

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 Consultation Report

## June 2023

### 1. Aim of the consultation

- 1.1 Barnet Council is introducing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to set out the approach to preventing homelessness and supporting those who face or are at risk of becoming homeless, taking into account the challenges and opportunities within the operating environment.
- 1.2 The themes of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are influenced by the Government's 'Homelessness Code of Guidance' on publishing a homelessness strategy, and are:
- Prevent homelessness
  - Ensure a sufficient supply of accommodation *[Note: to be delivered in part through the Housing Strategy]*
  - Provide support for people who are or have been homeless
- 1.3 As part of the development of the strategy, a consultation was held to seek residents' and stakeholders' feedback on the draft strategy. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation ran for ten and a half weeks, from 5 April 2023 to 18 June 2023. It primarily consisted of an online survey on Engage Barnet. Supporting documents were also available on Engage Barnet, allowing interested parties to view the draft strategy.
- 1.4 A number of targeted focus groups were also held to give residents and partner agencies an opportunity to give feedback on the draft strategy.

### 2. Methodology

- 2.1 The questionnaire was available on the council's consultation webpage Engage Barnet, with paper copies available on request. The questionnaires asked respondents how much they agreed with the different priorities of the strategy. In total, 16 responses were received through Engage Barnet. There were free text boxes that allowed respondents to add in comments, including to note anything they thought was missing.
- 2.4 The consultation was well publicised through various mediums including:
- Email sent to all Private Registered Providers operating within the borough, encouraging them to review the proposals and respond to the consultation.
  - Email sent to key homelessness services partner agencies, encouraging them to review the proposals and respond to the consultation.
  - The council's social media channels, primarily on Twitter where the council has over 25,000 followers.
  - A paid Facebook and Instagram advertising campaign, which targeted people living in Barnet.
  - The Barnet Group's and its subsidiaries' social media channels, primarily on Twitter and Instagram where The Barnet Group has over 3,000 followers.
  - Prominent feature on the council's website and promoted in a press release following the review by the Housing and Growth Committee.
  - Promoted in the council's Barnet First magazine, which is sent to all residents in the borough.
  - Promoted in the council's Barnet Together CTN community news e-bulletin.
  - Promoted in the Barnet Homes resident magazine atHome, which is distributed to over 13,000 homes.

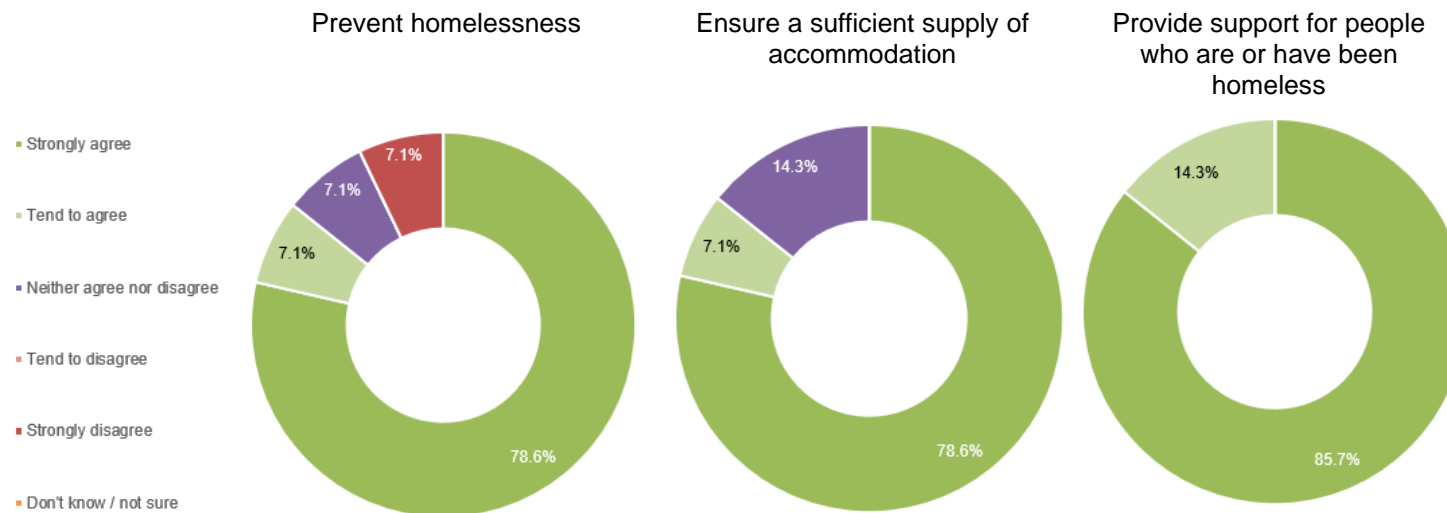
- Promoted to involved residents by Barnet Homes.
- Promoted through a signature block in the emails of key frontline staff of the council and Barnet Homes as well as Labour councillors.
- Key council departments, managers, and staff from a range of stakeholder service areas were briefed on the proposed Housing Strategy and were given opportunity to provide feedback.

