

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy



2026 to 2031



**Housing
Needs**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

“Prevent homelessness wherever possible, reduce rough sleeping, and ensure residents have access to suitable housing.”

1. Introduction

Everyone should have access to safe and suitable housing. When people lose their home, or are at risk of losing it, the impact can be significant for individuals, families and communities.

This strategy sets out how the Council will work with residents, partners and local services to:

- 1. Prevent homelessness by identifying risks early, making it easier for people to access help, and supporting residents before they lose their home**
- 2. Help people to access private rented homes as an alternative to temporary accommodation and social housing**
- 3. Provide good quality and safe temporary accommodation, and the best possible support, for those who need it whilst we look to rehouse them.**

Social housing has become anything but fair, with only the very few winning the lottery and the rest waiting in temporary accommodation for years. Whilst temporary accommodation provides a safety net for households, it does not provide the stability they need.

We will end the injustice of temporary accommodation, providing the majority of those who qualify for housing support with a private rented sector let. The private sector will become this borough's default housing option. It can provide the homes and security that households need to get on in life and thrive.

Our plan is to end the lottery of social housing and offer everyone good quality private rented housing that meets their needs, as an alternative to living in temporary accommodation.

The Council cannot solve every housing problem or meet every housing need. However, by focusing on prevention, partnership working and high-quality services, we can empower residents to resolve their housing issues independently, prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, and improve outcomes for those most in need.

This strategy has been informed by the Homelessness Review and engagement with residents, staff, housing providers, voluntary organisations and partner agencies.

2. Our five objectives

This strategy sets out five strategic objectives:

1. Prevent homelessness earlier and reduce repeat homelessness
2. Tackle rough sleeping
3. Improve access to the private rented sector and other housing pathways
4. Deliver a joined up and accessible service
5. Improve the quality and safety of temporary accommodation.

Delivery will be supported by a detailed Action Plan aligned with national targets and outcome frameworks, with progress monitored through strong governance and ongoing resident and partner engagement.

3. The Council's wider priorities

The strategy will support the delivery of the new Council Plan by focusing on practical, resident-centred improvements. It will contribute towards the Council's wider priorities:

- **Clean and safe streets:** tackling rough sleeping by working with partners to support people sleeping rough and ensuring public spaces are safe and welcoming
- **Value for money:** prioritising prevention, reducing repeat homelessness and reducing reliance on costly temporary accommodation, and making the best use of available housing and support services
- **Getting the basics right:** improving communication, case ownership, suitability, repairs, standards and timely support
- **Making residents' lives easier:** making housing advice and support clearer, simpler and more accessible, including through more digital and user-friendly systems.

This strategy will also support the Council's emerging K&C 2030 programme, which will shape how services are designed and delivered over the next decade. This includes a shift towards more digital, data-led and AI-enabled ways of working, a simpler and more consistent experience for residents, and a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention.

Homelessness services will play a key role in this shift by using data and technology to identify risk earlier, improve coordination across agencies and deliver more proactive, personalised support.

The strategy contributes to the Council's Grenfell commitments, particularly in strengthening trust, communication and resident experience and supports the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2025 – 2030, including by prioritising early intervention to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping.

4. The context

National context and policy framework

The Government's A National Plan to End Homelessness (2025) sets out a cross-government approach to making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, emergency response and recovery. It includes national targets to improve prevention and relief outcomes, reduce temporary accommodation use and halve long-term rough sleeping.

The plan expects local authorities to maintain action plans with local targets, strengthen partnership working and demonstrate progress against a national outcomes framework.

Wider policy changes, including stronger private rented sector protections, reinforce the need for a flexible, evidence-led strategy focused on sustainable outcomes.

Financial context and wider pressures

The Council will deliver this strategy within the context of financial challenges, limited resources and increased demand. Services will be kept under review to ensure support remains focused on preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping and improving housing outcomes.

We will maintain a strong focus to ensure that funding is targeted where it delivers the greatest impact for residents and achieves value for money.

