has recently been recognised by becoming an **Accredited Borough of Sanctuary** and we have achieved the **Stonewall's HouseProud Pioneer** accreditation, one of only 14 housing organisations to be awarded this.

This strategy is delivered in partnership with local statutory agencies, local non-commissioned partners and the Police and jointly by services across the council from departments including:

- Children's Services,
- Commissioning and Investment,
- Community Safety, Security and resilience
- Adult Social Care,
- Residential Environmental Health,
- VAWG
- Public Health.

Housing Association Partnership Agreement

Over 17,500 properties in Islington are managed by 48 housing association partners. Our partnership agreement with Islington's housing associations works to:

- to address the challenges our residents face including with the cost of living crisis
- support our young people may need a different response due to their past trauma
- signpost to employment opportunities and provide support to residents who are in rent arrears or at risk of eviction, making all attempts to resolve situations
- provide support for people in housing need, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and provide social housing or other affordable housing options so households can retain their place in Islington, and no one will need to sleep rough in the borough.

Cross-boundary cooperation

We work with neighbouring boroughs and Pan-London to meet housing need and identify opportunities for coordination and efficiencies wherever beneficial.

We work across 6 boroughs (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington, Westminster) through the **North London Housing Partnership** to provide targeted early homeless prevention support and we have reciprocal arrangements in place to support individuals fleeing domestic abuse. Across the subregion, the **North London Rough Sleeping Multi-Disciplinary Hub** accepts referrals from across 6 participating boroughs and intervenes to provide move-on solutions.

We provide accommodation and support for young people aged 16-24 who are sleeping rough through **Youth Hub**, a pan-London scheme in partnership with **New Horizons**.

We have delivered the **NRPF Network** since 2006. The Network improves local authority implementation of statutory duties for NRPF families, children and adults and we work within the **North London Housing Partnership Domestic Abuse Reciprocal Agreement** to promote housing options for survivors of domestic abuse.

Our priorities

The four priorities for this strategy are based on our current and programmed work to prevent and relieve homelessness and end rough sleeping in Islington. They are aligned with the council's commitment to promote fairness and equality, our **Housing Strategy** and our **Allocation Scheme**.

Priority 1: Preventing and relieving homelessness through early and tailored intervention

Homelessness is not inevitable and it can be prevented. We work to provide early help for those at risk of becoming homeless and we believe that everyone who is homeless should have a right to a safe, secure home along with an appropriate level of support to create a good quality of life.

Priority 2: Eliminating rough sleeping by helping people into settled housing

We work side-by-side and holistically with our council colleagues and partners to eliminate rough sleeping; we work to the values set out in our Homelessness Charter.

Priority 3: Improving housing options available to meet the needs of our residents

We aim to providing every individual accessing our services with a realistic, sustainable good quality housing option where people can feel safe, maintain contact with their family and friends and which support their life choices.

Priority 4: Providing accommodation and resettlement services to refugees and migrants

Islington Council became an accredited Borough of Sanctuary in 2023. We work ambitiously with our partners to make Islington a place of welcome, safety and success for all and to integrate new communities, build social cohesion and eradicate poverty.

Challenging inequality⁹ – supporting our Council-wide programme for a more Equal Islington

The promotion of diversity, equality and anti-discriminatory practices is implied across our daily work to address inequality in Islington. These principles influence our investment decisions and we have a council-wide programme of work to identify the positive actions we need to take to identify and address inequality. In Homes and Neighbourhoods, our contribution to Challenging Inequality for the current financial year includes:

- equality audits annually for lettings of affordable housing, homeless approaches and homeless decisions. Produce and publish an Annual Lettings plan setting annual targets for property types, and monitor the Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure that our allocations reflect housing need
- provide a truly inclusive and accessible service to meet the needs of survivors of domestic abuse through intersectional practice, Local authorities and housing providers have a responsibility to understand intersectionality, to recognise the discriminatory barriers presented within their own services and develop policies and practice that breaks down these barriers to create a service accessible to all survivors, particularly those from Black and minoritized communities
- deliver a customer-focused service and make sure those with experience of homelessness have a voice and are involved in determining the solutions to their own issues, and homelessness in general
- promote Islington values through events, social engagement and community outreach work including proactive outreach and early-stage prevention services at a range of faith and community-based locations at surgeries for specific communities including minoritised groups at locations such as Children's Centres.

