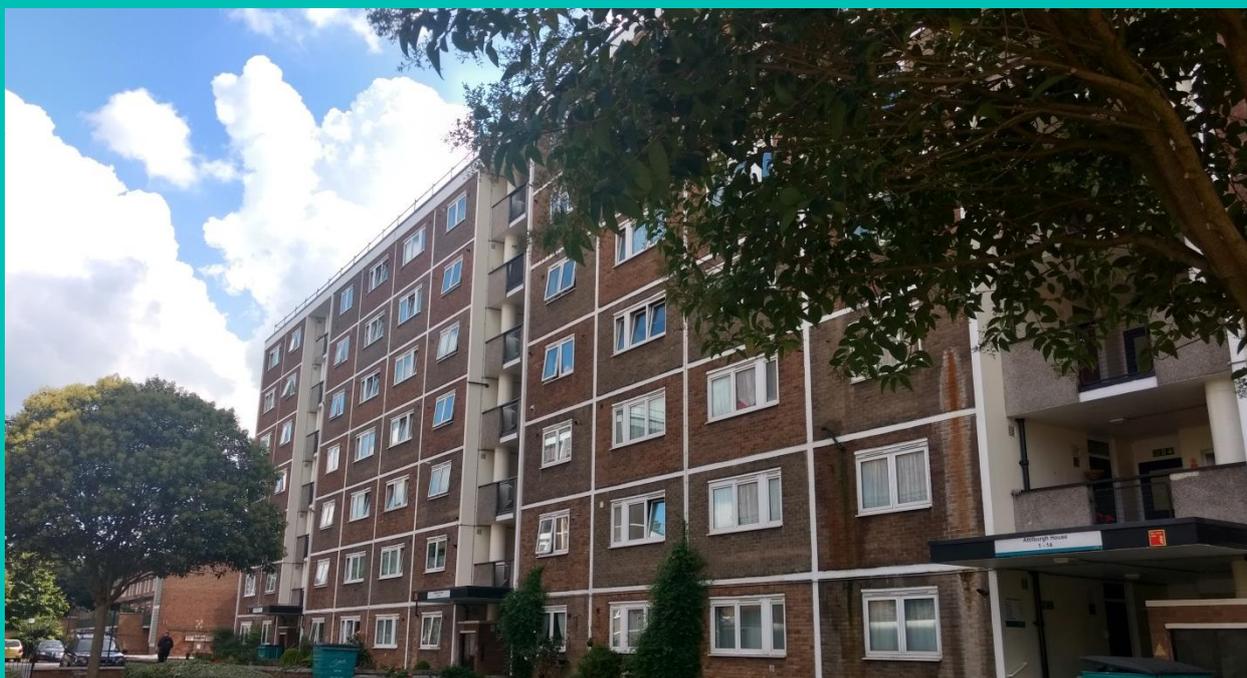


# SOUTHWARK HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

## 2018-2022

Draft 2 May 2018



# Contents

[Foreword](#)

[1. Introduction](#)

[2. Our vision](#)

[3. National and regional context](#)

[4. Southwark context](#)

[5. Strategic context](#)

[6. Summary findings from the Homelessness Review](#)

[7. 2018 – 2022 Strategic priorities](#)

[8. Equality and Health Analysis](#)

[9. Consultation](#)

[10. Governance and delivery of the strategy](#)

[11. Future Commissioning of Homelessness Services](#)

[12. Statutory duty](#)

Appendix two: Equality and Health Analysis

Appendix three: Review of Homelessness in Southwark

Appendix four: Appendix 4: Southwark Homelessness  
Strategy Action Plan 2018-22

# Foreword

I am proud to introduce this strategy for preventing and addressing homelessness in Southwark. Having access to good quality, affordable and secure housing sits at the very heart of every community and impacts every aspect from health through to education. Homelessness is the most extreme form of housing need which can have a devastating impact on people's lives and the wider community.

I am proud to say that Southwark Council and its partners led the way as an early adopter trailblazer, as England prepared for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. We have made a significant impact on preventing homelessness, but there is still a great deal to do.

The challenging national economic circumstances, welfare reforms and limited supply of affordable homes has created unprecedented and extremely difficult housing conditions for many households, and the problems a number of local vulnerable households face remain profound.

In response to these challenges, this new Strategy allows us to develop a comprehensive, longer-term vision for homelessness and housing advice services by going further than ever before with our prevention work. By working with partners in Children's & Adults' Services, Environment and Social Regeneration, other statutory and voluntary sector services, and neighbouring boroughs, we aim to deliver real improvements in the quality of life for homeless and potentially homeless people.

The cause and effect of homelessness and the provision of affordable, quality housing impacts on nearly every public service and sector of society. That is why this strategy has been developed to listen to all the stakeholders and to win the hearts and minds of all those that can help end homelessness in Southwark. Simply put, homelessness is everyone's responsibility.

Part of the homelessness solution is building on the solid foundation we have, celebrating the diversity and strengths across our public, private, voluntary and charitable sector partnerships. This strategy has therefore been developed in partnership with local residents and a wide range of valued partners.

The strategy reflects our strong commitment to early intervention and prevention, by continuing to invest in and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of front line homelessness services, and through working

with partners to ensure that homelessness is prevented as early as possible whenever possible.

This strategy was developed with the help of the Southwark Homelessness Forum, a body made up of many statutory and voluntary agencies working to prevent and tackle homelessness in Southwark. It is endorsed by Southwark Council, which provides strategic leadership on homelessness across the borough. I can assure you of the council's ongoing commitment to this agenda.

I look forward to continuing to work with all people involved to continue to reduce and tackle homelessness across Southwark. It's been a long time since we had a stand-alone Homelessness Strategy in Southwark, but we will use this to help us take a big step forward to an even more coordinated approach to engage and work with as many people as we can to help end homelessness in the borough.



Cllr Stephanie Cryan

Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation

“Simply put, homelessness is everyone's responsibility.”

# 1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area, and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness, based on the findings of the review.

Southwark last produced a stand-alone Homelessness Strategy in 2003. Following this, the Council took the decision to incorporate the homelessness strategy within the Housing Strategy, with a separate homelessness action plan, Southwark published its current Housing Strategy to 2043 which incorporated homelessness and housing advice.

Much has changed in that short space of time and with the backdrop of homeless applications increasing nationally, regionally and locally; it is time for a new strategy to coherently and comprehensively address this.

The timing of this strategy is particularly relevant as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is due to come into force in April 2018 and represents the biggest changes to homelessness legislation in 40 years.

The effectiveness of the Act, which has an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, is twinned with the effectiveness of partnership work with statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies. This ensures households' needs are met and that they are assisted as they engage and work through their personalised plans.

The Act also has a focus on helping households to access housing and we need to make sure that we have effective pathways to work collaboratively with and encourage households to secure their own accommodation.

Reducing homelessness is a key priority for Southwark Council. Southwark's Housing Strategy to 2043 states that our ambition is to break the cycle of homelessness, by working with vulnerable individuals and families to develop creative solutions to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Southwark has undergone significant socio-economic change over the past decade – an increasing population, regeneration and investment in our neighbourhoods.

Between 2004 and 2013, Southwark's population increased by 16% from 257,400 to 298,500. The latest mid-year estimate (2015) estimated the population at 308,901. The population is expected to increase by a further 15% over the next 10 years.

Southwark also has one of the higher population turnovers in London and is characterised by being a young, ethnically diverse population with 48% of its population being black and minority ethnic.

Southwark is located at the very heart of London. It has areas of great affluence, but also some areas of Southwark still rank as some of the most deprived in the country.

Against a backdrop of reduced funding, we need to radically rethink the way we tackle these challenges including the way people who are homeless are supported to regain their independence.

Since 2007, the increase in demand for affordable housing has been driven by the impact of the economic downturn, welfare reform under the Government, an increasingly unaffordable private rented sector, the long term social and affordable housing shortage, and restraints on local authority funding as a result of Government austerity measures. Therefore the pressures the Council faces in preventing homelessness have intensified.

In recognition of these facts, Southwark's Housing Strategy to 2043 set out ambitious plans to build 11,000 new council homes for social rent by 2043.

Despite these testing conditions, the Council has had some notable achievements in tackling homelessness:

## Five milestone achievements:

- 1,652 **homelessness preventions** in 2015/16 in addition to a further 112 cases relieved, placing Southwark 28<sup>th</sup> nationally and 4<sup>th</sup> in London in this regard.
- In 2015 and again in 2017 **Shelter were invited to critically review the service**. The outputs from this were to enable Southwark Council to take a considered view of the quality and standards of its homelessness and housing advice services and identify where improvement was required.
- Despite London experiencing an increase in **rough sleeping** of 43% between 2011/12 to 2015/16, Southwark has seen a gradual fall of 11% in rough sleepers over this period.

- Southwark successfully bid for funding to become one of three early adopter **trailblazer** local authorities in 2016. We are now in the process of expanding our homelessness service and systems to trial new approaches based on the framework of the impending Homelessness Reduction Act. In October 2017 Southwark was awarded a prize at the London Homelessness Awards for showing innovation, sustainability and commitment to helping reduce homelessness in London.
- In 2017 Southwark's Housing Solutions service achieved the nationally recognised accreditation award of **Customer Service Excellence**. The assessment included a thorough review of its customer services which involved seeing customer journeys first hand, reviewing documentary evidence and meeting with Housing Solutions staff and stakeholders.

Despite the progress made, a significant number of Southwark households remain at risk of becoming homeless and demand on borough services continues to grow.

As well as the traditional drivers of homelessness, the ongoing impact of welfare reform, particularly the restriction in financial support for housing costs has severely affected the ability of low income families to maintain their tenancies or source alternative sustainable and affordable accommodation within the borough. This is a trend which is likely to continue.

This strategy set out how Southwark and our partners will address the challenges identified through preventing homelessness and assisting homeless households to find affordable and sustainable housing solutions.

## 2. Our vision

Southwark Council's main goal is to provide a *fairer future for all*. We remain committed to preventing and reducing homelessness, tackling the main causes of homelessness and supporting those in need.

The new Homelessness Strategy is a response to a period of unprecedented change, including the impending Homelessness Reduction Act, public services facing significant financial challenges and social housing and welfare reforms. It builds on the recent achievements, whilst responding and adapting to the changing environment in which homelessness and support services are delivered.

The primary strategic focus is on finding long term sustainable housing solutions for people threatened with homelessness; offering high quality and innovative services to homeless households; and working with homeless households to explore the full range of housing options available to them.

The pressures on local authority budgets and the financial challenges facing the public sector in general means the design of our services and the solutions available needs to be efficient and with the aim of maximising positive outcomes affordably.

As a result, we are investing resources into continually improving online systems and the amount of information and advice on our website to increase the levels of self-service and access. At the same time, we know that we deal with some of the most vulnerable households and we will provide a full range of access to our services in consideration of their needs.

Our overall aim for this Strategy is to;

**“deliver an innovative, leading and accessible service to prevent homelessness and assist homeless households in finding long term affordable and sustainable housing”**

### The main strategic objectives:

1. to offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households and households threatened with homelessness,
2. to use our position as a leading trailblazer authority to make a positive contribution to national policy around homelessness and welfare reform,
3. to work collaboratively in finding long-term housing solutions for people threatened with homelessness.

In order to achieve these objectives, we have broken these down into five strategic priorities to focus on over the duration of this strategy.

These priorities have emerged from a combination of findings from the Homelessness Review, consultation and workshops and local and national contexts – as a response to the ongoing welfare reforms and changing legislation, in particular the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The five strategic priorities are:

#### Priority One:

##### Homelessness prevention.

We will deliver a leading prevention service through the early adopter trailblazer project in preparation of meeting the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

#### Priority Two:

##### Tackle rough sleeping.

We will use the Rough Sleeping Prevention Trailblazer funding to continue to make even more progress at tackling rough sleeping in Southwark.

### **Priority Three:**

#### **Vulnerability and Health.**

We will ensure our services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse.

We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equip them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur.

We will end the use of nightly rate (bed and breakfast style) temporary accommodation with shared facilities for homeless families.

### **Priority Four:**

#### **Responding to the local housing market.**

We will respond to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to households and landlords to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.

### **Priority Five:**

#### **Responding to the Welfare Reforms.**

We will work closely in partnership with support agencies and local services to offer solutions that ensure households are able to maintain tenancies and their homes sustainably.

# 3. National and regional context

## National and regional homelessness trends

*The Homelessness Monitor: England 2017*, commissioned by Crisis provides an excellent overview of the current national and regional context in terms of homelessness.

The report shows that Homelessness acceptance rates have gone up nationally and regionally in recent years. At nearly 58,000, annual homelessness acceptances were some 18,000 higher across England in 2015/16 than in 2009/10. With a rise of 6 per cent over the past year, acceptances now stand 44 per cent above their 2009/10 low point.

The numbers of people sleeping rough has been increasing nationally and in London for a number of years. An ongoing upward trend in officially estimated rough sleeper numbers remained evident in 2016, with the national total up by 132 per cent since 2010. Statistics routinely collected by the 'CHAIN' system similarly show London rough sleeping having more than doubled since 2010.

The vast bulk of the recorded increase in statutory homelessness in recent years is attributable to the sharply rising numbers made homeless from the private rented sector, with relevant cases having almost quadrupled over the period – from less than 5,000 to almost 18,000. As a proportion of all statutory homelessness acceptances, such cases had consequentially risen from 11 per cent to 31 per cent since 2009/10.

Since bottoming out in 2010/11, homeless placements in temporary accommodation have risen sharply, with the overall national total rising by 9 per cent in the year to 30 June 2016; up by 52 per cent since its low point five years earlier. While accounting for only 9 per cent of the national total, bed and breakfast (B&B) placements have been rising even faster, and now stand almost 250 per cent higher than in 2009. Signs of stress are also evident in the growing proportion of temporary accommodation placements beyond local authority boundaries: now representing 28 per cent of the national total, up from only 11 per cent in 2010/11. Such placements mainly involve London boroughs.

Summary of Homelessness Statistics	2009/10	2014/15	2015/16	% change 2014/15-2015/16	% change 2009/10-2015/16
Rough sleeping in England – snapshot (1)	1,768	3,569	4,134	16	134
Rough sleeping in London – annual (2)	3,673	7,581	8,096	7	120
Local authority statutory homelessness cases – annual (3)	89,120	112,350	114,780	2	29
Local authority statutory homelessness acceptances – annual (4)	40,020	54,430	57,740	6	44
Local authority homelessness prevention and relief cases (5)	165,200	220,800	213,300	-3	29
Total local authority homelessness case actions (6)	205,220	275,230	271,050	-2	32

Sources: (1)-(6) Department for Communities and Local Government; (2) Greater London Authority.

Notes: (1) Numbers estimated by local authorities on given date (based on counts in a minority of local authorities); '2009/10' figure is for Autumn 2010; (2) Numbers recorded as sleeping rough at least once during financial year; (3) Homelessness applications processed under statutory procedures; (4) Households formally assessed as 'unintentionally homeless and in priority need'; (5) Instances involving non-statutory assistance provided to homelessness applicants in retaining existing accommodation or securing a new tenancy; (6) Rows (4) + (5).

## National and regional policy and guidance

The timing of this homelessness strategy is particularly relevant in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act which received Royal Assent in April 2017 and is scheduled to commence in April 2018.

**The Homelessness Reduction Act** will see changes to the way homelessness advice and assistance is provided by local authorities in the future.

The aim of the Act is to expand the current homelessness duties set out in the **Housing Act 1996** (as amended, see [Section 12](#) for further details of the main duties). This was to ensure that local authorities provide meaningful advice and assistance to those people who do not fall into a priority need category or who have been found to be intentionally homeless.

In particular this is likely to have a positive impact for singles or couples with no children where previously legislation had not prescribed much to assist this large group.

