



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 [Draft]

Housing Services

--- www.brentwood.gov.uk ---

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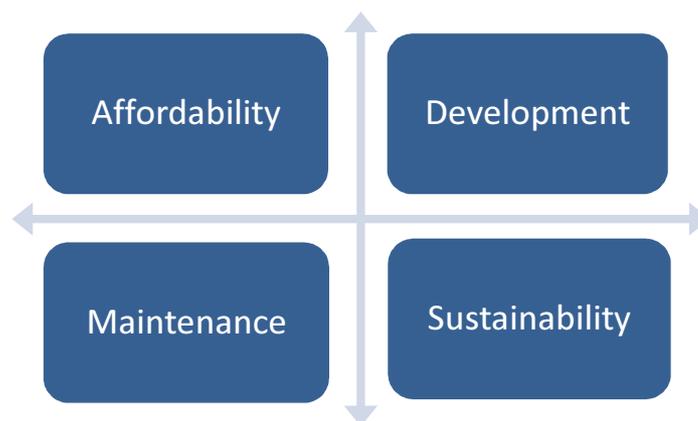
INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a growing issue throughout England at this time. It is important as a Local Authority to work towards achieving the best possible outcomes for customers at a time of limited resources and increasing challenges.

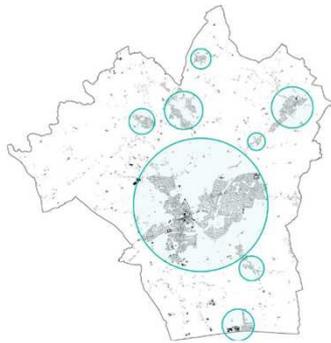
Our aim is to provide our customers with a flexible and innovative service which meets the backdrop of a challenging housing environment. We recognise that there are a wide range of housing needs and expectations and we are constantly seeking to overcome together the challenges which we face.

Housing is a critical element of all our lives and this is being increasingly recognised at all levels of government. Brentwood Borough Council is committed to providing the best service possible and is determined to provide effective and innovate solutions for the benefit of all our customers and residents.

Ms Tracey Lilley
Director of Enforcement & Housing



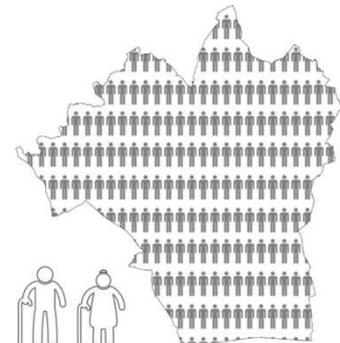
Brentwood Key Characteristics:



At the heart of the borough is the market town of Brentwood and its wider urban area, which is surrounded by villages set amongst the countryside and attractive natural landscape



89% of the borough is within London's Metropolitan Green Belt



The borough's population is over 73,500 with a significant retired population - an ageing population trend projected to continue



80%

of the borough's population own their home



£320,000

average borough house price

vs **£220,000**

average England house price



360

new homes per year

175

new homes per year



The current housing stock is largely made up of detached and semi-detached houses with less small unit accommodation

Partly because of higher average salaries in London and the south-east, house prices have been driven up making affordability a pressing issue in Brentwood

The old regional plan target of 175 new homes per year has been abolished (total 3,500 new homes 2001-2021). Now the borough's need is 360 new homes per year, which is 7,200 over 20 years



The borough has low unemployment and a good economically active population. However, there is currently an imbalance between skills and jobs because of the population working in London



Public transport, bus services in particular, are centred on Brentwood Town Centre, making accessibility an issue for villages with infrequent services and lack of evening running



The arrival of Crossrail at Brentwood and Shenfield will improve the existing metro service and provide new direct links through Central London. This could provide opportunities for development and investment, but also challenges for existing infrastructure capacity

Scope and Purpose

Why have a Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy?



The Homelessness Act 2002, requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review in its Borough every 5 years, to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review and to consult with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

This Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including to those owed a statutory duty (typically families with dependent children, or vulnerable adults), but also people who are single, sleeping on the streets, or other in transient arrangements (e.g. sleeping on a friends' sofa).