Priority 1:

Preventing and relieving homelessness through tailored early intervention

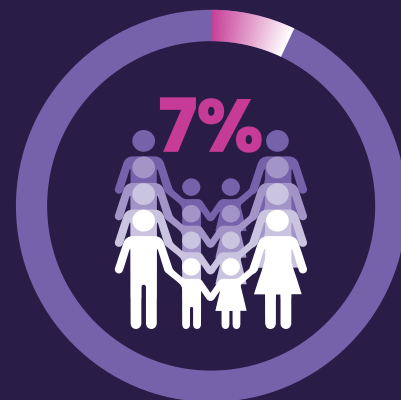
Homelessness is not inevitable and it can be prevented. We work to provide early help for those at risk of becoming homeless and we believe that everyone who is homeless should have a right to a safe, secure home along with an appropriate level of support to create a good quality of life.

The Challenge

Since our previous strategy and over the course of the covid pandemic we saw a consistent reduction in homelessness. However, we are now facing an increase in homelessness presentations, people living on the streets of Islington and people seeking to join the council's Housing Register. At the same time, we have been experiencing the lowest number of lettings in council and housing association properties for many years.

Housing insecurity for private renters

The median rent for a 2-bedroom property in Islington is £2046. This is higher than the London median of £1500. Only 23 out of 1710 two-bed homes available are affordable to rent on current housing benefit rates¹¹. We have had a 14% increase in private rents in Islington over the last 12 months and a 41% reduction in the provision of private rented sector. The average benefit allowance in Islington would need to increase by £560 a month for someone to afford the cheapest 30% of homes in the borough. Islington¹², like other London boroughs, has a relatively higher proportion of households estimated to have seen monthly rent payments rise in 2023 and these households seeing a higher cost increase.



Last year we let only 1,119 properties, housing around 7% of those 15,000 households

Survivors of domestic abuse

Survivors of domestic abuse can often experience overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage based on a combination of identity and experience. This can present significant barriers to accessing support.

Our housing teams have seen an increase in domestic abuse reported and ONS figures show that offences flagged as domestic abuse by police in the period March – June 2020 increased by **7%** compared to the same period in 2019. Nationally **90%** of VAWG Services saw an increase in demand for services since the Covid-19 pandemic. In Islington, reported domestic abuse offences rose by **4.2%** in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. Since 2020, the council has responded by increasing investment in VAWG services to increase their capacity to support survivors by **56%** in 2020-21¹⁰.

Temporary accommodation is not temporary

In Islington the average stay in temporary accommodation is 64 weeks compared to an average of 5 to 10 years for the rest of London.

The availability of temporary accommodation to relieve homelessness continues to place increasing pressures for all authorities: London has the most severe temporary accommodation pressures in the country, accounting for two-thirds of England’s total numbers (**59,160 households**). The number of homeless London households living in temporary accommodation is at near-record levels that have not been experienced since 2005 when numbers peaked at **63,800 households**. A recent survey by London Councils has found that between September 2022 and April 2023, 15 boroughs reported receiving a notice to quit, a legal document requesting the return of a property, from landlords for **3,531 properties** in use as temporary accommodation.



Our work

We aim to provide early prevention upstream activity to address homelessness and provide sustainable housing solutions to meet the needs of homeless households.

Providing mediation and landlord incentives to prevent homelessness

We take early interventions to prevent people becoming homeless using mediation and provide incentive payments to landlords to enable individuals to remain in their current homes or delay the applicant's threat of homelessness.

Supporting individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse

We aim to deliver best in class support to individuals and families fleeing domestic abuse. We work with Islington's Solace's Senior Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) who is co-located with housing officers. We recognise that survivors' experiences of domestic abuse are in part defined by their race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and other intersecting needs and characteristics. Our officers will receive ongoing training to understand the intersectional needs and experiences of disadvantage and discrimination to break down these barriers to create a service accessible to all survivors, particularly those from black and minoritised communities.