Local context and drivers of homelessness

Homelessness in Kensington and Chelsea is driven by a combination of structural housing pressures and wider vulnerabilities. This includes high housing costs and limited local housing; poverty, insecure work and rent arrears; and physical and mental health issues and other support needs.

- 1,702 homelessness applications made on average in each of the last three years
- 1,208 households placed into temporary accommodation on average in each of the last three years (including those transferred from one temporary property to another)
- Around 1,900 households living in temporary accommodation – 11 per cent reduction from 2023 to 2026
- 54 per cent of homelessness caused by loss of accommodation with family or friends, loss of private rented property, and domestic abuse in the last five years
- Homelessness prevented in 71 per cent of cases on average over the last five years
- Monthly average of 18.5 rough sleepers in the borough over the last four years – 20th highest in London in 2025/26.

The Council has a strong track record of preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, and helping households access housing and move on from temporary accommodation, as highlighted in the Homelessness Review. However, demand for support remains significant and continued action is needed to improve outcomes for residents.

Our approach and response – Council-wide and beyond

Homelessness cannot be addressed by housing services alone – it is everyone’s responsibility. We will work with other services and partners, residents, housing providers and voluntary organisations to prevent homelessness, support people sleeping rough, improve housing outcomes and deliver better quality services for residents.

5. Resident voice and co-design

Residents with experience of homelessness and temporary accommodation helped shape this strategy through engagement activities, co-design workshops, satisfaction surveys, complaints and ongoing feedback.

Residents consistently highlighted the importance of:

- Clear communication
- Safe and suitable accommodation
- Understanding their housing options
- Knowing what happens next
- Being treated with dignity and respect.

These themes are reflected throughout the strategy and its action plan.

Residents valued the opportunity to share their experiences and help shape future services. Feedback highlighted the importance of continuing to involve residents in service improvement and ensuring that their views inform future decisions.

6. Strategic objectives

1. Prevent homelessness earlier and reduce repeat homelessness

Resident quote:

“Knowing where to get housing help may have helped... housing services available in the community may have eased my predicament.”

We will strengthen early intervention and prevention so more residents receive support before homelessness occurs and fewer experience repeat homelessness. While prevention outcomes in Kensington and Chelsea are strong, many households still approach the Council after becoming homeless, and repeat homelessness remains a challenge.

This objective focuses on earlier identification of risk, stronger sustainment support and better long-term housing outcomes. It also recognises that homelessness and rough sleeping are driven by a range of circumstances and require tailored responses, effective partnership working and clear pathways that reflect residents' individual needs and circumstances.

Key areas of focus:

- Embedding the Homelessness Prevention Hub as a core early intervention model
- Using LIFT and other data to identify risk earlier and target support
- Strengthening financial resilience through employment, welfare advice, debt support, income maximisation and cost-of-living support
- Using the Homelessness Prevention Fund more strategically to prevent avoidable evictions and household breakdown
- Improving prevention pathways for private rented sector tenants, families, young people, care leavers, households with no recourse to public funds, residents with complex needs and single people
- Embedding learning from the Renters' Rights Act and helping residents and landlords understand new rights and responsibilities
- Reducing repeat homelessness by improving housing outcomes
- Strengthening early intervention for families with children through closer working with schools, Family Hubs, Early Help, health visiting services and Children's Services.

2. Tackle rough sleeping

Resident Quote:

“Being able to recognise these high-risk individuals and offering early intervention... might help.”

We will continue to tackle rough sleeping by strengthening outreach, accommodation pathways and specialist support. Our priority is to support people sleeping rough to move off the streets as quickly as possible. However, where rough sleeping continues despite support being offered, we will take enforcement action where the law allows. We will not permit tents and encampments to form in the borough.

Kensington and Chelsea has achieved a sustained reduction in rough sleeping over time, but recent increases highlight the importance of maintaining focus and alignment with national targets.

Key areas of focus:

- Maintaining assertive outreach and rapid assessment

- Strengthening routes from the street into safe and appropriate accommodation
- Improving support for people with mental health needs, substance use, trauma or dual diagnosis
- Improving access to mental health support through closer working with health and specialist services
- Strengthening hospital discharge and prison or institutional discharge pathways
- Preventing repeat rough sleeping through sustained support and move on planning
- Working closely with the voluntary community sector, health, public health and adult social care partners
- Aligning local delivery with national rough sleeping targets and the emerging national framework
- Improving public understanding of how rough sleeping concerns can be reported and responded to.

3. Improve access to the private rented sector and other housing pathways

Resident quote:

“Also helping them to find a settled home so there would be more space to offer to other homeless people.”

There will never be enough social housing to meet everyone’s needs and temporary accommodation is not a good long-term option for households. We will therefore help people to achieve their housing aspirations by accessing private rented homes and other housing pathways, as an alternative to living in temporary accommodation and waiting for social housing that may never become available.

The Homelessness Review shows that temporary accommodation use remains high, with very limited opportunities to be rehoused in our social housing, however there are opportunities to help many households move to private rented and other types of housing. Supporting residents to access alternative housing options to temporary accommodation and social housing requires coordinated action across services and partners.

Key areas of focus:

- Awarding rehousing priority to households who choose a private rented home instead of temporary accommodation
- Strengthening private rented sector (PRS) access through landlord engagement, incentives and support
- Improving awareness and access to PRS pathways, including clearer advice and practical support for households to move into the private rented sector

- Maximising the number of final offers of private rented housing made to households to support rehousing to the PRS
- Making better use of Bridge housing, Homefinder and other move on options
- Prioritising family-sized housing where supply pressures are greatest
- Using supported housing as a prevention, relief and move on pathway, with stronger support into independent living
- Strengthening pathways for survivors of domestic abuse to access safe accommodation, specialist support and sustainable move on options, including support for children and families
- Strengthening housing pathways for young people, including care leavers, SEND cohorts and people involved in the criminal justice system
- Working sub-regionally and with neighbouring councils to widen access to suitable accommodation
- Improving the quality and accessibility of advice so residents understand their housing options, including through digital and in person support.

4. Deliver a joined up and accessible service

Resident quote:

“More support to find permanent housing, clearer communication... would make temporary accommodation more manageable and less stressful for residents.”

We will strengthen the homelessness system, so it is easier for residents to get the help they need, better joined up across services and more consistent in practice. This objective responds directly to feedback from residents, staff and partners about fragmented pathways, unclear responsibilities and variable decision making.

Homelessness is rarely caused by housing issues alone. Many residents also face mental health challenges, safeguarding concerns, trauma, poverty, domestic abuse, immigration issues, employment barriers or care needs. Addressing homelessness therefore requires a coordinated, whole system response.

Key areas of focus:

- Improving access to homelessness advice and support, including through voluntary community sector partners
- Improving staff training on prevention, private rented housing options, other housing pathways and supported housing
- Strengthening joint working with Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, mental health, safeguarding, domestic abuse and no recourse to public funds teams

- Developing clearer pathways, guidance and expectations to reduce inconsistent decision making
- Strengthening the Homelessness Forum as a strategic partnership and accountability mechanism
- Improving communication with residents through timely updates, clear contacts and transparent decisions
- Aligning commissioned services, voluntary and community sector advice, tenancy sustainment and employment support around prevention outcomes
- Expanding digital and non-digital routes to advice, updates and information
- Using data, digital tools and AI to improve coordination, identify risk earlier and support consistent decisions
- Improving continuity of case management so residents experience more consistent support and clearer case ownership
- Reviewing workforce capacity, staff wellbeing and operational pressures to support sustainable services and reduce disruption from turnover and absence
- Ensuring services and communication reflect different experiences and needs
- Supporting residents to build social connections and access community services, including Family Hubs, local groups and support networks.

5. Improve the quality and safety of temporary accommodation

Resident quote:

“The most challenging aspects have been the lack of stability... and the emotional strain of living in a temporary space without knowing when a more permanent home will be available.”