The Strategy does not alter the law but provides guidance on how it will be applied.



All Councils and social landlords must operate viable businesses with adequate recourse to financial resources to meet current and future business and financial commitments.



The Council seeks to continue to provide good-quality housing services for residents and prospective residents. We must aim to deliver continuous improvements and value for money in our services. Service provision is subject to challenge and change. The wishes of residents and others must be balanced against available resources within a clear framework.

What is 'Homelessness'?

The legal definition which local housing authorities work to is essentially defined as *not having anywhere settled to live*. Being homeless does not mean necessarily that an individual is rough-sleeping.

Typically an individual may be homeless and is 'sofa-surfing', being housed temporarily between friends and/or relatives.

The law pertaining to homelessness is principally contained within the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (see below). Both acts confer duties on Local Authorities to tackle the problem of homelessness.

Homelessness as a term refers to a range of different people and experiences. In law, it means that a person or household does not have accommodation that is available for them to occupy, that they have a legal right to occupy, and that it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

A lack of affordable housing is often a key difficulty to obtaining stable accommodation, with evictions from the private rented sector amongst the highest reasons for homelessness within England.

What is 'Rough-Sleeping'?

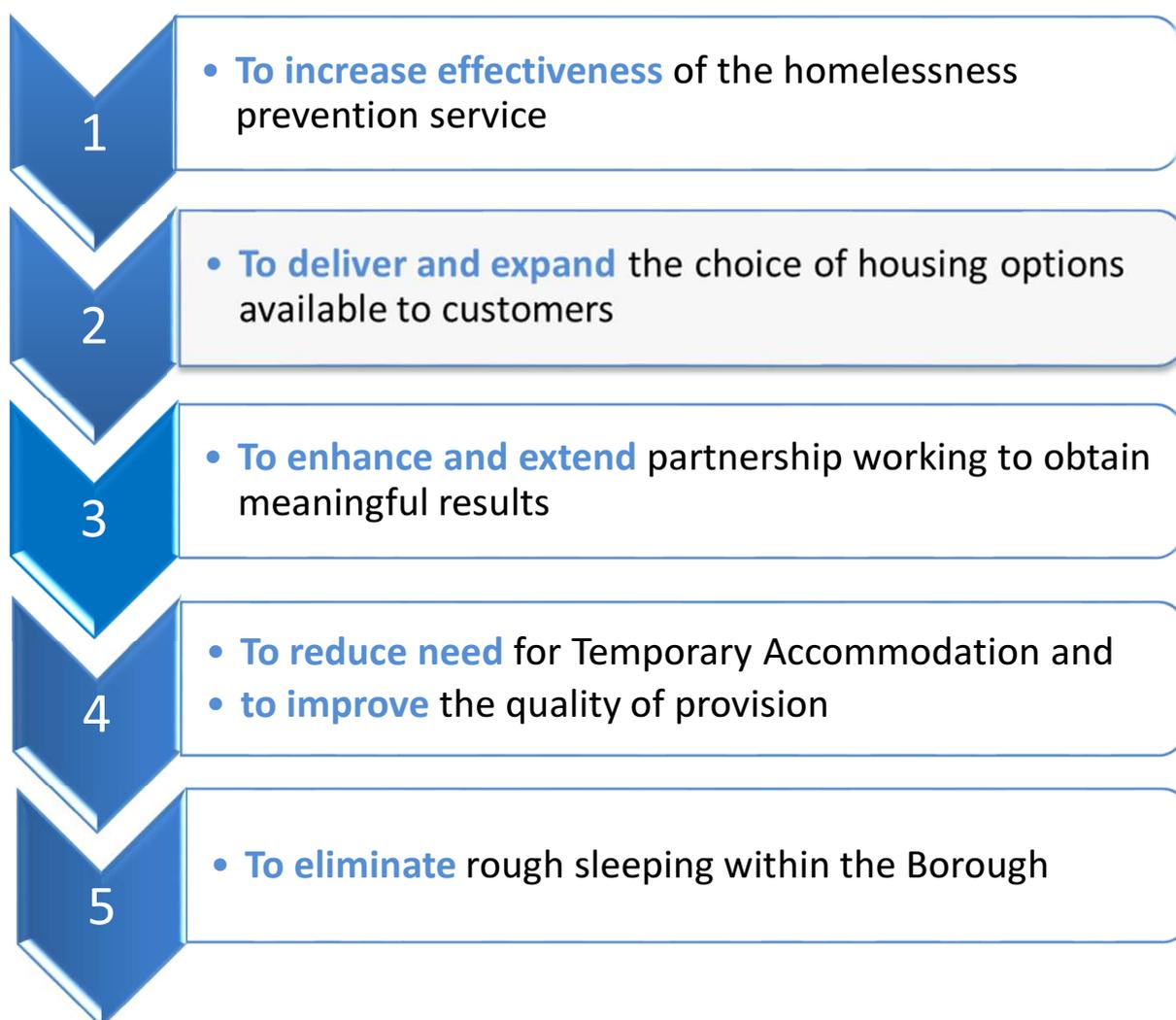
'Rough Sleeping', used for the annual Government count/estimate is defined by Homeless Link as:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