Solace provide domestic abuse refuge accommodation and support services to meet the specific needs of women escaping abuse and be inclusive to women self-identifying as transgender women. The service provides women and their children with one to one and peer support aiming to enable families to cope with the trauma they've experienced, leave abusive relationships, regain their self-esteem and support them to begin rebuilding their life in safety and independence.



Addressing youth homelessness

The council supports the principle that children looked after should be supported on their journey to independence. Housing's role within the council's **Corporate Parenting** offer has been strengthened to ensure that care leavers who become homeless receive the support of full rehousing duties up to the age of 25 and the council has recently approved a protocol between Housing and Children's Services.

Our **House Project** for care leavers provides peer to peer support for individuals allowing them to develop their life skills and our **Shared Lives** programme offers the opportunity to be supported in a family environment. We are purchasing **20 x 1 bedroom Ex Right to Buy properties** to accommodate people leaving looked after care and we work with **Abianda** to support young survivors of domestic abuse who are not eligible for re-housing.

Our **Care Experienced Panel** reviews referrals for care-experienced people at an early stage where there is a risk of tenancy enforcement escalation, for e.g. rent arrears, antisocial behaviour or other breach of tenancy conditions to consider preventative measures to ensure tenancy sustainment.

Supporting individuals leaving institutions

We work to provide specialist support for individuals leaving institutions in Islington:

- our housing officers are co-located with probation colleagues and our specialist triage officer works with individuals released from prison or youth detention
- former members of the regular armed services are prioritised in our allocation policy, and we are signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant
- We have a single point of contact in the housing service for hospital discharges.

Supporting LGBTQIA+ individuals

With an awareness that LGBTQIA+ individuals are disproportionately affected by homelessness, we have achieved **Stonewall's HouseProud Pledge Pioneer Status** and have an ongoing programme of awareness training for our staff.

Addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We work jointly with **Community Safety team** and **Police** to identify and support people at risk of cuckooing and those experiencing hidden homelessness. We work across the department and collaboratively with Adult Social Care and Community Safety to prevent operationally complex ASB cases from escalating. We have implemented a new process between council tenancy services and community safety to provide better support individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage whilst ensuring that ASB does not cause a detrimental impact on our estates.

Joint working: Providing safe accommodation for households fleeing violence

Our **Specialist Support Team** works with council tenants in temporary accommodation who have fled their home due to violence, including households at risk of domestic abuse, gang-related and serious youth violence and vulnerable adults who have been victims of cuckooing.

In 2022, the team assisted **35 households** into new, safe housing **63%** of these households were families requiring a 2-bedroom sized property or larger, and considering the severe shortage of family-sized housing across the city this is a real achievement for the vulnerable families needing a safe place to live.