Southwark is one of three early adopter trailblazer local authorities, along with Newcastle and Manchester, which are trialling and developing new services reflecting the reforms to provide early feedback to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Act introduced the following:

- The definition of being threatened with homelessness be extended from 28 days to 56 days
- Local authorities must accept a valid 'Section 21' notice as evidence that the tenant is threatened with homelessness
- The creation of a stronger advice and information duty
- Duty to assess all eligible applicants' cases and agree a plan (known as the 'personal housing plan')
- The creation of a stronger prevention duty for anyone threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance
- A new relief duty which is available to all those who are homeless, have a local connection and eligible regardless of whether they have a priority need. It requires councils to take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Those who have a priority need (for example they have dependent children or are vulnerable in some way) will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the council carries out the reasonable steps.
- Duties to help to secure accommodation

- Incentivise people to engage in prevention and relief work by allowing local authorities to discharge their prevent and relief duties if an applicant unreasonably refuses to cooperate with the course of action proposed

- A right to a review at the prevention, relief and main duty stages to ensure local authorities are held to account

- A requirement to collect data in order to monitor the overall effectiveness of the new legislation

- Explore options for further enforcement such as through the creation of a regulator of housing and homelessness services

The Council already takes steps at an early stage to assist those threatened with homelessness however; the additional requirements necessitated a re-design of the homelessness service.

In addition, a number of other Acts in recent years have shaped the national framework for homelessness services.

**Localism Act 2011:** the Localism Act came into force in November 2012 and supports the improvement of local housing options. The Act contained a number of key provisions relevant to homelessness including the power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation.

**Welfare Reform Act 2012:** the Welfare Reform Act 2012, aimed to simplify the benefits system and help more people into work. The Act introduced the following changes that have had an impact on the availability and affordability of housing:

- Changes to the local housing allowance rates left fewer tenants being able to meet their rental costs through housing benefit
- The shared accommodation rate (SAR) was extended to those aged 25-34 meaning fewer single people were able to afford to rent accommodation unless it was shared accommodation. The SAR limits for single people aged under 35 have already had a marked impact in reducing (by some 40%) their access to the private rented sector.<sup>1</sup>
- The introduction of the under-occupation charge (bedroom tax) for working age social rented tenants
- The introduction of the council tax support scheme in place of council tax benefit meant all households now had to pay something towards their council tax bill

1

[https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236823/homelessness\\_monitor\\_england\\_2017.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236823/homelessness_monitor_england_2017.pdf)

- The introduction of a benefit cap, restricting the amount of benefits a household can receive
- The introduction of Universal Credit. There are continuing concerns about the many difficulties that the administrative arrangements for Universal Credits pose for vulnerable households.

**Deregulation Act 2015:** the Deregulation Act 2015 introduced protection for private rented tenants against so called retaliatory evictions. Retaliatory eviction is where a tenant makes a legitimate complaint to their landlord about the condition of their property and instead of making the repair; the landlord serves them with an eviction notice. All new assured shorthold tenancies starting on or after 1 October 2015 are covered by the provisions in the Act.

**Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016:** the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 reduced the benefit cap set by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 in London to £23,000 per year for couples and lone parents and £15,410 per year for single people. Under the Act, certain social security benefits and child tax credits have been frozen for four years from April 2016. In addition and social housing rents have to be reduced by 1% per year for 4 years from April 2016.

The lower benefit cap will make it highly problematic for larger families, not just in London, but across the country, to find affordable housing.

**Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2018):** Housing authorities are required to have due regard to this statutory guidance in exercising their functions relating to homelessness and prevention of homelessness and applies the statutory duties in practice.

The Code of Guidance sets out in detail the duty to formulate a homelessness strategy and what an effective strategy should include. This is especially significant as the guidance has been produced in response to the impending Homelessness Reduction Act and as a result, it explains how the new legislation should be applied.

**Housing and Planning Act 2016:** the Housing and Planning Act 2016 contains measures that could have an impact on social housing and homelessness. Some of the provisions in the Act are yet to come into force. The Act includes:

- The extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants
- Local authorities may be required to sell their higher value homes as they become vacant, impacting on the supply of social housing (though the future of this is uncertain)

- Local authority tenants with higher incomes were going to be required to pay a higher rent, this has now been made optional for local authorities

- Measures to tackle rogue landlords in the private sector including banning orders, a national database of rogue landlords and the extension of when a tenant can apply for a rent repayment order

- Private landlords will be able to regain possession of a property they believe has been abandoned without a court order.

**National Planning Policy Framework:** The Framework

acts as guidance for local planning authorities both in drawing up Local Plans and making decisions about planning applications.

The Framework sets out that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries.

The Framework asks local authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the Framework. The Framework asks local planning authorities to plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

**Select Committee Inquiry into Homelessness:** in December 2015, a Government Select Committee launched an inquiry into homelessness following evidence that homelessness and in particular, rough sleeping was increasing. The Committee concluded that the Government must:

- Take steps to improve homelessness data collection
- Explore measures to give greater confidence both to tenants and landlords to encourage them to let to homeless people including reviewing local housing allowance levels and encouraging landlords to offer longer assured shorthold tenancies
- Review the definition of affordable housing to reflect local needs
- Recognise that many 18/21 year olds are at risk of homelessness and where they have lost their job, to have a 'grace period' before the housing element of Universal Credit is withdrawn
- Allow all recipients of housing support to have their housing benefit paid directly to their landlord

- Consider setting a statutory duty to provide meaningful support to single homeless people who can prove a local connection

- Monitor the practice of housing homeless families away from their local area

- Review the funding of mental health services for homeless people

- Review the level of refuges for victims of domestic violence

- Review the level of hostel provision for single homeless people

- Exempt all supported accommodation schemes from the proposed rent cap.

**Housing White Paper – Fixing our broken housing market (February 2017):** the paper covers the whole house building process, from finding sites to securing local support and permission as well as getting homes built quickly and sold on fair terms.

**No Second Night Out (NSNO):** A strategy for rough sleeping was set out by a Ministerial working group in a 'Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide', published in July 2011. Southwark developed a NSNO pathway which supports the Government's vision.

**London Housing Strategy (Draft) September 2017:** The strategy targets the affordability of accommodation in London and the crisis this is causing such as an increase in temporary accommodation. It outlines a vision for housing associations, councils, institutional investors, and small builders to play a far bigger role – and for City Hall to play a greater part in bringing land forward for building new homes.

It sets out the importance of more higher density homes across the city, and more high-quality homes at a stable rent. Above all, it sets out the importance and necessity of building more genuinely affordable homes for Londoners to rent and buy.

In the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire the strategy has a greater emphasis on everyone's homes being safe. The strategy calls on Government to devolve powers so that ambitious councils and housing associations are enabled to build more homes, supported by a long-term, stable and devolved funding settlement from Government.

**Health & Social Care Act 2012:** Each local authority has a legal duty under this Act to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Housing authorities should ensure that their homelessness strategy is co-ordinated with the Health and Wellbeing

Strategy, and that their review of homelessness informs and is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

**Children Act 1989:** The Act specifies the duties local authorities have to accommodate children under the Act if

- no one has Parental Responsibility for the child;
- the child is lost or abandoned;
- the person who has been caring for the child is unable to provide suitable care and accommodation; or
- the child is 16 or 17 years old and the Local Authority considers the child's welfare would be seriously threatened if it does not provide accommodation.

Further guidance was produced for provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people, following a landmark legal case against Southwark in 2009.

**Care Act 2014:** The Act is concerned with meeting the needs of adults with care and support needs, and the support needs of their carers.

Consideration of the Care Act on homelessness is relevant when:

- establishing priority need
- showing accommodation is not reasonable to continue to occupy
- preventing homelessness through the provision of services or care that enables an adult to remain in accommodation
- improving priority on an allocations scheme
- defending a possession claim, and
- obtaining supported housing or a place in a care home.

**Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended):** When a person who has been detained under sections 3, 37, 45A or 47 of the Mental Health Act ceases to be detained, the former patient must be provided with aftercare services under section 117 of the Act.

Before providing aftercare services, social services must carry out an assessment of the needs of the previously detained person, and decide which (if any) services are required to meet those needs.

Ordinary accommodation cannot be provided under section 117. Accommodation can only be provided where it:

- meets a need related to the person's mental ill health, and
- reduces the risk of the person's condition deteriorating.

The person has the right to express a preference for particular accommodation. Social services must meet this preference provided it is:

- of the same type that social services has decided to arrange
- suitable for the adult's needs
- available
- affordable, using a 'top-up' if necessary (see below)

# 4. The Southwark context

## Population

Southwark is a densely populated, geographically small and narrow inner London borough that stretches from the banks of the river Thames to the beginning of suburban London south of Dulwich. The population is relatively young, ethnically diverse, with significant contrasts of poverty and wealth. There is wide distribution in educational achievement, access to employment and housing quality. Major regeneration programmes have been underway for some time leading to significant changes in landscape and population structure and this continues to be the case. Major health indicators such as mortality and life expectancy have improved, but there are significant inequalities in these indicators for people living in different parts of the borough.

The Census 2011 recorded Southwark's resident population at 288,200, which is an increase of 18% since 2001. The latest mid-year estimate (2015) estimated the population at 308,901. By 2039, it is estimated that Southwark's resident population will have grown by approximately 26% to 390,000 individuals. The adult population aged 18-64 is expected to see the largest growth followed by the under 18 and 65+ population.

The population is highly mobile. 13% of residents move out of the borough and 13% move in each year. Those moving out are most likely to move to Lambeth and Lewisham. Movement within the borough has been high, however it is reducing.

Many people in their 20s and 30s come to work and live in the borough. Southwark's population is predominantly young: 42% are aged 20 to 39 years old compared with 35% in London and 27% in England; 58% of Southwark's population is aged 35 or under. Southwark has the 9th highest population density for boroughs in England and Wales.

Southwark is ethnically diverse with the highest proportion of residents born in Africa in the country (12.9 per cent), as well as significant populations from Latin America, the Middle East, South East Asia and China.

75% of reception-age children are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups with over 120 languages spoken in Southwark. In 11% of households nobody speaks English as a first language.

There continues to be an over-representation of BME households that approach homelessness services for support.

## Socio-economic

Southwark is undergoing a rapid change in its socio-economic profile with a rapidly developing local economy that has a strong representation in growth sectors such as business services, technology and creative industries. Its schools and parks and other improvements to the social wellbeing of the area have all made Southwark a particularly attractive place to live.

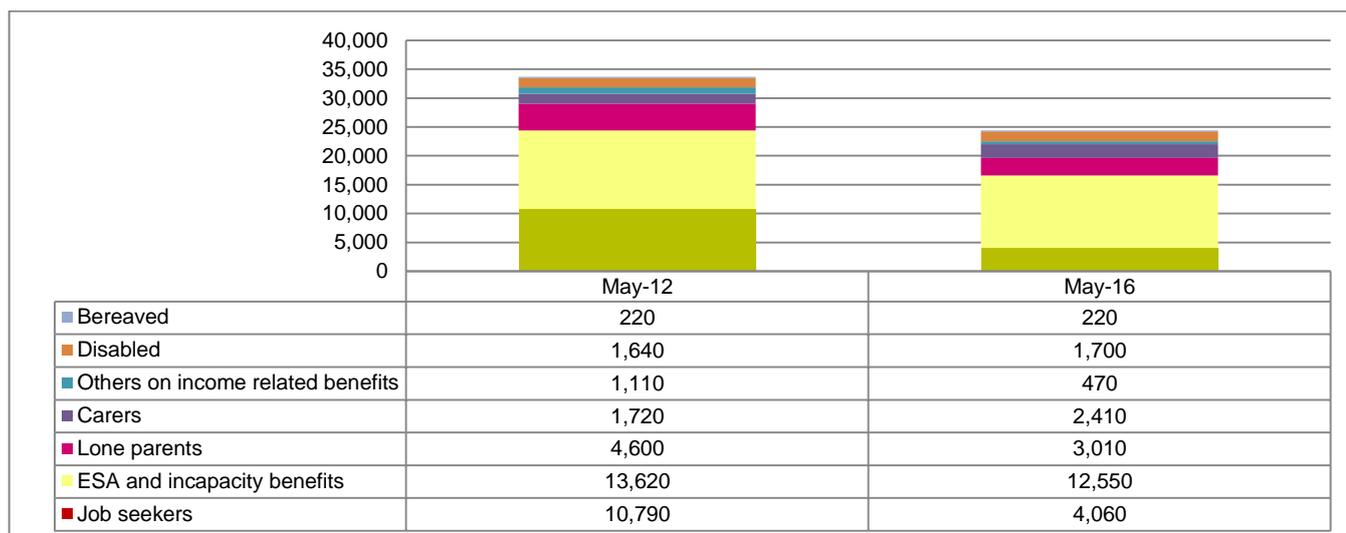
However, this is having an extra-inflationary impact on the costs of housing and has changed the expectations and demands tenants are making of the market and of the Council.

Yet in 2015, Southwark was ranked the 23rd most deprived local authority in England (out of 326) and the 9th most deprived borough in London (out of 33) according to The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

In September 2016 Southwark's unemployment rate was 6.9% compared to a London average of 6.0% and a national rate of 4.9% with 24,420 of working age residents (10.8%) claiming a key out of work benefit (these include JSA, ESA / Incapacity Benefit and other income related benefits).

Between May 2012 and May 2016 the number of working age benefit claimants in Southwark reduced by 28%. The data below shows that the main reduction has been in Job Seekers Allowance claimants with fewer than half the claimants in 2016, than in 2012.

**Chart 1 - Comparison of working age benefits claims in Southwark (May 2012 and May 2016)**



Source: NOMIS

### Carers

According to the 2011 Census, 7.1% (20,725) of Southwark's residents were providing unpaid care for a family member or friend. Nearly a quarter of the unpaid carers (4,748) were providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care per week. A further 3,446 were providing 20 to 49 hours per week.

### Health and wellbeing

Male life expectancy is 78.2 years compared to 78.5 years in England. Female life expectancy is 83.4 years compared to 82.5 years in England.

There is higher incidence of emergency hospital admissions due to alcohol related conditions, high rates of teenage pregnancy and HIV, high rate of premature deaths from cancer and cardio-vascular diseases and high prevalence of mental illness in the local population. Coronary heart disease, cancers and respiratory diseases remain the top three causes of death in the population. Disease prevalence models have shown that there are high numbers of undetected cases of diabetes, hypertension and heart disease in Southwark population. Socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poor housing result in high rate of child poverty and social exclusion which subsequently contribute to poor physical and mental health manifesting health inequalities.

Groups most at risk of suffering from poor wellbeing include older women, older teenagers (particularly girls),

people with a disability, people with a chronic illness, people in significant financial hardship and people who are unemployed (particularly men).

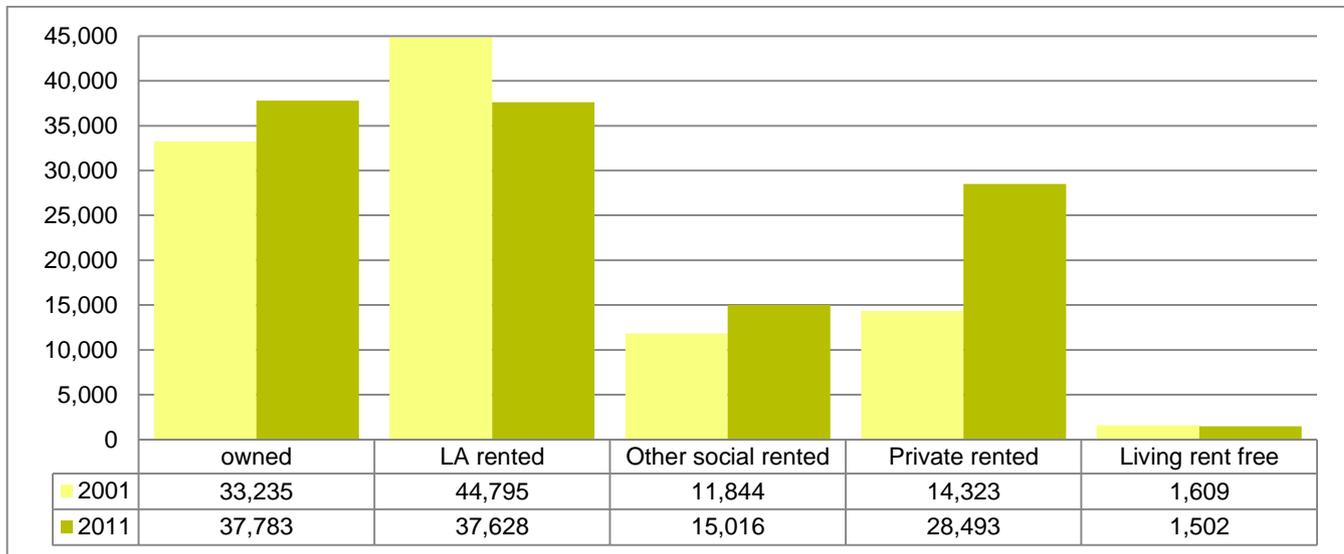
An unpublished report titled Southwark Single Homeless Health Needs Audit (2016) evidenced that the main primary cause for homelessness for this cohort is leaving institutional care, particularly for men. This was closely followed by parents, friends or relatives no longer being able to accommodate. Linked to this, the most common secondary causes for homelessness are due to mental or physical health problems, followed by drug and alcohol problems. In the Southwark Health Needs survey mental health problems were more prevalent than physical health problems, and were also more of a long term problem in comparison.