Rough-sleeping does not include those individuals who sit on the streets begging for money whom have accommodation available to them but choose to suggest they are homeless.

What are we trying to achieve?

There is no one permanent solution to the problems of homelessness and rough sleeping. Both central Government and Local Authorities must work together to overcome the issues that are faced for the benefit of those individuals affected. Brentwood Borough Council recognises this in its Corporate Vision, which is why housing is central to the Council's forward-facing agenda. The Council and its partners are therefore working:



Context: National Homelessness

Homelessness within England has increased each quarter since 2012 and remains a significant problem in the country. London has the greatest level of homelessness, with other major cities having significant problems as well. Whilst the number of homeless households outside of cities is considerably lower it is no less a problem for those individuals who experience it.

2012/13 to 2017/18 In England	Increase/Decrease (+/-)
Households requiring homeless assistance	+ 6%
Homelessness prevention	+ 6%
Homelessness relief	- 29%
Households owed main homeless duty (statutory)	+ 6%
Households in Temporary Accommodation	+ 31%
Rough-Sleepers	+ 51%

The above figures demonstrate that whilst prevention (stopping homelessness before it starts) is increasing the ability to relieve homelessness (after it has happened) has significantly fallen.

Under the Housing Act 1996 ('the Act') Local Authorities have a 'main duty' to secure permanent accommodation for those households to whom it owes a legal duty.

In England there is no legal duty to provide permanent accommodation to an individual just because they are homeless. It is partly for this reason that individuals sleep rough, hence the significant rise illustrated above.

Single homelessness tends to affect more males than females, particularly those individuals deemed not to be in Priority Need as per the Act. It is this cohort that often struggles disproportionately to access homelessness services and is the largest group of rough sleepers.

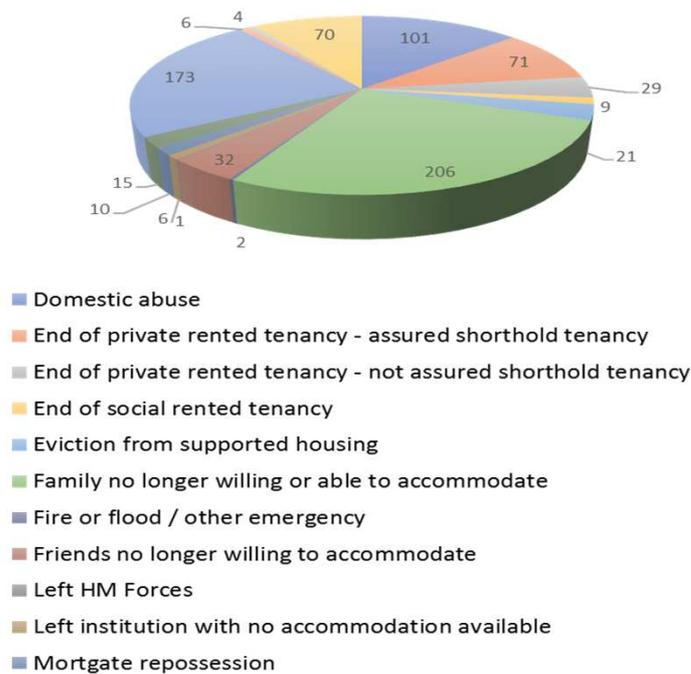
Homelessness in Brentwood

The Borough of Brentwood has a relatively low number of homeless households; however this is continuing to grow in line with the national average, principally due to lack of affordability within the Borough, affecting younger households disproportionately.