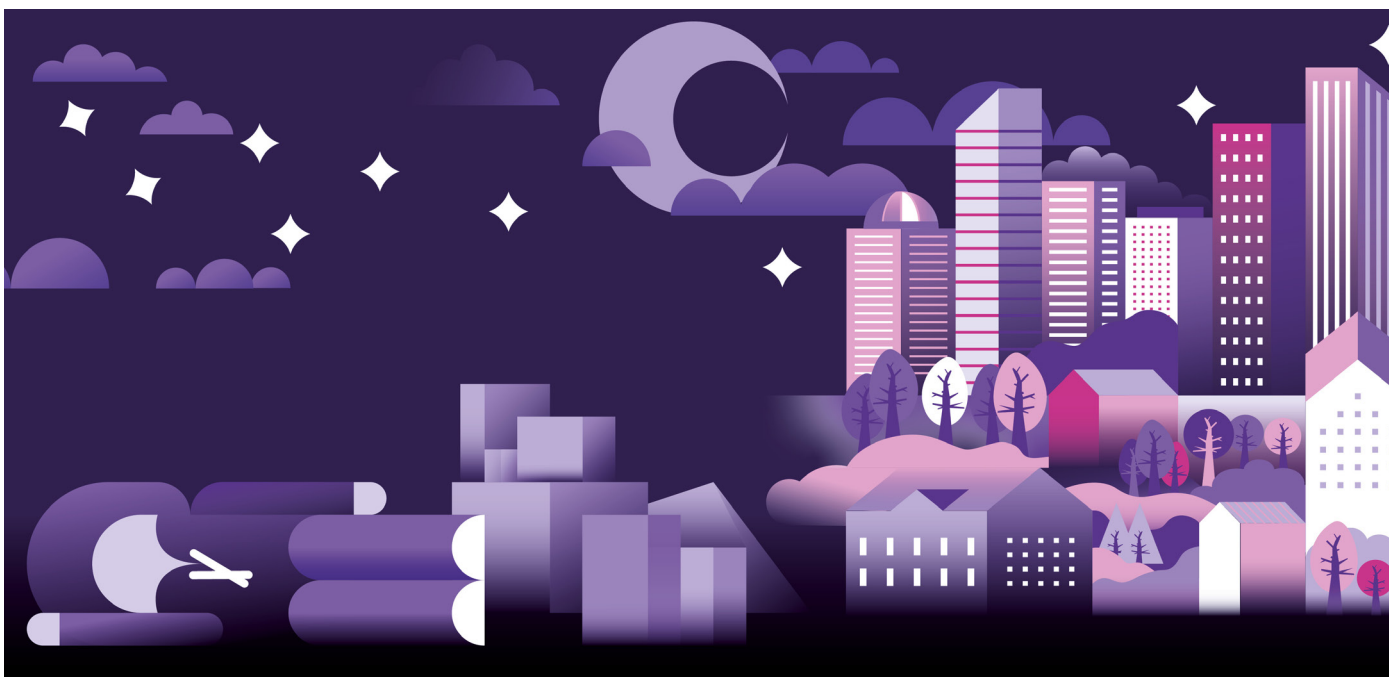
Priority 2:

Eliminating rough sleeping by helping people into settled housing

We work side-by-side and holistically across the council and with our statutory and community partners to eliminate rough sleeping; We work to the values set out in our **Homelessness Charter**.

The Challenge

One person sleeping rough is one person too many. Rough sleeping is the most acute form of homelessness and our prevention work focuses on avoiding this happening by providing early and person-centred interventions. The average age of death for people sleeping rough or living in emergency accommodation is just **46 for men** and **41 for women**.



Our work

Our rough sleeper response embeds a person-centred, compassionate response, which draws on people's individual strengths to move them away from the streets.

We ensure all rough sleepers, including the T1000 cohort (people who have long term or repeated episodes of sleeping rough), have a personalised route away from the streets and are committed to ensuring everyone we have rehoused over the past 2 years does not return to the streets.

Islington is committed to finding a solution for all people with restricted eligibility that have been supported under "Everyone In" in 2020.

We work alongside our partners who provide rough sleepers with a safe place to go including local day centres and night shelter accommodation provided by Shelter from the Storm.

We work with a blended team approach. This comprises health practitioners who work to support people with neglected health needs. The team also includes navigators, outreach workers, substance misuse services and employment support. Our outreach officers and Park Guard contractors are aware of and are well-connected to the substance misuse services available in Islington.

We work in close partnership with Adult Social Care, Commissioning and Health, to ensure a needs-led, holistic approach is delivered.

We are seeing rising levels of individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage across council services. The council aims to work across departments and with our partners to deliver a Whole System approach to support these individuals. Adult Social Care are working in the North London Mental Health Partnership to develop co-ordinated pathways for day to day working across discipline.

Over the past 5 years, Islington Council has successfully applied for and received significant investment from central Government's **Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI)** which runs until March 2025. This funding has allowed the council to create a truly multi-disciplinary team that offers a holistic approach to rough sleepers. With a strong focus on outreach, the service meets the person where they are at, breaking down barriers to ensure that the right type of support is available, at the time it is needed. This support is made up of commissioned services and internal council services, who work closely together to ensure coordinated support is offered, which is strengths-based and identifies a route away from the street. Services include an assertive outreach team, physical health outreach nurse, mental health social worker, psychologist, peer support workers and complex needs navigators, who can offer intensive support as needed.

