



Rough Sleeping in Newham: Policy into practice 2019-22

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Executive Summary

This report for the London Borough of Newham (LBN) documents and analyses the development of the borough's rough sleeping operations and strategy from 2018 to 2021. This rough sleeping strategy development sits within the wider context of the borough's development of an overall homelessness strategy, which had been an unfulfilled statutory obligation since 2010.

The questions being addressed in this report are:

- At the start of the study period in 2019:
 - What was the overall extent of rough sleeping in LB Newham?
 - What were the main policies and actions to address them?
 - What was the political and social context underpinning the rough sleeping problem?
- By the end of 2021, what were the main changes which had taken place in relation to the policies and outcomes for rough sleepers?
 - What were the main drivers and enablers of change?
 - Looking forward, what are the likely risks to sustaining positive changes made over this period?

The report documents the LBN and local partners' approaches to rough sleeping prior to the election of a new Mayor in 2018, and the shift of political priorities put in place thereafter. It outlines how pre-2018 activity was given a new focus through the development of a draft two-year homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, adopted in December 2019; and through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and "Everyone In" central government strategy put in place in March 2020. This includes the COVID linked ability to shut the "Stratford Mall" which was a major location and driver of rough sleeping in the borough.

The report examines the development of rough sleeping pathways and services across Newham, in partnership with newly created co-production and partnership forums with the third and voluntary sector; changes in LBN internal staffing and management arrangements which brought continuity and a clearer structure to the work of LBN officials; and the development of new systems to capture and analyse available data on rough sleeping.

Thereafter, during 2021 and into 2022, LBN developed a five-year Housing and Homelessness strategy, and also formalised many of the new working arrangements and partnerships in the form of a new five-year Consortium contract which was tendered, and then let in September 2021. The report concludes with a summary of the improved rough sleeping figures in January 2022 and an overview of the main drivers of the changes and improvements which have taken place during this period.

It should also be noted that this work grew out of an original 2017 research commission which was intended to complete in April 2020 and to cover a considerably smaller programme (the Responding to Migrant Rough Sleeping Project). Its primary objective was tracking a planned decrease in the overall number of CEE Migrants rough sleeping in boroughs as part of a joint initiative with the Home Office. That programme was subsequently suspended, and an extension to this research work was consequently agreed to provide this much more extensive report on the development of the rough sleeping strategy, and then to include the impacts of COVID and post-COVID strategic and operational activities.

The London Borough of Newham

The London Borough of Newham (LBN) was formed from the previous Essex County boroughs of East Ham and West Ham in 1965. It is five miles east of the City of London and is surrounded by the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich (across the Thames), Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Waltham Forest.

Greater London Authority (GLA) estimates of population size and socio-economic characteristics as at 2020 show a total population of 364,346. It has a younger population than the London average. It has a more diverse Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Population (Housing-Led) than London as a whole. There is a lower employment rate in Newham than in London and in England, particularly for women, and lower rates of home ownership in Newham than in London and in England. These statistics are available on the Newham website¹. In 2017-18, according to figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government², there were more homeless households in priority need of housing in Newham than in any other borough in London. It also had an overall higher rate of homeless households in priority need than in London as a whole, and than across England. In terms of the 2019 Indices of Deprivation (IoD), Newham was the 12th most deprived of the 317 English local authority districts. Although Newham has seen improvement in most domains since the 2015 IoD survey, Newham remained the worst local authority in the ranking of the Barriers to Housing and Services domain.

In terms of political control, the authority currently (January 2022) has 60 Labour party councillors for the 60 seats. Sir Robin Wales, who had been the Council Leader since 1995, was elected Mayor

¹ At <https://www.newham.info/population/-/view-report/1ee4f94e929141d0bb9e4792ecdd8e89/> iaFirstFeature <https://www.newham.info/>

² At the time of research, the department being discussed was known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). In 2021, the department was renamed the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

in 2002, the first elected mayor in England, and held this position until March 2018 when he was replaced by Councillor Rokhsana Fiaz.

Rough sleeping before 2018/19

The high rates of homelessness and rough sleeping noted above were in the context of the absence of a formal homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. There was also limited political attention and priority paid to these issues, with consequent low levels of services and little central or local funding to increase provision. Interviews with both third sector and council officers that formed part of this research often suggested that the previous administration had been “in denial” about the extent of the problems, or if not, took the view that providing services for rough sleepers would attract them to the borough and thereby increase the problem. The new Mayor had made addressing homelessness and rough sleeping one of the authority’s priorities when she was elected in 2018.

There was evidence that despite the lack of political commitment, the third and voluntary sector organisations had been taking action to address these problems prior to 2018/19, although not without their own difficulties. There was a range of voluntary sector providers of day centre and night shelter services, some of long standing, including one who had published a report and set of videos around homelessness and “street life” begging in Newham³. There was a range of soup run type providers present at Stratford Mall and other locations across the borough. One of the main large hostel providers in the borough offered emergency accommodation, although until major changes in its staff and management in 2017 it was, according to a range of interviewees, reputed to willingly tolerate various forms of antisocial behaviour. These services were uncoordinated by LBN or anyone else, and often operating in isolation and without awareness of each other, but often run by dedicated volunteers.

Prior to 2018/19, there was engagement from external street rescue teams, sitting alongside an internal street rescue team, but there was limited joint planning. More generally, data collection on rough sleeping was minimal, based on what was statutorily necessary, and not analysed or used to inform operational programmes or strategic planning. Initial requests for basic data on rough sleeping could not be met. The borough was made subject to special measures by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, including the requirement to provide overnight street count figures every two months, and to accept assistance from departmental advisors due to concerns about lack of progress in tackling rough sleeping.

³<https://youtu.be/9yXJ4TIMjfQ>

Initial actions

The first drafts of a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy were prepared in conjunction with a team from the homelessness advice organisation Shelter in 2018. This lists 27 local organisations who were contacted for their views as part of that work, and has a very detailed list of the daily availability of 42 "Homelessness Services" in various places in Newham, mainly offering food, hot drinks, and advice, mainly in church or community halls. Newham received a £1.6m Rough Sleepers Initiative grant in 2018 which supported the commissioning of some new services, including a rough sleeper assessment hub with 20 beds, additional emergency accommodation, additional outreach services, a rent deposit scheme, additional day centre and homelessness advice services, and additional night shelter emergency winter accommodation. At this time, the rough sleeping activities were developed by a frequently changing cohort of Service Commissioners on short-term contracts. While some of them initiated positive changes, and some went on to become permanent staff in similar or different roles in Newham, including one who eventually moved into a permanent position as Street Population Manager, nevertheless the frequent changes of personnel undermined any clear development of an overall strategy. They began the process of engagement with the third sector to develop the initial strategy. Using the RSI grant they initiated discussions on the development of rough sleeping pathways for a range of client groups and set up some good specific initiatives such as the Tent Clearance strategy to systematically remove abandoned tents in the Mall and Mall forecourt, as well as a Housing First programme⁴. They also coordinated the external (Thames Reach) street outreach teams and the internal street rescue team. However, there was no overarching strategy to guide them, little cross departmental coordinated support, and little or no political support until the change of administration.

A major development was the creation of the Mayor's Rough Sleeping Taskforce in summer 2019. This had a number of working groups including one on data, but one key aspect was that it had the explicit objective to "respond to the crisis with **care and compassion**". In some respects this reflected the failure of the previous attempts to clear the Mall by enforcement action, that used enforcement teams and police support to try to empty the Mall, and to address wider rough sleeping by employing Anti-Social Behaviour Officers to try to force people off the streets through legal action. This emphasis on "care and compassion" became, and remains, an underlying guiding principle which has informed subsequent strategic decisions and operational practice. In addition,

⁴ This is a programme for entrenched rough sleepers which provides them with accommodation first then works intensively to address their needs in that accommodation. For a review of Newham's Housing First programme see https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7729

there was a commitment to incorporate a wider public health approach in the development of the strategy.

Similarly, the Mayor raised the profile of rough sleeping in 2018 and 2019 with a series of measures to engage her fellow council members. All were asked to undertake a trip to the Mall to see conditions and problems there. With the requirement for street counts every two months, all council members were asked to attend at least one, in order to see the nature and extent of the problems and what could be done to address them in a strategic manner.

Development of the Rough Sleeping Interim Strategy, December 2019

By early 2019 the problems of rough sleeping in Newham were more visible and had higher political priority. Underlying tensions included rough sleepers having always been an issue for ward councillors, but often with the specific objective that rough sleepers be removed from their neighbourhood. Similarly, several third sector groups reached out to provide immediate food and support to people who were rough sleeping, thus supporting their continuing presence on the streets, and members of these groups often vocally (through social media posts) demanded that they be offered immediate housing by the council. The council had no overall data on the nature and extent of the rough sleeping problem and population (except for CHAIN data collected using the pan London CHAIN system which provides information on all verified rough sleepers). There were no “pathways” setting out how rough sleepers might be assessed for their needs, moved on to supported or other housing, and helped to address underlying problems. There was no comprehensive strategic plan to allocate and commission sufficient resources, hostels and housing related support, or cross authority and cross agency services to address the problems. Consequently, it was difficult to respond effectively to the specific demands from councillors, local support groups and local residents who rightly wanted something done, other than by ad hoc actions in the most pressing cases. Importantly there was no plan to address the authority’s recent statutory duty of prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, in addition to providing assistance for the relief of actual homelessness.

The Mayor’s Task Force provided a driver to develop a strategy. Alongside this, but independently, steps were taken to engage the third and voluntary section in strategic planning, and faith groups. The principal vehicle was initiated by the sector itself. A new “Homelessness Forum” was established, meeting every two months, co-chaired by the Chief Executives of two of the main local providers of emergency accommodation and rough sleeper assessment services. Invitations were extended to a very wide range of local providers of support, advice, and immediate assistance to rough sleepers, across a wide range of local residents and needs. This group provided an immediate step forward, bringing together a range of people with common objectives who had

actually not met before, with the aim of getting together to discuss shared problems and action. It also quickly established a good relationship with the emerging teams of commissioners and operational staff in the local authority. They were invited to attend regularly and present the progress they were making in tackling rough sleeping and in developing new pathways and strategic approaches to problems.

In parallel with this, the local authority set up an additional group with the brief to take forward the “co-production” of the new strategy and operations for rough sleeping. This group was co-chaired by the Lead Member for Housing, alongside a community representative who was an ex-rough sleeper and at that point currently housed in one of the supported housing hostels in the borough. This group had an overlapping membership from the third and voluntary sector members of the Homelessness Forum, and additional council members, including the Lead Member for adult social care.

By early 2019 some additional appointments of new Service Commissioners had been made, and some of the existing commissioners retained their posts. These staff, who were subsequently confirmed as permanent staff, were followed by further appointments of senior staff overseeing the management and strategic development and restructuring of the major Housing and Homelessness functions, a process which continued during 2020 and 2021. The previous policy of regular hiring of external staff on short term contracts was phased out, replaced by permanent (and more cost effective) contracts for new or existing staff.

In addition to these internal actions and driven by wider national requirements external to Newham, MHCLG undertook a programme of in-depth interviews with 70 rough sleepers in Newham, between 31 September and 14 October 2019, and in February 2020. The fieldwork was undertaken by local homelessness support agencies, supported by interpreters where needed. It took the form of a self-report questionnaire which could be self-administered or used in a structured interview format. It comprised several sections addressing basic demographics, history of homelessness, health, support needs and service use, contact with the criminal justice system, and work and benefits. The report is not publicly available but provided extensive information to Newham about these characteristics of the rough sleeping population. It was made available to Newham in February 2020, although this fell outside the consultation period for the interim strategy.

From these various actions and consultations, the interim Housing Strategy was developed and published in December 2019. It was necessarily interim as there was at that time a significant lack of good data and intelligence, and little experience of running comprehensive local services under

fully developed contracts and pathways. There was therefore a commitment to develop a full five-year plan (as was statutorily required) within the two-year interim period up to 2021/2.

The interim strategy built on the developments since the change of administration in 2018:

- There was an acceptance at political and officer level that radical change was needed in the light of the seriousness of rough sleeping problems in the borough
- The third and voluntary sector had partly stepped into the previous vacuum of leadership to present a co-ordinated and proactive offer to co-produce the strategy. There were differences between the various groups, and in particular those providing immediate support to rough sleepers and those who focused on services which were delivered once they were off the streets and seeking to address their underlying needs and aspirations, but these differing views were welcomed, for example in the Homelessness Forum
- The authority had recruited and retained senior staff who had the skills, experience, and commitment to developing a set of policies and delivery plans which would address the issues in a strategic and informed way
- The overarching principle that services should be developed in a “caring and compassionate” way had been clearly set out, as well as a commitment to a cross authority “public health” approach.
- Paradoxically, the failure to properly address problems in the past had given the authority a “clean slate” from which to develop a locally appropriate strategy and set of pathways and services. There were few “vested interests” who had their corner to defend in the authority; and some of the main third sector hostel providers had recently also had changes of leadership and direction
- There was a commitment to “co-production” which meant that the authority, third and voluntary sector partners, service users, and wider authority services were being involved as equal partners. At meetings (for example of the Homelessness Forum) there was a clear sense of respect linked to a willingness to challenge ideas and debate the issues openly
- The authority had established good relations with their MHCLG homelessness advisor, who was providing supportive and constructive advice, and was also clear about what was needed to be delivered (including when addressing council members). Other external advisers were also involved (such as from Shelter and Homeless Link).

The interim strategy, following informal development meetings and formal consultation, was adopted by LB Newham Cabinet on 3rd December 2019. The Committee paper set out the express commitments underpinning the document including working in partnership with other statutory services, the voluntary sector, the faith-based sector, and homeless people, as well as echoing the

wider Newham commitment to ensure the Newham resident is at the heart of the Council's approach to homelessness. While the strategy covers homelessness in general, it has a specific section on rough sleeping. This outlines commitments to:

- establish a new approach to assessment for low, medium and high risk
- accommodating and supporting rough sleepers towards independence
- providing support to those in need to prevent reoccurring homelessness in order to maintain independence
- improve data collection and analysis
- establish a rough sleeping pathway
- establish a Stratford specific plan

There is also an accompanying action plan with details of responsibilities and timings.

The paper noted that it was presented in advance of decisions of Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding and other funding which were due to be taken by MHCLG in the new year – but clearly it had been important to deliver this strategy in advance of such decisions, to show that Newham was making progress in tackling its problems and had clear plans for the use of any grant funding that it might receive. In fact, Newham also approved the award of £1.4m from the council's own budget to fund the "Rough Sleeping Provision – Homelessness Task Force", indicating an additional measure of council commitment to delivering the strategy⁵.

COVID and "Everyone In"

On 23rd March 2020, the UK government put major restrictions in place to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this, on the 26th of March, there was an announcement of the "Everyone In" programme to support rough sleepers to accept immediate, COVID-secure accommodation. Newham responded to the "Everyone In" programme by immediately booking hotel rooms to accommodate all identified rough sleepers. Four main hotels were used, initially one in Tower Hamlets and one in Redbridge, though people housed out of borough initially were subsequently brought back to Newham. In addition, 50 HMO properties were used. Rough sleepers were offered places irrespective of local connection or whether they had recourse to public funds or not (NRPF cases). Within a matter of days, the Stratford Mall was rapidly closed by means of a Public Health order, and rough sleepers and tent dwellers from there offered hotel places.

Some 680⁶ people were accommodated within a few days of the programme being announced. Various forms of transport and minibuses were organised across Newham to pick up rough sleepers from any sites they were occupying and take them to these places of refuge for COVID-

⁵ See Annex 2, Growth, of the Budget Report 2020/21 – 2022/23 at the Cabinet meeting of 18 February 2020

⁶ Cab 11 Jan 2022 Mall

safe individual accommodation. From there, support workers gathered details of their overall needs and background. This was an immense and intensive effort over a very short time. It represented a major mobilisation of the local authority resources, alongside their partner agencies, and was widely recognised in the borough and elsewhere as a very well planned and delivered exercise.

This action in response to COVID had in fact been put in place at a point where Newham had agreed and implemented its new homelessness and rough sleeping interim strategy, and had been working in collaborative partnerships with local agencies and across council departments for over a year. Progress had been made, albeit slowly, and the overnight counts of rough sleepers showed a reduction from 105 in September 2018 to 64 in November 2019. It now found itself in a position where all the rough sleepers were housed in a small number of hotel and HMO locations, all receiving services of some kind to keep them safe, and potentially ready to engage with rough sleeping assessment and support services. The total number housed, noted above, was higher than street count numbers as it included additional people from the Mall, from various "tent cities" in vacant land in the borough, hidden rough sleepers, intermittent rough sleepers, and people who had been housed in various night shelter and other dormitory or shared room accommodation.

There were problems with being able to engage with some of the rough sleepers, partly due to lack of PPE, partly as some did not have mobile phones or other means of remote contact, and partly due to resistance on the part of some of the rough sleepers. Nevertheless, teams found that about half those rehoused engaged with support services, including some groups such as sex workers and people with severe drug or alcohol problems, or significant mental health problems, who had previously been less likely to engage. In some cases, this resulted in immediate referral to more specialist care, including sectioning some people with severe mental health problems. Where people did not have a GP, they were registered and in all, 90% of those accommodated ended up being registered. Some people were reconnected with families or helped to reconnect to the "A12" group of eastern European countries now in the EU, or other countries. Some, particularly those with substance misuse problems who found isolation hard to handle, left the accommodation after a short period.

Once the restrictions were partially lifted, many of those accommodated moved on, often into other homelessness pathways. In all 206 rough sleepers were supported to regularise their immigration status, with 92 achieving pre-settled or settled status. Seventy-eight engaged with the Rough Sleeping Substance Misuse pathway. Several of the hotels were taken out of use, including the two out-of-borough ones.

Improved data collection was a major part of the response to the pandemic, and one which directly addressed and resolved the previous lack of good quality data about rough sleepers on the street or being supported in hostels, and by various programmes. During May and June 2020, Newham developed a single information and tracking system to understand the needs of rough sleepers who had been assessed and were engaging with Newham services. This is called the "Minimum Data Set" (MDS) and is kept up to date by the authority and the partner agencies who work with clients. It records demographic details, support needs, current accommodation and provider, engagement with support programmes, and other major outcomes. It also asks service providers to use the well-established tools of the Outcome Star and the Chaos Index to assess progress being made by rough sleepers in progressing toward being able to sustain independent living. The system operates in real-time and has a dashboard allowing a range of commissioners, service managers, and authorised partners to interrogate the system and call off reports. This is a bespoke tool developed in Newham but now being shared with other London housing authorities. It took maximum advantage of the COVID situation of having almost all rough sleepers available to assess, and used that work to build an initial picture of rough sleeping during this period. The numbers in "Everyone In" accommodation declined following the lifting of COVID restrictions in the second half of 2020 and have now been absorbed in the regular provision within the rough sleeping pathway. Despite this, the rough sleeper count in November 2020 recorded only six people. This represented the highest proportional drop in rough sleepers in England since November 2018, in large part achieved using a total £8.3m of grant funding during the pandemic.

The Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service 2021

In the aftermath of Everyone In, and in the context of the Interim Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Newham commissioners addressed the question of how best to contract and deliver services which had been identified by the Interim Strategy and were being considered for inclusion for the full five-year strategy, due to be agreed in early 2022. An outline of the type of services to be procured had been set out in the Interim Strategy and included:

- Outreach, accommodation-based support, floating support and "Housing First"
- Navigators who would assist rough sleepers to connect to the right support and accommodation
- Day opportunities, and education employment and training
- Immigration advice and support
- An accommodation-based assessment centre based in "Lady Helen Seymour House" which was to be purchased for this purpose

Development of this package involved the core commissioner team which had emerged over the previous 18 months, including the Rough Sleeping and Adult Services commissioners, and the

Street Population Manager. Also involved in discussions were the LBN housing department's new Assistant Director for Housing Needs and some of her senior staff. These officers were also now having very regular internal operational management meetings. In addition, the co-production and Homeless Forum meetings were continuing and regularly attended by members of this team, and which informed (indirectly, to avoid conflicts of interest) the development of the full specification for tender. Procurement was planned to allow the involvement and potential contracting of local providers who had a knowledge of the local needs and services. It was also to be informed by the Newham Community Wealth Building principles which are:

Leading by example

- Use our purchasing power and influence to keep wealth in our local economy
- Lead on progressive procurement, becoming a living wage employer and encouraging others to do so.

A fair deal for Newham workers

- Our young people will have access to the very best opportunities London has to offer, regardless of their background
- We will support residents to get a fair deal from their employer and the government.

Inclusive economy

- Unleash the dynamism of Newham businesses, supporting them to improve their productivity
- Nurture our cooperative economy, ensuring wealth created and held democratically.

The specification was published and a series of "meet and greet" opportunities were held for potential suppliers to meet with each other and potentially form consortia which would be able to bid together. Thereafter, there was a "Competitive Procedure with Negotiation" whereby discussion took place with bidders between two evaluation stages with the aim to improve the quality of proposed models of service delivery and bids. In line with the co-production approach of the new Rough Sleeping Strategy and operations, people with lived experience of rough sleeping who were involved with the various co-production groups were also included in the evaluation and negotiation panels undertaking this work.

At the conclusion of this process a consortium was chosen, and the decision confirmed at the Cabinet meeting of 1st June 2021, with the contract start on 1st September 2021. The successful consortium was made up of providers who already had a major local presence and had been delivering rough sleeping services locally for some time. These included some providers who in addition to an existing Newham presence also work in other local authorities as part of a family of providers with common policies and practices, and alongside them some Newham specific locally based providers. These services are now being delivered under the agreed contract, but since the

contract is still bedding in, the performance and outcomes delivered under this contract are not available for this report.

The contract is for three years, with an option for two one-year extensions – a maximum of five years. This reflects the need for an opportunity to change the nature of the contracted services if necessary. It also reflects one of the fundamental risks to the strategy and the services in Newham, that Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) funding from what is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously MHCLG) makes one year funding grants, with annual bids being made for available programmes and money. While Newham committed £1.4m of its own money in February 2020 to support the rough sleeping strategy, this has not been repeated (partly because of the specific COVID funding noted above) and this risk is that if RSI funding is not successfully bid for and awarded in later years, these services may not be able to be supported from other general purpose Newham funds. This is a risk affecting all local authorities funded by the RSI, or other short-term grants.

The five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

As noted above, Newham was required to produce a five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to follow on from the Interim strategy. The development of this document followed a similar path of wide consultation and co-production undertaken for the interim strategy. It was developed in the light of the changes which emerged during the interim, COVID period. It is also part of a wider approach to reviewing Newham housing strategies more generally, which saw an initial consultation on a new social housing allocations strategy in the second half of 2021; a transformed Homelessness Prevention and Support (HPAS) service; and a continuing commitment to build 1,000 social housing homes by 2022.

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy also addresses a number of post-COVID emerging issues. Amongst these are the rapid increase of eviction proceedings in the borough, which reached pre-COVID levels by October 2021, after the halt due to the COVID evictions moratorium. Additionally, the post-COVID reduction in Universal Credit, the impact of the ending of furlough which had seen 10% of workers furloughed in Newham, and wider post-pandemic job losses also had consequences for homelessness and housing insecurity in the borough. There is also a longer-term structural shift in the housing and demographic profile which has seen increasing arrivals of better off workers and a consequent rise in both rents and house prices, and linked increases in poverty for lower paid residents.

The vision set out in the full strategy is:

- No one is sleeping rough or forced to live in dangerous or transient accommodation;

- Everyone at risk of homelessness gets the tailored help they need to prevent it;
- There is an end to 'revolving door' homelessness;
- There is access to affordable, secure and fit homes; and
- The council is working in partnership with others to provide support to those who need it, when they need it.

Conclusions

This report has set out to document and analyse the changes in Newham's management of rough sleeping from two main perspectives. First, what actually happened in terms of changes in the services being delivered and the outcomes seen on the ground? Second, looking behind these changes and figures in more depth, who or what drove the changes, and the improvements. Third, what does this evidence tell us about the sustainability and future risks to services and outcomes? This final section provides a summary set of observations based on published reports and other papers made available to us, in-depth interviews with council officers, third sector partners, council members and service users, our regular attendance at forum meetings, several overnight street counts, and internal meetings.

What actually happened?

- In terms of the main outcome, rough sleeping was drastically reduced. This can be seen from official returns and CHAIN data. The official annual rough sleeping "count" was 17 in 2021, compared to a high of 79 in 2018. The work undertaken was successful and had been recognised as such by many commentators including MHCLG/DLUHC.
- While overall rough sleeping numbers were reduced to 60% of the previous highest numbers, the numbers of people who returned to the streets after previously rough sleeping (the "stock" and the "returners" as defined by CHAIN) remained roughly constant since 2018 at about 150. Similarly, the CHAIN maps of the location of rough sleepers across the wards in Newham show very little change
- An interim two-year and final five-year strategy were put in place, together with linked action plans and a growing number of rough sleeping pathways
- An Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service has been tendered and let for a period of up to five years
- Several third sector, voluntary sector, and user engagement forums have been operating and engaging in co-production of strategies, pathways, operational good practices, and critical comment on all aspects of rough sleeping in Newham.
- A comprehensive data capture and analysis system was put in place to monitor progress of rough sleepers engaging with services

- Several other initiatives with partners, like the joint Housing and Health Mental Health and Rough Sleeping service or the Rough Sleepers Substance Misuse pathway have been put in place.
- Over £10m has been spent delivering these outcomes

How did this happen?

There is no one answer to this question, but several factors which together contributed to the outcomes above (and some which tended to undermine progress):

- The change of administration and priorities driven by the new Mayor, who has extensive authority to direct the work of the authority due to the nature of the mayoral powers vested in her, but who also engages other lead members in priority activities
- The recruitment, retention, and commitment of a small group of creative, visionary, and above all competent officers who were given the authority and support to drive the detailed structural and service changes which were required
- Engaging and harnessing the latent capacity and experience of voluntary and third sector agencies who took advantage of the new political priorities to demand a seat at the table and to organise themselves to be a powerful and respected force
- COVID-19. The disastrous pandemic tragically ravaged Newham residents, and particularly low-income workers, but it also brought all rough sleepers off the streets. The teams, and in particular the tireless coordination of the Street Population Manager, ensured that these rough sleepers were protected. Other members of the core team identified the unique opportunity to gather and continue to gather and analyse information essential to planning and management of services. Finally, the third and voluntary sector supported this work fully, and gained the trust and support of the authority from this experience of joint working
- The COVID linked closure of the Stratford Mall meant that at a stroke the biggest driver of rough sleeping was removed. In addition, much of the activity to support existing rough sleepers, which was opposed by those seeking longer term solutions, was diverted to a more constructive process of developing the longer-term strategic solutions while welcoming the enthusiasm and commitment of groups previously working at the Mall. The closure was extended for a further period of 18 months on 7 January 2022, using traffic management powers rather than public health powers in this case
- With “Everyone In” came a major injection of cash resources, which were fully and well exploited by Newham
- Lead member and ward member support meant that council members were engaged in the process of understanding the role and importance of a strategic and planned, rather than a

reactive, individual case based approach, and supported the investment of money and resources. Naturally, some problems of conflicting ward casework priorities in contrast to longer term strategic approaches still remain

- An overall approach which stresses that “listening is always happening” between different sectors and groups who are involved. This is linked to the absence of the “baggage” of previous ways of working which might otherwise have got in the way of innovative creative solutions
- The parallel restructuring and strategy development which is continuing to take place across the major Housing Department functions to join up the various elements of HPAS, Rough Sleeping, Temporary Accommodation, Allocations, housing management and other services
- The cross departmental, cross sector approach which has involved both the direct Newham departmental leads but also health, mental health, public health, employment, substance misuse and other services. The tone and direction of engagement initiatives has been to build alliances and joint protocols rather than engage in blame and buck passing. Not all agencies have engaged, but many have
- The use of wider Newham commitments to resident empowerment and engagement – “putting people at the heart of everything we do” and ensuring that the Rough Sleeping Strategy should be based on “care and compassion”. This had practical impacts on how strategy development and service procurement were approached. The approach also stressed the importance and effectiveness of building on the strengths and capacities of existing local residents in preference to importing outside “experts” to manage Newham’s problems
- The additional good advice and support from external partners and advisors, particularly from the main MHCLG advisor in this period, but also Shelter, and Homeless Link

What are the risks and areas still to be tackled?

- Almost all interviewees identified uncertain future grant funding as the major risk. The record of good use of grant funds over the last three years is to Newham’s advantage in bidding for funds, as is the fact that it now has a clear strategy, action plans, pathways and protocols, and a commissioned integrated services package in place which provides important safeguards to reducing funding. However, any expectation of replacing specific grants by injecting funding from Newham’s general resources can only be seen in the context of reducing overall local authority funding and growing needs, especially in a borough with Newham’s demographics

- Increasing poverty and homelessness in Newham in the post-COVID, post Brexit, growing austerity, wider economic context. It is not just declining council funding that presents risks, it is also increasing demand for services. This has already been flagged as an issue in the new five-year homelessness strategy as noted above. These risks can only be mitigated within the context of the wider economic and demographic development opportunities managed at a Newham and London wide level, and solutions are both regional and political in nature
- There remains a risk of the Mall reopening and regaining its position as a major London centre for rough sleeping and drug dealing. As noted above, the period of closure has recently been extended until June 2023, but some uncertainty remains around permanent closure
- Missing policies and pathways. There are some areas of need and specialist services which are under-developed or missing in the current provision. This includes specialist women's homelessness services where many homeless women are hidden, forced to live in situations of domestic abuse or resort to succumbing to sex for rent demands, and other specific problems. This issue is currently being highlighted within the Homelessness Forum amongst other places
- The problems of rough sleepers with No Recourse to Public Funds are not specific to Newham and well documented. With the UK leaving the EU and the end of the period where settled status can be claimed, there are continuing problems with addressing the needs of this group due to lack of documentation. During COVID, all rough sleepers could receive support regardless of local connection or NRPF, but this is becoming an increasing problem as the authority is essentially providing direct subsidy to these individuals in the absence of access to Housing Benefit and other welfare benefit income. This issue overlaps with the previous issue of women specific services, as there is limited access to emergency refuge accommodation for survivors/victims of domestic abuse with NRPF status
- The operation of the new Integrated Service. It is too early to comment on whether the newly procured integrated service will deliver on expectations, and there is no reason to think that it will not. However, this remains an uncertainty at this point, and hence a risk
- New political priorities and focus. Again, there is no specific indication that the Mayor and council members will lose interest in rough sleeping and divert attention and resources away from it. Nevertheless, given the history of a lack of political priority given to the issues of rough sleeping in the borough, this needs to be flagged as a risk for the future

I. Introduction and Overview of Report

This report for the London Borough of Newham (LBN) documents and analyses the development of the borough's rough sleeping operations and strategy between 2018 and 2021. The wider context for this work was LBN's development of an overall Homelessness strategy, which had been an unfulfilled statutory obligation to do so since 2010. The questions being addressed in this report are:

- At the start of the study period in 2019:
 - What was the overall extent of rough sleeping in LB Newham?
 - What were the main policies and actions to address them?
 - What was the political and social context underpinning the rough sleeping problem?
- By the end of 2021, what were the main changes which had taken place in relation to the policies and outcomes for rough sleepers?
 - What were the main drivers and enablers of change?
 - Looking forward, what are the likely risks to sustaining positive changes made over this period?

The report documents the London Borough of Newham's and local partners' approaches to rough sleeping prior to the election of a new Mayor in 2018, and the shift in political priorities put in place thereafter. It outlines how pre-2018 activity was given a new focus through the development of a draft, two-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy adopted in December 2019; and through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and "Everyone In" central government strategy put in place in March 2020. This includes the COVID linked ability to shut the "Stratford Mall" which was a major location and driver of rough sleeping in the borough. The "Mall" is the name given to a ground floor right of way through the Stratford Centre, this centre being a shopping mall and indoor market located in Stratford town centre sitting between the Stratford Regional rail station and Stratford Broadway. The centre has 62 retail units as well as a "market village" which contains many small independent traders. Many people use the Mall as a cut-through between the stations and Stratford Broadway, and that route constitutes a public right of way which (until COVID) was open 24/7. As such it provided a large sheltered indoor space which became a well-known centre for rough sleeping, alongside extensive drug dealing and violence. In addition, the mall also became the focus of several "soup kitchens" and other voluntary service activities such as provision of tents, blankets, and other equipment to aid rough sleeping (which, in the opinion of Newham's Rough Sleeping Commissioners, encouraged and supported rough sleeping in many cases).

The report examines the development of rough sleeping pathways and services in partnership across Newham, with newly created co-production and partnership forums with the faith and

voluntary sector; changes in LBN internal staffing and management arrangements which brought continuity and a clearer structure to the work of LBN officials; and the development of new systems to capture and analyse available data on rough sleeping.

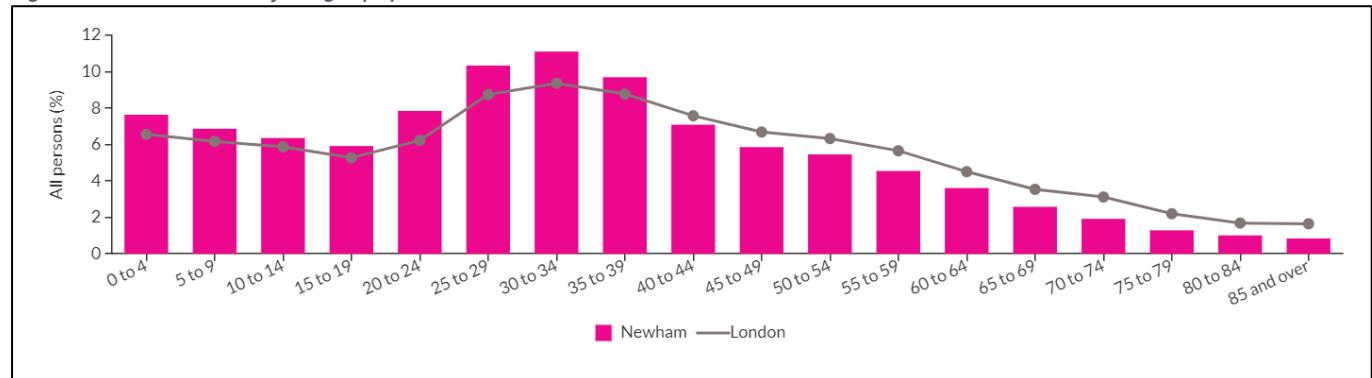
Thereafter, during 2021 and into 2022, LBN developed a five-year Housing and Homelessness Strategy, and also formalised many of the new working arrangements and partnerships on the form of a new five-year Consortium contract which was tendered, and then let in September 2021. The report concludes with an overview of rough sleeping figures in January 2022 and summary of the main drivers of changes and improvement which have taken place during this period.

The London Borough of Newham

The London Borough of Newham was formed from the previous Essex county boroughs of East Ham and West Ham in 1965. It is five miles east of the City of London and is surrounded by the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich (across the Thames), Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Waltham Forest.

GLA estimates of population size and characteristics as at 2020 are available on the Newham website⁷. These show a total population of 364,346. It has a younger population than the London average:

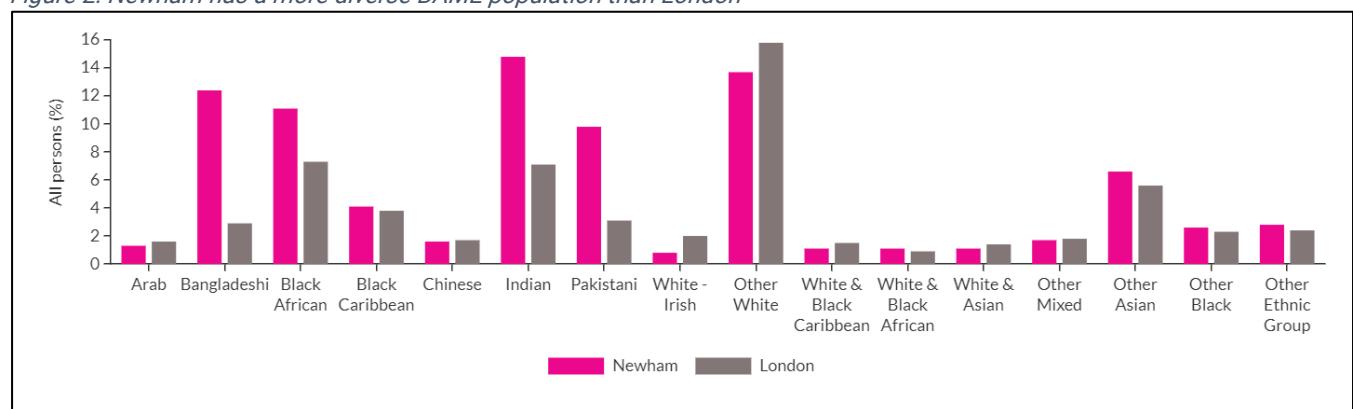
Figure 1: Newham has a younger population distribution than London



Source: LB Newham op. cit.

It has a more diverse Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Population ("Housing-Led") than London as a whole:

Figure 2: Newham has a more diverse BAME population than London

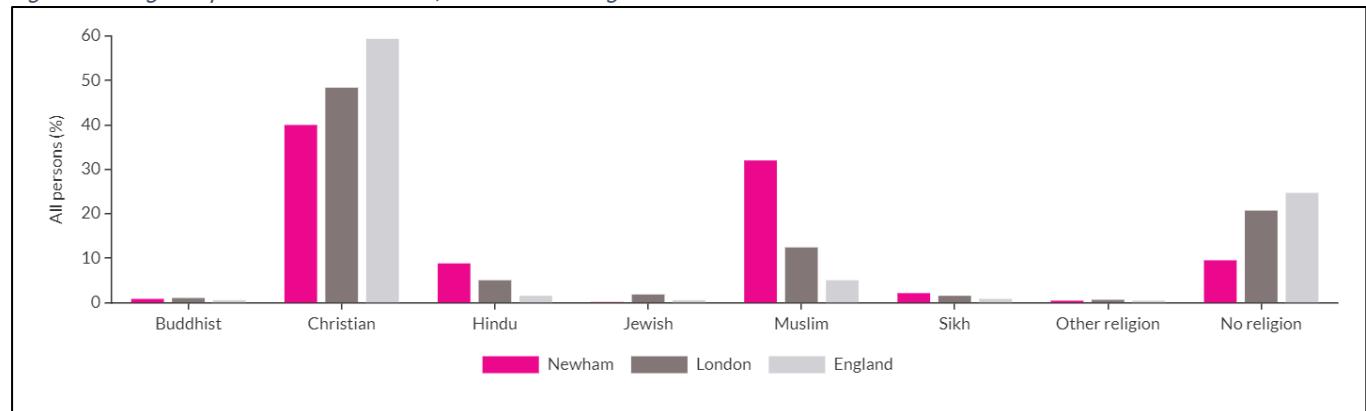


Source: LB Newham op. cit

⁷ At <https://www.newham.info/population/-/view-report/1ee4f94e929141d0bb9e4792ecdd8e89/> iaFirstFeature <https://www.newham.info/>

The profile of religions practiced is shown below, compared to London and England:

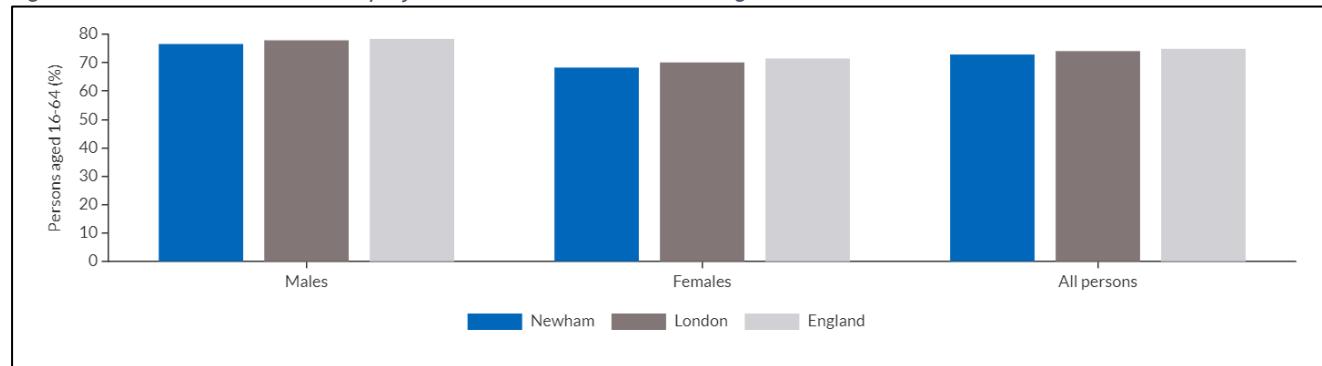
Figure 3: Religions practiced in Newham, London and England



Source: LB Newham op. cit

There is a lower employment rate in Newham than in London and in England, particularly for women.

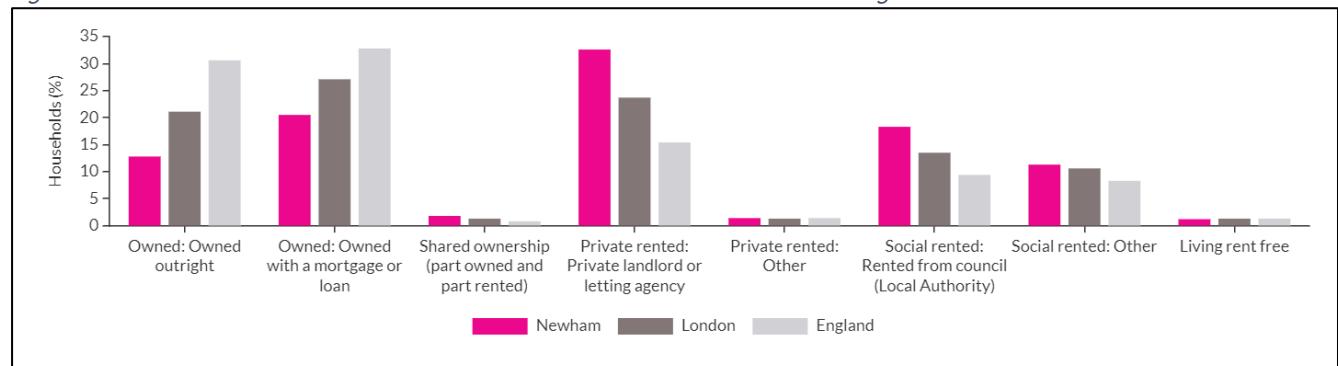
Figure 4: Newham has a lower employment rate than London and England



Source: LB Newham op. cit

There are lower rates of home ownership in Newham than in London and in England:

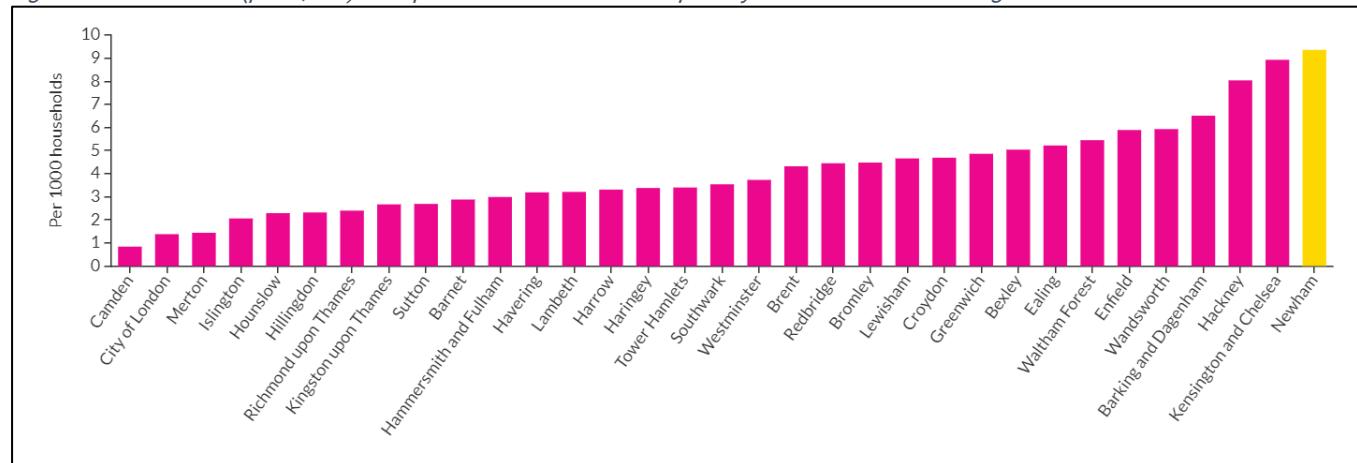
Figure 5: Fewer Newham householders are homeowners than in London and in England



Source: LB Newham op. cit

In 2017-18, according to figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, there were more homeless households in priority need of housing in Newham than in any other borough in London, showing the magnitude of the problem at that point:

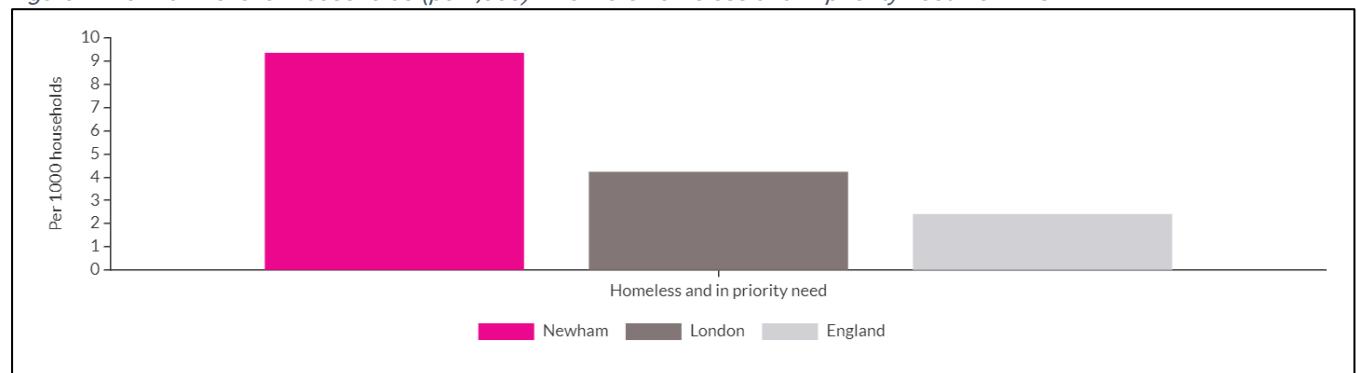
Figure 6: Households (per 1,000) accepted as homeless and in priority need in London boroughs 2017-18



Source: LB Newham op. cit

It also had an overall higher rate of homeless households in priority need than in London as a whole, and in England.

Figure 7: Newham level of households (per 1,000) who were homeless and in priority need 2017-18



Source: LB Newham op cit

In terms of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), a national measure of seven dimensions of social conditions (“domains”) in each local area in England, Newham was the 12th most deprived of the 317 English local authority districts in the 2019 update. Although Newham has seen improvement in most domains since the 2015 IoD survey, the borough remained the worst local authority in the ranking of the Barriers to Housing and Services domain. This domain includes measures of household overcrowding, rate of acceptances for housing assistance under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, and housing affordability including difficulty of access to owner-occupation or the private rental market, as well as measures of physical proximity to local services.

In terms of political control, at the time of completing this report, the authority has 60 Labour party councillors for the 60 seats. Sir Robin Wales, who had been the Council Leader since 1995, was elected Mayor in 2002, the first elected mayor in England, and held this position until March 2018 when he was replaced by Councillor Rokhsana Fiaz.

II. Rough sleeping in and before 2018/19

Rough sleeping data

Three sources of data evidence the position of rough sleeping in LBN in 2018/19. Official Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) figures for 2010 - 2018⁸, based on the statutory annual autumn street count are set out below, showing the variation and rise of the numbers over this period:

Figure 8: Annual rough sleeper street count in Newham 2010 - 2018

		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Newham	London	7	10	55	22	16	28	41	76	79

Source: MHCLG (Now DLUHC)

More detailed bi-monthly Newham street counts for 2018-19 are also available. At this time, the borough was subject to special measures by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, which included the requirement to provide overnight street count figures every two months, and accept particular assistance from departmental advisors, due to concerns about lack of progress in tackling rough sleeping. These figures for Newham's street counts are:

Figure 9: Newham bi-monthly street counts 2018-19

LBN Rough sleeper regular street count (LBN figures)							
Month	Sep-18	Nov-18	Jan-19	Mar-19	May-19	Jul-19	Sep-19
Verified bedded down rough sleepers	105	79	44	64	89	92	87

Source: LB Newham

A similar picture emerges from London Data Store CHAIN⁹ data for this period:

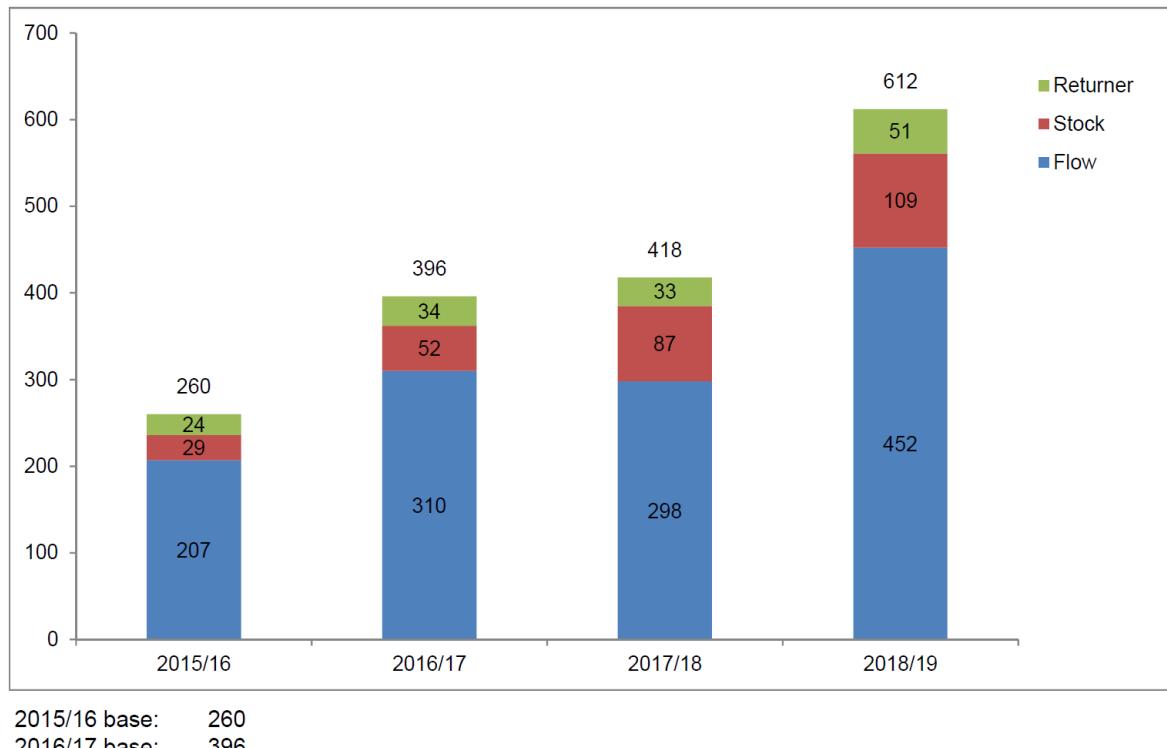
⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

⁹ The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) is a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. Its reports present information about people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in London. CHAIN is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by Homeless Link.

Figure 10: CHAIN data on Newham rough sleepers 2015/16 to 2018/19

2.1 Number of people seen rough sleeping: Flow, stock, returner model

People seen rough sleeping in the year, by the flow, stock and returner model.



2015/16 base: 260

2016/17 base: 396

2017/18 base: 418

2018/19 base: 612

Source: CHAIN Annual Report, Newham, 2018/19 London Data Store, GLA

Additional details of the pattern of rough sleeping is shown in the following two CHAIN tables:

Figure 11: CHAIN data on type, nationality, gender, age, support, and outcomes 14-15 to 18-19

LBN target	CHAIN equivalent	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19
Rough sleeping in the borough is reduced	Number of people seen rough sleeping	221	260	396	418	612
No one returns to the street	Returners	10	24	34	33	51
No one remains on the streets	Stock	38	29	52	87	109
Flow to the streets is minimised	Flow	173	207	310	298	452
	Nationality of Total number where known					
	UK			163	146	199
	CEE			160	127	209
	Other EEA			15	31	21
	Non EEA Europe			4	2	2
	European, not known			0	10	17
	African			22	38	31
	Asian			22	23	30
	Any other known			4	0	103
	Gender of Total					
	Men			340	365	534
	Women			56	53	78
	Ages of Total					
	18-25			43	28	40
	26-35			112	119	181
	36-45			117	132	215
	46-55			81	97	140
	Over 55			43	42	36
	Support needs of Total where known (some overlap)					
	Alcohol			103	120	132
	Drugs			88	90	115
	Mental health			111	105	125
By October 2019 50 of the caseload have accessed accommodation	Rehousing Outcomes arranged by LBN:					
	Temporary housing		0	1	10	63
	Permanent housing		0	3	1	12
	(NSNO referral)		63	83	82	109
100% who need it are supported to reconnect	Reconnection (total)			25	1	3
	UK		0	1	0	1
	Central and Eastern Europe		0	22	1	2
	Other Europe		0	2	0	0
	Rest of World		0	0	0	0

Source: LSE consolidation of data from CHAIN annual reports

Further details on previous accommodation and why they left are found in the next table:

Figure 12: Previous housing and why left 14-15 to 18-19

CHAIN Category	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19
Number of people seen rough sleeping	221	260	396	418	612
Previous housing					
Long term (total)			115	99	79
Private rent			73	72	54
LA housing			24	10	7
Owner occupied			6	11	5
RSL			8	5	8
Tied			4	1	5
Sheltered/registered care			-	0	0
Short or medium term			9	13	11
Institutional			7	5	5
Inappropriately housed			8	3	1
Newly arrived in UK			31	7	20
Other			24	14	39
<i>Not recorded</i>		116	157	155	
Reason for leaving last settled base					
Asked to leave/ evicted			42	43	59
Employment or education			77	37	48
Relationships			21	20	12
Financial			8	12	4
End of short or medium stay accom			9	4	3
Victim of violence or abuse			7	0	0
End of stay in institution			8	7	6
Housing conditions			1	3	2
Perpetrator of violence or abuse			1	0	1
Transient			3	0	2
Other			17	15	18
<i>Not recorded</i>		116	157	297	

Source: LSE consolidation of data from CHAIN annual reports

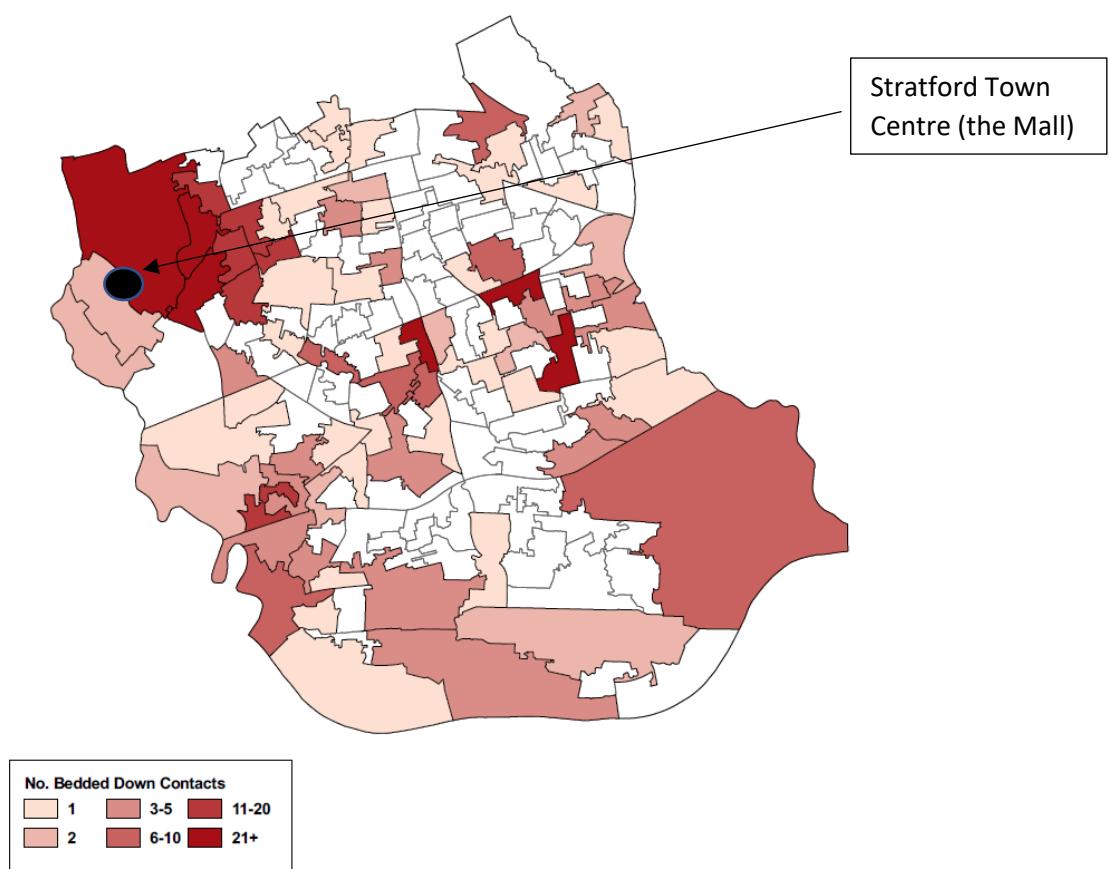
From this data, we can see that at 2018/19:

- The number of people seen rough sleeping in Newham had been steadily rising of the last five years, from 221 to 612
- This rise can be seen in all three categories of Returners, Stock, and Flow – existing rough sleepers had not been moving off the streets (the “stock”), or had returned to the streets, and there had been a significant jump in the “flow” of new rough sleepers seen for the first time
- 2018-19 saw a significant increase in CEE rough sleepers, though also a parallel increase in UK nationals
- Increases were over all ages, but particularly for the 36-45 group
- There was very little reconnection to other countries achieved

- Private renting remained the most common previous tenure, though it has declined in 18-19
- Eviction had been a major reason to leave previous accommodation, followed by “employment and education” which includes leaving work
- Rehousing through moving to temporary accommodation had increased significantly (to 63) as well as increasing moves to permanent accommodation (to 12).

The problems were also geographically concentrated. The map below¹⁰ shows the location of the 612 reports of rough sleepers discovered in the Borough in 18/19.

Figure 13: Rough sleeping heat map 2018-19



Source of Map data: CHAIN, GLA data store

Political context

The high rates of homelessness and rough sleeping noted above were in the context of the absence of a formal homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. There was also limited political attention and priority paid to these issues, with consequent low levels of services and little central or local funding to increase provision. Interviews with both third sector and council officers often suggested that the previous administration had been “in denial” about the extent of the problems or took the

¹⁰ This map from Newham’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-21.

view that providing services for rough sleepers would attract them to the borough and thereby increase the problem.

- *Robin Wales, the previous mayor, just said there was no problems of homelessness.* (Service user).
- *There was a lack of strategy and focus, and no clear targets or pathways to address rough sleeping. Constantly changing personnel was also a problem in LBN.* (Third sector partner)
- *We were told that rough sleepers do not pay council tax so why should Newham spend money to pay for this problem? Let central government pay.* (Elected member)

These views were matched by an approach to rough sleepers which viewed them as problems requiring policing and other legal action. Attempts were made to clear the Mall by enforcement action using staff teams and police support, but this led to local protests and failed to reduce the problem. The wider problems of rough sleeping in other areas of Newham were tackled by employing Anti-Social Behaviour Officers to try to force people off the streets through legal action.

The council also had no overall data on the nature and extent of the rough sleeping problem and population. There were no “pathways” setting out how rough sleepers might be assessed for their needs, moved on to supported or other housing, and helped to address underlying problems. There was no comprehensive strategic plan to allocate and commission sufficient resources, hostels and housing related support, or cross-authority and cross-agency services to address the problems. Consequently, it was difficult to respond effectively to the specific demands from councillors, local support groups and local residents, other than by ad hoc actions in what were seen to be the most pressing cases – resulting in those with highest political priority rather than those in the highest need receiving attention.

There is evidence from interviews that despite the lack of political commitment and this punitive approach, the third and voluntary sectors had been taking action to address these problems prior to 2018/19, although not without their own difficulties. There was a range of voluntary sector providers of day centre and night shelter services, some of long standing, including one which had published a report and set of videos around homelessness and “street life” begging in Newham¹¹. This is reflected in an early version of the interim strategy prepared in 2017/18 in conjunction with an external agency, Shelter, described in more detail below, and in the final published two-year Strategy

¹¹<https://youtu.be/9yXJ4TIMjfQ>

of December 2019. Services included several night shelters providing emergency dormitory-type accommodation in winter months, and over 40 “homelessness services” in various places in Newham, mainly offering day shelter and advice, in a warm place with hot drinks and some food, mainly sited in church or community halls. Several other third sector groups reached out to provide “on the streets” immediate food and support to people who were rough sleeping, thus supporting their continuing presence on the streets. Members of these groups were often vocal, including through social media posts, in demanding that those using their services be offered immediate housing by the council.

The wider services were generally uncoordinated by LBN or anyone else, run by dedicated volunteers, but often operating in isolation and without awareness of each other.

- *There is a lack of grip in Newham. There were many good people but no common vision. Partnerships were not built with good local agencies, but there was also a less helpful and contrasting element of the third sector who just focused on providing soup and food* (Newham policy adviser)

One of the main large hostel providers in the borough offered emergency accommodation, although until major changes in its staff and management in 2017 it was, according to a range of interviewees, reputed to tolerate various forms of antisocial or illegal behaviour. A new CEO was appointed in 2018 to address these and other problems, and quickly introduced changes.

- *There were lots of scandals and dodges here, including staff getting accommodation and prostitution. The new manager cleared all that out. In any case the local agencies used to compete with each other to get people so they could keep getting grants from the council cos of being full, and would not tell people that other agencies would be better at helping them* (Local previous service user)

The lack of accepted structured pathways and a coherent strategy meant that even the minimum statutory framework and the lack of accommodation caused difficulties:

- *X (evening food provider) and even Y (third sector agency providing emergency services) would ring us and demand that we house someone immediately and come down to where they were with the client there and then to get them. We would tell them that only verified rough sleepers¹² could be accepted, and that there was no other provision the*

¹² Under the pan London arrangements for street outreach teams a person has to be identified then found rough sleeping in a specific place when a search is made for them overnight (“verified”). Some people, particularly people who have not been rough sleeping before, can be immediately accepted to a “no second night out” service which provides

council could provide accommodation under the Homeless Acts – but they would refuse to accept this. If we went tried to verify the rough sleepers in the locations we had been told they were sleeping, sometimes they were not there - but some groups accused us of just not looking and we had to take pictures to prove we had been there. (Newham street outreach worker)

In addition, data collection on rough sleeping was minimal, based on what was statutorily necessary, and not analysed or used to inform operational programmes or strategic planning. The main source of evidence was CHAIN data from street rescue teams, collated and published using the pan London CHAIN system which provides information on all verified rough sleepers. Initial requests for basic data by us and by other agencies reviewing rough sleeping programmes in Newham could not be met.

- *There was just no data collected and used to understand who the rough sleepers were and their needs (Newham council officer)*

short term (72 hours) emergency shelter and an immediate assessment of how to prevent them going back on the streets (so no “second night out” hence potentially avoiding becoming an entrenched rough sleeper)

III. Changes from 2018 until March 2020

Political priorities

The new Mayor had made addressing homelessness and rough sleeping one of the authority's priorities since taking over in May 2018.

When I was elected in 2018 it was on a pledge to make tackling our homelessness crisis a priority. Homelessness and rough sleeping are rising problems nationally and across London's boroughs. However, they have become a particularly serious issue in Newham, where national policy and economic trends have intersected with the unique conditions in the Borough, such as a large private rented sector, high rents, and low incomes. Alongside this I promised to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping with compassion and care.

(Mayor's Foreword to the 3 July 2021 Cabinet paper *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy*, Appendix 1)

In Newham the position of elected mayor (confirmed in a May 2021 referendum) is a "Mayor and Cabinet" model which gives considerable authority to the elected mayor to scope the direction of policies in the authority, in contrast to the more common and traditional councillor-led committee model of local authority governance.

The final sentence in the quote about "compassion and care" is significant. This approach contrasts with the approach prior to 2018.

- *A key element which has changed in Newham in recent years is how the authority talks about the problem of rough sleeping. The language is now about compassion, care and support, and about creating community teams that are holistic.* (Independent advisor).

The reference to care and compassion recurs throughout subsequent rough sleeping strategy documents and policy presentations. The 2019 Interim Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy states, in its introduction, that it has been prepared by "adopting a care and compassion approach to Rough Sleeping and Homelessness".

Two political priorities are important to note here, as they are reflected in large elements of the evidence provided below about the development of rough sleeping services in Newham.

First, public health crossovers, as set out in both of the interim (2019-21) and main (2021-26) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategies (as explored later in this report):

- (2019) Initiating a public health approach to Rough Sleeping and Homelessness in the development of the borough's first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy in 10 years.

- (2021) This strategy sets out an intelligence-led, public health approach to tackling homelessness, and improving access to, and the quality of, housing within the borough. The homelessness strategy development is linked explicitly to the parallel Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023 published in 2020. That document sets out 12 priorities and 50 actions for improving health and wellbeing in the borough, using a broad definition of health and wellbeing, and recognising the links to equity, transport and public realm, poverty and housing. The reference to “intelligence led” will be explored later in the development of the Minimum Data Set and other rough sleeper data analyses.

The second is partnership working, and again referencing the 2019 and 2021 Housing and Rough sleeping strategies:

- (2019) Developing a holistic approach to homelessness cannot be achieved by the Council alone and requires a partnership approach, including Health, Community, Voluntary and faith-based sectors. [T]he Council acknowledges and appreciates the extensive current and historical efforts from the community, voluntary and faith sectors in maintaining support for rough sleepers. [We] need to engage better with Stakeholders, improve transparency and build trust.
- (2021) In this strategy we outline our plans to work with partners such as local institutions, the local voluntary, community, and faith sector, and private rented sector landlords.

These three – care and compassion, intelligence led public health approach, and partnership working – are all high-level statements of intention and political priority. This report examines both whether there is evidence that they were used to inform the development of rough sleeping policy and practice; and whether there is evidence that the adoption of these approaches had any bearing on the outcomes which can be evidenced in what is being achieved now.

- *What is noticeable about Newham’s new approach is that it is heart centred. It’s about care and support and creating community teams which take a holistic approach, and about compassion-based commissioning. Newham actually do this.* (Independent advisor)

Initial funding and programmes

In the period 2017-18 some initial steps were taken to develop services and strategies to address rough sleeping, in part due to pressure from MHCLG in the light of the situation set out in the previous section and the interventions of the MHCLG homelessness advisor. These pre-strategy actions were in part stimulated and supported by the provision of £2.175m over two years from three sources:

1. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) grant:
 - £1.6m total over two years
2. Greater London Authority (GLA) grant to fund additional outreach workers:
 - £300k over two years
3. Controlling Migration Funding (CMF)
 - £275k over two years

Included in the grant funded services were¹³

- Outreach combined (Thamesreach & internal)
directly commissioned since June 2019
- Anchor House assessment hub
Opened December 17 2018
- Emergency Accommodation – Single Homeless Project (SHP)
commenced October 2018
- Rent Deposit / Spot Purchase Scheme
commenced October 2018
- Night Shelter (NewWay)
October 2018 – April 2019
- Day Service (NewDay)
October 2018 – April 2019

During 2018 more specific action was being made towards developing a strategy and new services (with this research project originally commissioned in June 2018 as part of that work). The first drafts of a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy were prepared in conjunction with a team from the homelessness advice organisation Shelter in 2018¹⁴. This pulled together lists of the various services providing rough sleeping and related services. It lists 27 local organisations who were contacted for their views as part of that work and has information about the daily availability of 42 "Homelessness Services" of the type discussed above. The grants to NewWay and NewDay (above) are to two of the local community rough sleeping services, and the grant to Anchor House is to the largest established local homelessness hostel provider.

Council officers also were taking more positive action. They stepped up the process of engagement with the third sector in developing the initial strategy and using the RSI grant; they initiated discussions on the development of rough sleeping pathways for a range of client groups; they set up some good specific initiatives such as the Tent Clearance strategy to systematically remove

¹³ This information taken from a LB Newham slide pack dated October 2019 and entitled "Grant Funded Services Outcomes (Oct 2018 – Present)"

¹⁴ Information from LB Newham Draft 2 Year Homelessness Strategy which is unpublished and not for circulation. The information here has subsequently been made publicly available in other publications

abandoned tents in the Mall and Mall forecourt, as well as a Housing First pilot programme¹⁵ which provided 12 homes for entrenched rough sleepers. They coordinated the external street outreach teams and the internal street rescue team. Within this context, however, there remained issues to address.

- *We, the in-house Newham outreach team, did all the work – the street population manager did all the protocols then she and her team went out to move them. The third sector outreach teams did not want to move the tents, or actively clear sites when they were abandoned. It was the same when we came to clearing squats – they did not contribute enough. More laid back. (Council street outreach worker)*

Meanwhile, Council members continued to demand that rough sleepers be removed from streets in their wards. In the absence of any structured and official pathways and priorities these requests took priority.

- *We now have more places to house rough sleepers but councillors demand places to shift people to and they all fill up (Partner service provider)*

Although Newham also had an in-house street rescue team for rough sleepers it accepted to move off the streets, the quality of the accommodation and lack of systematic support at one of the most used hotel-based hostels led to very poor service and contributed to staff resignations due to their concerns about the inadequacy of the service being provided.

- *The suspicion was that Newham was just taking rough sleepers off the street temporarily, not doing anything with them, and then throwing them back out. There was no support or move on. (Third sector provider)*

There was little cross departmental coordinated support, and in particular no integration and support from the main Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service (HPAS)

- *HPAS gave no priority to rough sleepers, and would not accept them (senior council officer)*
- *HPAS decisions are often illegal (senior council official, referring to frequent rejections of applications from rough sleepers who could be considered to be in priority needs groups)*

Partly as a consequence of the lack of effective coordination of services, it became clear during this phase of development that whereas there were services for low (and to some extent medium)

¹⁵ This is a programme for entrenched rough sleepers which provides them with accommodation first then works intensively to address their needs in that accommodation. For a review of Newham's Housing First programme see https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/CASE/_NEW/PUBLICATIONS/abstract/?index=7729

needs rough sleepers, there was a major gap in provision for rough sleepers who had higher and more complex needs. While providers of emergency night shelters and day centre services could provide immediate relief for low needs clients, and while providers of hostel accommodation could safely and effectively house low needs clients, there was no real adequate provision for rough sleepers who were a high risk for providers to house, and who needed the coordinated assistance of specialist mental health, substance misuse, or other professional services to address their underlying problems and needs. This was a key element which was identified as an urgent priority within the new strategic framework.

Third, Voluntary and Faith sector initiatives

Alongside this activity the third sector launched its own initiatives to proactively improve services for rough sleepers in a more coordinated and strategic manner.

- *In the absence of local government we have taken the lead in setting up a forum. People working in the sector are now realising what had not been happening before but was needed – coordinated action. Different partners have different approaches and up to now often did not get on with each other, or often were not aware of what others were doing. Now the two main hostel providers have got together with local partners to coordinate services and make joint bids.* (Provider senior manager)

Homelessness Forum

The purpose and aims of the Homelessness Forum were agreed in July 2018 and stated:

Purpose

The purpose of the group is to work together to improve the experience of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Newham by influencing local policy and strategy and pursuing excellence in local practice.

Aims & Objectives

The aims and objectives of the group are to take a Newham wide approach to:

- discussing local challenges and identifying possible solutions to these
- improving existing services and joint working arrangements
- identifying unmet need, and working to develop new services and joint working arrangements to meet these needs
- effectively helping to coordinate local provision
- sharing new opportunities, policy developments and good practice

- highlighting issues in existing/developing policy and processes, proposing solutions to relevant bodies and agencies
- information sharing
- networking

The forum met and continues to meet every two months, initially co-chaired by the Chief Executives of two of the main local providers of hostel accommodation and rough sleeper assessment services. Invitations were extended to a very wide range of local providers of support, advice, and immediate assistance to rough sleepers, across a wide range of local residents and needs. The research team attended several forum meetings over a period of two years, in person and online during the pandemic. This group provided an immediate step forward, in bringing together a range of people with common objectives who had not met each other before, to get together to discuss shared problems and action.

A member of the LSE research team has attended around a dozen of these meetings, and we have reviewed the minutes of the others. There are three main aspects of discussions:

- Exchanges of information and planning of joint approaches to services, often informed by one of the providers presenting the work they are doing and seeking ways to involve others in the service. Examples of this include local partner and provider presentations around:
 - Better ways to use hot food distribution services to help disperse rough sleepers from the Mall, and wider issues around best use of food banks
 - Engaging with work on modern day slavery
 - Engaging with mental health services
 - Extensive discussion around coordinating action in response to COVID-19 and Everyone In, leading to further specific meetings
 - Understanding and applying the new Domestic Abuse legislation in services
 - Legal advice available to rough sleepers around immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds
 - Supporting rough sleepers into employment
- Presentations and reports back from Newham officials, most often the senior responsible operational managers or commissioners, about the proposals for new services or strategic plans, as well as replying to questions, challenge, and suggestions from participants.

- Regular updates on the extent of rough sleeping and progress in providing services and accommodation for rough sleepers
- Housing pathway development
- RSI grant and its deployment
- Specific issues around the emerging rough sleeper strategy and action plan, including missing and priority areas
- Developing the wider homelessness strategy and services to prevent homelessness within the wider Homelessness Prevention and Relief services (HPAS)
- Identifying areas for taking action around the development of new services and strategies, to continue the proactive identification of need, new pathways, and new service provision
 - Identifying a range of local services to deal with more complex and higher risk needs, and particularly to identify the areas of hidden need which were not being addressed
 - A task force, now set up, focusing specifically on women's homelessness issues
 - Possibly specific services for young people or other special groups
 - Developing a community of practice where good practice could be shared, alongside a directory of services

The Forum quickly established a good relationship with the commissioners and operational rough sleeping and wider housing staff in the authority. At this time the commissioning of rough sleeping services and development of operational policy was managed by a frequently changing cohort of Service Commissioners on short term contracts (and in at least one case a revolving door contract). These initial and frequent changes of personnel undermined any clear development of an overall strategy. Nevertheless, some of them initiated positive changes, and some went on to become valued and permanent staff in similar or different roles in the authority, including one who eventually moved into a permanent position as Street Population Manager. By 2020, a number of further key appointments had been made to some of the commissioner's roles. This combined a small group of key officers, supported by the Director of Housing and Director of Adult Services, who consistently drove progress in the services. There were also parallel changes of senior staff in other parts of the housing department, which was reorganised to better address needs and operational effectiveness. The previous policy of regular hiring of external staff on short term contracts was phased out, which both saved money and provided continuity and more effective strategy development.

These officers, and other associated council officers from other relevant departments, have been invited to, and regularly attend, forum meetings since the forum was established. They present the progress being made in tackling rough sleeping and in developing new pathways and strategic approaches to problems. The meetings display an atmosphere of critical mutual respect, and the officers give honest and open answers to points made. It is also clear that this is a mechanism which is used by forum members to hold the officers, and the authority, to account for what is being done to address rough sleeping. Generally, the officers are seen to listen and subsequently act on what they hear, in the context of their wider responsibility to represent the policies of the Council and their own professional judgement.

- *The Newham forum is the best amongst the others I know of in London. Being chaired by the third sector is a real benefit. The chairs are very strong in how they manage the business of the forum* (External expert)

One point made by a number of interviewees is that in fact the failure to properly address rough sleeping in the past had given the local authority a “clean slate” from which to develop a locally appropriate strategy and set of pathways and services. There were few people or council established teams with “vested interests” who had their corner to defend in the authority itself; and some of the main third sector hostel providers recently had changes of leadership and direction.

- *One of the secrets of change in Newham is that it was so bad that it was a clean slate – nothing was there and there was no one’s nose to be put out of joint.* (Independent observer)

This meant that adopting new ideas and approaches was easier due to the absence of entrenched previous practices and approaches.

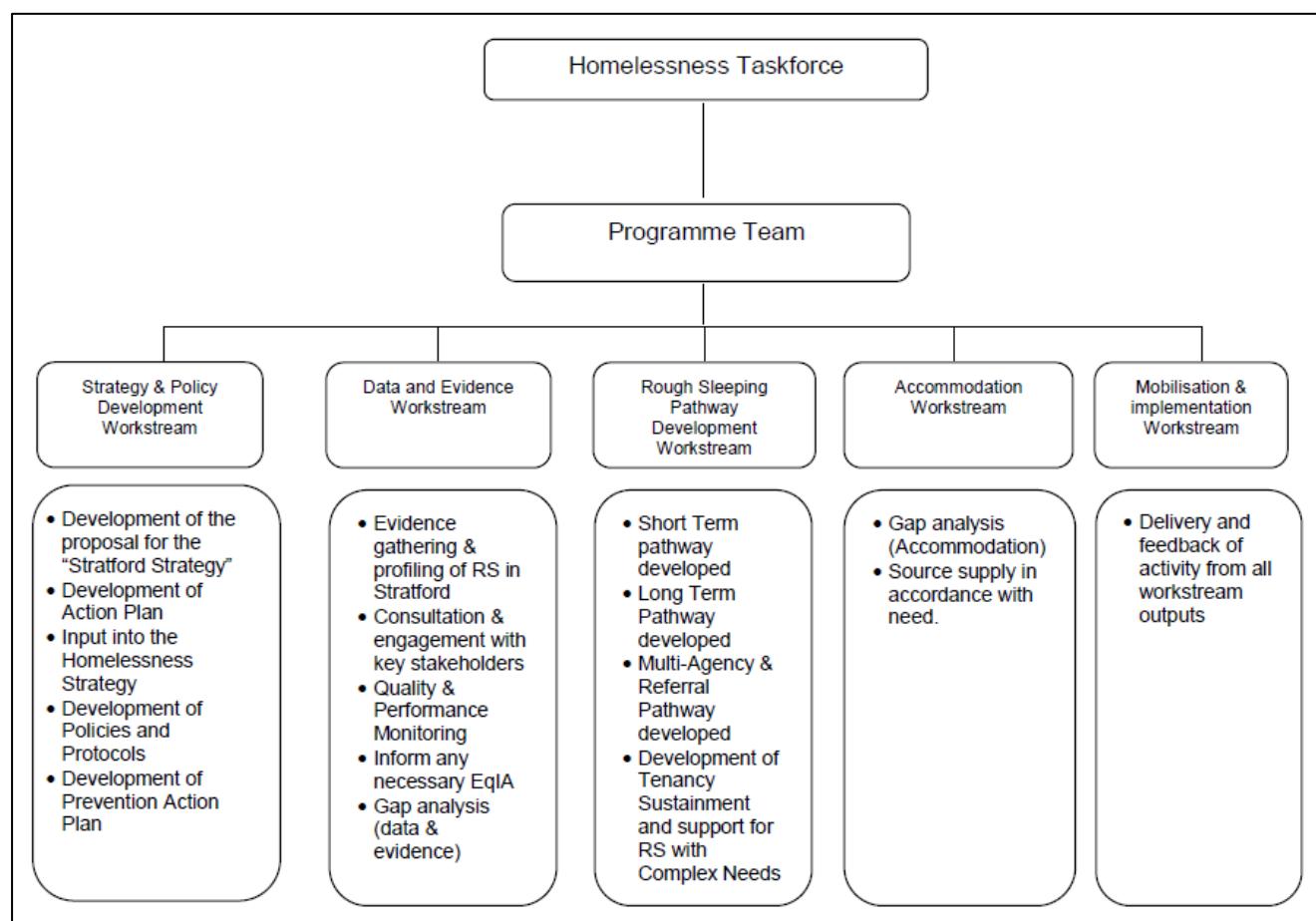
The local authority set up an additional group, the Homeless Action Group, with the brief to take forward the “co-production” of new and emerging range of strategies for housing and homelessness more generally, including rough sleeping. This Homelessness Action Group was co-chaired by the lead member for housing, alongside a community representative who was an ex-rough sleeper and at that point housed in one of the supported housing hostels in the borough. It included residents with lived experience, DWP, charities (including some overlapping members of the Homelessness Forum) and council officers and members. Their remit included providing consultation comments on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategies, although their areas of focus were more widely spread.

The Mayor's Task Force

Since her election, the mayor has raised the political profile of rough sleeping with a series of measures to engage her fellow council members. All ward members, and particularly lead members for service areas, were asked to undertake a trip to the Mall to see conditions and problems there. With the requirement for street counts every two months, all council members were asked to attend at least one, in order to see the nature and extent of the problems and get an insight from the officers and partners who were dealing with the problems of rough sleeping every day into how a more strategic manner of addressing rough sleeping could help.

A further major development was the establishment of the Mayor's Rough Sleeping Taskforce in summer 2019, whose workstreams and governance structure were agreed on 5 August 2019. The overarching structure of the Task Force (version VI) is set out below:

Figure 14: Mayor's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task Force Structure 2019



The Task Force continued its work during from the autumn of 2019, and through the initial COVID period. The various workstreams produced reports which were influential in the interim strategy development.

One was a report of a questionnaire sent to “expert stakeholders with local knowledge and experience relating to rough sleeping in Newham”, which included members of the Homelessness Action Group, a separate body with some overlapping membership with the Homelessness Forum. The questionnaire *“aimed to capture their understanding of the risks, impact, and drivers of rough sleeping in Newham and identify gaps in provision. It also aimed to identify what, if anything, made rough sleeping in the Stratford Centre and surrounding area unique and whether it required a modified response”*. Of the 23 responses, 12 were on behalf of voluntary sector organisations and eight on behalf of a public sector service.

The main impacts and risks identified were closely linked and fed into each other, according to respondents. Risks of rough sleeping frequently highlighted included:

- Mental health issues, sometimes caused by substance misuse
- Health risks linked to the impacts of exposure to the cold and wet from being on the streets. This, and the mental health issues above, were risks where lack of early intervention often led to increasingly serious and secondary impacts on physical and mental health
- Barriers to accessing services and support, including barriers due to immigration status and no recourse to public funds (NRPF), but also due to insufficient homelessness outreach, and difficulty in accessing services addressing employment training and advice, and access to basic income
- Violence and abuse, including exploitation by gangs and exploitative employers (including modern slavery issues), domestic abuse, and sexual exploitation
- Social isolation, sometimes in the form of becoming habituated to rough sleeping and entrenched in this as a normalised way of life

Issues frequently highlighted in provision and prevention included:

- The amount of supported housing available to support rough sleepers off the streets
- The range of housing options available to meet the diverse needs in Newham both led to rough sleeping and presented problems in identifying move on accommodation out of support services
- Newham’s application of the statutory criteria for accepting people as in priority need under the Housing Acts was too narrow and strict
- The current provision of support services for rough sleepers was inadequate in relation to mental health, substance misuse, employment access, No Recourse to Public Funds, finance, welfare benefits access, holistic support, floating support, digital exclusion, and the better use of people’s community and social connections

- There was not a consistent and coordinated set of services with clear pathways and wrap around support for rough sleepers, identifying specific needs and providing appropriate responses. Services were not linked together in an end-to-end way.

In relation to the Stratford Centre, the main issues flagged included:

- That it is a “public highway” open 24/7 and provides shelter
- That there was the provision of support for basic needs in the centre, including free food and other useful free provisions
- That there was a message being conveyed to a local, national, and international public that the Mall was available for shelter and support for basic needs, and that Newham Council tolerated this situation
- That the Mall was a centre for violence and exploitation of vulnerable rough sleepers, including risks related to drug misuse and to exploitative employers seeking to entrap people into conditions of employment that constitute modern slavery

In fact, the majority of these identified issues and risks were addressed in the strategy and operational development which were going on in parallel with this survey. It represents a useful check list of key issues emerging from the task force, and those issues were addressed.

A further paper produced in May 2020 covered data analysis. It provided an update of work already done to produce a client level system to record and analyse data, called the “Minimum Data Set” (MDS). Internal Newham documents indicate that during the “Everyone In” period, it was recognised that the relevant data/intelligence was key if the emergency housing was to be sustainable and safe during lockdown. Evidence of high-risk health factors, drug/alcohol misuse, mental health, issues of domestic abuse and gender-based violence needed to be collated and monitored in order to support clients in maintaining social distancing, managing risk, improving overall outcomes and avoiding COVID-19 outbreaks. Given the lack of time, due to the diversion of effort to COVID-19, the use of data to create multiple plans has been a key factor in determining success. In addition, medium- and long-term plans needed to be developed as well, in order to ensure continuity of care and that appropriate move on provision was in place.

In this context the MDS was developed. The MDS was designed in order to capture as quickly possible all necessary intelligence about rough sleepers being assisted by Newham. Development should also be in line with the longer-term requirements of monitoring and managing rough sleeping in the longer term, post-COVID, context.

Intensive work, led by one of the main Newham commissioners, was conducted during April and May of 2020 including consultation with providers, commissioners, and experts in the field. These

included key stakeholders from the Newham Task Force, the main Newham rough sleeping commissioners and operations managers, NHS representatives, outreach service provider partners, supported housing providers in Newham, external experts working with Newham on rough sleeping, representatives of MHCLG for a national view, and the LSE research team to provide any emerging insights from the research team's interim report and more recent research in Newham. The consultation and development plans were concerned to address and exploit:

- the role of intelligence, qualitative and quantitative, in measuring outcomes/success/sustained improvement for rough sleepers over time, moving towards independence.
- how intelligence can inform and improve successful interventions, in particular the role of qualitative and quantitative research, whether this be a single project or repeated
- the opportunities for primary research within Rough Sleeping operations as well as the potential for embedding action research
- how intelligence could inform a more AGILE approach to contract and KPI development and delivery
- intelligence gaps, how they can be filled and what they can tell us

Part of the approach chosen was to adopt the CHAOS Index and Outcomes Star. The CHAOS Index and Outcomes Star are tools that allow commissioners and providers to understand someone's need, complexity and journey in a more nuanced and objective way. The Chaos index is a means to assessing the needs and risk factors of adults facing chronic exclusion. It was developed in 2008 by the New Directions Team (NDT) at South West London NHS. The tool was devised in conjunction with local partners and validated by the local mental health NHS trust. In 2011, MHCLG published an evaluation of different approaches to dealing with the needs of adults facing chronic exclusion, although this was not explicitly focused on rough sleepers, but has relates to the CHAOS index¹⁶.

The index is also known as the New Directions Team assessment (NDT) and is a tool for assessing needs of clients of services. It focuses on behaviour across a range of areas to build up a holistic picture of need rather than the traditional demonstration of serious need in a specific area only (for example, mental health). It also explicitly measures involvement with other services, which is not routinely used as a measure of service eligibility otherwise. The result is an index which identifies "chaotic people" with multiple needs who, despite being ineligible for a range of services, require

¹⁶ MHCLG/ Matrix Evidence Ltd (2011) *Simple but effective: Local solutions for adults facing multiple deprivation* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6333/1925475.pdf

targeted support. The NDT assessment covers ten areas including engagement with services, self-harm, and risk to self and others. Each item in the assessment is rated on a 5-point scale with 0 being a low score and 4 being the highest score; there are two areas where the score counts double (0 is the lowest score and 8 is the highest). Low scores denote lower needs (so low NDT assessment scores are good). The NDT assessment is completed by key workers as soon as possible after the service user engages with a project and then at six monthly intervals¹⁷.

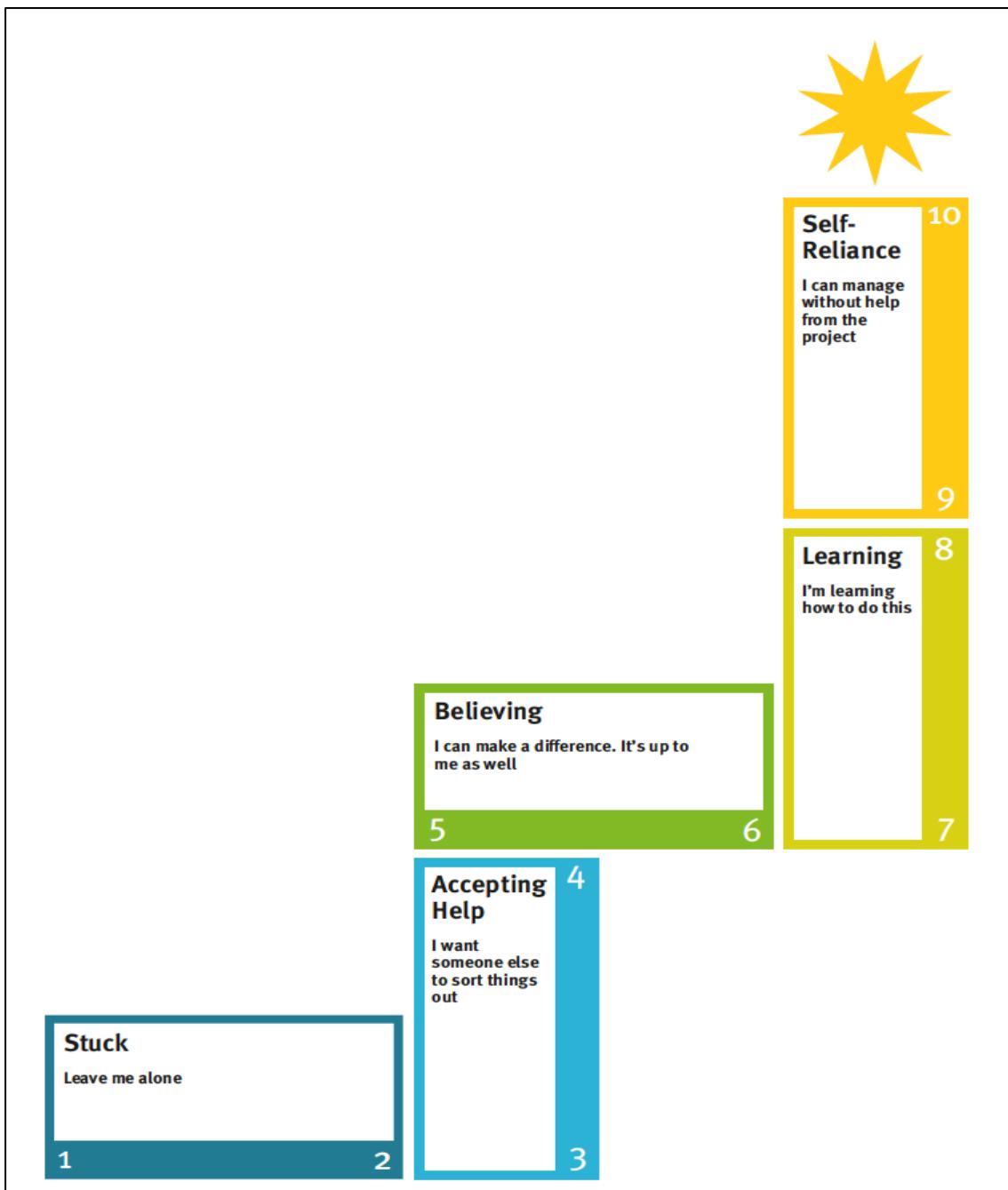
The Outcome Star provides a family of evidence-based tools for measuring and supporting change when working with people. It is intended to be an innovative way for frontline services to demonstrate their impact whilst improving their key work¹⁸ The Star highlights key outcomes which are relevant to a rough sleeper moving to independent living – and the steps to go through to make a substantial change to clients' lives. It does not simply measure the severity of the problem, but how motivated and supported they are in moving forward and sustaining a better situation. It intends to objectively and consistently measure distance travelled. The star is only suitable for front line workers who work one to one with service users over a period of time.¹⁹

The Outcome Star progression (client journey) is set out (in the Fulfilling Lives report cited above, drawing on Outcome StarTM literature) as below:

¹⁷ This information from *Fulfilling Lives: Supporting people with multiple needs* Annual report of the national valuation 2016 Big Lottery Fund/CFE Research, Leicester <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/Annual-Report-2016.pdf?mtime=20181031094658>

¹⁸ See <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/about-the-star/what-is-the-outcomes-star/>

¹⁹ Information from "What is the Outcome StarTM" available via the website above.



The Fulfilling Lives evaluation cited above notes a good overlap between CHAOS and Outcome Star measures for the same clients, suggesting that they are good measures for assessing an individual's wellbeing.

A parallel Task Force workstream considered in May 2020, the longer-term development of new services. This was as part of "Phase Two" and post-COVID work. The priority options to explore were:

1. Develop and implement a new model of care for complex Rough Sleepers
2. Invest now in move on options

3. Integrate outreach and in-reach/floating support
4. Enhance the approach to intelligence and coordination

These went on to be developed and more fully defined and expanded in the five-year strategy, which will be explored more later.

MHCLG Recognition, Funding and Rough Sleeper Interviews programme

Early in January 2020, the extent of Newham's progress in addressing rough sleeping was recognised by MHCLG in two ways. First, a £1.2m Rough Sleeping Initiative grant was awarded, one of the highest awarded to any English local authority, and second the then Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) visited Anchor House, the new Rough Sleeper Assessment Hub providing accommodation and specialist support to rough sleepers²⁰.

In an internal Task Force paper from early May 2020, it was noted that

Newham's rapid response to i) accommodating of Rough Sleepers and ii) closure of the Stratford Mall through the night, has been nationally recognised by the MHCLG as exceptional.

It also notes that in relation to its approach to intelligence and coordination

The MHCLG has highlighted Newham as best practice in this area, recognising the development of the minimum dataset, unified assessment, coordination model and intelligence led commissioning approach. This will be further enhanced by a new approach to qualitative research, which the MHCLG will be involved with, and the development of Power Bi dashboard for Rough Sleeping. These were all ambitions that have been accelerated within the Strategy Action Plan

MHCLG also involved Newham in a wider national research project. This was a programme of in-depth interviews with rough sleepers, which took place in late September and early October 2019 and February 2020. This research was conducted in a total of 25 local authority areas, with 70 rough sleepers interviewed in Newham. The fieldwork was scoped and directed by the MHCLG research team and undertaken by local homelessness support agencies supported by interpreters where needed. It took the form of a self-report questionnaire which could be self-administered or used in a structured interview format. It comprised several sections addressing basic demographics, history of homelessness, health and support needs and service use, contact with the criminal justice system, work and benefits.

²⁰ See <https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/21/12million-funding-boost-to-help-rough-sleepers-following-successful-bid>

A report of these local findings was made available to Newham in February 2020²¹, and a presentation of some of the main findings was made to the Homelessness Forum on 19 May 2020 by a Newham consultant. This would appear to indicate that of those interviewed one in five was female, and the mean age was 46. Three quarters had become homeless after the age of 26, with the most frequent age of first becoming homeless being in their forties. Rent arrears or mortgage repossession was responsible for a third of reasons for leaving previous settled accommodation, with a further one in five having been asked to leave by their landlord. A quarter had spent some time sofa surfing prior to sleeping rough. When asked to describe the experience of rough sleeping, lack of safety, being cold and in a tough situation, and the impact on mental health were frequently mentioned. Over two thirds reported a current mental health condition or having accessed mental health services in the previous three months, with depression and anxiety being the most reported conditions. A third reported having concurrent needs for physical health, mental health, and substance misuse issues. One in ten was currently working, and two thirds were in receipt of benefits. In terms of contact with services, over two thirds had been in contact with homelessness organisations, and about half with the local authority.

As part of this LSE research, the team undertook interviews with nine service users in a range of temporary accommodation. The temporary accommodation was provided by three of the outreach and support agencies to allow for assessment and support to be provided pending move-on to a more settled placement. While those interviews were useful at the time, they were pre-COVID and reflected the period early in the strategy development programme and confirmed much of the information which is set out above. That is to say they do not inform the main issues in this report, which are the actions during COVID and the post strategy development arrangements now in place. Undertaking service user interviews to assess how well these new arrangements are progressing would be a useful exercise from now on, but was outside the scope of this project.

Cabinet agreement to adopt the interim strategy

The 2019-21 interim Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and accompanying Action Plan was adopted by LB Newham Cabinet on 3 December 2019, and the Action Plan on 7 July 2020. It was necessarily interim due to the absence of good data and intelligence, and lack of experience of running comprehensive local services under fully developed contracts and pathways. The aim was to use the interim period to develop a full five-year strategy.

²¹ The Newham report has not been published but a summary report of the findings about rough sleepers in the 25 authorities where the questionnaire was used is available here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962402/RSQ_Initial_Findings_Data_Report.pdf

There is also an accompanying action plan with details of responsibilities and timings. This was adopted in a Cabinet paper of 7 July 2020. A further important Cabinet decision was on 18 February 2020²² when £1.4m was made available from Newham's own resources, to top up RSI and other grant funding. This indicated a further corporate commitment to the "Rough Sleeping Provision – Homelessness Task Force" activities.

The Strategy document states it has been drawn up in line with the Council's core principles which are:

- *People at the heart of everything we do*
- *Openness and transparency*
- *Efficient delivery and value for money*
- *Working in partnership*
- *Inclusion*
This includes the Mayoral commitment to community wealth building.

This last point on community wealth building is important and is related to the engagement with local service providers set out above and will be highlighted later in relation to the procurement of a new rough sleeping integrated services contract. Briefly the Newham Community Wealth Building principles are

Leading by example

- *Use our purchasing power and influence to keep wealth in our local economy*
- *Lead on progressive procurement, becoming a living wage employer and encouraging others to do so.*

A fair deal for Newham workers

- *Our young people will have access to the very best opportunities London has to offer, regardless of their background*
- *We will support residents to get a fair deal from their employer and the government.*

Inclusive economy

- *Unleash the dynamism of Newham businesses, supporting them to improve their productivity*
- *Nurture our cooperative economy, ensuring wealth created and held democratically.*

Another way of looking at this in the context of rough sleeper services is that Newham wishes to deploy and encourage its residents and local organisations to use and develop their own skills for local service provision, and not (for example) to outsource contracts to external (and possibly profit oriented) regional or national providers.

²² Annex 2 to the Growth, of the Budget Report 2020/21 – 2022/23, Cabinet meeting of 18/2/2020

The strategy also identifies equality issues around rough sleeping as follows:

In Newham, men are far more likely to present as rough sleepers. Many rough sleepers appear to have a history of criminal justice and more likely to come out with no fixed accommodation. There are high levels of mental health, drugs and alcohol addiction. The largest cohort age group is between 36 – 45 years old.

More work is needed to understand the link between rough sleepers and:

- *Children leaving care and youth offending.*
- *Sexuality.*
- *Wider health issues.*
- *Income.*

In the summary, the strategy committed to a range of actions including those most specifically related to rough sleeping programmes (highlighted below), and split between interim and longer term:

Figure 15: Main commitments of the interim strategy

Interim
1. Preventing homelessness
2. Relieving homelessness (including rough sleeping)
3. Establishing a new approach to assessment for low, medium and high risk needs rough sleepers
4. Accommodating and supporting rough sleepers towards independence
5. Providing support to those in need to prevent reoccurring homelessness in order to maintain independence
6. Improving data collection and analysis
7. Establishing a rough sleeping pathway
8. Developing services for young people, single people (18-34) and couples without dependent children
9. Establishing a Stratford specific plan
Longer term
10. Reduce the use of temporary accommodation
11. Increasing supply of affordable housing

Each of the main priorities above is explained in more detail in the strategy document, and subsequently operationalised in the Action Plan. For completeness the full commitments are available at Annex 1.

Progress reflected in the published strategy

In order to assess how far Newham moved on from the original draft strategy produced by Shelter in 2018 (not formally published but used in consultations) to the final one adopted in December 2020, we have compared the sections relating to rough sleeping in each. This provides an indication of how far the work of co-production and engagement with a wide range of partners might have informed the final version. No criticism of the first version is implied, which was an early first draft produced before the process of development and consultation had had time to embed itself. There are some marked similarities and differences between the earlier versions of the strategy and the final adopted version set out in the box below:

Figure 16: Main changes in new strategy

- Establishing a new approach to assessment for low, medium and high risk needs rough sleepers is a new section. This includes establishing flexible accommodation off the streets for rough sleepers including those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF); having a single assessment process; and creating a tailored personalised service to meet individuals needs
- Accommodating and supporting rough sleepers towards independence was originally called “Accommodating and rehabilitating rough sleepers”. In the original version the “Housing First” approach was mentioned as a key response, offering rapid access to a stable home with no test for housing readiness, with support is provided to that home. This is still included in the new version, but in terms of finding a way to help this work for Newham. The previous version also mentioned the RSI funded Rough Sleepers Assessment hub, outreach workers, day centres (also mentioned in the new version), and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). The Interim strategy includes several new commitments. These include reviewing accommodation and support services to ensure a focus on independence, building relationships with the community and voluntary sector, providing immigration advice to NRPF clients and wider access to advice regarding legal status, reducing rough sleeping caused by lack of joint working between partner services including Health, Social Care, and criminal justice, and assisting EEA nationals to exercise their rights. These are significant additions reflecting a more detailed analysis of the issues.
- Preventing homelessness in the original version made reference to joint working arrangements with environmental health, children’s services, court duty advice services and social housing providers. In the new version rough sleeping figures more prominently in the commitment to cross service working, which talks about “reviewing existing entry routed into rough sleeping i.e. prison, health, armed forces”. It also explicitly sets out the objective of “redesigning the pathway”. The original version also referred to working with partners in new partnerships being forged, though rough sleeping is not mentioned in this regard. The new version makes a similar but more detailed point about “working in engagement with the voluntary and faith-based sectors. The new version also explicitly adds a new section about developing more supported housing.
- Improving data collection and analysis proposals matured and became more precise in the new version. The original suggested an analysis of six months data to understand patterns and drivers of homelessness, which is expanded in the new version to include an additional exercise to analyse rough sleeping data to see how it can be “prevented, tackled, relieved and ended”, and a commitment to expand the Rough Sleeping Needs Analysis and repeat the data analysis exercise once more data is available. Similarly while the original version talks about needing “a more intelligent and strategic approach to data”, the new version specifically highlights the need for a new analytical resource to provide insights, which was subsequently provided for rough sleeping in the form of the Minimum Data Set, as described in the next section. The new version also highlights a specific commitment to “further understand the health inequity for homeless and rough sleepers”
- Establishing a rough sleeping pathway is a new section, though elements of it appear in various places in the original document. This section notes the need to complete the preparation of a full rough sleeper pathway, driven by the Task Force, as well as to develop new pathways to respond to issues raised through improved equality analysis. It also notes the need for further grant funding to deliver and enhance services. Improvements in the quality of services, and monitoring of outcomes to ensure the reduction of rough sleeping are flagged, as well as a wish to work with partners locally and nationally to introduce good practices and “what works” evidence. There is a further section which both reiterates the wish to “work with and develop the goodwill of the local third sector and faith based charities community... to ensure that rough sleepers are treated with dignity, respect and are holistically supported”

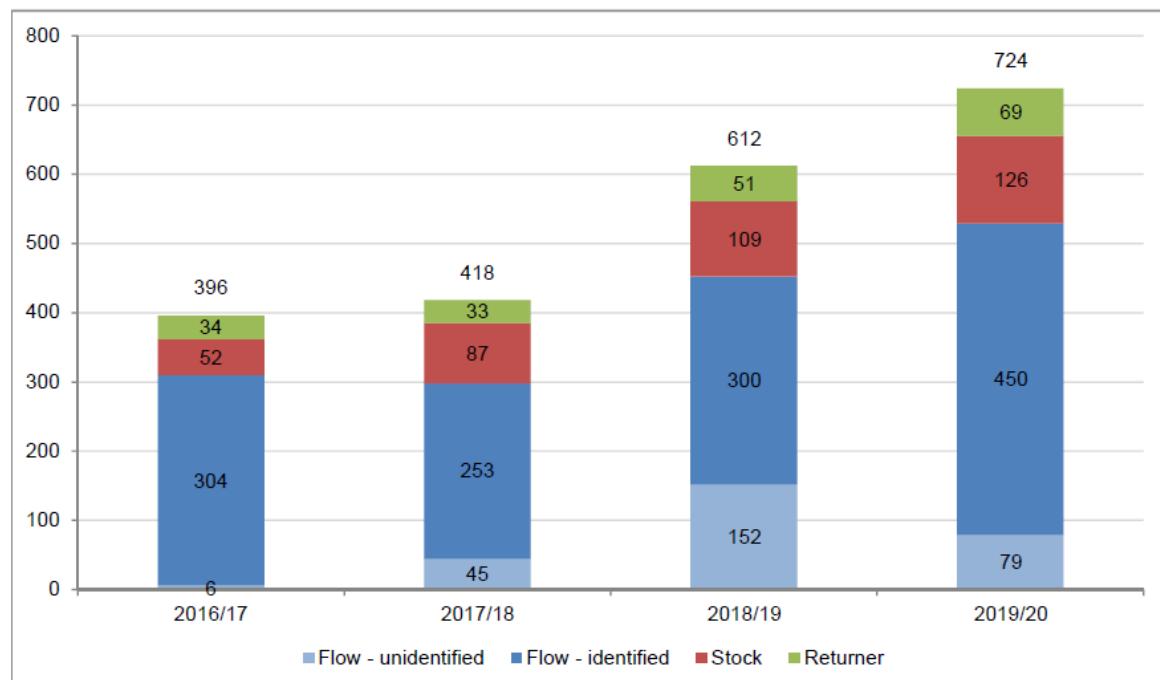
Pre-COVID summary

The approval of the Interim (2019-21) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy was a major milestone and the culmination of a two-year period of work to establish basic principles around dealing with rough sleeping, as well as building the operational structures to make progress in addressing it. The overarching principles of treating rough sleepers with compassion and respect had been embedded in the emerging strategies and structures, as well as the community wealth approach to developing local services, and services being developed in partnership with local agencies and service users. Many new protocols had been developed and implemented, such as the Tent Clearance strategy, increased cooperation between internal and external street homeless teams, an assessment centre, and much stronger management of the work by the Street Population Manager and team. The third sector agencies were driving changes and building relationships with the council, and the commissioner team was now working consistently and effectively to drive improvements.

Nevertheless, numbers of rough sleepers continued to rise during 2019-20, partly because these changes had not had time to work through to the reduction in the street population. The Chain data for 2019-20, updated from the data in Figure 10 above, shows a 17% increase from the previous year as set out below:

Figure 17: Updated rough sleeper figures for 2019-20

People seen rough sleeping in the year, by the flow, stock and returner model.



The expectation was that the changes during 2019-20 would begin to have an impact on rough sleeping during the following year, as the Interim Strategy and Action plan measures began to bite on the problems.

That expectation did not anticipate the arrival of COVID-19.

IV. COVID and “Everyone In”

COVID-19 context

The previous section set out the progress which had been made in the previous two years in putting in place operational, strategic, financial, and cross sector approaches aimed at providing services to rough sleepers and preventing rough sleeping. On 23rd March 2020, the Prime Minister announced a full lockdown in England would be introduced, and the necessary legislation was enacted on 26th March. Services for rough sleepers were amongst the major changes that needed to be implemented. These not only assisted Newham rough sleepers, but also had a major impact on the development of rough sleeper services in the borough.

Also on 26th March 2020, the Government instructed local authorities in England to address the needs of rough sleepers in taking immediate action to “help make sure we get everyone in”, including those who would not normally be entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation, such as those with irregular or uncertain immigration status including those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Details of the government’s instructions and the subsequent local government and partner responses can be found in the House of Commons Library 2021 report *“Coronavirus: Support for rough sleepers (England)”*²³, and further details of the impact of the actions taken are presented in the NAO 2021 report *“National Audit Office, Investigation into the housing of rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic”*²⁴.

The principles for action which the Government set out to be followed under the “Everyone In” approach included to:

- Focus on people who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough, and those who are in accommodation where it is difficult to self-isolate, such as shelters and assessment centres
- Make sure that these people have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or isolation, ideally in single room facilities

Actions to be taken included:

- The Local Authority convening a local coordination cell to plan and manage their response to COVID and rough sleeping involving the local authority (housing, social care, and public health) and local NHS partners together. This would then report in to wider local COVID structures
- Seeking to stop homeless people from congregating in facilities such as day centres and street encampments where there is a higher risk of transmission

²³ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9057/>

²⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-covid19-pandemic/>

- Urgently procuring accommodation for people on the streets if you have not already done so
- Getting the social care basics such as food, and clinician care to people who need it in the self-contained accommodation. The government urged organisations to work with the commissioned and non- commissioned sector to make sure there were adequate levels of support provided.
- If possible, separating people who have significant drug and alcohol needs from those who do not

Subsequent government guidance took account of the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerability in assessing priority need, and other guidance around hostels from Public Health England, Department of Health and Social Care, and MHCLG. A range of funding streams were put in place. This funding could be used to secure additional housing, provide additional services such as employment support and training, reconnection, and Cold Weather provision. Additional support was provided to the voluntary sector from an HMT Covid 19 Homeless Response Fund, supplemented by funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, with some of the latter fund being administered by Homeless Link. Crisis also provided additional emergency funding. Further funding for rough sleeping and homelessness was announced in the 2020 Spending Review.

Newham's response to COVID-19 and outcomes

Two LBN Cabinet reports summarise the actions taken during COVID, in July 2020 at the point of presenting the interim strategy Action Plan, and in December 2021 when the five-year action plan was presented for approval. This section focuses on mainly setting out the final outcomes, not least as COVID continued (and as of 2022 continues) to be a public health concern.

On Newham's actions and outcomes as at December 2021:

Numbers

- Over 680 rough sleepers had been accommodated in response to the COVID-19 "Everyone In" Newham programme.
- Note that much of this work had been done in the first three months, as reported in the July 2020 cabinet paper. At that three month point, 185 Rough Sleepers had been rapidly accommodated from the street, with a further 40 moved from shared accommodation, and an offer had been made to all those who remained on the street. Overall, the total number of Rough Sleepers accommodated to that point was 309, 43% of whom did not have recourse to public funds.
- Four hotels and 40 HMOs had been procured for this purpose, providing single rooms for all who were housed. This was in addition to suitable accommodation also provided by the main third sector accommodation and support providers.

- The total number housed was higher than street count numbers as it included additional people from the Stratford Mall, from various groups of rough sleepers camping on vacant land in the borough, hidden rough sleepers, intermittent rough sleepers, and people who had been housed in various night shelters and other dormitory or shared room accommodation.
- A complex accommodation offer delivered out of selected Hotels and HMOs with specialist support had been provided by a local support and housing provider. The focus was on the most complex and chaotic Rough Sleepers.
- Provision of all-female accommodation for women most at risk of harassment and specialist support had been provided
- An integrated outreach and floating support team was provided by Thames Reach to offer support to all remaining Rough Sleepers still on the streets (since some did not engage and others, particularly those with drug dependence issues, often decided not to remain in the emergency accommodation).
- Looking more broadly at rough sleeping figures, in September 2018 there were 105 Rough Sleepers in the borough (Figure 9 above, representing one of the Newham bi-monthly counts). The annual street count (the national autumn count done by all authorities and recorded in the official departmental Live Tables on rough sleeping) shows the pattern in the borough over 10 years. This indicates that Newham had achieved the highest proportionate reduction in rough sleeping of any single borough in London between 2019 and 2020. The figures, updating Figure 8 above, are:

Figure 18: Newham annual official rough sleeping count 2010-2020

Newham	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	7	10	55	22	16	28	41	76	79	64	6

Source: DLUHC Live Tables on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2021

Note that the November 2021 count has not yet been published but is slightly higher at 17, but still much lower than in most of the past years

- A new Move On Team was established in March 2021, to support people moving from supported or emergency housing into more independent living. By December 2021 this team had supported 40 Rough Sleepers achieve their move on plan.
- In December 2021, 94% of rough sleepers had not been seen back on the street, which indicates that pathways put in place may be broadly effective in sustaining outcomes.

Support

- In the initial period from March 2020 there were problems with being able to engage with some rough sleepers accommodated, not just due to lack of PPE and phones, but also due to the abrupt move to shelter. Nevertheless, teams found that about half those rehoused engaged with support services, including some groups like sex workers and people with severe drug or alcohol problems, or significant mental health problems who had previously been less likely to engage. In some cases, this resulted in immediate referral to more specialist care, including sectioning some people with severe mental health problems.
 - *We started to clear the Mall on 25-26 March, even before the Government announced the lockdown. Then we hired buses to take all the rough sleepers to shelter. We had been using RSI money to work with some of them already. Then we all had immediate problems like not enough PPE and had to give some of them phones to do remote support.* (Council manager)
 - *People engaged once they were in accommodation – though after a while some drifted off* (Outreach worker)
- 88 rough sleepers were, by December 2021, being supported to address their substance misuse issues, through an enhanced Public Health England rough sleeping substance misuse pathway established in summer 2020. In total over 200 rough sleepers have been through this pathway to date
- 91% of the rough sleepers currently being supported by the Council had now registered with a GP
- COVID-19 vaccinations were delivered to 60 per cent of rough sleepers
- The Council supported 219 Rough Sleepers to regularise their immigration status over the last 18 months. Sixty have achieved pre settled, settled, indefinite leave to remain (ILR), or limited leave to remain (LTR);
- A new Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service has been set up and has been operating since September 2021. In addition, Cabinet agreed to purchase a new Rough Sleeping Assessment Centre building which will provide a route off the streets for rough sleepers. These initiatives will be described in more detail in the section on the five-year strategy below.

Stratford Mall

The Stratford Mall was closed following lockdown. This was made possible by the granting of a court order on the grounds of protecting the health and wellbeing of rough sleepers who were vulnerable to COVID-19 risks if sleeping there overnight, and protecting others who might use the

Mall at night. This was an order under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984. In June 2020 a further Order under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 was granted and subsequently extended on a number of occasions to keep the Mall closed at night. In January 2022, Newham Cabinet approved an experimental traffic order which means that the route through the Mall, which is designated as a public highway, will close to pedestrians between 9pm and 5am every night. There are additional provisions for specific businesses in the evenings, and daytime activity is not affected. This will last as an "experimental order" for 18 months to allow the impact to be evaluated.

- *We used to go to the Mall in the mornings and there would be about 50 rough sleepers, many smoking, injecting, urinating, verbally abusing the security guards and us. Closing it helped so much.* (Newham outreach team worker)
- *The Mall was a massive problem driving rough sleeping. Closing it saved Newham.* (Independent adviser)

Data and intelligence

- A new data and intelligence system (the "Minimum Data Set") has been developed and implemented to ensure that information about rough sleepers being assisted is captured. This information was necessary and proportionate ("minimum") and was captured from all Rough Sleepers through a structured assessment process, so that a more bespoke and agile commissioning response could be provided depending on their needs. It records demographic details, support needs, current accommodation and provider, engagement with support programmes, and other major outcomes. It asks service providers to use the well-established tools of the Outcome Star and the Chaos Index to assess progress being made by rough sleepers in moving toward being able to sustain independent living. This system operates in real-time and has a dashboard allowing a range of commissioners, service managers, and authorised partners to interrogate the system and call off reports. This is a bespoke tool developed in Newham.
- The development of this system also links to the commitment to a new vision for rough sleeping following an intelligence led public health approach, and the aim to address each rough sleeper's person's individual needs with care and compassion due to recording and monitoring their holistic individual needs. Due mainly to Everyone In, Newham now has detailed and up to date information about rough sleepers in the borough, the extent and nature of their needs, and are building a historical picture of individuals and trends.

The MDS allowed us to match people in places – and quickly get 97% GP registered and 50% vaxed. With CHAIN we did not have the right information at our fingertips. (Council manager)

Finance

£8.3m of external grant funds was secured between December 2019 and December 2021, to which should be added the £1.4m of Newham's own funding.

- *Funding was the biggest factor in enabling us to provide the response we did. Newham got its highest ever allocation which was essential to making it happen* (Third sector provider)

The 2021 National Audit Office report²⁵ cited above makes a summary statement about local authority actions to address rough sleeping during COVID, which is an appropriate comment on Newham's own actions:

MHCLG²⁶, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector all rose to the challenge. Their staff went the extra mile and may have saved hundreds of lives. And two thirds of people supported by 'Everyone in' have since moved into long-term accommodation....

Everyone In has for the first time provided data on the potential scale of the population in England which either sleeps rough or is at risk of doing so. The Department needs to build upon this knowledge to understand fully the size and needs of this population and communicate this to local authorities.....

However, MHCLG can't rest on its laurels and it was caught off guard by just how many people needed help. Now rough sleeping is on the rise again, and the pandemic is far from over

Partner agency engagement and views

Above, we have set out how groups like the Homelessness Forum brought third and faith sector groups together, and reached out to statutory and specialist providers of support services to build awareness of good practice and contribute to the development of new rough sleeping pathways. This was particularly so during COVID, where the sector partners immediately rose to the challenge of Everyone In and undertook joint planning and delivery of services. The Homelessness Forum compiled and shared summaries from members about what they were doing to address the immediate Everyone In activity, including updates on what services were being provided and how, as well as passing on requests for assistance or equipment. Bi-lateral meetings were held with key council officers, in particular the Street Population Manager who was a focal point for much of the activity in securing accommodation and support for the rough sleepers being housed, a role which continued throughout the whole period up to today. The relationships which had been established over the previous two years enabled a rapid and collaborative response which coordinated the available resources in an effective way.

²⁵ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-covid19-pandemic/>

²⁶ Now DLUHC (the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities) but at the time was the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

The Homelessness Forum received and debated regular updates at its meetings. The minutes of the meeting in May 2020 (seven weeks into the Everyone In programme) record that:

- *[The chair] congratulated LBN on behalf of the voluntary sector and described the housing of 211 people [taken into accommodation at that point] as a remarkable achievement. (Forum minutes, 19th May 2020)*

This was a far cry from the views of the sector in the first interviews in 2019/20.

Others commented:

- *The third sector had been under-funded, under-recognised and under-appreciated as well as being fragmented and uncoordinated. By the time of the pandemic we had learned to leave our egos at the door and bring out different responses together. Newham realised that to tackle COVID they needed the boots on the ground that we brought and to build on new partnerships (Third sector provider)*
- *There was lots of thinking on the spot and everyone took part. And COVID proved that you actually can get everyone off the streets and support them! (Local voluntary day centre provider)*
- *During COVID Newham stretched its compassion in very positive ways. They kept its hotels open when other boroughs were closing theirs and it continued to support people with no recourse to public funds. There was also an open dialogue between the authority and its partners – rather than a hierarchical approach which some authorities took (External advisor)*
- *The first Everyone In weekend was a heroic effort. It, and the subsequent few months, was a period of real challenge as there were lots of complex people some of whom had difficult behaviours and with the confinement problems this led to some scary incidents. (Third sector provider)*

COVID Summary

Following all the initiatives taken since 2018, at the point of COVID leading to lockdown, Newham had put in place:

- An interim strategy, new partnerships with the third, voluntary and faith sectors,
- A set of new services in place,
- Political engagement and support,
- A set of committed staff and senior officers, and
- Initial government grants and Newham funding to develop rough sleeping services.

COVID presented a severe test of how well these elements could pull together, and in fact the new approaches appeared to work very well, with commitment, hard work, and good coordination across all the constituent parts of the rough sleeping landscape. In terms of people, Newham had many committed, insightful, hardworking and competent leaders in the various sectors, who worked closely together, and with other partners, to do what was needed, and more. The aims of services delivered with “care and compassion” remained at the forefront of the actions taken, as did the commitments to partnership working and to community wealth building by drawing on the strengths of local organisations and people.

Newham also quickly took advantage of some of the opportunities which were brought by COVID as elements of the otherwise devastating and tragic consequences of the pandemic. Dealing with COVID brought the various partners together to deal with the emergency and its lasting impact. Relationships were strengthened between organisations and trust was built between individuals. Many specific areas of concern – for example the specific needs of vulnerable women or of people with insecure or unclear immigration status who were often wrongly denied recourse to public funds, or the difficulties of securing adequate mental health services – were amplified and brought to the fore by the intense concentration of rough sleepers being accommodated in a small number of places. This led to a greater awareness of the additional pathways and services which needed to be developed for these groups. The concentrations of rough sleepers provided both the stimulus and the opportunity to undertake more thorough assessments, and most importantly, collect and structure the type of data which had to that point been missing, but could now be used to build a comprehensive database and analysis tool to understand the rough sleeper journey and outcomes of services. Finally, and of major importance, money was available to support this work, to a value not previously seen.

So, Newham had made itself ready for a longer-term period of strategy and service building, and took full advantage of COVID to accelerate the development of services and strategic plans. This is very positive. For now, COVID is still appearing in new waves, but lockdown has ended. The numbers of rough sleepers are much reduced.

However, the money is also reducing, and with the end of the emergency period, Newham will return to a more “business as usual” mode of operating. The next issue is, what is Newham doing to maintain progress in improving its rough sleeping services? What is their five-year strategy?

V. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-26

Overview

The five-year strategy was adopted by Newham's Cabinet on 7th December 2021 following a period of consultation over the Summer of 2021. It presents the outcomes of the work which had been going on over the period since 2018. This section of the report also sets out two major commitments of this strategy – the commissioning of the Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service and start of that contract in September 2021, and the agreement, in May 2021 to purchase Lady Helen Seymour House to operate as a 40 bed Centre of Excellence Assessment Centre to support, stabilise, and assess rough sleepers direct from the streets. £1.8m has been set aside in Newham's 2022-23 capital budget for this purpose.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping five-year strategy also addresses a number of post-COVID emerging issues. Amongst these are the rapid increase of eviction proceedings in the borough, which in October 2021 reached pre-COVID levels, after the halt due to the COVID evictions moratorium; post-COVID reductions in Universal Credit; the ending of furlough, which had seen 10% of workers furloughed in Newham; and wider post-pandemic job losses. There is also a longer-term structural shift in the housing and demographic profile of the borough which has seen increasing arrivals of better off workers and a consequent rise in both rents and house prices, and linked increases in poverty for lower paid residents.

The strategy builds on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in continuing to take a public health approach. The vision set out in the strategy is for a future in which²⁷:

- **No one is sleeping rough or forced to live in dangerous or transient accommodation**
- **Everyone at risk of homelessness gets the tailored help they need to prevent it**
- There is an end to 'revolving door' homelessness
- There is access to affordable, secure and fit homes
- **The council is working in partnership with others to provide support to those who need it, when they need it.**

The strategy is organised around six key themes:

- Understand current and future housing need
- **Prevent homelessness through early help**
- **Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets**
- Improve access to better housing that meets the needs of residents

²⁷ Available at <https://www.newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/homelessness-rough-sleeping-strategy>. Elements most relevant to rough sleeping have been emphasised by the author

- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation
- Adopt a partnership approach to preventing homelessness and improving wellbeing

It sets out the Council's approach to specific topics including **the effective use of data**, working with tenants and landlords to prevent homelessness, **improving pathways for people leaving institutions**, **supporting survivors of domestic abuse**, **the new Integrated Rough Sleeper Support (IRSS) service**, **move-on from hostels and temporary accommodation**, maximising opportunity in the private rented sector, improving the customer experience, **and partnership working across the Council and with external partners**.

Section 3 of the Strategy: "*Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets*" covers the main issues about rough sleeping. This short but comprehensive section is set out at Annex 3.

Developments since the Interim Strategy

The initial statement of the final strategy re-affirms the commitments that "*the Council is transforming our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion. As part of this service transformation, we sought to include the views and experiences of people with lived experience, which fed into the development of our strategy and commissioning of services*".

The five-year strategy marks a clear progression from the interim strategy. The key updates are set out in the box below:

Figure 19: Key updates from the Interim Strategy

- Take forward the interim set of statements of intent to do something and now present an updated set of statements about what has been done and will be further developed. Previously the interim commitments were "*to redesign services...complete the ongoing work to develop a rough sleeper pathway...[which] will be implemented.... Develop and implement a specific rough sleeper plan for Stratford...develop a consistent format for data collection...[and] scope a new analytical resource to provide insight*". The new five-year strategy sets out that much of this had now been done, including creating the Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service (IRSSS), and the financial commitment to create a new assessment centre at Lady Margaret Seymour House. More specific details about these three initiatives are below.
- To support individuals accommodated under the COVID "Everyone In" directive to now move on into long- term sustainable accommodation. This is dealt with by a dedicated move-on team, which includes joint working between the rough sleeping service and HPAS to improve their opportunities of a good outcome.
- To complement the overall IRSSS with focused support programmes around areas of particular needs identified during the development of the strategy. These include
 - Gender: a specific offer responding to the needs of women who were rough sleeping. This was rolled out in the summer of 2020 and has adopted a psychological and neurological approach to supporting vulnerable women who are rough sleeping. It has a dedicated officer to support the work.
 - Nationality: the new service includes immigration advice and support for people who have unclear immigration status. The strategy also adds "*The Council maintains its opposition to the government's 'hostile environment' policy, referenced in the Windrush Council Motion, carried at Full Council in November 2018.*"
 - Health and Wellbeing: The strategy commits to building the existing relationships with health, with further work taking place to enhance the health response. More work is needed on infectious diseases (e.g. TB)
 - Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM): this approach has been used in the wider transformation of the rough sleeping service. The MEAM approach was established to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, and to avoid people falling through the gaps between service provision. It was first used to help design and deliver better coordinated services for people engaged with sex work. The approach to people engaged in sex work has previously been focussed on enforcement based and the new approach will build a 'support before enforcement' response that is underpinned by a greater understanding of trauma. The same principles are being used to inform the Council's response to rough sleeping.
 - Substance Misuse: 43% of rough sleepers being accommodated by the Council and currently on the street have been referred through to the national charity Change Grow Live with substance misuse issues. This offers substance misuse support, and medical and psychological support around complex issues such as mental ill health or sex working. The approach includes specific navigators to assist rough sleepers on an enhanced the rough sleeping substance misuse pathway, which provides dedicated support to those motivated to change.

Alongside the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Newham published a draft Action Plan list of priority themes as well as a more detailed Action Plan for 2022-23²⁸.

The Strategy has not fully resolved all issues, and remains a work in progress. This is not a criticism of the strategy but a recognition that everything could not be done at the same time, and in addition, that many wider changing and emerging dimensions of the rough sleeping problem are beyond the control of LB of Newham. For example, action linked to this strategy has kept the Stratford Mall closed for a further 18-month period, but that may or may not result in permanent closure. The Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service has only recently started, Lady Margarete Seymour House has not yet been purchased, the specified new pathways have not yet been completed. Wider issues include the continuing impact of further waves of COVID or a related pandemic; problems of poverty and deprivation produced by the current economic context; population migration in or out of Newham and the impact on neighbourhoods and the local housing market, all which could have knock-on effects on homelessness and housing need levels. Newham is, however, now taking steps to strategically plan how to best use its housing resources and organise its wider housing services, including through initiatives such as the recent strategy on allocation of housing and the commitment to have built, by 2022, over 1,000 new council homes, all of which will be at social rent levels. These continuing risks will be explored below, including the views of council, voluntary sector, and external observer interviewees.

The Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service (IRSSS)

The concept of an “integrated” service provides a operational structure that mirrors the “holistic” and person centred aims and values of LBN’s new strategy. It intends to group the core services into one organisation with a lead coordinating body (“Change, Grow, Live” (CGL)). A summary diagram of IRSSS services is below:

²⁸ All these documents are available at <https://www.newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/homelessness-rough-sleeping-strategy>

Figure 20: Integrated Rough Sleeping Support Service approach



Source: LB Newham Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-26

The aims and approach of the service (our emphasis) are to:

- Adopt a **universal strength and assets-based assessment process** for all rough sleepers to understand the complex needs of the individual
- Provide **suitable accommodation and personalised support services** that provides an immediate route off the street but that also reflects their assessed needs
- Develop a **person-centred plan** that reflects and builds on their strengths, assets and hopes. This will cover their immediate next steps and the longer term to form the basis for their single service offer
- Develop and deliver **innovative and evidence based biopsychosocial approaches** to rebuilding people's security, confidence and, importantly, independence
- Enable a **sense of belonging and purpose** in their wider community
- **Work with partners in health and across the system** to ensure more joined up approaches to care, where the Rough Sleeper can access the right care at the right place at the right time
- Develop **partnerships with all organisations and individuals** committed to ending rough

sleeping in the borough

- Focus on **improving longer term outcomes** for Rough Sleepers particularly for those who are 'complex and entrenched', and not just a roof for a night
- Support Rough Sleepers with **unclear immigration status** to access available support and opportunities to find a sustainable route away from the street

Procurement

In designing the procurement process for this service, a number of principles underlying the strategy itself – inclusiveness and holistic approaches – were deployed. The approach was agreed internally through a series of specific Cabinet papers and approvals throughout this period. The core commissioner team, which had emerged over the previous 18 months, including the Rough Sleeping and Adult Services commissioners, took the main responsibility, along with the Street Population Manager. Also involved in discussions were LBN's Housing Department's new Assistant Director for Housing Needs and some of her senior staff. In addition, the co-production and Homeless Forum meetings were continuing and regularly attended by members of this team and this informed (indirectly, to avoid conflicts of interest) the direction of travel of the procurement exercise. From the wider Council perspective this procurement was informed by the Newham Community Wealth Building principles discussed previously. These were designed to provide a fair and competitive means for local providers to bid on an equal footing, and balance potential competing pressures from large external organisations being able to offer financially loss leading or less locally informed and tailored bids.

The procurement started by publishing the specification, then holding a series of "meet and greet" opportunities for potential suppliers to meet with each other and potentially form consortia which would be able to bid together. Thereafter there was a "Competitive Procedure with Negotiation" process whereby discussion took place with bidders between two evaluation stages with the aim to improve the proposed models of service delivery and bids. In line with the co-production approach of the new rough sleeping strategy and operations, people with lived experience of rough sleeping were also included in the evaluation and negotiation panels undertaking this work.

At the conclusion of this process, a consortium was chosen and the decision confirmed at the Cabinet meeting of 1st June 2021, with the contract to start on 1st September 2021. The successful consortium was made up of providers who already had a major local presence and had been delivering rough sleeping services locally for some time. These included some Newham-specific, locally based providers as well as providers with an existing Newham presence but who also work in other local authorities. These services are now being delivered under the agreed contract, but since

the contract is still bedding in the performance and outcomes delivered under this contract do not form part of this report²⁹.

The contract is for three years, with an option for two one-year extensions – a maximum of five years. This allows an opportunity to change the nature of the contracted services if necessary. It also reflects one of the fundamental risks to the strategy and the services in Newham, that Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) funding from what is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously MHCLG) makes one year funding grants, with annual bids being made for available programmes and money. While Newham committed £1.4m of its own money in February 2020 to support the rough sleeping strategy, this has not been repeated (partly because of the specific COVID funding noted above). The risk is that if RSI funding is not awarded in later years, these services may not be able to be supported from general purpose Newham funds. This affects all authorities funded by RSI grants and other short-term funding.

Lady Helen Seymour House Assessment Hub

As part of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, LBN made £1.8m available for the planned purchase of a building, Lady Helen Seymour House, which will be converted into a new assessment hub. This building will provide temporary accommodation for 42 rough sleepers and the assessment unit will provide onsite wraparound health and care support, with external agencies such as GPs, substance misuse and mental health services.

The unit will provide:

- A central hub that will be able to accept people straight from the street and provide an immediate safe and secure space to assess their needs.
- A route to longer-term accommodation tailored to the individual needs of the person. This may include “Housing First”, which is a programme that provides a stable home with specialist floating support for entrenched Rough Sleepers, or specialist supported accommodation.
- Accommodation for people after they are assessed and while support is put in place before they move onto next steps.
- Support for rough sleepers who do not need such intense residential care.
- The centre will act as a hub for those placed in social or private rented housing and will be a one-stop-shop where recovery plans can be developed and monitored.

²⁹ Website of service <https://www.changegrowlive.org/irsss-newham/info>

VI. Outcomes, and Drivers of Change

This report documented and analysed the changes in Newham's management of rough sleeping from three main perspectives:

- First, what actually happened in terms of changes to the services being delivered and outcomes seen on the ground?
- Second, looking behind these changes and figures in more depth, who or what drove the changes, and the improvements?
- Third, what does this evidence tell us about the sustainability of services and future risks?

This final section of the report provides a summary set of observations based on published reports and other papers made available to us, in-depth interviews with council officers, third sector partners, council members and service users, and our regular attendance at forum meetings, several overnight street counts, and internal meetings.

What do the latest rough sleeping figures tell us about what happened in the last two years?

Rough sleeping was drastically reduced over the last two years. This can be seen from official returns and CHAIN data.

In terms of street counts, the official 2021 count showed a reduction to 17. Only six rough sleepers were found in 2020, which is almost certainly a result of the "Everyone In" programme, but the 2021 count (as yet unpublished on DLUHC) number represents a major drop in the number of rough sleepers found through the overnight count, compared to previous years.

Figure 21: Rough sleeper counts 2010-2021

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
7	10	55	22	16	28	41	76	79	64	6	17

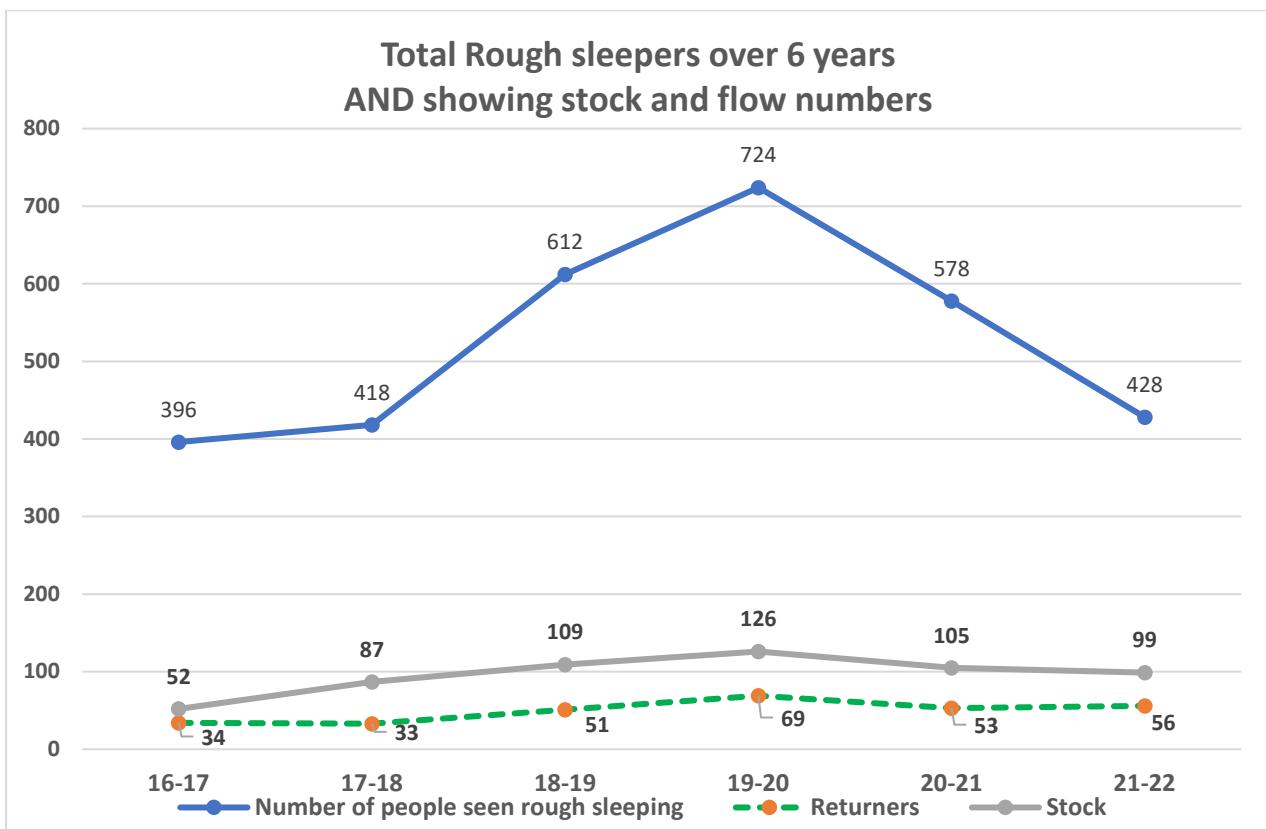
Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>

Looking at CHAIN data, latest figures show that:

- The numbers of rough sleepers peaked in 2019-20, which is to say just before the COVID pandemic and "Everyone In" programme.
- Since then, they have reduced significantly, to 60% of the peak number and back to the levels of 2016-18. The continuing improvement into 2022 suggests that the strategic approach and commissioned services which Newham has put in place over the last two years have been effective in significantly addressing the rough sleeping problem.

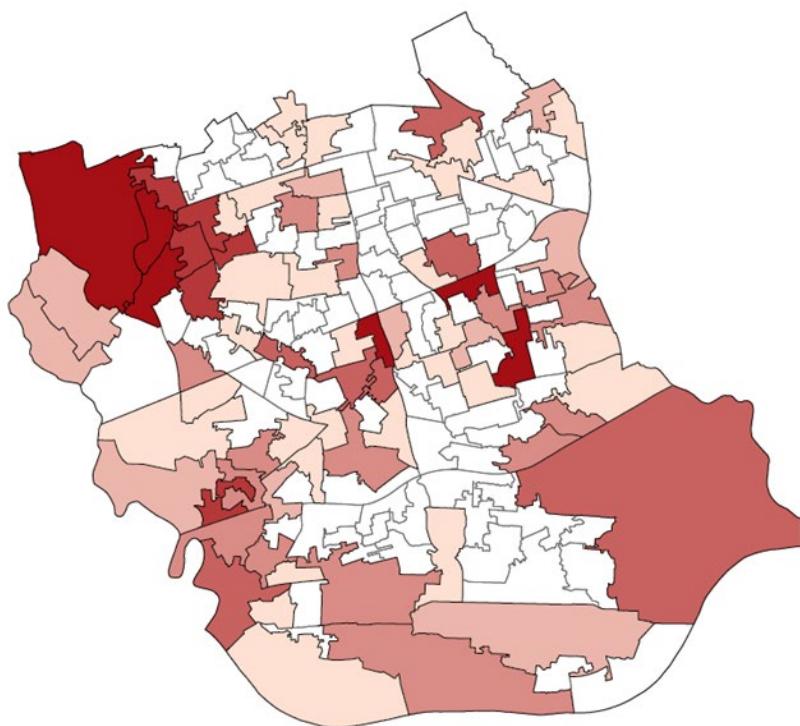
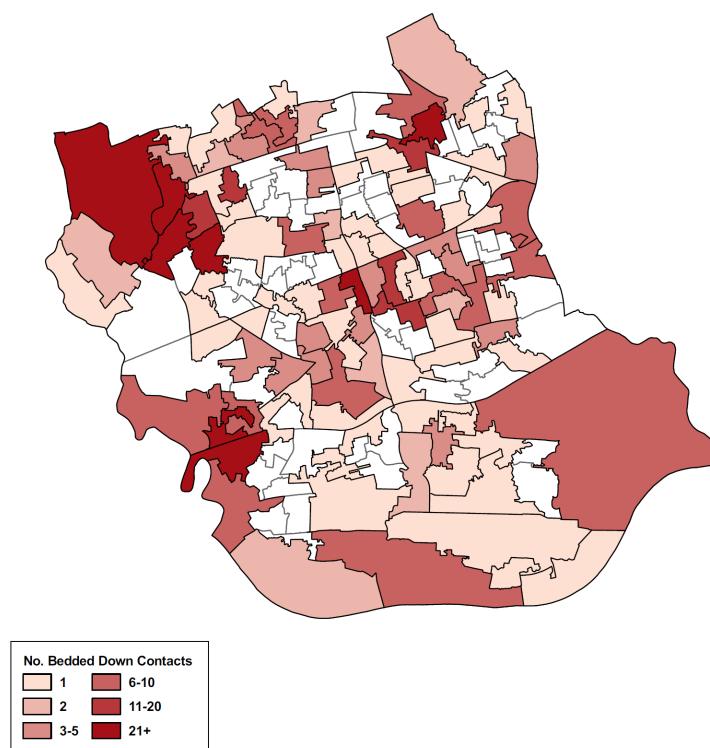
- Note however, that while the total numbers of rough sleepers have reduced sharply, the two groups of “stock” and “returners” have been roughly stable throughout the whole period – at around 150 in total. CHAIN defines stock, in relation to its 2021-22 report as “people who were also seen rough sleeping in 2020/21 (i.e. those seen across a minimum of two consecutive years). “Returners” are defined as “People who were first seen rough sleeping prior to 2020/21, but were not seen during 2020/21 (i.e. those who have had a gap in their rough sleeping histories).” This suggests that actions such as the closure of the Mall and the other actions to deal with people found rough sleeping in the borough overall may be delivering more of the improvements than the actions to deal with the cases of more entrenched and repeat rough sleepers in the borough – those who may be more likely to have higher and more complex needs. This is already recognised in the strategy and new services which have been put in place. It is also now clearly monitored using the MDS system.

Figure 22: Total rough sleepers 2016-17 to 2021-22



Similarly interesting is the CHAIN map of the distribution of rough sleepers across the wards in the Borough, which shows very little change from 2018-19 to 2021-22:

Figure 23: Ward maps of location of rough sleepers 2018-19 and 2021-22



CHAIN 2018-19 Map of rough sleepers

While these figures give an indication of recent outcomes, it should be noted that since COVID had such a fundamental impact on how rough sleeping was managed over the last two years, and while its impact continues to be felt, it is actually difficult to draw firm conclusions from the data as to what Newham's rough sleeping patterns are in the post-COVID, post-Stratford Mall context.

The final strategy included a commitment to analyse rough sleeping data to see how it can be "prevented, tackled, relieved and ended". This would be appropriate to undertake in the near future, since it will present a picture of the emerging "steady state" presence of rough sleepers, and in addition the initial impact of the new IRSSS which has been running since September 2021. The original scope of this report was to include a systematic analysis of this kind, but the data was not made available and in any case, it is doubtful if that exercise would have provided a representative picture of rough sleeping due to the COVID impact. Newham could undertake it now, in line with the strategic commitment, and compare overlapping data from the MDS.

What were the drivers of change?

In this section, we have reviewed the second round of interviews with officials and third sector partners, as well as an analysis of the wider evidence set out throughout the report up to this point, to establish what the key drivers of change have been in LBN. These have been listed in rough order of priority.

The role of the mayor and elected members

A fundamental driver of change was the change of administration and priorities driven by the new Mayor, who has extensive authority to direct the work of the council due to the nature of the mayoral powers vested in her, but who also engages other lead members in priority activities.

The mayor always put homelessness in front of her priorities... she very pro-active, going out on site, asking what we needed. This gave us an opportunity to show that even the worst forms of homelessness can be attacked. (Council officer)

Underlying the mayor's appointment was a wider political shift in the political landscape of the dominant Labour group, seeking change:

There was a coalition in the Labour Party [in 2018] who wanted a change of approach in Newham, so we got rid of the previous mayor. We hoped a different approach was to put people at the heart of things.... Staff in LBN were in the past told they were gatekeepers, and that services were in short supply so they should be cut back even in non General Fund activities. (Elected member)

Consequently, there was wide lead member and ward member support for the mayor's new policies. Members could be engaged in supporting a more caring and compassionate approach as well as the process of understanding the role and importance of a strategic and planned, rather than a reactive individual case-based approach.

Homelessness is an issue for adult social services – it's not just houses. (Elected member)

They also supported the investment of money and resources (though not as much money as the voluntary sector would have liked). Naturally some problems of reconciling politically urgent ward casework priorities with longer term strategic approaches still remain.

If there is a mayor's enquiry about a rough sleeper this will get more attention and the person could be taken into accommodation right away where others would not. (Council officer)

There are also continuing concerns about establishing this new approach

The new Mayor brought perspective, and she understands importance of third sector and partnership, but there is still long way to go (Third sector partner)

COVID-19

The disastrous pandemic tragically ravaged Newham residents, and particularly low-income workers, but it also brought all the rough sleepers off the streets. The local teams, and in particular the tireless coordination of the Street Population Manager, ensured that these rough sleepers were accommodated and protected. The other members of the core team identified the unique opportunity to gather, and continue to gather and analyse information essential to planning and management of services. Finally, the third and voluntary sector supported this work fully, and gained the trust and support of the authority from this experience of joint working

In COVID, Newham stretched their compassion in a very positive way (Independent expert)

Closing the Mall

COVID also closed the night time use of the Stratford Mall. At a stroke, the biggest driver of rough sleeping was removed. In addition, much of the activity to support existing rough sleepers, which was regarded with caution and some concern by those seeking longer term solutions, was diverted to more constructive engagement. They were actively drawn into the process of developing longer term strategic solutions, with a view to welcoming their enthusiasm and commitment to working toward the relief of the impact of rough sleeping. The closure was extended for a further period of

18 months on 7th January 2022, using traffic management powers rather than public health powers in this case.

We need to close the Mall permanently. Dignity is not being harassed and threatened by drug dealers and thieves. (Elected member)

Money

Adequate funding was a necessary element in enabling Newham to deliver the good outcomes it achieved. With Everyone In came a major injection of cash resources, which was fully and well exploited by Newham. In this period, over £10m was spent delivering these outcomes, including £1.4m of Newham's own funds. This is money which Newham had to bid for and justify being awarded, both internally and externally. Without the sort of continuous progress outlined in the report, this amount of funding would not have continued to be entrusted to Newham to spend, so the funding is both a result of progress made and a driver of further expected progress.

A proactive and excellent third, voluntary and faith sector

When this research started, comments from the third and voluntary sectors about LBN's work to tackle rough sleeping in the borough were almost entirely negative, expressing frustration and in some cases anger. Even before COVID, the sector and its passionate and highly able leaders took the initiative in demanding a place at the table, and the opportunity to bring better services to rough sleepers of the borough.

We fortunate in having thoughtful capable leaders in the third sector – in addition we sometimes supported some of the smaller and black led groups to grow, as did other Homelessness Forum members. (Elected member)

Some people would always take local action. But when see some progress, and when get some response from LA, then there can be less battering down the door and more productive growth (Third sector provider)

Thereafter they continued to hold Newham to account for the changes it was making. At that point Newham's elected members and the newly consolidated senior officers responded by fully engaging with the sector and working in partnership to harness their latent capacity, experience and enthusiasm.

This partnership process was a practical necessity. It was also based on the new wider Newham commitments to resident empowerment and engagement, "putting people at the heart of everything

we do" and a commitment that that the rough sleeping strategy should be based on "care and compassion". These values informed strategy development and service procurement.

The approach also stressed the importance and effectiveness of building on the strengths and capacities of existing local residents in preference to importing outside larger groups or "experts" to manage Newham's problems – the community wealth approach.

Our previous carer service we lost, and it went to an out of borough organisation – and this turned into a disaster. (Third sector provider)

In [X organisation] there was a clear objective to build the skills of people from the local area who were volunteers. They would then often apply for paid roles when they came up (Third sector provider)

This partnership building was also linked to the absence of previous entrenched ways of working which might otherwise have got in the way of creative solutions.

The third sector is becoming more collaborative, more structured, and less likely to neglect small groups (Homelessness Forum member)

Newham had no legacy, and could pick the best. In comparison [X borough] had long established hostels policies – entrenched and turgid - and changing that system was much more difficult. (External adviser)

Better availability and use of intelligence and data

The development of better information about rough sleepers, particularly through the minimum data set, allowed needs to be more clearly identified and managed in new services.

The MDS uses the Chaos Index and Outcome star as tools to identify more clearly what the needs and aspirations of rough sleepers are, and their progress. All this information helped us understand new and continuing needs, for example for street sex workers for whom we started to provide women only accommodation units. We also began to take a bio-social approach to plan better move on offers. (Council manager)

Changes in Newham Housing Department structures and staff

Central to the improvement was the recruitment, retention, and commitment of a small group of creative, visionary, and above all, competent officers who were given the authority and support to drive the detailed structural and service changes which were required. Making staff permanent provided continuity and commitment. In addition, two of the senior commissioners involved in the rough sleeping work were promoted to Assistant Director level.

We used to make permanent staff redundant to save money, and then when services fell apart we'd get in temps. The previous administration was a complete shambles. (Elected member)

Commissioners are doing great work. [X] is one of the driving forces for change and has been like swan, pushing and driving through improvements behind the scene while looking calm. (External adviser)

Links to wider housing services

Taking a wider overall view of the relationship between rough sleeping and other parts of the housing service was also very important. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was part of a wider set of actions and strategies aimed at improving the performance and outcomes of Newham's housing duties and ambitions. Services have been restructured within the authority, including appointing a new Assistant Director of Housing Options and Supply to oversee related parts of a more integrated housing service, including housing need and the Homelessness Prevention and Support service (HPAS), housing registration and allocations, private sector housing and related services.

The new HPAS service is a great improvement – and it is responsive to the developing new services (Third sector service provider)

This Assistant Director managed the consultation on a new strategy around the allocation of social housing which was launched in the second half of 2021. A new HPAS manager with considerable previous experience was also appointed in early 2020.

There is also a cross-departmental, cross-sector approach which has involved both the direct Newham departmental leads but also wider health, mental health, public health, employment, substance misuse and other services. The tone and direction of engagement initiatives has been to build alliances and joint protocols, rather than engage in blame and buck passing. Not all parts of the authority and wider agencies have engaged, but many have.

External advice

The additional good advice and support from external partners and advisors, particularly from the main MHCLG advisor in this period, but also Shelter, and Homeless Link, was very helpful.

VII. What are the continuing risks and opportunities?

Funding

Almost all interviewees identified uncertain future grant funding as the major risk. The record of good use of grant funds over the last three years is to Newham's advantage in bidding for funds. As is the fact that it now has a clear strategy, action plans, pathways and protocols, and a commissioned integrated services package in place which provide important evidence to use when bidding for national funding. There is likely to be less opportunity for the policy to receive additional funding for rough sleeping from Newham's general resources, in the context of restricted overall local authority income and grant funding.

The new message from the authority is "tightening belts". Also now many streams of funding allowing progress in the past are drying up – in a period of wider austerity. (Service provider manager).

Increasing poverty and homelessness in Newham

There is a real risk in Newham, from the post-Covid, post Brexit, growing austerity, wider economic context. As restricted overall council funding continues, there is also increasing demand for services. This has already been flagged as an issue in the new five-year homelessness strategy. Mitigating these risks can only be done within the context of the wider economic and demographic development opportunities managed at a Newham and London wide level, and solutions are both regional and political in nature. There is also likely to be a progressive polarisation in the population demographics of Newham, between new gentrifying incomers, and existing residents in situations of continuing or increasing poverty and low income.

There is a new greater affluence in Newham over the last 5 years. It is improving in the Index of Multiple Deprivation lists but the gap between have and have nots is widening. Acute poverty is growing, and things are worse for those without any safety net. A major part of this is increasing rent levels which are harder to meet. (Third sector provider)

Everyone In has come to an end and we will soon be seeing more people on the streets.
(Third sector service provider)

The Mall reopening

Newham is continuing to take steps, and using new legal routes, to keep the Mall closed in the evenings and the period of closure has recently been extended until June 2023. There is a good

chance that this could result in a permanent night time closure, but if not, Newham could quickly regain its position as a major London centre for rough sleeping and drug dealing.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

The problems of rough sleepers with NRPF are not specific to Newham and are well documented. There are many cases in Newham, and following on from the COVID approach which allowed all rough sleepers to have support regardless of local connection or NRPF, this is becoming an increasing problem. The authority is essentially providing direct subsidy to these individuals in the absence of access to Housing Benefit and other welfare benefit income, although it is uncertain how long this can be sustained. This issue overlaps with a previous issue of women specific services, as there is limited access to emergency refuge accommodation for survivors/victims of domestic abuse who may be migrants and others who have no recourse to public funds

For NRPF rough sleepers, lots has been done to get immigration status sorted, including for a group of people who had not sorted out settled status post Brexit. Newham will soon have to decide whether to keep supporting them. Some want reconnection out of the UK but there are few commissioned reconnection services (Service provider)

The operation of the new Integrated Service

It is too early to comment on whether the newly procured integrated service will deliver on expectations, and there are no reasons to think that it will not. This remains an uncertainty at this point, and hence a risk.

The new IRSSS consortium is very exciting. The partners are all service focused and we are applying excellent national, clinical and ethical standards in what we do. But there will certainly be bumps and problems as we get going. (IRSSS service provider)

The service is now integrated so we can't just evict rough sleepers since the service would just have to pick them up again! This is good as we don't want a revolving door – we are now all in this together. (Council manager)

LBN should be applauded for setting up the IRSSS. There is a transformational element of the new partnership, which has a creative and broader approach. There is lots more to be done, and LB Newham and the service are just getting started. (IRSSS consortium service provider)

Missing policies and pathways

There are some areas of need and specialist services which are under-developed or missing in the current provision. This includes specialist women's homelessness services as many homeless women are hidden, forced to live in situations of domestic abuse or resort to succumbing to sex for rent demands, and other specific problems. This issue is currently being highlighted within the Homelessness Forum amongst other places

Lots of women who are homeless and at risk of rough sleeping are hidden. They get involved in sex for rent, sofa surfing, or prostitution. If they get identified, they sometimes ended up in services alongside violent men who threaten and abuse them (Third sector provider)

New political priorities and focus

There is no specific indication that the Mayor and the Labour Group members will lose interest in rough sleeping and divert attention and resources away from it. Nor does a change of the main party in power seem likely any time soon. Nevertheless, given the history of a lack of political priority given to rough sleeping in the borough, and the growing impact of gentrification in Newham, this should be flagged as a risk for the future, at the very least in terms of there being potentially less political and resource priority given to rough sleeping by the authority.

VIII. Brief concluding remarks

This report has provided a detailed analysis of the progress made by LB Newham in tackling rough sleeping over the past four years. The impact on the incidence of rough sleeping has been marked, although the latest figures suggest there remains an underlying core of entrenched and repeat rough sleepers. The presence of such a core is common to other authorities across the UK, and the types of new services put in place by Newham have a clear and well thought out approach to making inroads to the issues around those individuals. Getting to this point has been the result of a major joint effort on the part of local authority members, officers, and local agencies.

Some lessons can be learned, and shared with other local authorities and housing support agencies. In brief they are:

- Strong partnerships with third sector organisations
- Starting from scratch and not allowing previous policy/strategies to get in the way of innovation
- An approach of “compassion” and respect for the people directly affected
- Funding is key
- Data collection, analysis, and good record keeping creates viable pathways

None of these lessons are original; most are well known and in various places already highly developed. But the London Borough of Newham has done some innovative work in developing its own approach (including the MDS and the IRSSS); it has put these initiatives in place using very collaborative partnerships; it has stressed its community-based and “compassionate” approach; and has taken the time to thoroughly plan and implement the changes over a realistic time period. Its approach of good data analysis will show, over the next few years, how effective this work turns out to have been.

Annex 1: Interviewees and other meetings and events attended

2018-20		
Organisation	Sector	Times
Salvation Army project	Advice workers/service providers	1
LB Newham	Commissioner	4
LB Newham	Commissioner	4
LB Newham	Commissioner	1
LB Newham	Consultant commissioner	1
LB Newham	HPAS	1
LB Newham	LBN Outreach team	1
LB Newham	LBN Outreach team	1
LB Newham	Lead Commissioner	2
LB Newham	Outreach Team Manager	4
Anchor House/Caritas	Provider	1
Renewal Programme	Provider	1
Director of Support and Empowerment, Renewal	Provider	1
Newway Nightshelter project	Provider	1
Co chair Homelessness Action Group and Anchor House resident	Service user	2
LB Newham	Strategic Lead, HPAS	1
Thames Reach	Street Outreach Manager (incl. Newham)	2
Thames Reach	Street Outreach Manager (London wide)	1
Thames Reach	Street Outreach worker	2
Thames Reach	Street Outreach worker	1
SHP	Support provider	1
Bonny Downs	Third sector advice worker	1
Bridges Memorial Church Day Centre	Third sector day centre	1
No Second Night Out Hub	Third sector NSNR Hub staff	2
Service users	In outreach provider accommodation	9

2020-22		
LB Newham	Assistant Director	2
LB Newham	Assistant Director	3
LB Newham	Assistant Director	1
LB Newham	Strategic lead, HPAS	1
LB Newham	Outreach Team Manager	2
LB Newham	Outreach Team Member	1
LB Newham	Elected Member	1
LB Newham	Elected Member	1
Independent Advisor, Homeless link	Independent advisor	1
Independent Advisor, MHCLG	Specialist government advisor	1
Renewal Programme	Provider	1
Anchor House/Caritas	Provider overview	1
Anchor House/Caritas	Specialist provider manager	1

Anchor House/Caritas	Specialist provider manager	1
Anchor House/Caritas	Specialist provider team member	1
Bonny Downs	Provider	1
CGL	Provider	1

Events and meetings attended	
Overnight street counts	5
Homelessness Forum	8
Internal LBN strategic meetings	4
Internal LBN operational meetings	2
Internal LBN briefings (presenting)	1
Public meeting on Strategy consultation	1

Annex 2: Rough Sleeping Commitments in the Interim Strategy

The more detailed commitments around rough sleeping set out in the Interim (2019-21) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy plan are:

Establish a New Approach to Assessment for Low, Medium and High Risk Needs

The Council will seek to:

- Establish appropriate off street provision for rough sleepers that is flexible and responsive to need, including for those with no recourse for public funds.
- Ensure there is a single assessment process.
- Create tailored personalised service for individuals that will meet their needs.
- Invest in the development of the above.

Accommodating and Supporting Rough Sleepers towards Independence

The Council will seek to:

- Review and redesign rough sleeping temporary and emergency accommodation and support services, with a view to establish a sustainable and quality provision that prioritises the development of independence.
- Review the current Housing First initiative, with a view to establish a future approach that will work best for Newham.
- Consider a role for day services within the Newham rough sleeping system
- Build on existing relationship with the community and voluntary sector.
- Continue the provision of Immigration Advice and Support to those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Develop services to ensure that individuals have access to the best advice available regarding their legal status and the options available.
- Ensure that the instance of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping resulting due to a lack of joined up working between Health, Social Care, Criminal Justice, Housing and Rough Sleeping functions are addressed via the development of robust Service Level Agreements, pooled budgets and joint commissioning initiatives, as necessary.
- Assist EEA nationals to exercise treaty rights through access to work and the right to stay.

Providing Support to those in need to Prevent Reoccurring Homelessness in Order to Maintain Independence

The Council will seek to:

- Develop more supported housing, in particular to provide options for relieving homelessness and to provide a more compassionate and cost effective alternative to nightly paid and temporary accommodation
- Improve partnership working by engagement with the voluntary and faith based sectors to enable us to look at the issue of homelessness in the wider context of the problems that people face locally.
- Work with partners to review existing entry routes into rough sleeping i.e. prison, health, armed forces, with a view to redesigning the pathway.

Improve Data Collection and Analysis

The Council acknowledge there is a need for a more intelligent and strategic approach to data. Currently there is a lack of sufficient data to identify homelessness trigger points, full assess equity impact and to predict future trends in homelessness locally. The Council will:

- Review the current data being collected by commissioned services and the Council delivered

services.

- Develop a consistent format for data collection
- Scope a new analytical resource to provide insight into system performance
- Make effective use of historic data to better understand the drivers of homelessness and use this to inform the targeting of resources at groups and individuals at risk of homelessness.
- Collect data over a six-month period to understand who is approaching the service, what the key drivers of homelessness are, what the underlying issues are, how homelessness can and is being prevented and relieved. In addition, the Council will also seek to identify who is not using the service and understand why this is and how the service can be structured to reach groups that are not currently receiving service.
- Collect data over a six-month period to understand who is sleeping rough, what the key drivers of rough sleeping are, what the underlying issues are, how rough sleeping can be prevented, tackled, relieved and ended.
- After the six-month collection of data we will analyse the data and public the findings. We will also continue with data collection and use the analysis of the data to inform the five-year homelessness strategy to be published in December 2021.
- Widen the Rough Sleeping Needs Assessment to include Homelessness. Furthermore repeating the analysis when more data is available.
- Further understand the health inequity for homeless and rough sleepers

Establish a Rough Sleeping Pathway

The Council will:

- The Mayoral Taskforce will complete the ongoing work to develop a rough sleeper pathway.
- The recommendations will be implemented through commissioning and changes to internally delivered Council services.
- Continue to maximise grant funding.
- Review the quality of each intervention and ensure that there are contractual processes in place to ensure high quality service delivery, make necessary changes to achieve this and reduce rough sleeping.
- Work with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that there is an adequate joined up approach to both the prevention and relief of Rough Sleeping, in Newham.
- Continue to work with and develop the goodwill of the local third sector and faith based charities community that enables us to achieve the common aim of ensuring that rough sleepers are treated with dignity, respect and are holistically supported to make the necessary lifestyle changes to end their rough sleeping.
- To continue to engage with partners and review local and national best practice across the sector, adopting a 'what works' approach that enhances the borough's learning and expertise in ending rough sleeping.
- To energetically pursue funding opportunities that enable the Council to enhance existing provision and develop innovative solutions and initiatives to end rough sleeping.
- Ensure new pathways respond to the issues raised through improved equity analysis.

Establish a Stratford Specific Plan

The Council recognises that Stratford requires a tailored approach to Rough Sleeping that address a number of specific and unique challenges. The Council will seek to:

- Task the Mayoral Taskforce to develop and implement a specific Rough Sleeping plan for Stratford to prevent further new rough sleepers to the area and assist those currently rough sleeping into support services.
- Work with a range of stakeholder to develop the detail for the new action plan.

Annex 3: Rough Sleeping main commitments in the final strategy³⁰



1. Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets

Rough sleepers are often considered a homogenous community, defined only by the place in which they sleep, a measure used in no other part of society. In fact, their housing need could be the result of any number of factors, often complex and traumatic, with related problems such as substance misuse and mental health exacerbating other issues. It is easy to forget that people very rarely choose the path of rough sleeping: it's often an unfortunate consequence of a unique journey.

The Council has embraced a public health approach to rough sleeping. Through this approach we consider all the needs of the person and work to secure long term improvements in health and wellbeing, deal with longstanding inequalities, and prevent a return to rough sleeping and homelessness.

11 Transformation of rough sleeping services

The Council has the ambition to end rough sleeping in Newham. To achieve this, we are transforming our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion. We believe that a compassionate approach to supporting Rough Sleepers is required to rebuild trust with those who have fallen through our societal gaps and often experienced significant trauma. However, this approach requires a balance between providing tailored support and building the confidence required to maintain long-term independence.

As part of this service transformation, we sought to include the views and experiences of people with lived experience, which fed into the development of our strategy and commissioning of services. What people told us was:

- Losing their accommodation was the last thing to go. Restoring a roof for the night, whilst a platform for change, wouldn't be enough.
- People wanted to be part of the decisions made about their own future.
- Generic pathways didn't work for everyone.
- Many wanted to return to the lives they had before becoming homeless, with support to get back into work.
- Immigration advice and support was a key feature.

- It was clear that more complex rough sleepers required a model of care that wrapped around them, rather than expecting them to travel for services.
- Rough sleeping pathways for substance misuse and mental health were welcomed.
- Services should approach rough sleepers with care and compassion.

12 Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service (IRSS)

Taking these views into account, and in order meet the overarching aims, the Council has introduced an Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service. This model integrates accommodation and non-accommodation service covering; outreach, floating support, accommodation-based support and Housing First and will:

- Adopt a universal strength and assets-based assessment process for all rough sleepers to meaningfully understand the complex needs of the individual
- Provide suitable accommodation and personalised support services that provides an immediate route off the street but that also reflects their assessed needs
- Develop a person-centred plan that reflects and builds on their strengths, assets and hopes. This will cover their immediate next steps and the longer term to form the basis for their single service offer
- Develop and deliver innovative and evidence based biopsychosocial approaches to rebuilding people's security, confidence and, importantly, independence
- Enable a sense of belonging and purpose in their wider community
- Work with partners in health and across the system to ensure more joined up approaches to care, where the Rough Sleeper can access the right care at the right place at the right time
- Develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping in the borough

³⁰ The full set of strategy documents are available at <https://www.newham.gov.uk/housing-homes-homelessness/homelessness-rough-sleeping-strategy>

- Focus on improving longer term outcomes for Rough Sleepers particularly for those who are 'complex and entrenched', and not just a roof for a night
- Support Rough Sleepers with unclear immigration status to access available support and opportunities to find a sustainable route away from the street

3.3 The Newham Pathway

3.3.1 Assessment hub

The Council will open a new assessment centre, called Lady Helen Seymour House. Lady Helen Seymour House will provide temporary accommodation for 42 rough sleepers and the assessment unit will provide onsite wraparound health and care support, with external agencies such as GPs, substance misuse and mental health services.

The unit will provide:

- A central hub that will be able to accept people straight from the street and provide an immediate safe and secure space to assess their needs.
- A route to longer-term accommodation tailored to the individual needs of the person. This may include "Housing First" which is a programme that provides a stable home, with specialist floating support, for entrenched Rough Sleepers or specialist supported accommodation

- Accommodation for people after they are assessed and while support is put in place before they move onto next steps.
- Support for rough sleepers who do not need such intense residential care.
- The centre will act as a hub for those placed in social or private rented housing and will be a one-stop-shop where recovery plans can be developed and monitored.

3.3.2 How the Model Responds to Need, Equality and Disproportionality

The IRSS is the first fully commissioned rough sleeper service within the borough for several years. The service model is designed to support all resident who are experiencing multiple and intersecting disadvantage. The model adopts an approach that balances both the specific needs of individuals with the shared needs of the wider rough sleeper population.

The model has been enhanced in response to service user feedback.



SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES

- Drugs and alcohol
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Physical Health
- Immigration
- Education & Training
- Employment

ACCOMMODATION

- Emergency accommodation
- Supported accommodation
- Housing First
- PRS with Floating Support

ROUGH SLEEPERS

- Need (Minimum Dataset inc CHAOS Index & Outcomes Star)
- Aspirations and Strengths

3.4 Gender

The programme identified the need for a specific offer responding to the needs of women who were rough sleeping. This was rolled out in the summer of 2020 and has adopted a psychological and neurological approach to supporting vulnerable women who are rough sleeping. It is proving to be successful in supporting women and providing a better platform for further case work, and will therefore be continued, with the appointment of a dedicated officer to support the work.

3.5 Nationality

37% of those currently accommodated have unclear immigration status, although this figure masks the large proportion who have been supported to regularise their immigration status. Of those currently accommodated 44% have unclear immigration status. At times over the last 18 months this has been as high as 60% (May 2021).

To support these residents, the new service includes immigration advice and support for people who have unclear immigration status. While we acknowledge that some may not be willing to engage with our services, we are committed to support everyone we can within the means we have available. The Council maintains its opposition to the government's 'hostile environment' policy, referenced in the Windrush Council Motion, carried at Full Council in November 2018.

3.6 Health and wellbeing

COVID has underscored the importance of rough sleepers accessing medical care; as a result, we have ensured that 90% of currently accommodated rough sleepers are registered with a GP. The model currently being developed will build on the existing relationships with health, with further work taking place to enhance the health response. Further work is required to enhance existing approaches to infectious disease i.e. TB.

Newham has been embedding the principles of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach into the wider transformation of the rough sleeping service. The MEAM approach was established to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, and to avoid people falling through the gaps between service provision. Newham joined the MEAM Approach network in May 2020 to help design and deliver better coordinated services for people engaged with sex work. The approach to people engaged in sex work has previously been focussed on enforcement based and the new approach will build a 'support before enforcement' response that is underpinned by a greater understanding of trauma. The same principles will inform the Council's response to rough sleeping.

Workers in the IRSS will be expected and supported to broaden their skills over the length of the contract. Importantly, roles in this pathway are seen as an opportunity to improve health and care for rough sleepers, with workers being trained to deliver health and care. This would include STI tests and mental health first aid.

Significant additional investment has been made in mental health services in inner northeast London to provide rough sleeping specific support through Rough Sleeping Mental Health Services. Further transformation of the mental health offer is ongoing which enhances the pathway further.

Finally, enhancing the Adults Social Acre pathway was identified as a priority, ensuring that those eligible for a care act assessment and appropriate safeguarding support receive it in a timely manner. Resource has been identified to maintain the dedicated social worker which commenced in Q4 2020/21.

CASE STUDY: HOSPITAL DISCHARGE PILOT

A new out of hospital model is proposed for North East London. This includes a new team within the existing integrated discharge hub for those who are rough sleepers or at risk of rough sleeping. They will focus on supporting rough sleepers, sourcing step down accommodation where appropriate, and provide wider project management. Newham has led the bid for funding to support this model, and boroughs are awaiting the results of the bid

3.7 Substance Misuse

43% of rough sleepers being accommodated by the Council and currently on the street have been referred through to the national charity Change Grow Live with substance misuse issues. Change Grow Live's homelessness team offers substance misuse support, and medical and psychological support around complex issues such as mental ill health or sex working. The new model includes specific navigators to support people who are rough sleeping with substance misuse issues. In addition, the Council has separately enhanced the rough sleeping substance misuse pathway, which provides dedicated support to those motivated to change.

3.8 Future work and sustainability

We will continue to develop all areas of delivery to improve the lives of rough sleepers and work toward the target of zero people on the street. Particularly, we will further embed evidence-based multidisciplinary approaches, working across various departments and using a range of expertise to rebuild people's security, confidence and importantly independence. The vision continues to treat every individual with care and compassion, but also to understand their very specific needs and aspirations and not to see them as simply someone who sleeps on the street.

3.9 Move-on from hostels.

As the "everyone in" directive has ended, the emphasis is now on supporting all individuals accommodated into long-term sustainable accommodation. To facilitate this, we have created a dedicated move-on team, which will involve joint working between the rough sleeping service and HPAS to improve the single person's pathway.