Rent	£ pcm	LHA	Shortfall
1 bedroom	897	562.38	334.62
2 bedroom	1095	696.50	398.50
3 bedroom	1420	851.85	568.15

June 2019 Snapshot Figures: Private sector renting compared to maximum Housing Benefit (LHA). The shortfall is the amount of money a family would have to find per calendar month (on average) from their personal income. For those households on Universal Credit the shortfall could be even greater

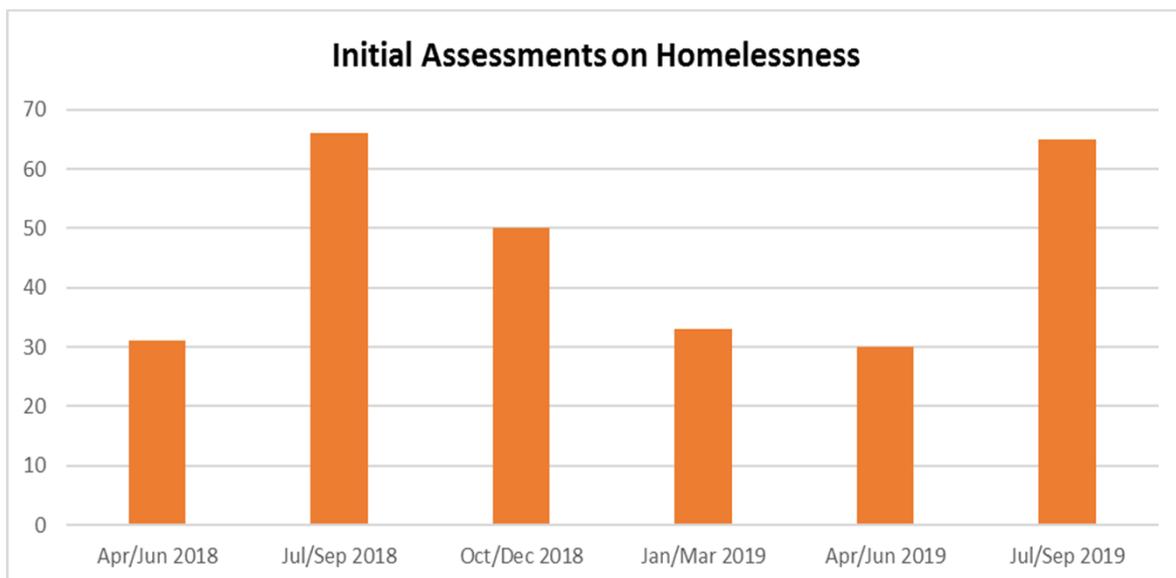
Approaches: By Loss of Accommodation



The above chart demonstrates the self-identified reasons as to why applicants are approaching Brentwood Borough Council as homeless.

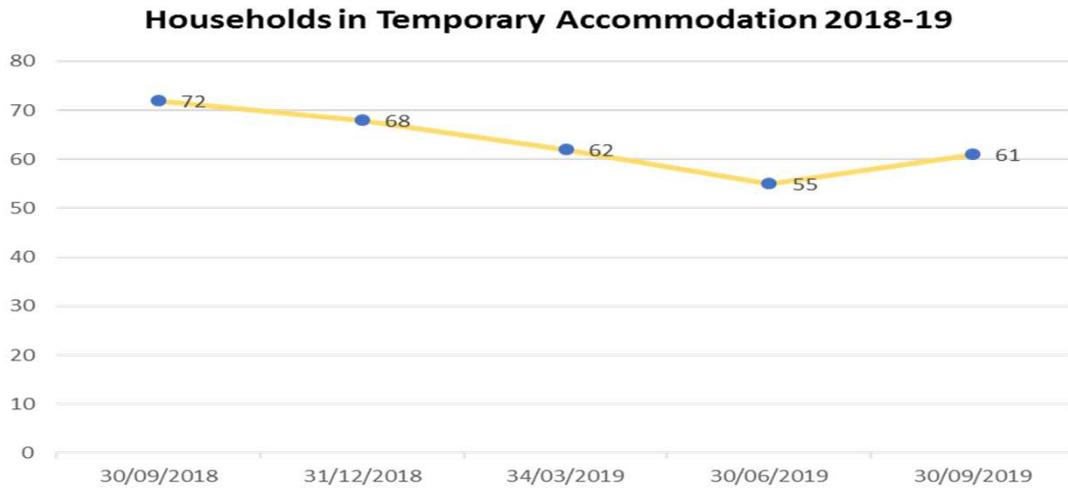
The two main reasons for homelessness within the Borough are loss of private rented sector ('PRS') accommodation and parental evictions. What is less clear is the motivations behind these two reasons. Accommodation within the PRS is notoriously insecure, with lawful evictions being relatively easy to obtain whilst accommodation costs remain high. Parents who evict their children do so for a range of reasons, however it seems likely that the lack for available affordable housing as an alternative is often a motivator for this.

The level of potential homelessness within the Borough can be viewed by the amount of initial assessments conducted by the Housing Options Team:



The above figures form part of the Government's new H-CLIC statistics which are listed as experimental figures due to the new and developing methodology. However, the figures display that there is a significant level of homelessness within the Borough, with an annual determination of approximately 183 initial assessments. Those initial assessments do not include the approaches for housing advice and assistance to the Housing Options team which are on average 5 times greater than the technical initial assessments.

The Council has a duty under the Housing Act 1996 to secure interim/temporary accommodation for a qualifying homeless household. The figures for temporary accommodation highlight those households who would likely be rough-sleeping or sofa-surfing without intervention.



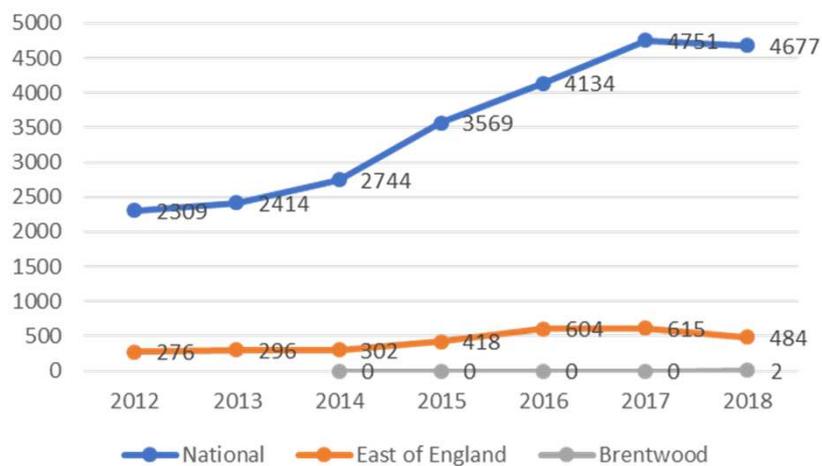
The level of households in temporary accommodation remains relatively stable, reflecting the continual efforts of the Council to secure affordable permanent accommodation against the rise in homelessness presentations. However, the level of families using temporary accommodation should be reduced to obtain the best possible outcomes for those who are homeless and require stability.



Rough Sleeping

The main statistics concerning rough-sleeping are as per the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government annual rough sleeper count/estimate, which reflect rough-sleepers on an average night in the year. Brentwood does not have a rough sleeper problem in terms of numbers, but the effect on individuals should not be underestimated.

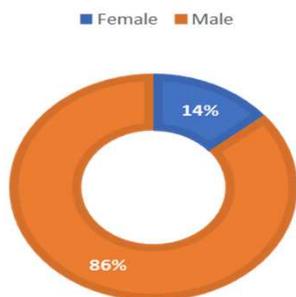
Rough Sleeping Annual Snapshot



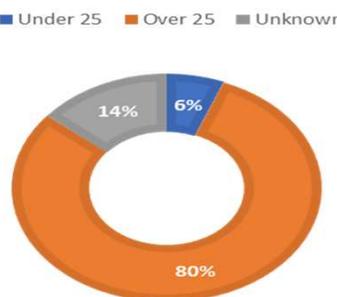
The figures indicate that there has been a slight decrease in the last year in national and regional rough-sleeping figures. However, the overall pattern since 2012 is a significant rise. In Brentwood in 2019 a recording of 0 rough sleepers was made on the nightly count. Whilst this is an indicative figure only it suggests that the level of suggested rough-sleeping (as presented by those begging) is far higher than the reality.

In terms of the average presentation nationally of rough-sleepers the figures in terms of gender and age tend to be far more consistent geographically. It is important when considering how to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness that the most affected cohorts are targeted.

ROUGH SLEEPING: BY GENDER



ROUGH SLEEPING: BY AGE



Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Since April 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act has changed the homelessness duties for all Local Authorities in England.

The new legislation means that all applicants who are eligible and about to become homeless will be entitled to receive advice and assistance in order to prevent them from becoming homeless.

The Act changes the way Councils address and resolve the issues around homelessness by introducing two new duties in addition to the main housing duty. These two duties are:

Duty to Prevent Homelessness

Brentwood Borough Council will provide advice and assistance to people who are about to become homeless within 56 days. If an individual is eligible for assistance and at risk of losing their home, we will try to prevent homelessness by working with them to help them remain in their current accommodation or to help them find somewhere else suitable to live. Under the Law and as part of our prevention duty, all applicants are required to work and engage with the Council to take steps to prevent their homelessness together.

Duty to Relieve Homelessness

If an individual is already homeless, and deemed eligible, or if we cannot prevent eviction from their current accommodation then under the new Act, there is a duty on the Council to try and relieve homelessness.

For both duties the Council has a legal obligation to produce:

Initial
Assessment

Personal
Housing
Plan (PHP)

The two main ways of securing permanent accommodation are through the Council's Housing Register and via discharge into the Private Rented Sector by securing accommodation which is suitable and affordable.

Strategic Priorities & Approach

1

- To increase effectiveness of the homelessness prevention service

- ❑ **Personal Housing Plans (PHPs):** Increased support for people to take responsibility for avoiding homelessness. Online PHP systems, to enable customer focus and review.
- ❑ **Improve IT systems:** Through adopting internal efficiencies and introducing new technology the Housing Options service is committed to improving performance through reducing waiting times and providing targeted housing option programmes and delivery.
- ❑ **Mitigate the impact of welfare reform:** as outlined in the wider Housing Strategy.
- ❑ **Early signposting of individuals** to advice agencies, particularly through partner referrals.
- ❑ **Maximise the use** of the Homeless Prevention Fund, and/or alternate funding where possible.
- ❑ **Expansion** of the Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) to help households requiring a security deposit for private renting.
- ❑ **Increased partnership working** to maximise resources and to target services to those most in need.



Strategic Priorities & Approach

2

- To deliver and expand the choice of housing options available to customers

- ❑ **Create** an Affordable Housing Strategy for the Borough; to enable the building of new Council accommodations for future customers.
- ❑ **Develop** an Affordable Housing Register to provide a co-ordinated approach to the allocation of Affordable Homes and Intermediate housing products such as shared equity schemes.
- ❑ **Utilise** section 106 payments creatively to expand affordable house building.
- ❑ **Target large developments**, such as Dunton Hills Garden Village for Council-owned and/or Council assisted builds (retaining nomination rights).
- ❑ **Work alongside** the Council's Empty Homes strategy to bring accommodations back into use.
- ❑ **Expand** access to the private rented sector through a broadened customer offer.
- ❑ **Enable** customers to obtain housing through the private rented sector, with tailored service provision and financial assistance.



Partnership Working

3

- To enhance and extend partnership working to obtain meaningful results

- **Hub working:** Brentwood Borough Council's renovated Town Hall now allows for direct partnership working within the same space for customer ease of access.



Department
for Work
& Pensions

- **Supportive working:** The Council works directly with a variety of agencies, both to signpost homeless and rough-sleeping customers and to co-support them.