Focusing not only on housing outcomes

Our approach to tackling rough sleeping is a person-centred and compassionate. We are drawing on individuals' strengths to move away from the streets. We extend our focus using peer coaches to look beyond immediate need, to tackle multiple disadvantage and support individuals with their health and wellbeing, substance use, employability and personal safety. Our approach to people with restricted eligibility is sensitive and thorough, ensuring everyone's needs are assessed and immigration advice is sourced.

Proactive outreach services

Our team is made up of a commissioned outreach service who go out early in the morning and late at night to meet people rough sleeping in addition to an internal team which comprises specialist workers, including: a dedicated women's worker, a no recourse to public funds worker and complex needs workers who are able to

offer specialist and intensive support to people met by the commissioned outreach team. The internal team also carry out outreach, including during the day, to engage with people who are at risk of rough sleeping. This team offers a hand holding approach to supporting people access and engage with the services they need. Each team member holds a caseload and works with individuals by building up trusting relationships.

These teams support other rough sleeping initiative-funded interventions as needed including physical health nurse, mental health social worker and substance use services, and we conduct joint street outreach shifts where needed.

Alongside street outreach, Islington has a team of complex needs navigators who work with people who have multiple needs and are at risk of falling between service thresholds. This team offer support to people who are/at risk of cuckooing, those at risk of eviction and offer intensive support to people in emergency off the streets accommodation, to support them to move on positively. This team has a large focus on homelessness prevention, seeking to build individuals resilience and ensuring their accommodation and support is appropriate for their needs before closing the case.

Homelessness in women

Islington participated in the annual Women's Census in 2023. Recognising that that women's homelessness tends to be more hidden and that there are up to 9 times¹³ more women sleeping rough than are officially recorded, Islington has now signed up, alongside other boroughs, to pilot a 'gender informed outreach approach' to meet the needs of vulnerable women experiencing homelessness. The North London Housing Partnership Vulnerable Women's Accommodation Service works with clients over a 5 month period to assist move-on.

Working across the subregion as part of the North London Housing Partnership

The **Early Homelessness Prevention Service** is an award-winning service that provides a 64-bedroom sleeping hub for rough sleepers and provides specialist immigration advice to non-UK nationals and NRP clients.

Supported housing in Islington

We are seeing increasing levels of need and complexity as people are impacted by social circumstances including poverty and poor mental and/or physical health. Our supported housing schemes provide accommodation for vulnerable people in the borough and enable Islington residents to remain living in their communities. In Islington we work to address multiple disadvantage and provide support services to ensure that individuals, whatever their circumstances or past experiences, can live happier and more stable lives.



The council commissions a range of supported housing schemes, which offer bespoke support for people who require housing-related support. There are different Pathways, offering differing levels of support from low to high and offer specialist support to meet the needs of specific groups including, but not limited to:

- Young people aged 18-24 years old
- Care experienced individuals aged 16-25
- Individuals with mental health support needs
- Individuals with substance misuse problems
- Individuals with a history of offending
- Individuals with learning difficulties
- People with complex and multiple needs
- Women escaping violence

These schemes ensure that bespoke support, tailored to specific needs is available and supports individuals to achieve stability, offering a steppingstone into independent accommodation in the private rented or social housing sector.

Housing First and Independent Housing Intensive Support Scheme

We accommodate former rough sleepers at Stacey Street (30 individual rooms including a women-only space with separate communal facilities) with plans to open further accommodation at St Johns Mansions (19 units) to help improve outcomes for homeless households.

Our **Independent Housing Intensive Support Scheme** operates with 80 properties and has had a significant demonstrable impact on reducing the number of people rough sleeping in Islington. 30 people accepted onto the scheme thus far were referred directly from rough sleeping services including hotels and emergency accommodation. We work with single homeless people with a range of support needs and to date 93% of clients accepted into the scheme have maintained their tenancies and all of those currently in the scheme are on track to complete 2 years in service.

Priority 3:

Improving housing options available to meet the needs of residents

We aim to provide every individual accessing our services with a realistic, sustainable good quality housing option where people can feel safe, maintain contact with their family and friends and which support their life choices.