### Housing tenure

Nationally (England and Wales), Southwark has the largest proportion of council tenants although this has been changing.

31.2% of households in the borough currently rent a home from the local authority; down from 42.3% in 2001. The 2011 Census showed that the local authority rented tenure is no longer the largest, having been overtaken by the owner occupied tenure. Proportionally, the private rented sector is the fastest growing sector as illustrated in the following chart:

**Chart 2 – Comparison of Southwark housing tenure (2001 and 2011)**



In response to the growing demands for housing in the borough, Southwark’s Housing Strategy to 2043 set out ambitious plans for building 11,000 new council homes for social rent by 2043 (including 1,500 by 2018).

# 5. Strategic context

This section sets out the strategies across the council and that of our partners and highlights relevant sections which impact on our strategy.

## Council Plan 2014 to 2018 Summer 2016 refresh

As the overall plan for the organisation, the council plan describes how we will deliver on our vision of a fairer future for all, by making promises and commitments to the people of Southwark based on our core values.

The fairer future promises include delivering value for money and the delivery of quality affordable homes. Linked to these is the plan to 'manage homelessness and temporary accommodation effectively, leading to better outcomes for residents' and to 'have a lettings policy that means that 50 per cent of all new council homes go to people from that area, with the rest going to other Southwark residents'.

The promise for a safer community includes a commitment to deliver a Domestic Abuse Strategy (see *Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-2020* further on in this section for details).

## Customer Access Strategy 2017 refresh

This strategy sets out the plans for the transformation of council services from a customer access perspective.

The plan is to have improved access to online services and takes account of the requirements for vulnerable households who are less likely to be able to access online services.

## Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043

The strategy has four simple principles at its heart:

1. We will use every tool at our disposal to increase the supply of all kinds of homes across Southwark.
2. We will demand the highest standards of quality, making Southwark a place where you will not know whether you are visiting homes in private, housing association or council ownership.
3. We will support and encourage all residents to take pride and responsibility in their homes and local area.
4. We will help vulnerable individuals and families to meet their housing needs and live as independently as possible.

All four principles have a direct or indirect impact on homelessness, but the fourth principle has the most direct commitments:

- Preventing homelessness wherever possible through self reliant individuals and resilient communities
- Working in partnership locally and across London to bring an end to rough sleeping in Southwark.

## Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-2020

The Strategy sets out a clear statement of intent that abuse is not acceptable. Its recommendations are managed through the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Group. This includes prevention, early intervention and enforcement in relation to both men and boys.

The VAWG Delivery Group includes representatives from partnerships across Southwark including Housing Solutions.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARACs) are identified as one of the most effective approaches in the identification, assessment and multi agency response to high risk cases of domestic abuse. Information about the risks faced by these victims is shared by relevant agencies (i.e. health, housing, social services) in detail and decisions are made to increase their safety, health and wellbeing, for both the adults and their children.

## Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2018) states that each local authority has a legal duty under the Health & Social Care Act 2012 to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Housing authorities should ensure that their homelessness strategy is co-ordinated with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and that their review of homelessness informs and is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Homelessness and health are closely related: poor health is both a cause and a result of homelessness. People who are homeless are three to six times more likely to become ill than housed people. The strategy requests collaboration with partners on the following relevant areas:

- Make every home warm, dry and safe - Health and Voluntary Sector professionals are asked to report rogue landlords and letting agencies so that tough enforcement action can be taken.
- Increase the resilience and capacity of our communities - Southwark Council will promote resident involvement and provide advice to tenants on their rights and responsibilities. The voluntary sector and community groups are asked to help vulnerable tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Support young people who are vulnerable and ensure their transition into adulthood is positive - Partners are asked to work together to support the provision of quality debt advice particularly those affected by welfare reform. Partners are asked to undergo shared training on homeless protocols.

### Quarterly Homelessness Forum

Southwark's homelessness forum represents a partnership between the council and the wider local public, voluntary and charitable sectors. It allows discussions about issues that affect homeless people and how services are responding to these. The forum meets on a quarterly basis with the aim of ensuring that current and future services for homeless and potentially homeless people in Southwark:

- Meet national and local homelessness standards;
- Are high quality and maximise opportunities for homelessness prevention;
- Meet the needs of a range of homeless people, including those of rough sleepers, families, people with disabilities or ill health and victims of domestic violence;
- Provide value for money;
- Learn from and share models of good practice locally and further afield;
- Offer choice where possible;
- Maintain a high level of awareness about housing options and homelessness amongst partner agencies;
- Contribute to the delivery of other local and national strategies, plans and objectives across housing, regeneration, health and wellbeing, and social care.

The forum is co-chaired by the voluntary sector and the Council, and plays an important role in helping to develop Southwark's Homelessness Strategy.

From 2017, a sub-group from the forum will be monitoring the delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer.

### The (Draft) Strategic Planning Policy

This is currently being consulted on and aims to ensure that regeneration and development provide the best outcomes and opportunities for all our residents. It will ensure physical change goes hand in hand with positive social change through using the strategy and policies set out in the New Southwark Plan.

Some of the aims are particularly relevant to homelessness as they look to give local residents the skills and opportunities they need to support themselves independently in the borough:

- Strengthening and supporting cohesive and empowered local communities;
- Supporting our residents to take advantage of the employment and education opportunities that new development brings; both in construction and in completed developments.
- To use every tool at our disposal to increase the supply of all different kinds of homes and endeavour to secure 50% of all new homes as affordable homes.

### Southwark's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy "Common Purpose Common Cause" 2017-2022

The vision of the strategy is to support a sustainable, confident and resourceful voluntary and community sector that can work alongside the public and private sector to deliver the best outcomes for Southwark residents.

It acknowledges that some voluntary organisations are primarily involved in specific types of service delivery and have much in common with housing and health services.

The strategy accepts there will be 'no new money in the future' because of tough financial challenges and this means we all have a responsibility to reduce duplication between services, commission efficiently and reduce demand on intensive interventions (e.g. hospital and care homes).

### Southwark's Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22

This sets out four key areas to be addressed:

- Employment and skills;
- Business;
- Thriving town centres and high streets;
- Financial wellbeing.

Its relevance to homelessness stems from the aspirations to help residents find secure employment and have the skills to progress beyond entry-level.

A stronger economic environment, a fair wage and residents with the skills to support themselves with the cost of childcare will all contribute to preventing homelessness.

This will be achieved by working with employers to promote the London Living Wage, helping businesses grow, and investing in Southwark Works, a team of specialist employment advisors, which helps people affected by welfare reform and people trying to get back into work such as those with health related barriers, young people and single parents.

### **(Draft) Adult Social Care Business Plan 2018**

This document sets out the vision and priorities for the period April 2018 to an as yet undetermined date and follows-on from the Vision first developed in 2015.

It highlights the challenge and significance of integration of services, including housing. The strategic priorities include prevention delivered by Southwark's voluntary and community sector. Another strategic priority is the provision of community and accommodation based support.

Relevant goals include ensuring effective monitoring and management of Extra Care and Step Down accommodation options and a review out of borough placements with a view to arranging appropriate Southwark based accommodation.

### **Joint Mental Health Strategy 2018**

To aim of the strategy is to set the direction of the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in relation to the delivery of better mental health user and population-based outcomes for Southwark.

Relevant objectives include promoting public health messages around the benefits of healthy workplaces, physical activity, healthier high streets and prevention of homelessness to ensure that residents in Southwark are supported to make better lifestyle choices and take control over their mental health and wellbeing.

One of the core aims is to improve support for people with mental health issues who have multiple needs such as substance misuse, homelessness and physical health issues and ensure that they get the help they need and do not slip through gaps between services.

# 6. Summary findings from the Homelessness Review

In developing this Strategy, a comprehensive review of homelessness in Southwark has been undertaken. This included both primary research and an in-depth desk-top analysis of data from the council and other agencies to identify key issues and trends. Research undertaken also included primary research with service users and analysis of relevant research in homelessness and associated areas. The full details can be viewed in the Homelessness Review which is available on the Southwark Council website at:

[www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service)

## In summary, the key findings were:

- In 2015/16, Southwark's net spend on homelessness services was approximately £3m.
- The number of homelessness applications Southwark has received has increased considerably since 2013/14 to 2015/16.
- At the same time, the rate of households accepted as homeless and in priority need fell notably.
- The most common cause of statutory homelessness in Southwark between April 2011 and April 2016 has been that parents, friends and relatives are no longer willing to accommodate the individual or household in question.
- There has been a significant growth over this time in the termination of assured tenancies; which accounted for 8% of homelessness in 2011/12 and increased to 30% in 2015/16.
- Average rents in the borough have grown considerably whilst Local Housing Allowance has been frozen.
- Rising rents have caused an increase in homeless applications to the council for those that cannot afford them and the sector has become largely unaffordable for the council to use to prevent homelessness.
- Southwark had the fourth highest number of preventions and reliefs in London and ranked twenty-eighth nationally.
- The number of households in TA has continued to rise. Southwark has managed to find enough affordable accommodation within London as of

April 2016, although this is becoming more challenging.

- The total number of lettings the council has been able to make each year has been falling, in part causing more households to wait longer in TA.
- Southwark has seen a slight fall of 11% in rough sleepers between 2011/12 and 2015/16, despite a 43% increase across London in this period.

## Resources for homeless and homelessness prevention services

In 2015/16, Southwark's net spend on homelessness services was approximately £3m. This paid for temporary accommodation, staff, running costs and homelessness prevention measures like the Finders Fee scheme. It also includes a government grant of £370,000

In 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16, Southwark received just over £1.5m in each year as a Homelessness Prevention Grant settlement from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

In 2017/18, the council received £1,236,085 in Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding, a slight increase on the previous year (£1.1m). The grant settlement, from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), is aimed at helping benefit recipients whose benefit award does not cover their full rent costs.

Housing Solutions was successful at bidding for £1.0m from DCLG to fund the early adopter prevention trailblazer, spanning from November 2016 and lasting two years.

Southwark was also awarded £393,000 in December 2016 after a successful bid to tackle rough sleeping.

## Increasing numbers of households seeking assistance

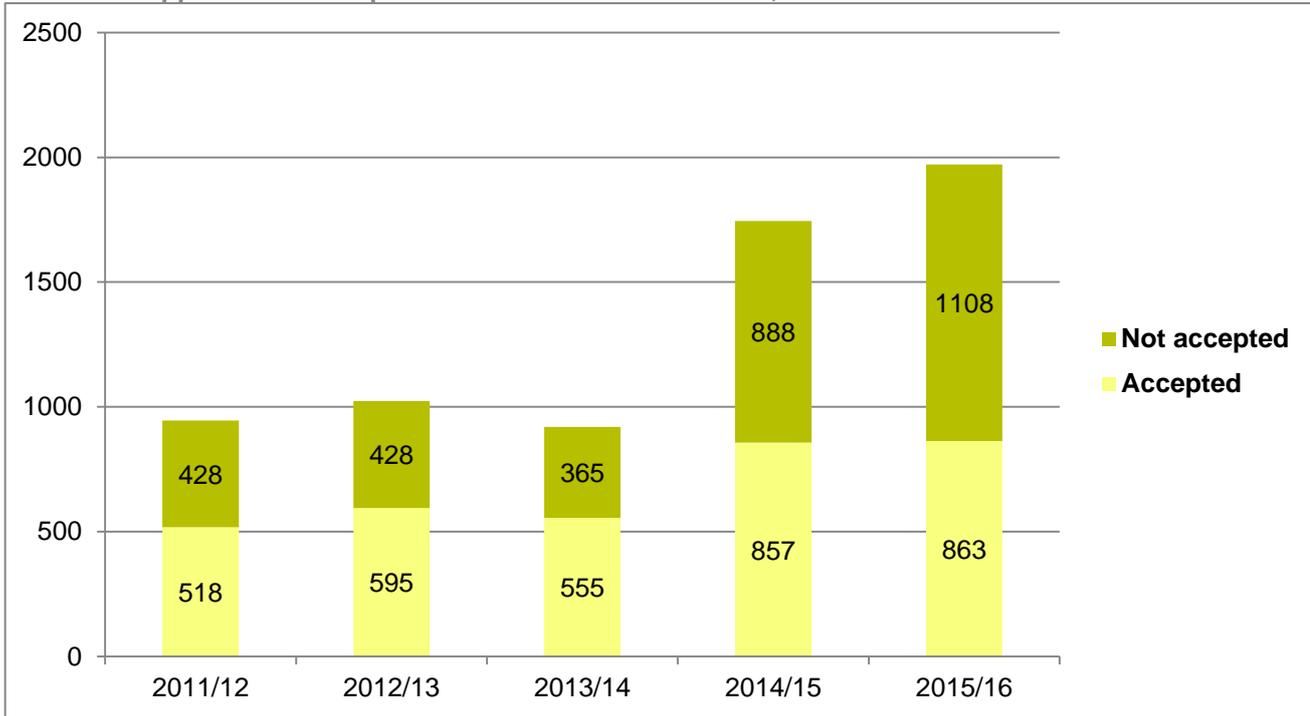
The following charts show that the number of homelessness applications Southwark has received has increased considerably since 2013/14 to 2015/16.

The increase in applications is due to two important factors: the restructure of homelessness services in 2013/14 that enabled the council to help more residents; and a reduction in the number of homes that residents can afford. Affordability issues are complex, but Welfare

Reform and increasing costs of the private rented sector in the borough have been factors.

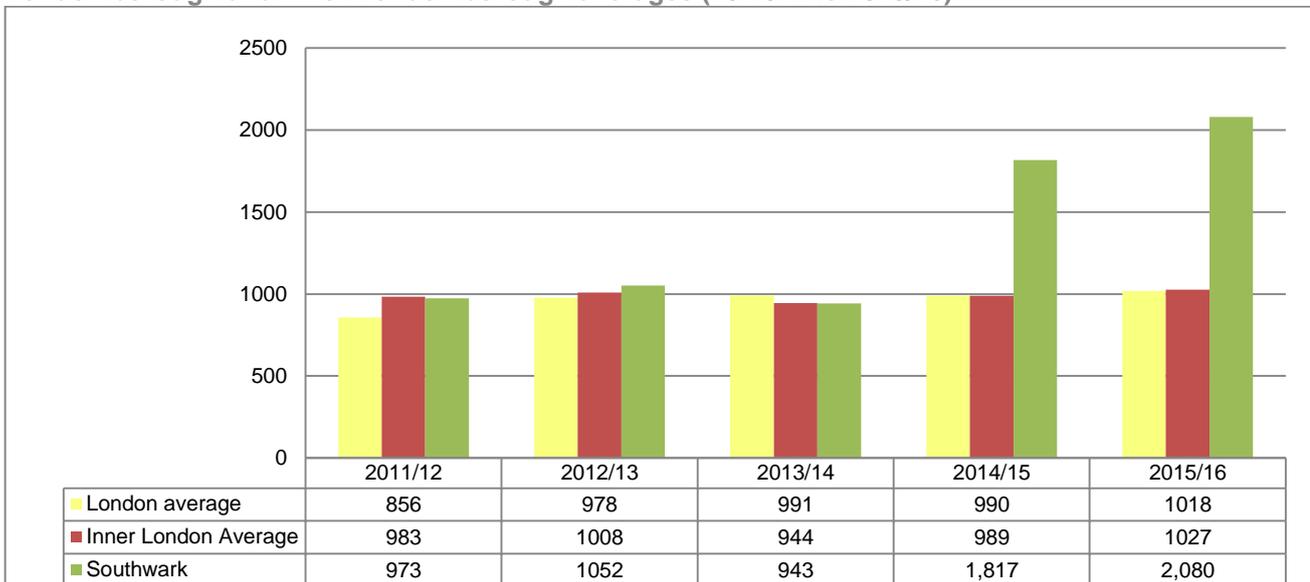
In 2015/16 Southwark received twice as many homelessness applications as (the average for) other Inner-London councils.