2.5 In total, there were 44 attendees at targeted focus groups; these included groups for council residents who have recently been housed, care leavers, adult social care clients, and key homelessness services partner agencies.

2.6 The Greater London Authority (GLA) was also invited to review the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and provide feedback.

### 3. Summary of key findings

3.1 The questionnaire asked respondents if they agreed with the themes stated in the strategy, with options of strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The majority (mean of 90.5%) agreed, with 100% of respondents agreeing with the third theme. 7.1% disagreed with the theme on preventing homelessness. The comments received were very supportive of the proposed themes, and emphasised the need for ongoing support, adequate housing, and the council's social and moral duty to prevent homelessness. There was one negative comment about believing it is not acceptable to be asked for money by rough sleepers. The questionnaire also asked if respondents felt anything was missing from the three sections; there were comments received about training on mental health issues for Housing Options staff, delivering affordable homes, and support for tenants in the private rented sector.



- 3.2 72.7% of respondents felt the strategy was clear and easy to understand; 27.3% answered “don’t know” to this question, however there were no comments received about how it could be improved.
- 3.3 Overall, 54.6% of respondents felt the strategy addresses the most important housing issues we face in Barnet over the next five years (45.5% said they did not know), however there were no comments received about how it could be improved. A question was also included to seek any other comments from respondents. These included a suggestion to create a specialist physical health team, to ensure implementation, and increase affordable housing within private developments, and a comment about the impact of local area connection policies on transient residents.
- 3.4 The focus groups provided opportunity for discussion about the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the other key housing-related strategies and policies that Barnet Council is currently reviewing. These enabled quality discussions about residents’ aspirations and areas of concern, in addition to being an opportunity to explain the documents in more detail. The focus groups indicated good support for the aims of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Attendees stated concerns about the following matters that are pertinent to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy:
- Homelessness prevention, particularly the challenge of providing mental health support.
  - Ongoing support for those placed in temporary accommodation.
  - The need for intervention at an early stage.
  - The need for 1:1 support and advice.
  - Suggestion about the use of council buildings for temporary accommodation.
  - The need for more supported accommodation.
  - How people with no recourse to public funds can be accommodated.
- 3.4 Discussions were also held with key council services that are affected by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 3.10 All of the comments received have been reviewed and fed back into the strategy. Comments will also be considered in the development of the supporting implementation plan.

#### 4. Consultation questionnaire demographic characteristics

- 4.1 Most of the 16 questionnaire respondents were residents of Barnet (53.9%), while others responded as representatives of a private registered provider (e.g., a housing association) (15.4%), a person who works in the borough (15.4%), or representatives of a voluntary or community organisation (7.7%). 3 respondents chose to skip this question.
- 4.2 28.6% of respondents owned their home outright, 28.6% rented from the council, 28.6% rented from a registered social landlord, and 14.3% rented privately.
- 4.3 The council is required by law, under the Equality Act 2010, to monitor respondents against the protected characteristics. These questions were only asked of respondents who indicated they were residents of the borough (7 respondents in total). Due to the low number of questionnaire respondents,

a summary is provided in this report; however, the results are not considered to be statistically relevant. The diversity of respondents was improved through the targeted focus groups, which included people from a range of backgrounds and ages. Groups that the council typically finds hard to reach, including those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping, were considered through the focus group with key partner agencies who were asked to consider the needs of their clients in their engagement with the council.

- Most respondents were aged 25-34, 35-44, and 65-74 (28.6% each).
- 50% were female and 50% were male.
- 100% of respondents said that their sex was the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- 60% of respondents were White British, 20% were of a mixed White and Asian background, and 20% preferred not to give their ethnicity.
- 33.3% of respondents said they considered themselves to have a disability.
- 40% of respondents were Christian, 20% had no religion or belief, and 40% preferred not to give their religion or belief.
- 60% of respondents were heterosexual, 20% were gay or lesbian, and 20% preferred not to give their sexual orientation.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The findings from the consultation overall show strong support for the proposed new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 5.2 We thank all those who took the time to respond to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation.