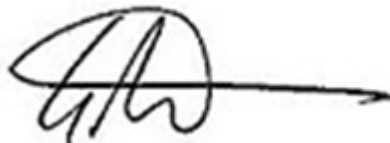


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Council Update on the Themed Debate on Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Cabinet Member for Better Homes	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b>  Full Council	<b>DATE</b>  21 <sup>st</sup> July 2025
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  This report provides an update on discussions held at the Full Council debate on homelessness and temporary accommodation on 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2025.  <b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b>  <b>Contact Officer</b> Isabelle Pearce 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG <b>Telephone</b> 020 7974 5199 <b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:isabelle.pearce@camden.gov.uk">isabelle.pearce@camden.gov.uk</a>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> The Council is asked to note the contents of the report.	



Signed, Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing

Date: 10/07/2025

## 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Council held a themed debate on homelessness and temporary accommodation in April 2025, in which the challenges of supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness was discussed. At this debate it was agreed that an update would be provided, specifically on the work of the Temporary Accommodation Taskforce and the progress of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.2. The four speakers invited to present at the beginning of the debate were; Vicky Fox, Doorstep Homeless Families Project, Michelle Binfield, Centre for Homelessness Impact, Francesca Albanese, Crisis and Abi Knight, Institute for Health Equity Report.
- 1.3. We were grateful for their attendance and the contributions to the debate were crucial. Their feedback has been taken into account and the TA Taskforce are specifically reflecting on comments from speakers regarding communication and support to families who are required to move temporary accommodation.
- 1.4. Challenges include:
  - 1.4.1. In Camden there has been significant increase in the demand for homeless assistance in 2025. Data from the service shows on average the homelessness service sees 400 approaches per month, this is up almost 40% from 2024.
  - 1.4.2. Unaffordability of purchasing properties and private sector rents in the Borough are at an all-time high with the main reason for homelessness between October and December 2024 being households losing their private rented home. The average private rent in Camden makes up 65% of median pay - with the unaffordability of the Borough having a direct impact on households approaching for homelessness support.
  - 1.4.3. Only 2.3% of properties across London are affordable within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) limits. None of these are in Camden. In addition, the Government have frozen Local Housing Allowance rates for 2025. In addition, there is a trend of landlords opting to sell properties rather than staying in the rental market.
  - 1.4.4. Camden have the highest waiting time for social housing of central London Boroughs with the waiting list growing by around 10% each year. Many people will never be housed, with others waiting years.
  - 1.4.5. Increasing homelessness approaches has resulted in a significant increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation - from 498 in 2019 to over 1000 in March 2025.

Limited move-on options mean households are staying in temporary accommodation for longer periods.

## **2. Temporary Accommodation Taskforce: Demand, Supply and Support**

- 2.1. The Temporary Accommodation Taskforce was formed in October 2024. The Taskforce aims to improve the day-to-day experience of residents living in temporary accommodation, and those at risk of homelessness, while alleviating the rising costs of temporary accommodation (TA) for the Council.
- 2.2. The Taskforce has been tackling Camden's over reliance on using costly commercial hotels such as Premier Inn & Travelodge for temporary accommodation. Camden has moved 180 households from commercial hotels to alternative, less expensive forms of temporary accommodation and as a result, Camden no longer have any homeless households accommodated in the Premier Inn or Travelodge hotels. This removes the need for households to move regularly between hotel bookings, providing more stability which is especially essential for families and has an annualised saving of £3.5 million.
- 2.3. The service no longer has any families in B&B temporary accommodation for over a 6-week period, the taskforce worked hard to bring the number down and will continue to monitor this.
- 2.4. Rates have been renegotiated with expensive nightly paid providers of temporary accommodation; the reduced rates are equivalent to £1.2 million annual saving.
- 2.5. Expensive nightly paid accommodation has been replaced with more affordable units, saving the council £750,000 annually.
- 2.6. There is a paper going to cabinet to consider steps to standardise rents across the temporary accommodation portfolio.
- 2.7. Quarter 1 has seen a 43% reduction in households being placed into temporary accommodation. The upcoming sprint project being run by the service will help us understand the new ways of working.
- 2.8. The construction of two new family hostels has commenced at Camden Road and Chester Road which will provide 89 hostel units, including studio units, 1 bed units, 2 bed units and some wheelchair adapted units. This work was delayed due to issues outside of the councils control but is now on schedule to be delivered Autumn/Winter 2026.
- 2.9. The Council has onboarded 20 new temporary accommodation property providers in the last 6 months, focusing on affordability and quality. This will improve the supply of quality temporary accommodation options which residents can be placed in.
- 2.10. Suitable void properties have been identified on regeneration sites and a small number in our general needs housing stock are to be relet as temporary accommodation on a short-life licence basis.

- 2.11. As households remain in temporary accommodation for longer, the Task Group is overseeing work to review the support offer to households living in temporary accommodation, including working closely with Adults and Children's Services on wider wrap around support, and utilising our floating support service to provide guidance and options on next steps.
- 2.12. The Housing Service has recently been restructured, and the role of Temporary Accommodation Officers has been adapted. The role will now visit households in temporary accommodation to undertake tenancy audits, property checks and deliver welfare support.
- 2.13. A Housing First scheme in partnership with Notting Hill Genesis and Westminster City Council comprising of 30 units of accommodation specifically for Camden including 10 council acquisitions, 10 Notting Hill Genesis acquisitions and bringing 10 Council general needs voids back into use. This Housing First scheme will provide a social housing tenancy and the wrap-around support for residents with a history of rough sleeping with multiple disadvantage to help them sustain tenancies and a life away from the streets.