- **Healthy working:** The Council works with a variety of public services, charities and agencies to target some of the causes of homelessness, to enable an holistic approach towards resolution.



NHS
*Basildon and Brentwood
Clinical Commissioning Group*

- **Safe Working:** The Council employs a safety first approach to rough sleeping and homelessness and works closely with support agencies, such as those working with the victims of domestic abuse and violence.



- **Home Working:** We work alongside other housing providers, to secure alternate forms of accommodation both within and without the Borough, including supported accommodation, mental-health supported accommodation and provision for vulnerable young families.



Temporary Accommodation

4

- To reduce need for Temporary Accommodation and to improve the quality of its provision

The Council provides temporary accommodation ('TA') to immediately relieve homelessness and where a statutory duty to provide permanent accommodation exists but there is no suitable and affordable alternative available.

The Council recognises that temporary accommodation is not the solution to a household's housing problem, it is often a step in the journey towards obtaining a permanent home. The Council recognises that placements out-of-Borough and in shared accommodations need to be avoided wherever possible. The quality of accommodations should be such that households are able to live in them comfortably without undue restriction.

To try and achieve the above we will:

- ❖ **Roll-out** a brand-new Placement Policy, which will provide a clear and transparent framework for all future offers of TA to homeless families.
- ❖ **Promote contact** with support services, to ensure joined-up working of those using services when entering and exiting TA provision.
- ❖ **Advance** our rolling programme of accommodation provider reviews. To regularly inspect non-Council controlled accommodation, to ensure they meet suitability standards.
- ❖ **Secure affordable TA options** to try and work within the relevant Housing Benefit/Universal Credit caps, to ensure no excessive burdens are placed on vulnerable individuals.
- ❖ **Create** a tailored-support package of advice and information for those households entering Council-controlled accommodations to reduce the stress and burden of temporary housing.

Vulnerable Groups

The Council recognises that homelessness creates problems and affects all individuals. There are certain groups whom it is deemed by the Government are affected potentially to a greater extent and whom have the most difficulties engaging with services and being able to prevent or relieve their own homelessness. Our focus here is:

Domestic Abuse

- Safety-first approach
- Working in partnership with Police, MARAC & IDVAs (see Glossary) and health services to provide a multi-agency solution.
- Refuge protection
- Specialist support: Changing Pathways
- 1-2-1 Hub Working: South Essex Domestic Abuse Hub
- Provision of 'Sanctuary schemes' to remain at home

Care Leavers

- Working with Children's Services, other statutory and voluntary sector
- Utilising the new ECC 16/17 year old Joint Protocol.
- Early intervention work to prevent homelessness
- Accessing floating support through Peabody
- Collaborating with other Local Authorities to use supported accommodation for young families (Railways Meadows)

Ex-Offenders

- Essex Prisoner Protocol: With Prisons, Probation and the CRC to create a housing pathway
- Working with the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) on appropriate cases.
- Partnership working with Police and the Council's Enforcement Team
- Providing accommodation where appropriate to aid rehabilitation

Former Members of the Armed Forces

- Supported through Civilian Military Partnership Board
- Priority on the Allocations system, including removal of Local connection requirement
- Supported housing options pathway
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Veterans Aid
- Veterans' Gateway

ROUGH SLEEPING

5

- **To eliminate** rough sleeping within the Borough

To achieve the above priority the Council will continue to try and tackle the problem of rough sleeping and the causes of rough sleeping. It can be harder to identify and engage with rough sleepers than some might think. It is often those who do not ask for help and who hide away whom are the most vulnerable. Brentwood Borough Council and its partners will work towards supporting and improving the lives of all rough sleepers as far as we are able. To do this we will:

- ✓ **Co-ordinate** working with the Police
- ✓ **Focus on prevention** working, particularly with single homeless persons
- ✓ **Identify** rough sleepers via Homeless Link
- ✓ **Actively monitor** the streets of Brentwood and respond to intelligence
- ✓ **Jointly-work** with the Council's Community Safety & Enforcement Teams
- ✓ **Immediately investigate** street homelessness
- ✓ **Support individuals** to access services to ensure 'No Second Night Out'
- ✓ **Signpost and assist** individuals to engage with medical, social and substance misuse services



Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

Brentwood Borough Council will ensure that vulnerable people are protected during periods of extreme weather conditions, when certain weather can threaten the safety and well-being of individuals. The Council will take prompt action to ensure rough sleepers have access to shelter if it is believed that they are at risk during periods of severe weather.

To enable this the Council works to a 'Severe Weather Emergency Protocol' ('SWEP') which is the procedural mechanism for rolling out immediate support.

Objectives of SWEP

- To ensure that no one dies on the streets due to severe weather
- To ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support services, particularly during the winter months

Cold Weather Provision

The trigger for SWEP to be activated is when the Met Office forecasts a minimum of three night's temperature, being zero degrees Celsius or below. Local conditions such as wind chill, snow and heavy rainfall will also be considered. Circumstances outside this range will also be considered.

Hot Weather Provision

During extended periods of high temperatures SWEP may also be activated. Whilst daily temperatures remain at an average of over 86F/30C the Council will provide emergency bed & breakfast accommodation to rough sleepers, as well as providing additional support services.

Referrals via

- ✓ Any agency or service for example Police, Adult Social Care, Community Protection
- ✓ Homeless rough sleepers self-referring to the council or via Streetlink
- ✓ Member of the public referring someone to the council or via Streetlink

Provisions

Rough sleepers who approach the Council or who are found will be offered accommodation. The type of accommodation will depend on availability; this will usually be a hostel or a Bed and Breakfast establishment. The Council will also consider use of any available accommodations within its own stock.

Equality, Diversity and Well-Being

❖ Brentwood Borough Council actively works to ensure that its tenants, leaseholders and customers receive the services that are appropriate to them. The Council also strives to ensure that additional services can be provided to enable customers to access services which may be beneficial to their wellbeing and quality of life.

Confidentiality

❖ Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 the Council complies with the six data protection principles. Further information is available online at www.brentwood.gov.uk (*Information About You*)

Publicising the Policy

❖ The policy will be available at the Town Hall in hard copy. The policy will also be made available online at www.brentwood.gov.uk.

Address for Service:

❖ For the sake of certainty this is:

Brentwood Borough Council
Town Hall, Ingrave Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8AY

Glossary

[the] Council	Brentwood Borough Council.
Housing Benefit	A government benefit, currently administered by Local Authorities, which pays all or part of the rent and service charge for a property.
Interim Accommodation	Accommodation which is temporary where a duty exists under s.188 (1) of the Housing Act 1996.
Local Authority	A county, county borough, district or London borough council <i>et al</i> established by Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985.
PRSO	Private Rental Sector Offer. Accommodation which is owned by a private landlord and where private rent is payable.
Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	Provision of emergency nightly accommodation in extremes of temperature, as detailed within the Housing Strategy (as amended 2020).
Temporary Accommodation	Accommodation provided once a duty to provide permanent accommodation has been accepted, whilst it is being sourced.
Universal Credit	A Government benefit, administered by the Department of Work & Pensions, which replaces Child Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance and Working Tax Credits.

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Version Control

Item	Reason for Change	Version	Author	Date

Last Review Date: XXX XXXXX 2020

Next Review Date: XXX XXXX XXX 2023

Scope	Homeless & Rough Sleeping Households/Individuals
Effective date	XX/XX/2012
Review date	XXXXXX
Signed Off	Housing Services Manager – Angela Abbott
Author	Housing Options Manager – Stuart Morris
Strategy Owner	Housing Services
Legislation	<p>Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002</p> <p>Housing Act 2004</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017</p> <p>Data Protection Act 2018</p> <p>EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016</p> <p>Local Government Act 1985</p> <p>Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Orders 1996, 2003 and 2012</p> <p>Supplementary Guidance on the Homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(England) Order 2012</p> <p>The Homelessness Code of Guidance</p> <p>The Council’s Housing Strategy 2017-2020</p> <p>The Council’s Allocation Policy 2014</p> <p>Children Act 1989 (in particular s.17)</p> <p>Children Act 2004 (in particular s.11)</p>
Consultation	General - Tenant Talkback. Partnership Consultation: TBC

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Published XXth of XXXX 2020 by Brentwood Borough Council
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