**Chart 3a – Applications accepted as homeless in Southwark, 2011/12 to 2015/16**



Source: Internal records

**Chart 3b – Comparison between the number of homelessness applications made in Southwark with the London borough and Inner-London borough averages (2011/12 to 2015/16)**



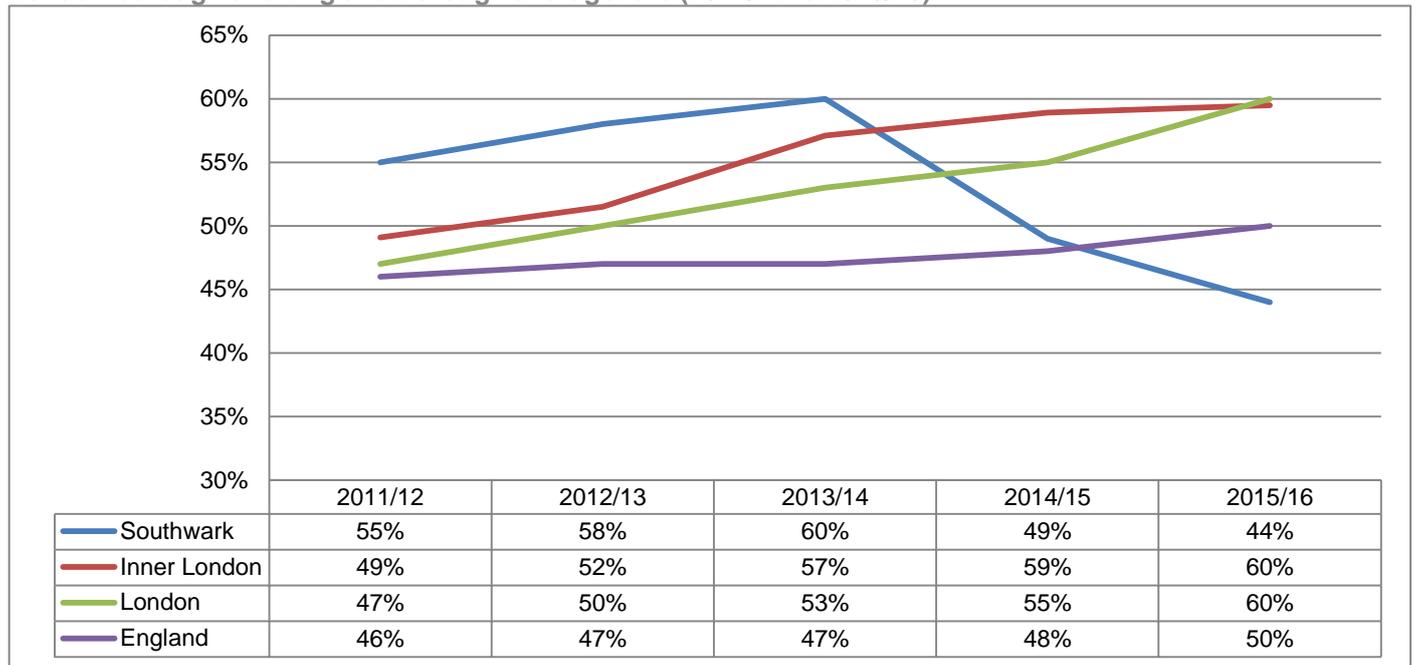
Source: DCLG Live Table 770 and Internal records

\*Inner-London boroughs include Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster

The rate of households accepted as homeless and in priority need fell notably between April 2013 and April 2016, and Southwark made significant steps to

outperform its peer group at ensuring resources were reserved for those that needed them most.

**Chart 4 – Comparison between Southwark’s homelessness acceptance rate and the average London, Inner-London borough and England borough average rate (2011/12 to 2015/16)**



Source: DCLG Live Table 784

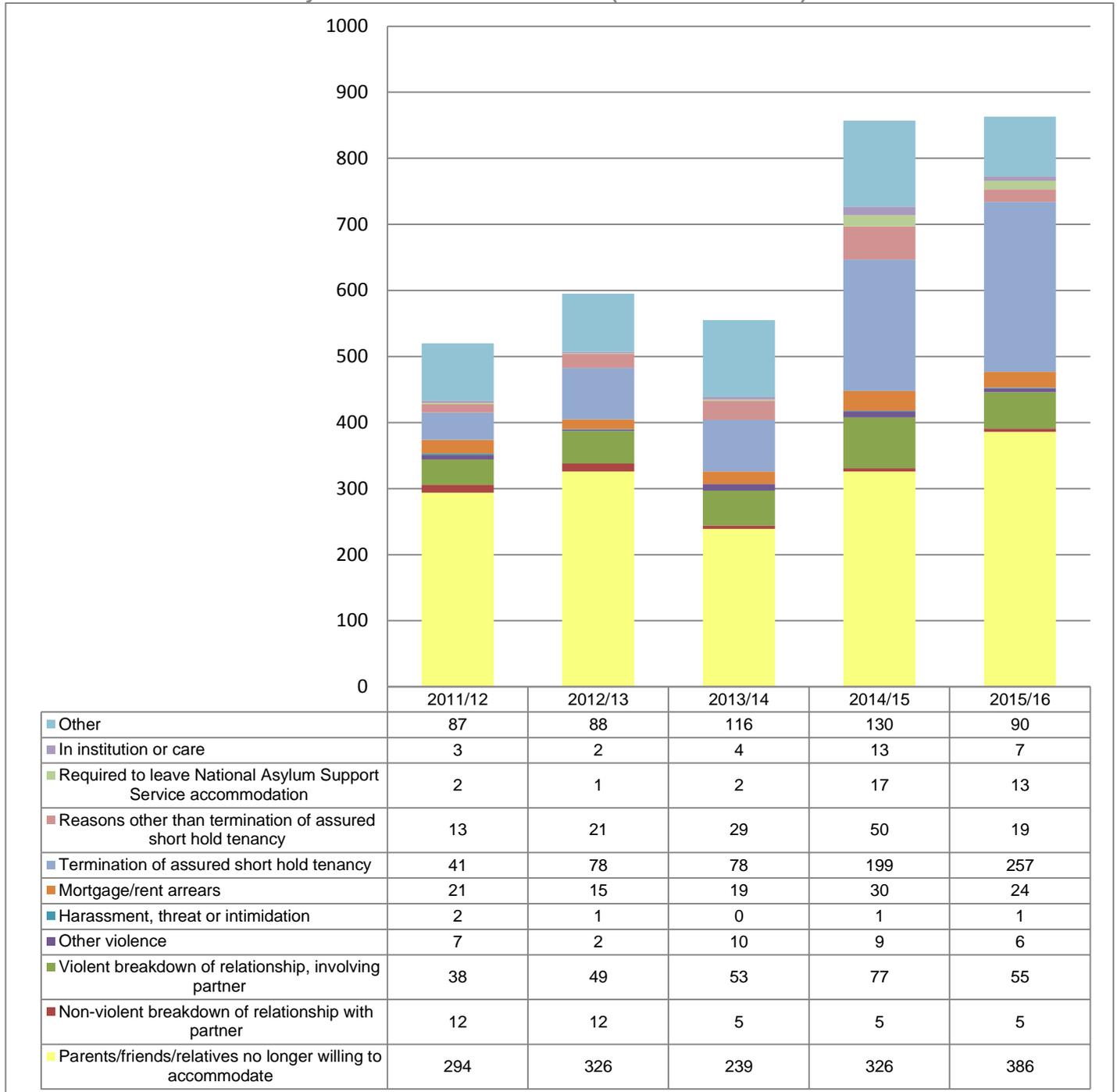
\*Inner-London boroughs include Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster

## Reasons for homelessness

Chart 5 shows that the most common cause of statutory homelessness in Southwark over this time has been that parents, friends and relatives are no longer willing to accommodate the individual or household in question.

There has been a significant growth over this time in the termination of assured tenancies; which accounted for 8% of homelessness in 2011/12 and increased to 30% in 2015/16.

**Chart 5 – Reasons for statutory homelessness in Southwark (2011/12 to 2015/16)**

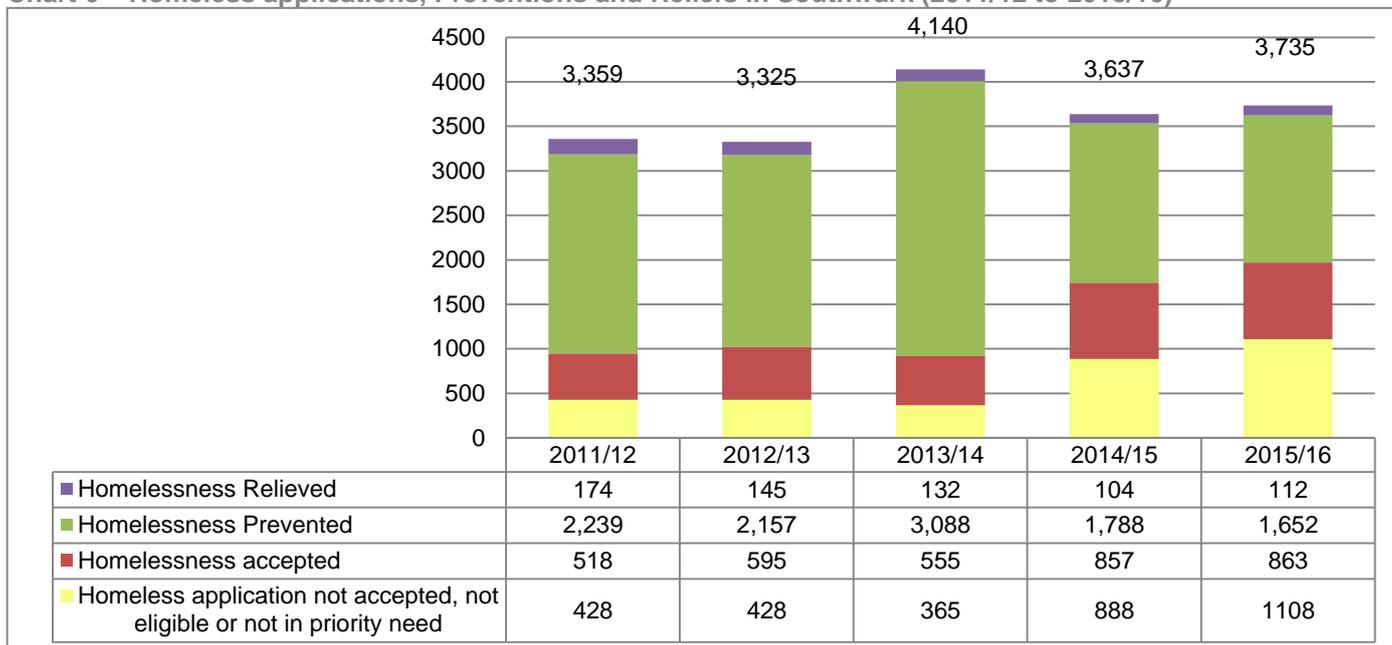


## Applications, preventions and relief

Chart 6 shows the increasing level of demand being placed on the borough's homeless services across homeless assessment, prevention and relief.

The reduction in preventions after 2013/14 followed a reduction in the amount of funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) the Council received after 2013/14.

**Chart 6 – Homeless applications, Preventions and Reliefs in Southwark (2011/12 to 2015/16)**

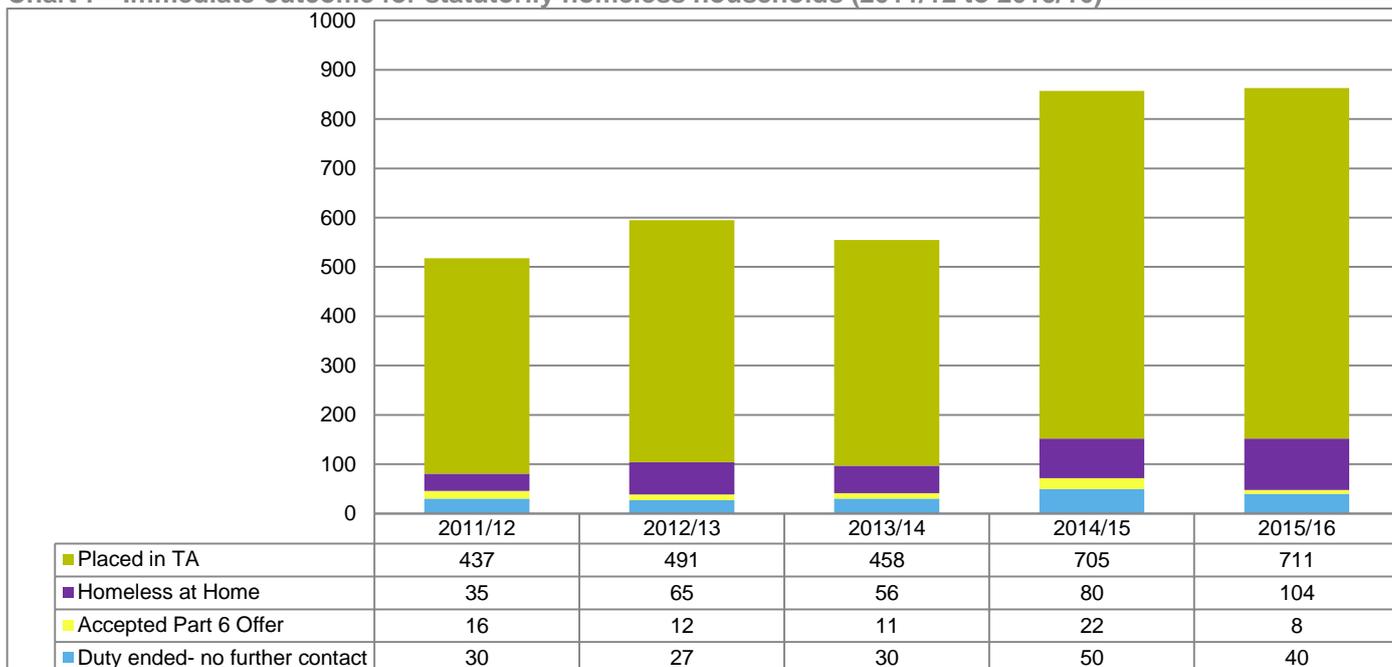


## Outcomes for homeless households

Chart 7 illustrates how the outcomes have put a strain on the Council's already stretched financial resources. In previous years Southwark would have been able to help many of these households to avoid homelessness by using the borough's private rented sector.

However, average rents in the borough have grown considerably whilst Local Housing Allowance has been frozen.

**Chart 7 - Immediate outcome for statutorily homeless households (2011/12 to 2015/16)**



## Average Private Rents in Southwark

The increase in average house prices has led to Southwark becoming one of the more expensive London boroughs to rent privately. Because of that, for many, home ownership will be unachievable. Saving enough for a deposit to buy a first home is often impossible as rents take up too much of a renter's income.

To summarise, higher rents in the private rented sector cause two major problems for Southwark:

- (1) An increase in homeless applications to the council for those that cannot afford rising rents,
- (2) The sector has become unaffordable for the council to use to prevent homelessness.