### **3. Raise Camden Work for Children in TA**

- 3.1. The London Borough of Camden commissioned the UCL Institute of Health Equity to undertake an audit of child health equity in the borough, this report was published on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025.
- 3.2. The report found that poor housing and specifically temporary accommodation have considerable negative impacts on the health determinants of children in the borough and suggests that significant action is needed to support families in temporary accommodation in order to mitigate this.
- 3.3. A taskforce will be created by Public Health with the focus on improving the childhood experiences of those born into the most difficult situations.
- 3.4. One of the topics and outcomes of interest that the Taskforce will tackle is the effect of temporary accommodation on educational attainment.
- 3.5. This work will link into the work currently underway within the Temporary Accommodation Taskforce.

### **4. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030**

- 4.1. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a statutory requirement for local authorities, as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 4.2. Responding to a comprehensive review of homelessness in the borough, once finalised, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be our 5-year plan to rise to the complex challenge of homelessness in Camden. The draft Strategy is shaped around four priorities: preventing homelessness, supporting people who are experiencing homelessness, improving housing options for

homeless people, and campaigning for change nationally and sharing our learning.

- 4.3. The Strategy acknowledges that Camden cannot end homelessness alone: recognising relationships with communities and partner organisations as great assets in tackling homelessness, and that national reform is needed to truly deliver the change we want to see. As such, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes system reviews across Council services. While setting out ambitions for better integrating our services and designing them with and around the people who need them, the draft Strategy also has a strong focus on bringing partners and communities together to share learning and best practices, reduce stigma and increase early intervention, and build the case for local and national change.
- 4.4. The draft Strategy is currently in public consultation for a period of 14 weeks from 23 June and closing on 29 September 2025. Following consultation the final document will be submitted for approval to Cabinet on 10 December 2025.
- 4.5. Preparation work is taking place to ensure effective governance and action planning for the delivery of the new Strategy.

## **5. The Way We Work in Housing**

- 5.1. The Way We Work in Housing vision is to transform how we work with our residents, enhance the quality of our housing and repair services by being proactive, responsive, and empathetic. The scale of the national housing crisis means we are unable to meet the housing needs of the borough; however we can radically improve our service to residents by implementing our service standards and showing residents more empathy to improve satisfaction.
- 5.2. Additionally, this work includes careful consideration of how we support staff to deliver statutory services to families in dire need, especially where the number of people who need our service are increasing dramatically.
- 5.3. Our aim is to establish a practice model centred around trauma-informed reflective practice, providing a supportive framework for both frontline staff and their managers.
- 5.4. The Housing Policy, Performance and Assurance Team is currently working with Camden's Centre for Relational Practice to design a practice model which is sustainable, adaptable and can be embedded across the service.

## **6. Renters Rights Bill**

- 6.1. Central Government describes the Renters' Rights Bill as delivering their manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including the ending of Section 21 'no fault' evictions. They explain that the bill will improve the current system for both the 11 million private renters and 2.3 million landlords in England. It will give renters much greater security and

stability so they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities and avoid the risk of homelessness.

- 6.2. We expect the Renters Rights Bill to progress through Parliament in 2025. We welcome the Government's intention to provide tenants with more protection in the private rented sector, and we work closely with tenants, the Camden Federation of Private Tenants and other advocacy organisations to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights and seek support as early as possible. We are working with London Boroughs and London Councils to anticipate the impact of the Bill on the London housing market – but do not expect the Bill to significantly reduce the demand for homelessness in the short term, but might provide stability and increase quality in the sector over time.
- 6.3. Work continues to plan for the ascension of the Renters Rights Bills to Parliament. We aim to ensure risks, such as increasing demand on temporary accommodation and ability to find suitable private rented sector housing are mitigated through planning ahead.
- 6.4. The Council's sector leading Private Rented Housing Service has been preparing for the introduction of the bill, including creating a helpful website to keep renters informed of the content of the bill and the impacts it will have on them and their rights. This webpage will be kept updated as the bill progresses.
- 6.5. Services are working together to ensure communication for residents and enforcement of the bill are coordinated.

## **7. Homelessness Initial Assessment Process / Front Door**

- 7.1. To tackle increasing pressures on temporary accommodation placements it is crucial that we continue to focus on prevention and private rented sector placements to create sustainable, long-term impact.
- 7.2. The homelessness initial assessment or triage process has been redesigned and waiting times for a homeless appointment have reduced from 8 weeks to currently 2 weeks, this has been achieved by shifting resources and placing experienced officers at the first point of contact.
- 7.3. We hope to further lessen demand on TA by improving the customer journey at the front door and will therefore be carrying out an intensive solution focus piece of work in July.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The Council owes a homeless person (and their family) a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness, and to provide interim, temporary or long-term accommodation

- 8.2. The Council has a duty to provide a homeless applicant with interim or Temporary Accommodation while carrying out their inquiries if it has reason to believe that the person may be:
  - 8.2.1. Homeless
  - 8.2.2. Eligible for assistance
  - 8.2.3. In priority need
  
- 8.3. Failure to provide temporary accommodation to those entitled to it or insufficient provision of such accommodation may result in a breach of our statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996.

## **9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council spent £26.6m on temporary accommodation in 2024/25. This represents an overspend of £21.2m compared with budgets. This level of spend on temporary accommodation is financially unsustainable. It is a London-wide problem described by London Councils as an 'emergency' which 'threatens to bankrupt London Boroughs'. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that the Council both reduces the number of households requiring temporary accommodation and the unit cost of temporary accommodation. Some of the actions it is taking to achieve this are set out in section 2.

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no specific environmental implications.

**REPORT ENDS**