The Challenge

Nearly a third of homes in Islington are privately rented. The council is committed to standing alongside private renters to make sure they have a safe place to call home. Although we continue to build genuinely affordable homes for local people including lifetime homes, the council has very limited capacity to rehouse those unable to remain in their existing housing into social housing and regrettably, even people in the greatest need often face a delay of several years before they get housed. Alongside the scarcity of suitable social housing, we know that private renters are under huge pressure, and we hear from hundreds of renters who don't feel safe or listened to when their rents increase.



Our work

New Allocation Scheme

Our scheme gives priority to households who approach us with the greatest need. Points are given to survivors of domestic abuse, it aims to help homeless households find new ways of settling down, addresses households who are living in properties suffering from damp and mould, ensures local people are prioritised for available properties and has introduced additional priority for households with medical needs. We produce an annual lettings plan to make the housing allocations scheme more transparent and to ensure it is matched with housing need.

Property acquisition

Over the past five years we have used retained **Right to Buy (RTB)** receipts and GLA grant to purchase ex-council homes that were sold under the RTB. In 2023 we purchased 140 properties and have announced plans to buy back a further 410 which is £1 in every £5 the Government has invested nationally and represents a total investment of nearly £113 million to provide good quality, in-borough temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, homeless families in Islington and families relocated to the UK through the Afghanistan humanitarian programme.



Providing temporary accommodation

We use our acquired properties for temporary accommodation as well as for those with resettlement status, refugees, care experienced people and rough sleeper households. This has allowed the council to house families, who were often housed outside of the borough, close to their support networks, council services and schools. The programme uses borrowing and receipts from right to buy sales that we would have had to hand back to the government with interest if they were not used.

We work to resolve housing issues for residents in temporary accommodation as quickly as possible and to reduce the number of households in nightly paid temporary accommodation and work to eliminate the usage of shared B&Bs for homeless families and single people.

Housing for local people

We maintain our **New Generation Scheme** and local lettings schemes to support the next generation of Islington residents to gain access to a council home in their area.

We work across the subregion through services commissioned by the **North London Housing Partnership** including the Land for **Council Homes** programme dedicated project co-ordination team working on progressing rooftop developments across each of the six boroughs (Camden, Barnet, Islington, Enfield, Westminster) within the Partnership.

Matching our stock with housing need

Our housing mobility team provide intensive support for under-occupying residents to move out of larger homes that no longer suit their needs into smaller homes by accompanying movers on viewings and covering their moving costs. People who have used our downsizing service have been happy with their new homes and have told us that their moves are “life changing.”

Our fraud team works to recover homes for deserving residents and maximise the recovery of unlawful profits.

Working to drive up standards in the private rented sector

The private rental sector in Islington performs a vital role in meeting housing need in the borough. We work to improve housing conditions and management for residents living in privately rented accommodation and our **Private Sector Charter** sets out our expectations on how the sector should operate. We provide information for residents on how to report poor conditions to us and take the steps that they can take to make the landlord carry out the needed work.

We proactively tackle damp and mould in the sector and through our flagship **SHINE programme**, work to reduce fuel poverty and help people stay warm and healthy. We administer Disabled Facilities Grant funding (115 completed adaptations in the last year and a further 59 approved) for repairs, adaptation and grants for energy efficiency of owner-occupied and private rented properties.

Our **Private Landlord Forums** work to improve our partnership work with private landlords to prevent homelessness and improve the quality of the management of private rented accommodation in the borough.

We tackle rogue landlords in the borough through joint working with Residential Environmental Health.

We introduced borough wide additional licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in February 2021 along with selective licensing for single household in one ward which was extended into two further wards in May 2024. Property licensing now applies to 7,000 properties and we are currently investigating whether other wards would benefit. Property licensing helps us to regulate the condition and management of private rented properties in the borough. We license properties to improve standards and management, help address anti-social behaviour and to protect our residents from rogue landlords. We may take enforcement action either by way of criminal prosecution or imposing fines of up to £30,000.



Building new genuinely affordable homes

Islington is continuing to build new genuinely affordable homes including lifetime homes which are properties that can be easily adapted for wheelchair use. The new homes we build enhance the choice, affordability, quality and variety of housing available and developments include the social infrastructure that residents and the existing community need to thrive, including schools, health facilities and green spaces.

Islington's Home Shelter scheme

Survivors of domestic abuse often must leave their homes because of the risk of repeat incidents of abuse and affected families may have to spend long periods in temporary accommodation until they can access more settled accommodation. The move to new settled accommodation can also be disruptive, expensive, potentially forcing another change of school and health services, as well as a move away from support networks. Our Home Shelter scheme offers sanctuary and an alternative to homelessness by allowing survivors to live safely in their council homes. The scheme is multi-agency, survivor-centred and can receive referrals from multiple agencies and services. The scheme is evidenced to successfully allow domestic abuse survivors to remain in their homes.

Priority 4:

Providing accommodation and resettlement services to refugees and migrants

Islington Council became an accredited **Borough of Sanctuary** in 2023. We work to make Islington a place of welcome and sanctuary and work to end destitution through the delivery of targeted refugee and migrant accommodation responses. We work to remove barriers to accessing services whilst building more resilient communities to help prevent destitution and ensure that the council focuses on workable solutions for people in need.

The Challenge

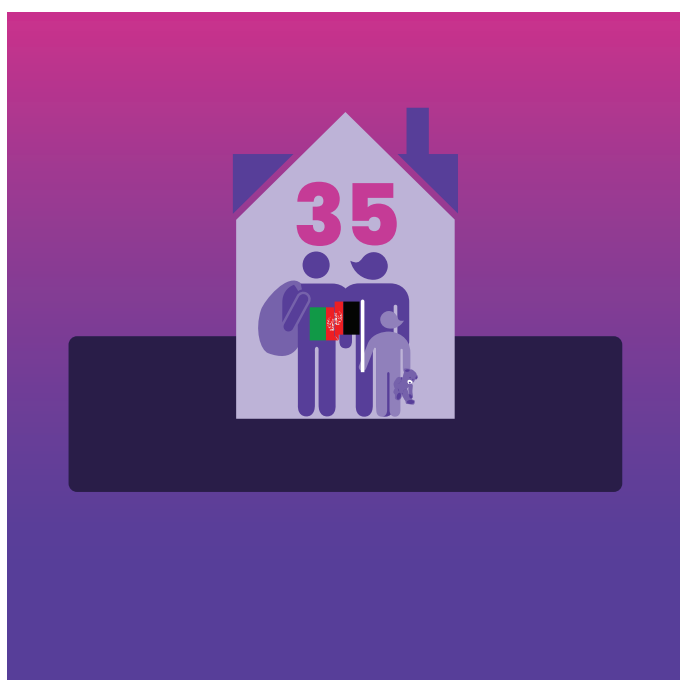
National immigration policy can exclude people from services. This is in conflict with Islington as a place that welcomes everyone and recognises and values the contribution of refugees, migrants and those seeking sanctuary.

Islington has resettled the largest number of evacuees from Afghanistan of all London Boroughs, the department has now bid for government funding to increase provision of affordable accommodation for refugees.

35 Afghan Households are currently accommodated and **150** hosting arrangements for **Ukraine Refugees** are in place and our humanitarian response continues.

The support and early intervention we provide saves the council money by reducing the need for individuals accessing multiple services at a late and more complex stage.

Islington works strategically across services and with partners including the Home Office, Clearsprings, Finefair and Migrant Help to coordinate our response to the Streamlined Asylum Process.



Our work

Our No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) team provides services for households from Afghanistan and Ukraine and leads nationally on best practice for the 17,000 people living in the Home Office hotels across London.

We provide continued support for Ukrainian refugees and hosts in their hosting arrangements, to ensure that basic housing standards are being met, that people being hosted are not being exploited, and that Hosts receive the support from the council they need to make such arrangements work well.

We are developing a refugee and migrant strategy to remove barriers for refugees and migrants accessing services through building partnerships with voluntary and community sector organisations.

Hosting the NRPF Network since 2006 which works to address the negative impact of the 'no recourse to public funds' condition that gives rise to increased homelessness and destitution. It challenges policies that increase poverty and informs practitioners in the application of important 'safety net' duties to alleviate migrant destitution. It also continues its programme of training, including through delivery of **DHSC, Local Government Association (LGA)** and **Home Office webinars** on supporting hospital discharge and survivors of domestic abuse.

People recently granted settled status

We have put resources in place to prevent refugees becoming homeless due to a sharp rise in approaches from people granted refugee status. Our **Rapid Response team** is made up of

dedicated officers who work to find affordable accommodation in very short timeframes. Active outreach and innovative approaches to finding properties help avoid an increase in rough sleeping. We have written a housing guide for refugees granted refugee status and in-person surgeries are ensuring good awareness of housing options and challenges.

In Housing we have three dedicated officers who work to source and allocate properties to refugees, carry out engagement with refugees at existing refugee welfare sessions at council offices at hotels, provision of range of financial options for helping refugees to find housing, including landlord incentives, deposits or first month's rent and a written "What to do when you get refugee status in Islington" guide which is available in a number of different languages.

Further work we undertake across council services include age assessments and taking identified children into care, support for victims of modern slavery and Care Act assessments for people with care needs, monitoring of infectious diseases and co-ordination with the Police and anti-terrorism agencies.

A Strategic Board provides oversight of our activity with representation from across council services and our operational response provides a space for specific cross-cutting issues to be raised and for good practice to be shared.

Delivering our strategy

This strategy is owned by the **Homes and Neighbourhoods Directorate**. The council's **Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee** will monitor progress and it will be delivered through the **four Priorities**.

The accompanying **Action Plan** will be monitored by our management team and a midway update published.

It may be adapted to meet the further challenges that will likely arise during its lifetime.



Improving our services

Resident Engagement

Our residents' voices are important, and we will engage with and be accountable to them in the way we manage their homes and estates. We use a range of resident engagement activities and structures to empower our residents and make sure that their voices are heard. These include community drop-ins, consultations and focus groups, scrutiny by elected members, supporting community development through Tenant Resident Associations and community centres. Our current programme includes:

- Scrutiny of service quality and annual feedback from our frontline officers
- Mystery shopping conducted by our critical friend Shelter
- Our rolling STAR survey measures our customer satisfaction with overall services as we strive for improvement
- We use focus groups to ascertain the quality of housing needs services provided and satisfaction levels of residents who use our services and implement service improvements identified through resident feedback

Ensuring consistency and quality

- Regularly audit on domestic abuse casework to ensure that our processes are followed and record keeping is consistent.
- Use learning from our complaints to identify areas of concern and implement all Ombudsman guidance as it is published.

Responding to the changes affecting the sector

Our strategy is live and will be kept under review in order to adapt to changes affecting the sector such as the change in government.

Anticipating new legislation

We will respond to all forthcoming guidance issued by the government including the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

We have applied the standards required by The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 to the temporary accommodation we provide to our residents and encourage the Social Housing

Regulator to work with the government to consider applying the standards to homeless services and provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people.

We await further information on the requirements of the Renters' Rights Bill to reform the private rented sector and remove the use of fixed-term assured short hold tenancies and assured short hold tenancies by both private sector and social landlords.

Sustainable funding for our services

Funding for our homelessness services remains under great pressure. We rely on the Homelessness Prevention Grant provided by the government to deliver our services. Although the current allocation for 23-25 was slightly increased from those of previous years we are providing our services in a context of overall financial pressures because of government policy such as rent reduction and ongoing funding cuts to council services. Additionally, reductions in Discretionary Housing Payments (28% in 2022/23) further constrains our ability to provide and plan sustainable services.

Through our work with NRPf Connect, a collective £77.6 million per annum has been shown to have been spent on social care support across 82 local authorities. We are working with local government associations to advocate for the policy and funding changes necessary to reduce these pressures¹⁴.

The strategy is based on known funding streams but these may be liable to reduce or cease. Sustained investment is needed to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping for good. We ask the government to provide councils with greater long-term certainty over grant funding, which would enable us to achieve better value for money through more efficient localised financial planning. Our current Rough Sleeping Initiative funding runs until 2025, if no further funding is made available beyond this, current interventions funded by this grant will end, and this will have a negative impact on our ability to meet the needs of those rough sleeping.

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If you would like this information in another language or reading format, such as Braille, large print, audio or Easy Read, please contact 020 7527 2000.

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