We will improve the quality, safety and dignity of temporary accommodation for residents who need this safety net, whilst we explore more suitable, longer-term options with them, such as private rented homes.

While reducing reliance on temporary accommodation remains a long-term priority, the lived experience evidence demonstrates that improving standards and communication within temporary accommodation is an urgent and necessary focus.

Residents consistently raised concerns around safety, repairs, unsuitable accommodation, landlord behaviour, poor communication, and uncertainty about rehousing. The Homelessness Review also highlights that temporary accommodation is often experienced as long-term rather than transitional.

Key areas of focus:

- Strengthening quality assurance, inspections and landlord accountability
- Improving repairs, maintenance, safety and security responses
- Making suitability assessments and reviews responsive to changes in household circumstances, including health, disability and family needs
- Using procurement and supply planning to reduce unsuitable or high-cost accommodation
- Reducing disruption from out of borough placements where possible, including impacts on children's education, schools and support networks
- Improving support for families, disabled residents, survivors of abuse and residents with health needs
- Ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, except for very short-term emergencies, and reducing temporary accommodation use for households with children
- Developing clearer escalation routes when problems arise
- Treating residents with dignity, empathy and respect throughout their housing journey
- Providing clearer information on housing pathways, rehousing expectations, waiting times, allocations and bidding
- Introducing proactive communication standards so residents receive regular updates without needing to chase
- Improving access to advice so residents know who to contact about applications, bidding or accommodation concerns
- Ensuring temporary accommodation supports children's health, development and wellbeing, including education, health services and SEND needs
- Working with Public Health, NHS and community partners to improve access to health, mental health and preventative support for residents in temporary accommodation.

7. Crosscutting principles

These principles will guide all five objectives:

- **Prevention first:** helping people before they reach crisis
- **Resident voice:** listening to people with lived experience
- **Dignity and respect:** treating residents fairly and with care
- **Fair and accessible services:** making sure support works for different needs
- **Working together:** recognising homelessness needs a joined-up response
- **Evidence-led:** using data and feedback to improve services
- **Digital and data:** using technology responsibly to improve support
- **Children and young people:** helping families so homelessness does not hold children back
- **Trauma-informed:** understanding people's experiences and responding with care.

8. Delivery and action planning

The strategy will be delivered through a detailed action plan that translates the strategic objectives into specific, measurable actions. This will include targeted actions to improve prevention outcomes and the experience of residents once they have become homeless. The action plan will set out responsibilities, timescales and success measures, and will be aligned with national homelessness priorities and statutory reporting requirements.

When agreeing the actions to underpin the strategy, the Council will focus on getting more out of every pound spent, targeting resources where they have the greatest impact for residents. The action plan will remain a live document and will be reviewed regularly to reflect learning, changes in demand, legislative developments and feedback from residents, staff and partners.

9. Measuring success and monitoring progress

Progress against the strategy will be monitored through a combination of performance data, service information and qualitative feedback from residents and partners. This will be the responsibility of the Kensington and Chelsea Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum. Monitoring will focus not only on statutory outcomes, but also on residents' experiences of prevention, temporary accommodation, and housing pathways.

Key indicators will include prevention and relief outcomes, use and duration of temporary accommodation, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping trends, and resident feedback on service quality and communication. Learning from monitoring activity will be used to inform service improvement and adjust delivery where necessary.

Regular reporting will support transparency and accountability, ensuring progress is visible internally and to partners.

10. Governance and accountability

Governance arrangements will provide strategic oversight of delivery and ensure accountability for outcomes. Senior officers will have responsibility for monitoring progress against the strategy and action plan, supported by regular updates and performance reporting.

Partnership forums will play a key role in reviewing progress, sharing learning and addressing systemic barriers. Resident feedback will be incorporated into governance arrangements to ensure lived experience continues to inform decision-making.

The strategy will be reviewed within five-years to ensure it remains fit for purpose in a changing policy, funding and housing context.