Chart 8 - Average monthly private sector rents in Southwark (2013 to 2017)



Table 1 - Comparison between capped LHA rates (Inner SE London, rounded) and average advertised rents in Southwark (January 2017)

Size of accommodation	LHA cap - April 2016 (pcm)	Average lower quartile rent (pcm)	Average median rent (pcm)
Room (in shared accom)	£412	£646	£719
1 bed	£884	£1,340	£1,538
2 bed	£1,150	£1,675	£1,950
3 bed	£1,433	£1,998	£2,449
4 bed	£1,807	£2,600	£2,925

Source: Southwark Market Trends Bulletins (based on advertised rents for self-contained properties in Southwark, unless stated)

LHA rates are the housing element of benefits paid towards the rental costs for private rented accommodation.

The Government is currently considering proposals that will restrict supported housing tenants to only be able to claim LHA to pay for their housing costs.

### Preventions and relief

Southwark had the **fourth** highest number of preventions and reliefs in London in 2015/16 and ranked **twenty-eighth** nationally. Southwark was the highest placed inner-London local authority.

In summary, in 2015/16 Southwark Council prevented or relieved homelessness through:

-Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund: **39%**

-Resolving housing benefit problems: **20%**

-Supported accommodation (including supported lodging schemes, successful referrals to supported housing projects): **11%**

-Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure that someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector: **9%**

-Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector: **6%**

-Debt advice: **5%**

-Other: **10%**

The Homelessness Reduction Act will obligate local authorities to assess households at risk of homelessness in 56 days, rather than the current 28 days.

Local authorities will then have another 56 days to attempt to relieve the household's homelessness.

The Act will require public bodies to work together and be able to demonstrate that they have considered every option to prevent each case of homelessness.

**Table 2 - Current Location of Southwark's TA**

Location of Southwark's temporary accommodation		
Location	Number of homes	%
Southwark	1408	74%
Surrounding London boroughs (Lewisham, Lambeth, Bromley)	360	19%
Other London boroughs	133	7%
Outside of London	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Internal records (April 2017)

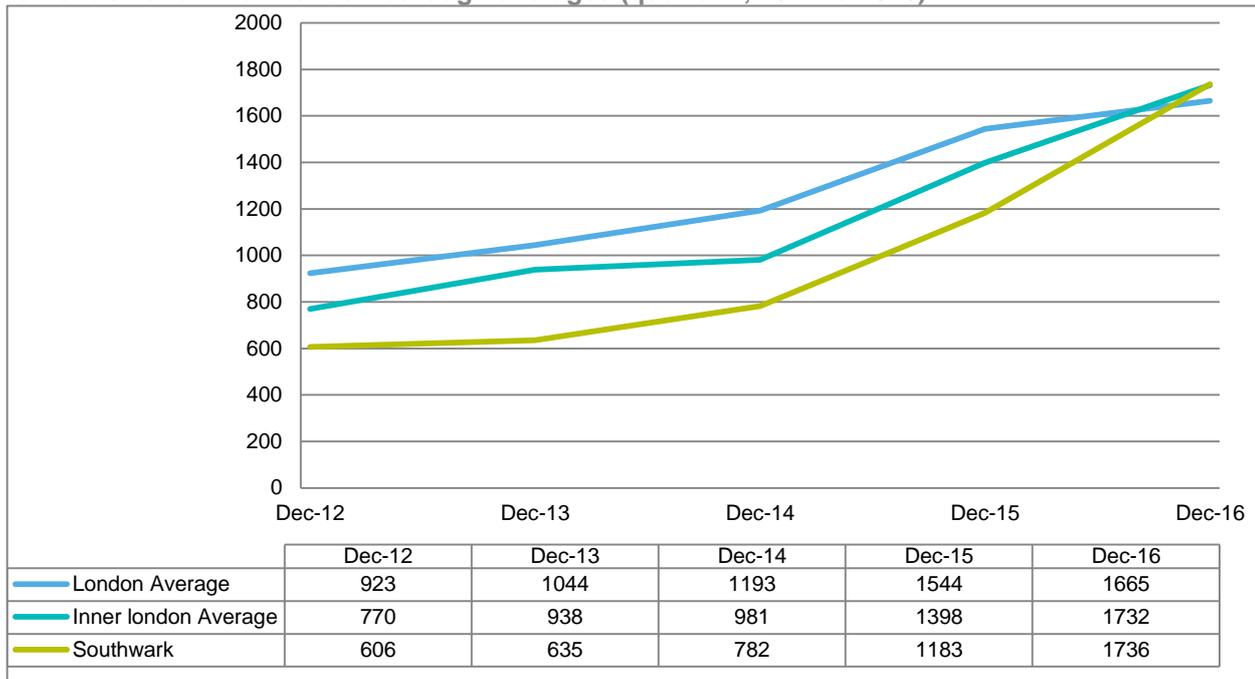
### Temporary Accommodation (TA)

The table above shows that 74% of TA secured for homeless households is in the borough and no households have had to leave London.

The following chart shows how the number of statutorily homeless households in TA has increased across London over the last five years.

Until December 2016, the number of homeless households in TA in Southwark had remained below the London and Inner-London averages.

**Chart 9 – Number of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation in Southwark, compared to London and Inner-London borough averages (quarter 4, 2012 to 2016)**



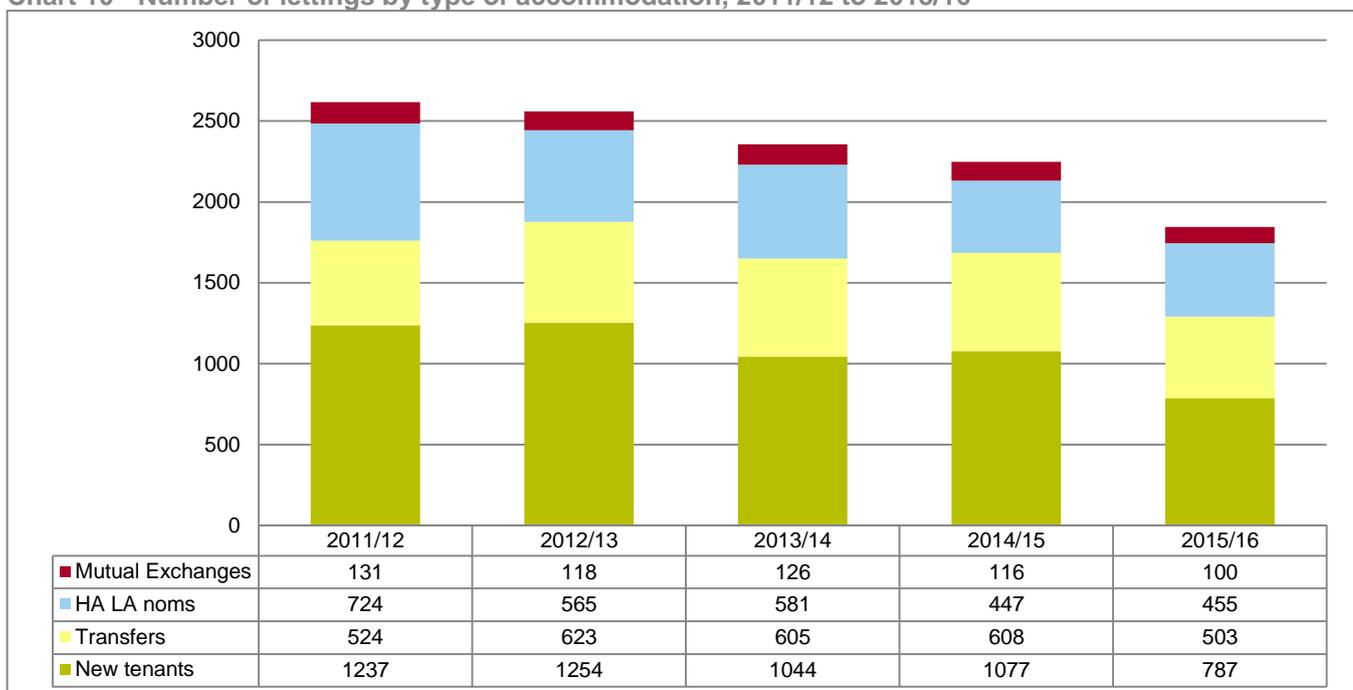
Source: P1E data, iform.

### Lettings

The total number of lettings the council has been able to make each year has been falling since 2009/10 (3,030) mainly as a result of the Right to Buy.

2015/16 saw the fewest number of lettings on record (1,845 including nominations to housing associations and mutual exchanges).

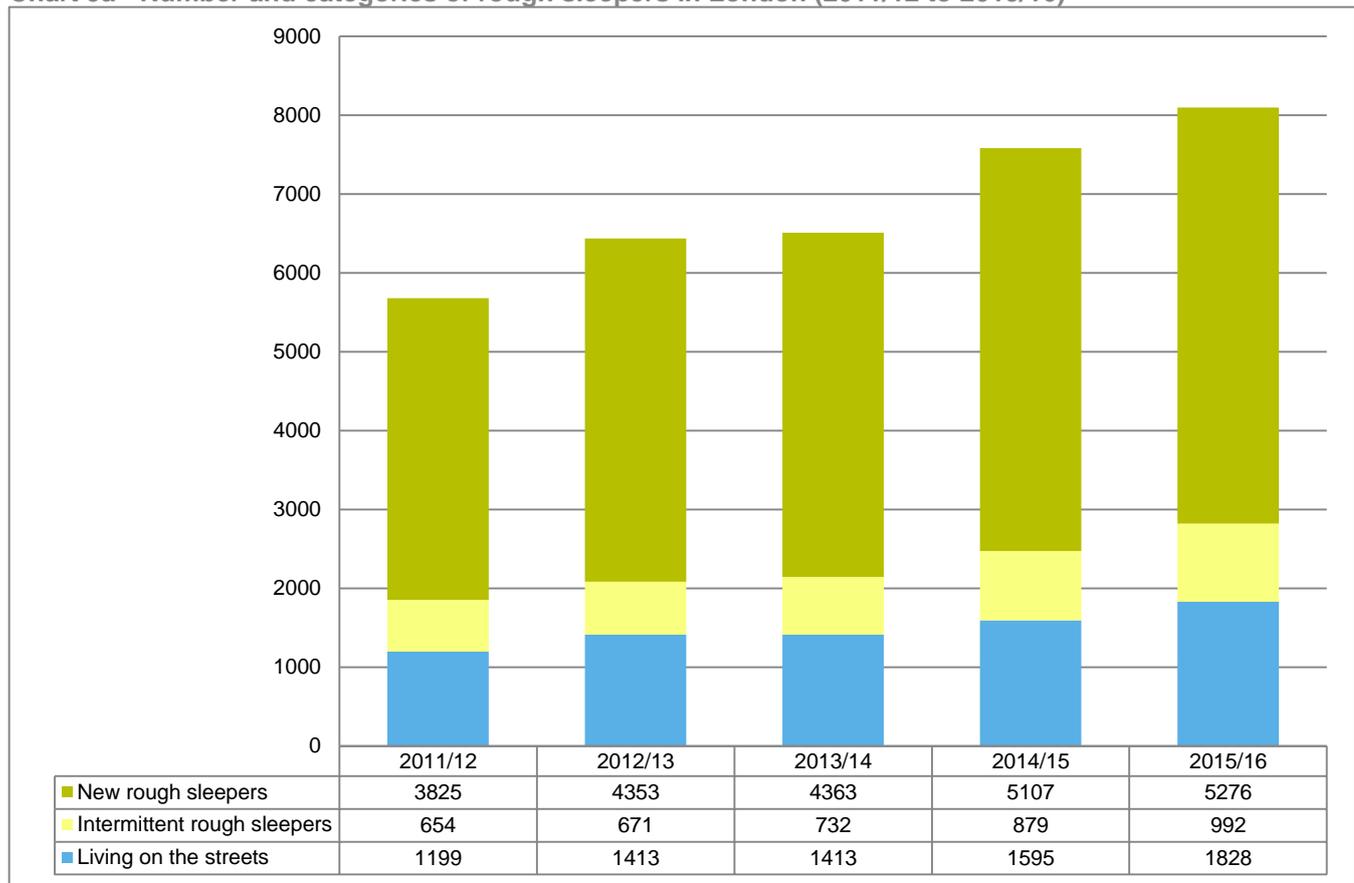
**Chart 10 - Number of lettings by type of accommodation, 2011/12 to 2015/16**



Source: LAHS/HSSA + Internal records

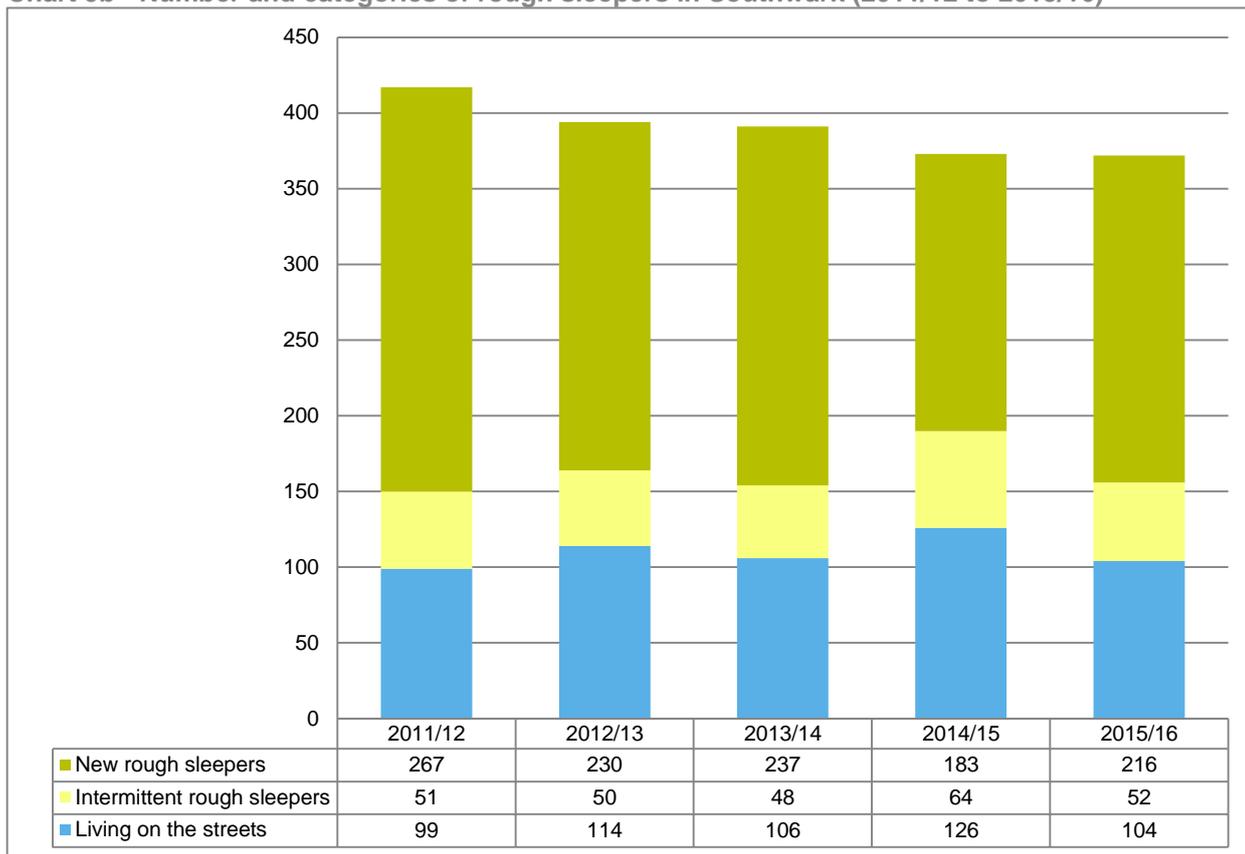
## Rough Sleepers

Chart 9a - Number and categories of rough sleepers in London (2011/12 to 2015/16)



Source: CHAIN reports

**Chart 9b - Number and categories of rough sleepers in Southwark (2011/12 to 2015/16)**



Source: CHAIN report

The number of rough sleepers in London has increased over the last five years. 43% more rough sleepers were seen in 2015/16 compared with 2011/12.

In Southwark however, overall numbers have reduced slightly (around 11%). This is mainly due to a reduction in new rough sleepers (down from 267 in 2011/12 to 216 in 2015/16).

Overall, in 2015/16 Southwark had the sixth highest number of rough sleepers in London.

The data on Table 3 shows that nearly half of the people seen rough sleeping in Southwark in 2015/16 were from Europe. About 8% were from Africa.

Table 3 – Nationality of rough sleepers in Southwark (2015/16)

Nationality	Flow	Stock	Returner	Total	Total %
UK	75	45	21	141	38.11%
Europe (CEE)	83	42	16	141	38.11%
Europe (EEA)	25	5	9	39	10.54%
Europe (Non-EEA)	1	0	0	1	0.27%
Europe (Unknown)	2	1	0	3	0.81%
Africa	20	6	2	28	7.57%
Asia	6	2	0	8	2.16%
Americas	3	3	3	9	2.43%
Not known / missing	1	0	1	2	-
<b>Total (excl.) Not known</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total (incl. Not known)</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>372</b>	

Source: CHAIN reports

# 7. 2018 – 2022 Strategic priorities

This five year strategy covers the period 2018 – 2022, and seeks to further strengthen the high level of partnership working in place across Southwark and to continue to make significant improvements across homelessness services.

We aim to continue being a leading authority at preventing homelessness and to further intensify and accelerate our action. This will be achieved through adoption of the following five inter-relating strategic priorities. Key actions across each of the five priorities are detailed in Appendix 2.

## Priority One:

### Homelessness prevention.

**We will deliver a leading prevention service through the early adopter trailblazer project in preparation of meeting the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act.**

The Homelessness Review confirmed that the main cause of homelessness in Southwark was 'Parents/friends/relatives being no longer willing to accommodate' which has been a significant long standing factor. Since 2014/15 there has also been a sharp growth in 'Termination of assured short hold tenancy'.

This has contributed to a rise in cases accepted as homeless in Southwark. The successful bid for £1.0m funding for the prevention trailblazer through to 2018 will help fund resources and initiatives to tackle these issues. Consultation with our partners also recommended that more mediation was needed with families and landlords.

As a result, Southwark is recruiting two Visiting Officers and four Private Sector Liaising Officers to assist with mediation and ultimately homelessness prevention. The trailblazer will fund a total of 24 posts for 16 months. This will support the service in trialling the new duties due to be imposed through the Homelessness Reduction Act. Significantly the Gateway Customer Services Assessment Officers will be reinforced due to the extra demands anticipated from additional housing advice and support demands. The changes will be closely monitored to analyse the impacts which will assist the MHCLG with funding and planning the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Not all of the aims of the trailblazer can be met through recruitment alone. The objective is to promote the concept of customer choice and empowerment as a core principle for how the new prevention model is intended to operate both in the pilot stage and to inform thinking post enactment of the HRA.

The council recognises the importance of utilising technology and partnership working with statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies to help us deliver an efficient modern service. We have already started issuing paper-based Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to meet one of the requirements set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act, however we have bigger ambitions to digitise the service. The advantages of online PHPs are that households will be able to view and report updates frequently and partners will also be able to interact with the permission of the household. This will help ensure that households' needs are met and that they are assisted as they engage and work through their personalised plans.

### The aims of the trailblazer will be met through the Southwark Prevention Trailblazer delivery plan with the following desired outcomes -

- Developing a Council-wide approach to preventing and tackling homelessness
- Working in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness and deliver the new duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act including the duty of public authorities to refer cases to the local housing authority
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of prevention work to meet the requirements of the new section 195 prevention duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of help to single applicants to help them to find accommodation to meet the new section 189B 'Help to Secure' Duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act
- To develop a self-help prevention of homelessness strategy
- Treating Customers with compassion, understanding and empathy to tackle the culture change issue highlighted by the DCLG Select Committee. This is a change which the Government have publically stated they want to see brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Develop a number of new initiatives to support the new section 189B 'Help to Secure Accommodation

#### Duty' for single people and families

- Disseminating learning to other local authorities and the sector more widely
- Develop a Resettlement Support Service to provide on-going support to the most vulnerable and to act as an early warning service for those housed who may experience difficulties in sustaining their accommodation
- Making sure there is a holistic approach to assessing housing needs and homelessness with Children Services and Adult Social Care and to ensure that where no duty is owed that applicants are dealt with correctly under social services legislation supported by the Housing Service
- Working with MHCLG to develop a new data reporting framework
- Anticipating and tackling problems that may undermine the successful implementation of the new prevention model
- Ensuring as the service develops it is in line with service users expectations and shaped by their views
- Checking and monitoring performance of the Trailblazer Pilot

The Homelessness Reduction Act broadens the responsibilities of local housing authorities, such as Southwark. The Act changes the legal definition of 'threatened with homelessness' and triggers earlier and more enhanced work to prevent those threatened with homelessness. It requires local authorities to take reasonable steps that are likely to help the applicant to secure accommodation, for example, providing a rent deposit or access to mediation to keep households together.

We will ensure that all households, whether they are singles, couples or families, will receive advice and assistance, whatever their circumstances. This will mean that single people (and couples without dependents) should benefit more from the extended support available than they would have done in the past.

The Southwark Homelessness Review 2017 shows that in 2015/16 of the 863 applications accepted as homeless only 15% are single person households. This underlines how the majority of assistance was previously given to families rather than singles. Single households would need to demonstrate a priority need such as poor health to be owed the full rehousing duty. Therefore single households, such as those facing eviction from a private tenancy or where their family can no longer accommodate them at home, will receive improved assistance from the council.

This will require greater resources as the council is likely to face an increased number of approaches from single homeless households. Southwark received £1,000,000 trailblazer funding over two years from the Department for Communities and Local Government which has contributed to supporting this service provision. Longer term the government has committed to providing £72m nationally for new burdens funding, of which Southwark has been involved with negotiating how the funding will be fairly distributed. The government will then assess if the funding is sufficient to allow councils to meet the new requirements from the Homelessness Reduction Act before announcing longer term funding arrangements.

The message received from working with our partners at Southwark's Quarterly Homelessness Forum was to start early with prevention by helping young people understand that keeping a home is difficult. This message also reflects the Housing Strategy aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible by developing residents' skills and abilities for self reliance and building resilient communities. As part of our upstream prevention measures, we will be working with schools and colleges to better engage with children and young people around the realities of housing and homelessness with the aim of reducing youth homelessness.

This links in with the predictive data modelling work stream under development as part of Southwark prevention trailblazer delivery plan and the rough sleeping prevention trailblazer pilot action plan. In both these cases the target will be to use data to identify cohorts to engage with regarding the challenges of keeping a home, increasing resilience and the realities of the housing market. We will invest resources into these activities as part of our overall prevention strategic priority.

We are currently working in partnership to develop this predictive analytics, whilst being mindful of meeting data protection obligations. We hope to be able to use data from across our partnerships with other authorities and the 'big data' held across the council as a whole to produce a powerful, analytical tool. This can identify households at risk of homelessness and to help intervene sensitively at opportune moments when they interact with the authorities.

In addition to predictive analytics we are engaging in upstream prevention activities to reduce the pressures on our homelessness advisory services. We will continue to work in partnership with services that, for example, cover health and employment, as these are often triggers for homelessness.

As part of our commitment to improving our homelessness and rough sleeping prevention service,

we will aim to build on our achievement of 'Silver standard' by achieving the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) Gold Standard Challenge by meeting all ten of the challenges and delivering more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. Southwark previously achieved eight of the challenges.

#### The ten challenges comprise:

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice.
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative.
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support.
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

Since late 2017 Shelter have launched a service from our main Homesearch Centre in Peckham Rye. Whilst Shelter remain an independent advocacy advise service, we value their input and support in our homeless prevention services and ensuring we are offering as much support to households as possible.

To ensure our services meets all of its targets and that we deliver a high quality prevention service we will continue to be assessed with transparency, by being reviewed by Shelter. Therefore we will continue our partnership together with Shelter comprehensively reviewing our services through their mystery shopping exercises and we will continue to aim to improve the service for the benefit of everyone that uses it.

We have made good progress with integrating social care and homelessness by setting up our Integrated Homelessness Team comprising of social care staff based in the Housing Solutions service. We do, however, recognise there is still work to do to develop a clear process for how we prioritise and allocate temporary and permanent housing for households referred via social services.

Longer term, the council is developing plans to co-locate homelessness and social services at a new central site in the borough. These plans will build on the good foundations that the services have developed together and reflect a one-council mind set where all services are working closely together to produce the best outcomes.

The success for holding strategic cross-departmental meetings has been recognised and these will be continued to assist with communication and cohesion across our services.

Improving the links between senior management from different services will help us to tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, hoarding and other behaviours which can lead to homelessness. In addition to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), which is one of the most effective approaches in the identification, assessment and multi agency response to high risk cases, a series of workshops is being co-ordinated by Southwark Anti Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU).

The workshops are intended for partners to describe their work and referral pathways so that additional support can be levered in to support vulnerable households as required. The workshops provide an opportunity to consult with services such as SLAM (South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust), Resident Services, Environmental Health and the Fire Brigade.

#### Priority Two:

##### Tackle rough sleeping.

**We will use the Rough Sleeping Prevention Trailblazer funding to continue to make even more progress at tackling rough sleeping in Southwark.**

In Southwark, anyone found to be sleeping rough for the first time is taken to the GLA's No Second Night Out hub by the outreach team. Individuals are given a roof over their head for the night while a more permanent housing solution is sought. People are

assessed – if they are from Southwark then they are referred to the council's housing solutions team.

Since 2010 rough sleeping in England has increased by 134%.<sup>2</sup> Despite London also experiencing an increase in rough sleeping of 43% between 2011/12 to 2015/16, Southwark has seen a gradual fall of 11% in rough sleepers over this period.

Even though this evidence suggests the council is already making good progress to tackle rough sleeping, this strategy sets out the plans to make further steps towards this target.

As well as being a homelessness prevention trailblazer, in December 2016 Southwark was proud to have been chosen by DCLG (now MHCLG) to be a rough sleeping prevention trailblazer. Southwark successfully bid for £393,000 funding over three years, which will be used to develop innovative approaches to prevent and relieve rough sleeping.

#### Southwark developed a rough sleeping prevention trailblazer plan which set out 20 actions:

1. Develop a No First Night Out Model.
2. Develop a Housing First Model.
3. Develop a multi agency assessment hub within the Housing Solutions service and design a process to target and prevent people sleeping rough.
4. Develop small scale accommodation project for customers who approach services and have nowhere safe to stay that evening.
5. Develop a personalized accommodation finder service
6. Guarantee that no person will sleep rough if they approach any statutory partner for advice and assistance.
7. Develop a single access crisis intervention and support service
8. Recruit former rough sleepers and customers of the Housing Solutions service as apprentices to ensure employment opportunities are available as part of the council's housing academy.
9. Develop a mentoring service for rough sleepers via the recruitment of former rough sleepers.
10. Develop a community hosting scheme.
11. Develop a homelessness and rough sleeping predictor model using all available data from housing, health, social care, education, police, prison service, etc. to develop a homelessness prevention and early intervention model.
12. Develop a personal plan and pathway plan for all customers, and make these plans available to relevant partner agencies.
13. Develop an Offer to Resolve model mediation

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/rough-sleeping/rough-sleeping-our-analysis>

and support service.

14. Develop a Sharing Accommodation Scheme to increase options for people who are threatened with sleeping rough.
15. Develop a Residential Lodging scheme.
16. Continuously promote the concept of customer choice and empowerment as a core principle of the service by treating customers with compassion, empathy, and understanding.
17. Develop a passport to independent living model.
18. Promoting housing advice and literature in all GP surgeries and hospitals.
19. Developing effective working protocols with all agencies to improve information sharing, improve joint decision making and coordinated intervention to prevent rough sleeping via a single front door gateway.
20. Develop an advocacy service for customers who are threatened with rough sleeping or are currently sleeping rough in Southwark.

Full details of these actions and the latest updates on the progress of these activities can be found on our website:

[www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service)

Working alongside *StreetLink*, we already operate a No Second Night Out model. We aim to build on this through the development of a No First Night Out model to prevent single people from having to sleep on the streets.

The Housing Solutions service has recruited two No First Night Out officers to work with our partners to develop a prevention approach. The officers aim to identify pre-rough sleepers (those about to be on the streets) and to intervene to prevent them from spending their first night on the street.

This approach reflects the Mayor of London's No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce which was established in 2016 to take a more preventative approach to rough sleeping.

Another significant ambition of the rough sleeper prevention trailblazer is the development of a Housing First model. This programme has been gaining traction globally but remains relatively new to England.

The Housing First pilot model will replace the traditional system of transitional accommodation for chronic rough sleepers. It allows those with complex needs to be housed straight away, without the insecurity of temporary accommodation. Housing First works on the

concept that other issues can be more easily addressed once stable housing is secured. Funded through the trailblazer, Southwark will employ two Housing First officers to work with these vulnerable people when the approach is officially adopted in 2017.

Consultation on strategic priorities at the Quarterly Homelessness Forum in February 2017 noted strong support for retaining existing services; in particular the specialist street population outreach team (SPOT) and Southwark's supported hostels.

Southwark will therefore aim to continue its partnership SPOT through St Mungo's Broadway, subject to following the appropriate recommissioning process when the contract is reviewed. This will involve assessing all options including considering transferring services in-house.

SPOT provides support to those individuals rough sleeping in the borough, both those new to the streets and those who require a sustained casework approach to try and break the cycle of long term life on the streets.

SPOT also survey the borough's streets on a nightly basis and seek to find housing solutions by accessing supported accommodation in the borough for those clients with a local connection or facilitating reconnection to home towns or countries where the individual is not entitled to assistance from the council.

On a broader level, we continue to monitor progress following the creation of the Government's new Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel, with a target of eliminating rough sleeping by 2027. Southwark contributed to a seminar at the Westminster Social Policy Forum in early 2018, which came about as a result of this panel and will continue to take a lead on good practice in relation to rough sleeping.

Rough sleeping is a result of many causes but it often is linked to poverty, inequality and long-term disadvantage. As such, Southwark is committed to contributing to advisory panels and forums, mentioned above, to help tackle issues around welfare reform and affordable housing, which also ties in with our other priorities in this strategy.

We also recognise the complexities of rough sleeping and how it varies between different cohorts. For example, rough sleeping among women tends to be different from men and that migrants, young people, BAME and LGBTQ rough sleepers may require different responses and interventions.

Given the broader causes and variety of different approaches required to end rough sleeping, a meaningful co-production is required so that effective

solutions to ending rough sleeping can be developed and delivered through the active involvement of those with lived experience of rough sleeping. Our Quarterly Homelessness Forum continues to drive this forward with a multi-agency approach. This provides the opportunity to disseminate information and to link up services to improve the knowledge of professionals that encounter people threatened by or experiencing homelessness. For example, health workers, providing mental health and substance misuse services receive training on the new homelessness laws and those working for homelessness services gain an improved understanding on how to connect individuals to such services.

### Priority Three:

#### Vulnerability and Health.

We will ensure our services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse.

We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equip them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur.

We aim to end the use of nightly rate (bed and breakfast style) temporary accommodation with shared facilities for homeless families.

For many people who become homeless the provision of suitable accommodation is the only problem that needs to be addressed. However, many other people can become homeless or threatened by homelessness due to a range of support needs. For example, this can be related to a mental or physical disability or a particular circumstance such as domestic violence, a past history of offending behaviour or drug and alcohol misuse. By working with our partners to provide targeted, specialist support, we endeavour to limit the number of vulnerable people who become homeless.

#### Temporary accommodation:

It is clear that homelessness and temporary accommodation have an impact on health and wellbeing. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020 concludes that homelessness and health are closely related: poor health is both a cause and a result of homelessness. People who are homeless are three

to six times more likely to become ill than housed people.

A national survey conducted by Shelter of 2,000 people in temporary accommodation<sup>3</sup>, found that more than half said that they were suffering from depression, and that depression and other mental health problems were two of the most common health conditions reported.

It is a strategic priority to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, particularly in nightly rate (B&B style) by developing suitable offers of private rental sector accommodation.

The council pledged a long term aspiration in March 2017<sup>4</sup> to eliminate the usage of B&B style and hostel temporary accommodation. Over the lifespan of this strategy we will aim to make progress towards this. This is in accordance with The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003 which sets out the statutory duty to limit B&B usage for only when no other suitable accommodation is available. It also set a limit of six weeks for how long families, pregnant women and single under 18-year-olds can legally be placed into B&B accommodation.

We will look to prevent homelessness and develop our processes so decisions are made upstream where possible to reduce the necessity of using nightly rate accommodation.

Where it is necessary to use nightly rate accommodation, or even temporary accommodation of any type and at any stage where a household is found not to be owed either interim or full housing duty, we will take full account of the Health & Social Care Act 2012. This means working sensitively with social services, so that families, for example, remain safely housed whilst adequate steps are taken to resolve the situation.

Partners at the Southwark Homelessness Forum identified as a priority that the council should avoid placing young people in temporary accommodation where possible. The view was that living in a temporary accommodation environment may have a profound long-term effect on the behaviour of young people. This approach will also help us meet one of the ten challenges set out in the NPSS Gold Standard, namely '9.To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation'. We are resolving to find better pathways for all households that are ready to cope with a permanent rehousing solution.

<sup>3</sup>

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/40116/Living\\_in\\_Limbo.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/40116/Living_in_Limbo.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Southwark Life – Spring 2017

Prevention will focus on supporting young people to remain at home with their family, or in wider family networks, where appropriate and safe to do so. This may mean mediating between young people and their families. Where young people do become homeless, the strategy supports the commissioning of specialist services that can effectively address the young person's respective needs.

#### **The 16+ Project:**

The council recently commenced three separate programmes for young people receiving care and housing services.

To ensure the programmes are aligned correctly, a 16+ Projects report was developed.

#### **• The '16+ Programme'**

- Redesigning the 'front door' for young people
- Re-commissioning existing accommodation & support services
- Developing new pathways for young people leaving services

#### **• The 'Care Leavers Partnership Programme'**

- Radically redesigning the councils leaving care service
- Working in partnership with care leavers
- Evaluating possibility of wider adoption by other local authorities

#### **• The '16+ Housing Strategy'**

- Reviewing placements of 16 – 18 year olds
- Reviewing placements of young people aged 18+
- Developing a new Housing Panel

There is also a major role for education work in schools and other youth provision, raising awareness about the housing options and the reality and risks of homelessness.

#### **Domestic abuse:**

The Review of Homelessness in Southwark shows that behind the two main causes of homelessness (family and friends no longer willing to accommodate and termination of an assured shorthold tenancy), the third biggest factor is violent breakdown of a relationship, involving a partner. This equated to 55 cases or 6% of all statutory homelessness in Southwark in 2015/16,

below the national average of 10%<sup>5</sup> and representing a sizeable drop from 77 cases the previous year.

Stopping domestic abuse remains a multi-agency priority across Southwark. Local communities together with a wide range of local organisations and agencies continue to work in partnership to develop and deliver integrated preventative and reactive provision to ensure that domestic abuse is reduced and not tolerated in Southwark.

The council has made positive progress and shown how seriously it takes domestic abuse by the amount of effort and resource that has been focussed on this in recent times and planned for in future.

In Southwark, the council, police and Solace Women's Aid work together to offer a bespoke service to people who become the victims of domestic abuse, as unique as each individual's circumstances. This may mean supporting people to stay in their own home safely, working with the police or women's refuges, looking at options for temporary accommodation or resolving issues within families.

From November 2017 Solace Women's Aid independent advocacy services launched from our Homesearch Centre in Peckham Rye. This forms part of a new partnership hub developed with Solace, Job Centre Plus and Shelter that will deliver independent advocacy services for our customers. This will make us directly accountable and ensures our service doesn't fall short of delivering a high quality service to help all households as much as possible.

Our Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-2020 sets out a clear statement of intent that abuse is not acceptable. Its recommendations are managed through the Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Group. This includes prevention, early intervention and enforcement.

The VAWG Delivery Group includes representatives from partnerships across Southwark including Housing Solutions and ensures that tackling domestic abuse remains a high priority for the borough.

The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is one of the most effective approaches in the identification, assessment and multi agency response to high risk cases of domestic abuse. Information about the risks faced by these victims is shared by relevant agencies (i.e. health, housing, social services) in detail and decisions are made to

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-and-homelessness-prevention-and-relief-england-january-to-march-2017>

increase the safety, health and wellbeing of adults and their children.

The homelessness strategy and the council's housing allocations policy must have due regard for each other. We are currently in the process of drafting a new allocations policy and it is anticipated this will be ready for public consultation in mid-2018. The draft policy will have regard to the council's commitment to ensuring the safety of our residents and reflecting our *fairer futures* theme '*Cleaner, greener, safer*'.

We will continue to review the allocations policy for accommodating domestic abuse survivors to ensure they receive the prioritisation that they duly require and remain mindful that we do not disadvantage people who have lost settled accommodation because of domestic abuse.

The Council is making progress on a specific domestic abuse policy in order to lead on the issue when the Homelessness Reduction Act comes into effect in April 2018.

Southwark joined an initiative in late 2017 to conduct a mystery shopping exercise in partnership with several London local authorities to assess the quality of our services for domestic abuse survivors. We aim to review these findings in 2018 and produce an action plan to provide the best possible service in one of our most sensitive areas of work. We also plan to conduct a further mystery shopping exercise in 2018 to 2019 to reassess our performance.

Southwark voluntarily signed up to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, coordinated by Safer London supporting households at risk of homelessness from domestic abuse and other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), hate crime, gang violence or other high risk community safety reasons move to a safe area of London. The scheme has 29 London boroughs and 22 registered housing providers signed up so far and have already successfully moved a number of households.

In recent years the council has made progress towards improving the integration between social services and Housing Solutions to work more cohesively. This has resulted in a fully integrated team and service level arrangements. Our next steps will be developing team members to become specialists in specific areas, such as domestic abuse, so that we strengthen the understanding and liaison between housing, homelessness and social services and ultimately provide a more efficient and effective service.

#### **Digital inclusion:**

Southwark's Customer Access Strategy Refresh 2017 sets out plans for embracing technology and improving digital platforms for customers to access our services. Online platforms allow greater access to services at times and from locations that are convenient to the customer. The strategy also acknowledges the challenges of digital exclusion for vulnerable customers, this is particularly relevant with homelessness - the sizable number of vulnerable households that need homelessness assistance is evidenced in charts 3, 4 and 19 in the full Homelessness Review (Appendix 3).

Although the homelessness service provides face to face services as part of its statutory responsibilities, we want to ensure that traditional methods of communication such as face to face, telephone and paper-based correspondence remain as accessible as digital alternatives. However, we aim to improve our digital platforms so that most households choose this out of preference for their convenience which also assists us with managing a growing demand (see charts 3a and 3b above, in Chapter 6).

Our online provision ties in with our traditional face to face service by providing information and advice on accessibility. We are looking to develop this further by taking part in a physical disability focus group, early in 2018, and will review and update our information and access accordingly. This area covers a wide range of physical disability, such as visual impairment, hard of hearing and limited mobility.

We will also make sure our homelessness service signposts households to free digital skills and online training courses at our libraries and Digital Inclusion Hubs.

### **Mental health and resilience:**

Housing Solutions works in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure that it meets the housing and support needs of those customers who suffer from mental health issues.

A report by Homeless Link<sup>6</sup> using information supplied by over 2,500 people highlights the extent to which homeless people experience some of the worst health problems in society. It showed that 80% of homeless households reported some form of mental health issue while 73% reported physical health problems.

This evidence was also reflected locally through an unpublished report entitled Southwark Single Homeless Health Needs Audit (2016) which evidenced that the main primary cause for homelessness for single

homeless households is leaving institutional care, particularly for men. This was closely followed by parents, friends or relatives no longer being able to accommodate. Linked to this, the most common secondary causes for homelessness are due to mental or physical health problems, followed by drug and alcohol problems. Mental health problems were more prevalent in respondents to the Southwark Health Needs survey than physical health problems and were also more of a long term problem in comparison.

The latest research has highlighted the links between personal resilience and the likelihood of becoming homeless<sup>7</sup>. It also shows how working in partnership with a diverse range of agencies and services can help deliver this model of increasing personal resilience. The same research article notes that the No First Night Out approach which Southwark is looking to adopt is 'the idea of capitalising on someone's innate sense of resilience, protecting it by ensuring they don't ever sleep rough and utilising it to make sure that accommodation offers are sustainable.' The approach also looks at strengthening resilience through our partnerships addressing individual's needs such as improving social networks and tackling health issues.

We are therefore working with our partners on a co-ordinated approach to ensure that resilience is understood and that opportunities are taken to give people the knowledge and skills they need which can later help prevent them from becoming homeless.

Those with experience of homelessness are more likely to have unhealthy lifestyles, which can cause long term health problems or exacerbate existing issues. Analysis of the latest data found that 77% of homeless people smoke, 35% do not eat at least two meals a day and two-thirds consume more than the recommended amount of alcohol each time they drink.

Southwark will look to promote and engage in schemes such as Making every contact count (MECC) which is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day to day interactions that organisations and people have with other people to encourage changes in behaviour that have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.

MECC covers aspects such as increasing physical activity and reducing alcohol consumption, both of which have links to mental health and homelessness. The council will also engage with homeless households to realise the financial benefits associated with healthy living and positive changes to lifestyles.

7

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2017/jul/10/preserving-resilience-with-no-first-night-out>

<sup>6</sup> Homeless Link, *The unhealthy state of homelessness: Health audit results 2014*

The Review of Homelessness shows that Southwark is doing well at gradually reducing the number of rough sleeping cases where the primary support need is alcohol related, although there is still more that can be done.

Another scheme we are looking to promote and engage in is the pilot project called Mindapples, supported by Guy's and St Thomas's Charity. This project aims to equip public health workers with the knowledge and skills to use engagement and training materials to promote mental wellbeing and resilience in their communities. This ties in with the overall objective of preventing homelessness and reflects the aims of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020.

Housing Solutions will work with Public Health and Adult Social Services to achieve its joint strategic goals, as outlined in the Joint Mental Health Strategy 2018.

Southwark's Housing Solutions service has worked with consultants to develop a resilience questionnaire. This will form part of the process to assess the suitability of temporary and permanent rehousing options in different locations for households where it has proved difficult to find immediate, suitable accommodation closer or within Southwark.

## **Priority Four:**

### **Responding to the local housing market.**

**We will respond to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to, households and landlords to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.**

Having a stable home enables people to access support services, integrate into their local community and to obtain and sustain work and training. We will continue to manage the expectations of customers and ensure that we maximise access and availability not only to social rented accommodation but to other housing options. This approach will help us to meet housing need, prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Summary findings from the Homelessness Review in Southwark show the impact of average rents in the borough growing considerably whilst Local Housing Allowance has been frozen. The outcome of this has been a sharp growth over this time in the termination of assured tenancies; which accounted for 8% of

homelessness in 2011/12 and increased to 30% in 2015/16.

The rising unaffordability of buying and renting a home reaches far beyond Southwark and even London. This pressure has led to an increase in homelessness and households living in emergency temporary accommodation as a result.

Accordingly, we are responding to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to, households and landlords to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.

As part of the early adopter trailblazer prevention plan, we are implementing a number of new schemes which fall under the self-help strategic aims of the overall project. One example of this is the self-help finders fee scheme, whereby a package of incentives aimed at the household and the landlord will encourage households to resolve their own housing situation as part of our prevention approach to homelessness. Through this scheme households will be able to source their own suitable and affordable accommodation arrangements in the private rented sector in an area of their choice.

The chronic housing shortage is a national issue and is particularly acute in London. We, therefore, will continue to work in partnership to explore and develop initiatives for London-wide procurement of temporary accommodation and private sector rental accommodation. We are working with London Ventures, a joint partnership between ErnstYoung and London Councils, on a number of initiatives including looking to develop accessible online platforms, specifically for homeless households. The intention is to assist self-serve property finding, empowering households to resolve their own homelessness and improving service efficiency.

Another project that Southwark has commenced with London Ventures is to develop a transition insurance product. The idea is to overcome obstacles preventing households from resolving the threat of homelessness where they are unable to afford a deposit to secure a private rental property. Transition Insurance is being considered as an alternative to a rent deposit for households in this situation. The challenge is to develop a product that appeals to landlords, tenants and local authorities assisting in homelessness prevention.

We will deliver a comprehensive approach to responding to the present market conditions. These will address procurement of temporary accommodation, with specific regard to the cost and suitability of the options. We are aspiring to increase the number of leased accommodation used for TA. Leased

accommodation offers greater stability for households in contrast to nightly rate bed and breakfast style accommodation which also often have shared facilities.

The net cost of temporary accommodation provision by the council in 2016/17 was £3.4m. The Homelessness Review (Appendix 4) shows that the cost of this has increased from the previous year (£2.9m) due to the reliance on spot purchased nightly rate accommodation.

We will conduct our own detailed research to explore the housing market in Southwark and surrounding areas and develop an action plan to deliver a range of the most effective procurement solutions. The objective is to use the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) funding for preventative solutions. In April 2017 the FHSG replaced the TA Management Fund, which could only be used for intervention when a household is already homeless. Southwark supports this development in the funding arrangements, which reflects the homelessness prevention agenda.

To enable us to find the most effective housing solutions we will need to expand how we access the landlord market. For example, we will look to begin attending local property auctions and landlord investment shows to seek out landlords that we can work with to house our homeless households. We will look to expand our public profile online and in the media. This will assist with developing a modern professional image that can help attract landlords to work with us.

The Homelessness Reduction Act encourages local authorities to embed an approach to use the private rented sector accommodation to discharge a duty to homeless households and households threatened by homelessness. As a result, we will explore how we assist households to find accommodation that meets their needs in the private sector. By guiding households with finding their own accommodation they will have more control over their choices.

Through using our resources and working with landlords to arrange assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector we can offer more stability as an alternative to emergency accommodation. We will explore creative solutions such as developing new accommodation supply, possibly by using Right To Buy sales receipts and setting up joint ventures. By working in partnership to acquire, predominantly two-bed, private sector accommodation, these can be used to rehouse homeless households or as a more stable form of temporary accommodation. This can help us to take back some control over the local rental market and have greater control over the quality of accommodation on offer and give us nomination rights to tenancies.

Following on from this we will look to refresh the housing allocations scheme to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

We will periodically review this scheme to monitor the impact on those threatened with or actually homeless. This will also ensure all homeless households placed outside of the borough have the opportunity to return to Southwark by bidding for permanent social housing. To this extent, we will continue to ensure that households placed out of borough, either in TA or through our powers to discharge duty of homeless households into the private rented sector, remain able to bid for permanent social housing in Southwark.

Some households will not be suitable for a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) and policies will have to reflect this. Our resilience questionnaires will also support evidence of suitability to ensure households can cope if no suitable accommodation can be found in borough. The council is recruiting two Resettlement Officers to assist and support households placed predominantly outside of Southwark, this will be funded by the successful trailblazer prevention bid.

We are still doing all we can to try and keep households in Southwark and in good quality housing despite the challenges this presents.

Southwark's Housing Strategy reflected this approach by committing to building 11,000 new council homes by 2043.

This represents a clear commitment to housebuilding and solving what is seen as a national shortage of housing and identified as a significant issue in the London Housing Strategy. This is a substantial step in supporting some of the most vulnerable households in our community to finding a permanent home and reducing the number of homeless households in the borough.

### **Empty homes**

With Southwark being an inner London borough, naturally there is a challenge to find locations to develop new housing. Because of this, we must make best use of the existing stock in the borough. Accordingly we must work to identify and make best use of empty homes where possible, such as using empty homes for temporary accommodation.

Southwark has a good record of bringing privately owned empty properties back into residential use. We offer a limited range of grants, loans and lease packages to empty home owners for refurbishment and redevelopment works. These are incentivised if leased to the council for use as temporary accommodation.

However, with the current, buoyant housing market, the packages on offer could be strengthened to make them more competitive and appealing. By refreshing the Empty Homes Policy and improving the packages on offer, this will encourage empty home owners, to bring housing stock back into use, improve the condition of the accommodation as well as the local area, providing good housing across all tenures including temporary accommodation.

The Empty Homes service will continue to explore good practice, for example on outreach work, to find the best ways of making contact with empty home owners and informing them about the empty homes assistance currently available.

### **No recourse to public funds households**

Southwark has faced an increase in demand in providing temporary accommodation to destitute people from abroad without recourse to public funds. We have a specialist team working with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) households. Housing Solutions has recently made good progress integrating the procurement of temporary accommodation for all forms of homelessness including NRPF households. Through integrating our services we are able to build a clearer picture of the cost of housing for all of the households we have a duty towards.

With NRPF households, the council covers the cost of accommodation and does not receive any support from central government for this expenditure. Demand for services for NRPF families has been growing (Chart 17 in Appendix 3), placing increased cost pressures on local authorities particularly those in urban centres such as London. The Council's NRPF related costs have been growing steadily over the last five years. In 2012/13 the council spent £2.7m on NRPF support and is forecast to be around £7.5m in 2016/17.

Our future aim is to look for opportunities to provide better quality accommodation and at the same time look to ensure we are spending our money as effectively as possible.

The immediate priority is to continue intensively resolving cases and managing over-stayers and illegal entrants through encouraging a voluntary return process.

The aim is that, in due course, the reduction in overall caseload will develop capacity for the team to focus on service development such as a possible further integration of NRPF staff in Housing Solutions and the NRPF team exploring mirroring processes set out in the HRA17. This could, for example, include an equivalent of the personal housing plan.

## **Priority Five:**

### **Responding to the Welfare Reforms**

**We will work closely in partnership with support agencies and local services to offer solutions that ensure households are able to maintain tenancies and their homes sustainably.**

Southwark has the ambition to continue to be a trailblazer at the forefront of influencing national policy including collaborating with partners and regional bodies to support proposals which could alleviate homelessness and oppose those which may have unintended consequences which cause homelessness.

Collectively, the Review of Homelessness in Southwark (Appendix 3) data reveals the impacts of welfare reforms on Southwark. Two of the most significant reforms are the frozen LHA rates and the Benefits Cap. These factors have restricted the benefits available to claimants and without our intervention, have made living in Southwark unaffordable for some households. This has also resulted in an increase in evictions from private rented tenancies as LHA has not kept pace with market rent.

In response to this, Southwark's Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) provides advice and financial assistance for local tenants who rent social or private sector housing.

The FIT will continue to help in the following ways:

- By managing the Discretionary Housing Payment fund (DHP), which is used to help tenants cope with housing costs.
- By managing the Rent Arrears Fund, which provides a maximum payment of £500 to stop landlords evicting tenants because of rent arrears.
- By providing advice and assistance to those affected by welfare reforms, such as the Social Sector Size criteria (otherwise known as Bedroom Tax), Benefit Cap, Local Housing Allowance reforms or Universal Credit).
- By helping with budgeting and finding alternative solutions to housing needs (for example, providing a deposit so that households can move into a more affordable property).

FIT advises and assists tenants at risk of losing their homes or worried about their current housing situation. The service actively works with other agencies,

including Job Centre Plus to help tenants find employment or downsize through our Smart Move or Mutual Exchange schemes. Overall, the team has a strong focus on helping people to find employment as the most sustainable way for most households to manage and reduce the financial impacts of the caps.

### Data monitoring

Data is vitally important for how we use our resources. Analysing reliable sources of data allows us to see what the impacts are from our policies and what further actions we need to take to address any challenges that are presented.

We will closely monitor the impacts of welfare reform through data collection and information sharing with partners. This information has so far assisted us with successfully leading on lobbying the government to consider the revision of policies where we can show negative impacts arising. For instance, Southwark has evidenced that the UC system makes rent payments particularly difficult to collect for temporary accommodation as a result of the transience of the tenancies. We argued for the Housing Benefit system to be reinstated until the UC system resolves this issue. This is now set to be the case with the Housing Benefit system reinstated for temporary accommodation from April 2018.

We will also make best use of our data collection on the impacts of welfare reform by analysing households likely to become affected by any of the reforms, or those that appear to already have been impacted. We will try and help these households through our outreach work, such as the welfare reform events, and partnership working to find the best solutions for each individual case.

In order to have a better understanding of how long households stay in their private rented tenancies after we place them, we will develop a system to collect this data. This will allow us to review the causes of why tenancies have not been sustained, such as because of rent arrears, which in turn can help us to address the challenges.

### Partnerships

Southwark's quarterly homelessness forum allows us to work closely with our partners, sharing information and working on solutions for tackling homelessness. The forum remains a valuable part of our plans for partnership working over the coming years and formed an integral part of Southwark's Homelessness Charter which was published on our [website](#) in 2017.

The council commissions the work of many of its partners, as detailed in the Review of Homelessness in Southwark (Appendix 3). For example;

- St Mungo's which provides commissioned outreach work and floating support;
- the Manna Society which provides a day centre homelessness advice service, food, clothing and showers, seven days a week;
- Advising London which provides generalist advice available in community languages;
- St Giles Trust which provides advice and referrals to homeless households, predominately to those who were recently incarcerated,
- Citizens Advice Bureau which provides generalist advice including welfare reform, and;
- Southwark Law Centre which provides legal advice.

These organisations help support the functions of the Housing Solutions service. The way we commission and recommission services in the future requires development though in order to reflect our Fairer Future Procurement Strategy.

The *Strategic coordination of council commissioning* cabinet report (December 2016) recommended, in line with our new VCS Strategy 2017-2022, a council-wide senior officer commissioning board to oversee the planning and co-ordination of commissioning intentions and activity and strengthen the governance arrangements around voluntary sector commissioning.

The commissioning principles align with the Fairer Future Procurement Strategy to deliver high quality services; encourage local sourcing and employment; being open, honest and accountable; spending money as if it were coming from our own pockets; contribute to reducing inequality through added social value and are focused on delivering outcomes.

Forming part of Southwark's Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 is the investment in Southwark Works to help residents furthest from the labour market such as single parents, families in vulnerable situations, people over 50 and people affected by welfare reform back into work by developing job application skills and gaining vocational qualifications.

Partnership working with Citizens Advice Bureau - Money Savvy to help residents with personal budgeting, debt advice, digital skills, managing the impacts of welfare reform and transition to employment is another important partnership, along with Southwark Works, which are helping to prevent homelessness.

The Economic Wellbeing Strategy also opens a dialogue with businesses to engage and educate on

the benefits of not offering zero hours contracts to employees and the value of providing a London Living Wage. Issues around claiming Universal Credit on zero hours contracts means having a stable income plays a role towards ensuring residents are able to budget successfully. This, in turn, reduces the chances of falling into rent arrears and the associated risk of homelessness through being evicted.

Overall, we need to utilise the support on offer externally, engaging with external agencies and making agreements for how we can make best use of these services. This will involve developing a comprehensive record of local agencies that can play a role in supporting our service.

We will review existing Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with our partners and develop new ones with the aim of prioritising homeless households (and those threatened with homelessness) for advice and assistance. We will negotiate for homeless households (and those threatened with homelessness) to be given priority assistance on the basis that we have a statutory requirement to assist these households.

A new duty in the Homelessness Reduction Act means that public authorities, such as hospitals, prisons and job centres, are required to notify a housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. We will develop local protocols and referral arrangements with appropriate agencies, whether or not they are included within that duty to ensure they are aware of the new duties and to make sure a clear and effective protocol is in place.

### **Sustainable permanent accommodation**

The current economic climate and the welfare reforms have created a challenging environment for households to cope with the costs of maintaining a tenancy in Southwark.

Table 17 in the Review of Homelessness (Appendix 3) shows the shortfall between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and the average rents in the borough. LHA which is the equivalent of housing benefit for households in the private sector were frozen in 2016 and may decrease if rents go down locally. Therefore there is likely to be a continued challenge to house people locally, particularly those not in work.

We need to respond to this by annually reviewing our temporary accommodation and permanent housing solutions procurement and placement policies.

We will always look to find temporary and permanent solutions in Southwark first of all, but to meet demand we have to prioritise these for households that need them most and are most likely to be able to sustain

them. This is simply because the supply of affordable accommodation in the borough does not currently meet the demand.

The Localism Act 2011 introduced the power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation. We have yet to introduce this as a policy of our own. We are looking to develop our policies so that they incorporate stronger ties with the private rented sector, as a more settled alternative to lengthy periods of time in temporary accommodation where households can often be asked to move with little warning. We are also looking to develop the policies based on the Homelessness Reduction Act which is guiding local authorities to utilise the private rented sector as a major resolution for preventing homelessness. The Act encourages a collaborative way of working with households. This would mean advising households on suitable locations and affordable options but allowing the households to have more control in the decision making for finding the right home for them.

In order to partly resolve these pressures, in addition to other solutions mentioned previously in the report such as a commitment to build more council housing, households that can maintain a private tenancy, and depending on individual circumstances, will be considered for placements in the private rented sector.

We believe that if this approach is going to be effective then we need to develop a stronger offer, particularly where households are offered accommodation outside of Southwark, for example due to affordability. We will design services for households moving into accommodation in the Private Rental Sector (PRS) outside of Southwark and its surrounding boroughs. This will include developing profiles of different areas so that households can assess a location's suitability to meet their own needs.

We will provide a resettlement service which will deliver ongoing contact and support with arrangements such as enrolling children at new schools, linking in with employment and training services and registering at a local GP. The resettlement service will also offer and run tenancy training events to help households sustain tenancies.

It is understandable that many households would prefer to stay in Southwark but it is necessary to find a balance between the cost of supporting these households in expensive nightly rate accommodation and also for the households having to spend extended periods of time in temporary accommodation.

Homeless households rehoused into the private rented sector, including those outside of the borough, will be awarded Band 2 priority bidding in the Housing

Allocations Scheme. This will give households a high priority to move back to Southwark should they prefer to do so.

### **Housing for under 35s**

Most single private renters under the age of 35 are usually only entitled to housing benefit at the shared accommodation rate. This presents a significant challenge because of the strong rental market for this cohort driven by young professionals willing to pay a higher rent.

We are looking to develop models that can provide affordable solutions both for our own homelessness budgets and for the households. For example, we will work in partnership with private landlords to develop working models for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). These schemes will house a mixture of singles and small family units such as couples or single parents with the aim of it being broadly cost neutral to the council.

We will continue to help affected tenants by giving financial advice and employment support as well as providing self-help packs available through our website. This will contribute to households having access to information which can help them to make the right decisions for their own situations.

# 8. Equality and Health Analysis

An Equalities and Health Analysis (Appendix 2) has been undertaken of the Southwark Homelessness Review and draft Homelessness strategy 2018-2022 to ensure that there are no adverse effects for any particular group. The strategy in itself sets out the strategic priorities which will be delivered to prevent homelessness and respond to those in housing need.

It has relevance to equality because it impacts on the boroughs most vulnerable people, who are over

represented amongst the protected characteristic groups. As the overarching aim of the strategy is to prevent homelessness and to support vulnerable people, the delivery of the actions identified will have positive impact for BME, disabled and vulnerable, young people and women, all of who are over represented amongst those who are at risk of homelessness.

# 9. Consultation

As part of the formulation of this strategy we took the opportunity to consult with staff and colleagues from across the Council.

A discussion event was held in February 2017 for key stakeholders at the Southwark Homelessness Forum to identify the key strategic priorities.

A further consultation took place on a draft of this strategy at the Southwark Homelessness Forum in September 2017.

Those involved in the consultation are listed below:

Advising London  
Citizens Advice Southwark  
Depaul UK  
DWP  
Guys and St Thomas Hospital NHS  
Homelesslink  
Hyde Housing  
Lookahead  
The Manna Society  
Mungos Broadway  
Shelter  
Solace women's aid  
Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers  
Southwark Disability  
Southwark Law Centre  
Southwark Carers  
St Giles Trust  
Thamesreach

## Your comments and further information

We would like to know what you think about this strategy or homelessness in general. You can leave comments or feedback at any time using the contact details below:

Email: [ian.swift@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:ian.swift@southwark.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0207 525 4089

We will take your comments to our review meetings. Further copies of this strategy are available to download from the council's website:

[www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/finding-a-new-home/about-the-housing-solutions-service)

We are looking to set up a customer focus group for our service users to help us review this strategy as we reassess our priorities annually. If you are interested in joining our customer focus group then contact us on the details below:

Email: [alex.skerten@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:alex.skerten@southwark.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0207 525 3710

# 10. Governance and delivery of the strategy

To make the right decisions, and drive necessary reforms, we need to use our strength and leadership at both a borough-wide and regional level across London to shape both the growth and reform agendas. We want to be seen as a leading authority, nationally, at developing positive changes and this includes lobbying for the powers and responsibility we need to continue to reduce homelessness.

We also need to ensure that together with partners, we have the skills, structures and infrastructure for the delivery of the Strategy's priorities, and to deliver the radical and innovative agenda that will be essential to successfully tackling homelessness over the next five years.

All directorates across Southwark Council are signed up and committed to delivering the Homelessness Strategy, working with partners and within the Council to ensure that its priorities are delivered. The objectives in the Homelessness Strategy will be delivered using a plan that identifies the main tasks needed to tackle and prevent homelessness over the next five years. Given the context of rapid change, the delivery plan will be reviewed every year to ensure that the tasks remain relevant and are revised where appropriate. A mid-term review is also planned for 2020.

The plan will identify issues linked to specific tasks, and indicate timescales.

The Southwark Homelessness Forum and a nominated officer responsible for monitoring delivery of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will consider progress against the delivery plan annually at the meeting, providing feedback, constructive comments and escalating barriers to delivering the Homelessness Strategy.

The mid-term review will be presented to the Senior Management Team and Cabinet Member for Housing to monitor delivery against the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and to reassess ongoing targets.

# 11. Future commissioning of Homelessness Services

Commissioning is the whole process through which Southwark and other public bodies identify and deliver services when these are not to be delivered directly in-house. It involves assessing need, borough wide, neighbourhood or estate based level as well as for particular population segments and commissioning services to meet those needs, or inviting proposals for the provision of services identified as required by the local community.

In December 2016 a report entitled '*Strategic coordination of council commissioning*' was presented to Southwark's Cabinet.

One of the recommendations was for a council-wide senior officer commissioning board to oversee the planning and co-ordination of commissioning intentions and activity and strengthen the governance arrangements around voluntary sector commissioning.

The rationale behind the proposed changes is our, together with our partners, commitment to commissioning that delivers high quality services that have a positive impact for our residents. Improving co-ordination with a council-wide approach is much needed during this period of reduced council budgets and as part of what the council is doing to deliver our Fairer Future promises. This approach is linked to the vision contained in the new Southwark voluntary and community sector strategy *Common Purpose Common Cause*.

The new arrangements for co-ordination will be implemented taking account of a number of important principles. These include encouraging local sourcing and employment, being open, honest and accountable in how we commission and working with our partners to make the most of opportunities for getting social value from the services. Spending the money as if it were coming from our own pockets is the council's promise to making public money deliver better outcomes. Improved co-ordination will build a better understanding of what the outcomes are and how effective they are in creating a safer and fairer Southwark.

The likely impact of this council-wide commissioning approach is a change in the process to how we have previously commissioned and recommissioned the services of our existing partners. Nevertheless, the council will continue to commission services that support and directly contribute to meeting the objectives set out in this strategy.

A more co-ordinated approach to commissioning in the future can also help to jointly commission accommodation and support services with children's social care, health, criminal justice agencies and other partners, in order to share and maximise resources and ensure a more holistic service response.

We will ensure that commissioning decisions are reflected in changes to the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

# 12. Statutory duty

Southwark's main statutory duties are primarily set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), including:

- Section 179: Duty to provide advisory services
- Section 184: Duty to make enquiries in respect of eligibility and duties owed
- Section 188: Interim duty to accommodate in cases of apparent priority need
- Section 189B: Help to Secure Accommodation Duty. A new duty to be introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Section 192: Duties to people found not to be in priority need and not homeless intentionally.
- Section 193: Duties to people found to be in priority need and not homeless intentionally.

- Section 195: Duties to those threatened with homelessness
- Section 198: Referral of case to another local housing authority

The 2002 Homelessness Act also introduced a requirement on Local Authorities to take a strategic approach to dealing with homelessness. This is done by:

- Carrying out a review of homelessness in their area, and
- Based on the findings of the review, developing and publishing a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness.