

New direction for housing in Wandsworth

Housing and Homelessness
Strategy 2023-2028





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Foreword

Councillor Dikerdem, Cabinet Member for Housing



New direction for Housing and Homelessness in Wandsworth.

Our ambition is for Wandsworth to be a fairer, more compassionate and sustainable borough. Ensuring our residents have a safe, secure affordable home is fundamental to this. We believe that quality housing remains one of the most important ways to improve health, social, environmental and economic outcomes. Since May 2022, we have put in place a raft of changes to the Council's housing policies and priorities and this shift in direction is reflected in our Housing and Homelessness Strategy. We will ensure our Homes for Wandsworth Programme will deliver 1,000 new council rent homes, get a fair deal for renters, and take robust action to tackle the homelessness crisis.

As well as a commitment to significantly increase the supply of housing at social rent, we will invest more in homelessness prevention, reduce the use of temporary accommodation, and strengthen tenants' rights to have a secure 'lifetime' tenancy. A review of the housing service standards commenced at the beginning of 2023 to re-affirm our commitment to ensuring repairs are completed promptly and cleaning standards improved. This was reviewed through a series of resident led working groups.

This Council has made a clear public commitment to investing in frontline staff to improve how we deliver services. In response to higher demands on staff and an evolving legislative regime, we have increased the number of officers within our Area Housing teams and officers dealing with homelessness for the first time in decades.

We understand the issues our community faces, and this is expressed in our five key themes

which underpin this Strategy: Delivering for our council tenants and leaseholders; Building More homes; Improving Standards for Private Renters; Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping; and Supporting Residents with Additional Needs.

The UK's recent high inflation rate has caused a significant challenge for local authority budgets. The Council has a duty to review housing rents and agreed to increase council housing rents by 7% in line with the Government's cap, a below inflation rise which took effect at the beginning of April 2023. This will mean we can continue to maintain our existing stock at decent levels, improve and expand a high quality and responsive service for our tenants and support the investment in the delivery of much needed new Council homes for our borough.

However, despite the rent increase, the cap set by Central Government means a real-terms funding cut to Wandsworth's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of 4.1%, equivalent to £4 million per annum, or £47 million over the next 10 years. This cut comes alongside expanded requirements from central government, such as fire safety, decent homes, and the green agenda, which all come at significant cost.

We are committed to ensuring that local people have a genuinely affordable place to call home and took the decision that our housebuilding programme – Homes for Wandsworth – will be 100% council rented homes.

I want to see increased affordable housing delivery in the Borough outside the Homes for Wandsworth programme too. We need private developers to deliver genuinely affordable homes that meet the needs of our communities. We consider social rents to be the most appropriate form of tenure for low

cost rented homes. We will therefore seek where possible and viable, to negotiate social rent tenures on all future planning applications for low-cost rent properties.

Increased homelessness demand will sadly continue to be driven by previous welfare benefit reforms, notably the welfare benefit cap, and the failure by governments since 2010 to update Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels to allow lower income or benefit dependant families to obtain and/or retain affordable private sector tenancies locally.

Changes within the private rented market, such as the introduction of Section 21 'no-fault' evictions and ever rising rents making housing less affordable, have resulted in increased pressure on homelessness services and temporary accommodation. I believe that no one should be homeless in our community and we will aim to build on the successful 'Everyone In' programme that gave all rough sleepers a safe place to stay during the pandemic. The Council will establish a rough sleeping hub that brings together Council services, SPEAR (Rough Sleeper service) and other partner agencies to provide a single point of access for rough sleepers, utilising £4.8m of Government funding.

The Council is able to demonstrate that it is effectively using resources available to meet its statutory duties relating to housing the homeless, which were fundamentally changed by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. However, homelessness and temporary accommodation have continued to increase since the Act was introduced. To tackle this, the Council is committed to maximising resources to meet identified housing needs, including the creation of 23 additional housing posts to support prevention and help find accommodation. By doing this, we expect to allocate additional resource to reduce the demand on non-statutory rehousing queues.

Private housing makes up a large proportion of the Borough's housing market and this Strategy maps out how the Council will drive up standards across the Borough by reviewing the feasibility of introducing discretionary licensing to improve the condition and quality of properties in the private rented sector in an aim to crack down on rogue landlords. The majority of private housing is well maintained and safe but there are landlords who do not fully comply with safety requirements.

To improve and maintain good conditions we need to consider the use of all the tools available, discretionary licensing is a vital part of this and will help sustain an active inspection team to improve conditions.

As a response to the cost-of-living crisis we have introduced an interest free extension period to the payment terms for council leaseholders for major works bills to four years for bills over £3,000. We are committed to supporting leaseholders and are pleased to be able to offer these favourable terms. We believe this change will go some way to help residents manage their competing financial pressures more effectively and feel more secure in their homes.

The Council has removed flexible fixed term tenancies (FFFT) for the majority of tenants and will offer secure periodic (lifetime) tenancies to new tenants. Residents should have a stable place to call home without the worry of a review of the tenancy every five years. Whilst there is an exception for the largest properties as these are such a scarce resource, we believe our generous incentive scheme for those who are under-occupying their homes and the renewed focus on this will help us achieve more under-occupation transfers without the need for FFTTs.

We have inherited the live Winstanley-York Road regeneration which so far has delivered 204 properties for council rent and two for equity share to accommodate leaseholders from the regeneration area. A further 300 homes are currently under construction and 60 are due to start on site before spring 2024.

We decided to end the process to find a development partner to deliver the masterplan for the Alton Estate regeneration. This decision was taken to enable us to review options for the estate and consider alternative proposals. We remain committed to investing in and improving the Alton estate and will review the options for investment and development. We have held an initial engagement process to help shape options and have consulted residents during 2023 to help us arrive at the preferred option.

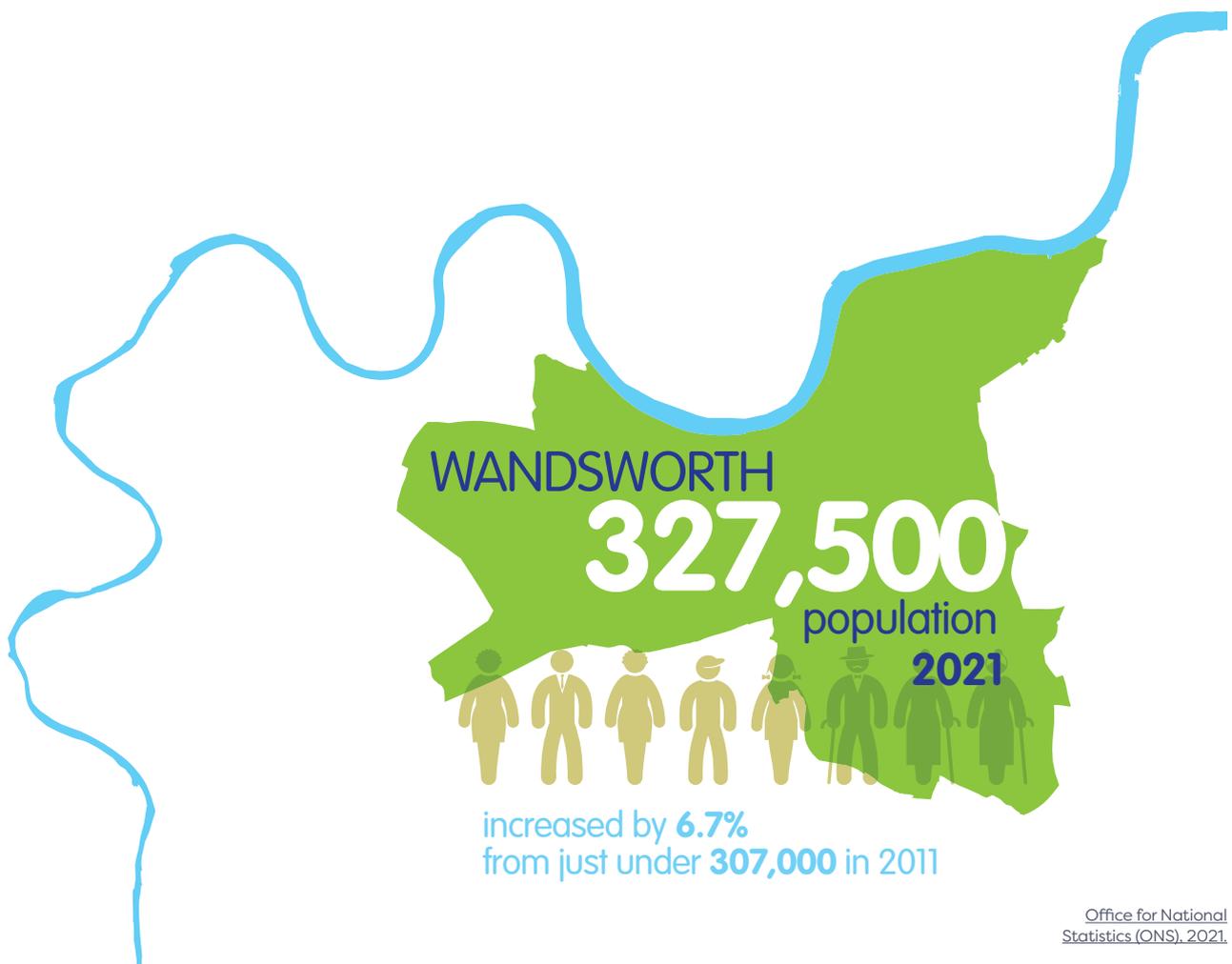
It is essential we protect the most vulnerable in our society and we are committed to supporting residents with additional needs through supported housing, providing suitable properties and adaptations to existing properties, both Council owned and in the private rented sector. We are

committed to helping those who wish to remain living independently in their home and I am extremely proud of the work the Department does across the Council and Borough to support the most vulnerable.

We are an active member of organisations such as the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH), London Councils, and the Local Government Association. These organisations provide a forum for councils to collaborate and share best practice, enabling members to work together to achieve common goals. We will continue to work in partnership with organisations to get the best deal for our residents.

Over the course of this Strategy, we will need to respond to the challenges residents are facing and meet housing demands. This Strategy demonstrates how we have already started to do this and sets out what we will continue to do over the next few years to achieve our objectives.

Councillor Aydin Dikerdem
Cabinet Member for Housing



Introduction

The Council understands the challenges residents face to secure good quality, affordable housing, and the key role housing plays to provide a foundation for physical, social and mental well-being. Both council homes and the private rented sector are crucial to meeting housing demand and supporting the local economy by providing for workers and families.

This Strategy sets out the Council's plan for housing and homelessness for the period 2023-2028. It replaces the Borough's previous 2019-2022 strategy to ensure the housing challenges facing the Council over the next five years are met. Challenges include new legislation and developments in the sector, meeting the climate aims set by the Wandsworth Environmental and Sustainability Strategy, responding to building safety issues following the Grenfell Tower fire and housing conditions following the tragic death of two year old Awaab Ishak in 2020. These challenges are some of the biggest the housing sector has faced in over 40 years.

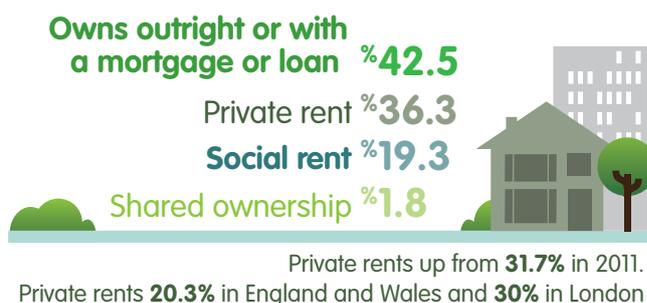
The Housing Act 1985 states that every local housing authority must consider housing conditions and needs for further housing provision and this Strategy has been developed to represent the diverse needs of the Borough. The Strategy is complementary to other plans developed by the Council, including the Local Plan. This Strategy is required to conform with the London Housing Strategy under the Greater London Authority Act 2007 and combines the Council's Strategy for housing and homelessness prevention to reflect the joint approach needed.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local housing authorities to publish a homelessness strategy to identify strategic objectives to tackle homelessness and set out how it will deliver these services. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) significantly changed homelessness services across the nation by putting an emphasis on preventing homelessness and extending statutory services to assist households who were not deemed to be in

Wandsworth Council's continued focus is set out in five themes, each of which is important in supporting housing for the Borough. These are:

- Delivering for our council tenants and leaseholders
- Building more Homes
- Improving Standards for Private Renters
- Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Supporting Residents with Additional Needs

Tenure in the Borough:



Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021.

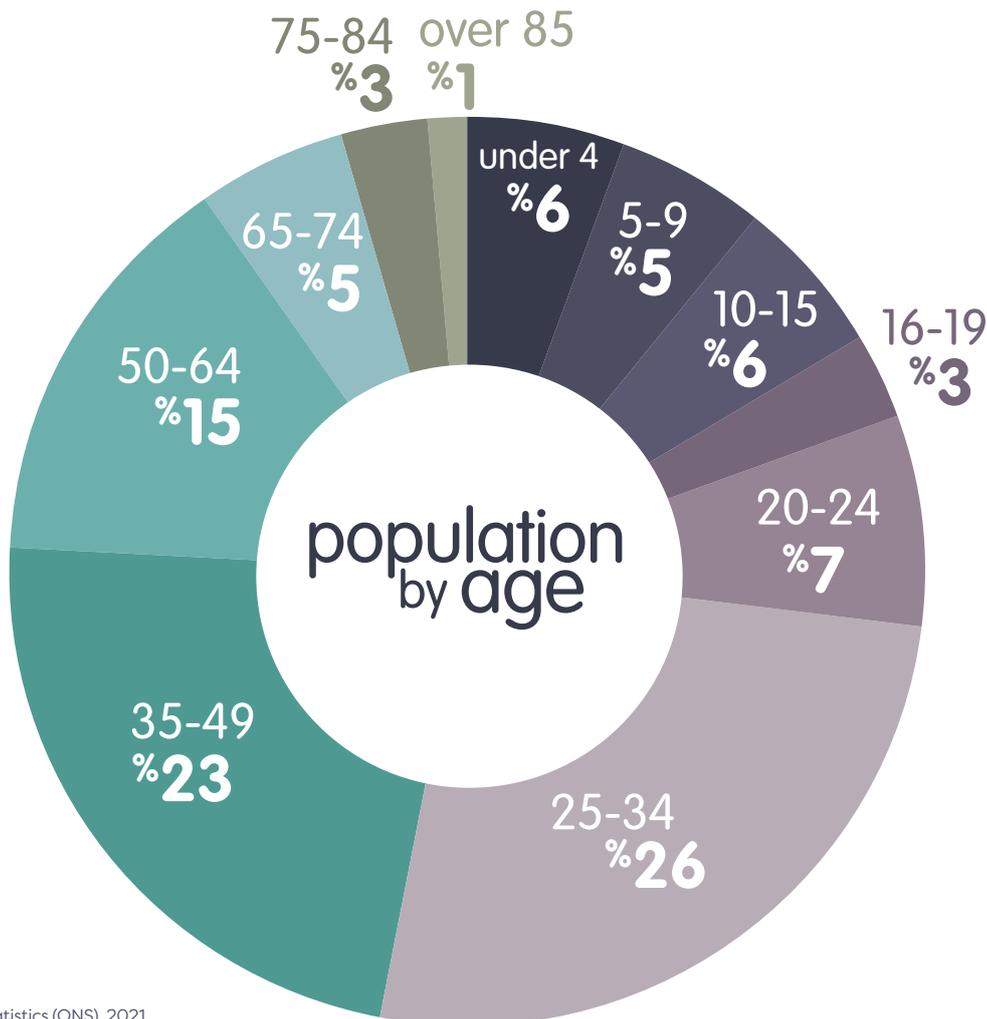
priority need. In 2022, the Government published an updated Rough Sleeping Strategy: “Ending rough sleeping for good” through prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent and joined up system. The Borough’s priorities and objectives to tackle rough sleeping incorporate government legislation and policy direction.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028 sits beneath Wandsworth Borough Council’s Corporate Plan and informs other strategic plans, such as the Council’s Local Plan, Community Safety Plan, Strategy for Children and Young People and the Environment and Sustainability Strategy. It will inform housing policies such as the Tenancy and Rent Strategy and Tenancy Policy, Affordable Rent Guidance, Allocation Scheme, Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy and Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Policy Statement. An Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) is accompanied with this Strategy to identify how this will impact residents and what the Council will need to do to monitor this impact.

Covid-19 has impacted residents and the housing market, and the Council must respond to the challenges faced following the pandemic as well as emerging legislation, such as building safety, and addressing climate change. This Strategy will set out the national, regional, and local context and identifies the key challenges faced in providing good quality, affordable homes and preventing homelessness in Wandsworth.

Resident	Total	%
White	222,046	68
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	20,637	6
Asian/Asian British	38,297	12
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	33,011	10
Other ethnic group	13,422	4
Overall total	327,413	100

Census 2021, Office for National Statistics



Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021.

National context

The national housing landscape has changed since the previous Housing and Homelessness Strategy, particularly due to fire safety regulation changes, a greater focus on the green agenda, the impacts of Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis and most recently the tragic death of Awaab Ishak from exposure to extensive mould in his home.

Changes to the housing sector have created new challenges and opportunities that have influenced the future direction of the Council working as both a social and private landlord and responding to homelessness.

Building Safety Act 2022

In April 2022 the Government passed the Building Safety Act in response to the Grenfell Tower fire and the recommendations made by Dame Judith Hackitt, to create a new, more stringent regulatory regime for all “higher-risk” buildings (buildings in scope being 18 metres and above), and the creation of a new Building Safety Regulator with stronger regulatory oversight.

Fire Safety Act 2021 - In April 2021 the Government passed the Fire Safety Act. This Act amended the Fire Safety Order 2005, to clarify building owners’ and managers’ responsibility to manage risks associated with the structure and external walls of a building, including cladding, balconies and windows and the entrance doors to individual flats that open onto common parts.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 - In April 2022, the Government passed new regulations in response to the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 Inquiry, known as the Fire Safety (England) Regulations to improve the safety of residential buildings. These regulations included measures such as: the installation of property information boxes; providing information to the fire and rescue service; monthly checks to essential firefighting equipment, such as automatic opening vents (AOVs), lifts and dry risers; the installation of wayfinding signage; inspection of front entrance doors; and provision of information to residents.

Climate change

The UK Government declared a climate emergency in 2019 and subsequently set out plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050. In April 2021, the Government set a target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 from 1990 levels. The UK’s main source of emissions is from buildings, with 17% of UK emissions in 2019 produced by the home. The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, outlined in November 2020, sets out a series of proposals to support green jobs and infrastructure. The Government’s key commitments for improving building energy performance is through the Future Homes Standard to ensure that all new-build homes are zero carbon ready and to improve as many existing homes as possible to be EPC Band C by 2035.

The Heat and Buildings Strategy aims to phase out installation of gas boilers beyond 2035 and move to low-carbon technology, such as heat pumps. The Government have announced a number of green funding opportunities to meet targets within the Heat and Building Strategy and to support improvements in energy performance of social housing, including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Energy Company Obligation 4 (ECO4) funding and Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme.

Social Housing Regulation Act

The Social Housing Regulation Act sets out in legislation several commitments from the 2020 Social Housing White Paper, with the focus on broadening the remit of the Regulator of Social Housing. This includes setting up a Tenant Advisory Panel, improving performance information sharing and transparency, placing the regulator’s



Consumer Standards on the same footing as their Economic Standards, strengthening of investigative and enforcement powers (enforcement will now include local authorities).

The Council is required to collect and publish a range of comparable information on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints as part of the legalisation through tenant satisfaction measures. The Act stipulates that each organisation has a 'Health and Safety lead' and outlines their responsibilities.

Housing Ombudsman report 2021

The Housing Ombudsman Service released a report outlining a review of their full casebook of complaints where damp and mould cases have been reported by residents. In total 26 recommendations were made, focussing largely on four areas: moving from being reactive to proactive, no longer inferring blame and taking responsibility, disrepair claims to resolution, and complaints and learning.

The Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH) has asked local authorities to undertake a review into how landlords respond to cases of damp and

mould in their dwellings. The coroner report into the death of Awaab Ishak outlines service failings in the build up to his death as a result of chronic exposure to fungus from extensive mould in the home.

Homelessness and rough sleeping

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires councils to prevent homelessness through early intervention and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those who have priority under the Act. There has been a shift to provide preventative measures to reduce homelessness through improved advice provided by local authorities. Public authorities have a statutory duty to refer service users who they believe are homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local authority.

In 2022, the Government published an updated Rough Sleeping Strategy, *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good*, which committed £2 billion of funding. The Strategy sets out the Government's plan through the following key themes: Prevention, Intervention, Recovery, and A Transparent and Joined-up System.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act is the most comprehensive package ever to tackle the crime of domestic abuse and aims to provide support and protection to survivors and punish perpetrators. The Act created a statutory duty on local authorities in England to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation. The Act requires local authorities when re-housing an existing lifetime social tenant or offering them a new sole tenancy in their own home, to grant a new lifetime tenancy.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a number of changes empowering local authorities to tackle rogue landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector. The Act allows local authorities to issue a financial penalty notice, requires them to make an entry on the database where a landlord or property agent has received a banning order, and provides new powers for local authorities to seek banning orders and Rent Repayment Orders to cover illegal eviction. Changes also included the ability to extend the Right to Buy (RTB) to private registered providers (PRPs) and regulations to streamline planning policies to increase the delivery of homes.

Building regulations and accessible homes

The building regulations act (2010) relates to access to, and use of buildings and sets out the minimum standards for all new homes. The Government has recently committed to raising accessibility standards for new homes across the UK, recognising the importance of suitable homes for older and disabled people. This does not currently include a percentage of wheelchair user housing, but as a borough we remain committed to providing at least 10% in line with the London Plan.

The Social Care White Paper

The Government published a Social Care White Paper setting out a ten-year vision for the reform of social care. Within the Paper, and subsequent implementation plan, are proposals to actively shape the specialist housing market, to establish and consolidate local strategic leadership and create incentives for local areas and housing providers to invest, including in new and innovative models of provision.



Castlemaine Tower

Regional context

The London Housing Strategy 2018

The London Housing Strategy 2018 sets out the Mayor of London's plans to tackle the capital's housing crisis and his vision to provide all Londoners with a good quality home they can afford.

The London Housing Strategy 2018 is underpinned by five key priorities:

- **Building homes for Londoners** – to identify and bring forward more land for housing, invest in homes and infrastructure, diversifying the homebuilding industry and improve skills, capacity and building methods of the industry.
- **Delivering genuinely affordable homes** – to ensure homes are genuinely affordable, work towards half of new homes built being affordable, and protect London's existing social housing.
- **High quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods** – to create well-designed, safe, good quality, and environmentally sustainable homes, meet London's diverse housing needs, and involve Londoners in homebuilding.
- **A fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders** – improve the quality of private renting, develop a more secure, stable, and affordable private rented sector, reform and improve leasehold relationships.
- **Tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers** – prevent homelessness and help homeless Londoners into housing and rough sleepers off the streets.

The Mayor recognises that councils in London are at the frontline of the housing crisis and will play a central role in delivering the London Housing Strategy. The Mayor of London will work with councils to support the full range of functions

including planning and giving permission for new housing schemes; promoting development across their areas; building new council homes for social rent; and ensuring that Londoners affected by the housing crisis get the help and support they need.

Council housing strategies are required to be in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy under the Greater London Authority Act 2007. The key priorities of the Mayor's Strategy are reflected in the Wandsworth Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

The London Plan 2021

The adopted 2021 London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20 years.

The London Plan sets ten-year targets for net housing completions in each London borough. For Wandsworth the target is 1,950 homes per annum, equivalent to 19,500 homes from 2019/20 to 2028/29. The London Plan relies on the 2017 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and 2017 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for its evidence of housing need. The SHMA forecasts a need for approximately 55,000 additional homes in London per annum.

The target set for the Council's recently adopted Local Plan for the period 2023/24 to 2037/38 is 20,313 dwellings and the Wandsworth Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment has identified capacity in the Borough for up to 24,381 dwellings¹. The London Plan sets a strategic target for 50% of all new homes to be developed as genuinely affordable across London, with an exception of 35% allowed on fast track applications. 50% affordable homes is required on all public sector and industrial land appropriate for residential use.

¹ [Wandsworth Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, 2022](#)



Aerial shot of Sudbury House.

2021 – 2026 Greater London Authority Affordable Homes Programme

The principal use of this grant will be to deliver additional affordable housing, it is expected all schemes will achieve 40% affordable housing subject to viability, with grant available for any homes above 35%. Funding for schemes of 35% affordable housing and fewer will only be funded if exceptional circumstances are evidenced and

justified. The GLA provides funding for genuinely affordable housing. These being Social Rent, London Shared Ownership and London Living Rent. Schemes achieving 100% affordable housing will be eligible for all the homes to be funded.

Local context

Corporate Business Plan

This Strategy is underpinned by the actions and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the Wandsworth Corporate Plan, reflecting the Council's service delivery commitments and priorities. The Plan comprises of 4-year objectives to be delivered by March 2026, supported by one-year actions and KPIs that will be reported to committee twice a year.

The Wandsworth Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will deliver a fairer, compassionate, and more sustainable Wandsworth. The priority areas include:

A Fairer Wandsworth

- We will work towards ensuring all local people have a genuinely affordable place to call home
- We will support residents who are impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and Covid
- We will create safer neighbourhoods where communities feel confident and protected and victims and survivors are supported.

A Compassionate Wandsworth

- We will be a compassionate Council that truly listens and is ambitious for all.

A More Sustainable Wandsworth

- We will tackle climate change by working together with our residents, businesses and communities and will be carbon neutral as a council by 2030.

Local Plan

The Council's Local Plan sets out the spatial vision for Wandsworth and the planning policies in place to achieve this. The Local Plan aims to make provision to meet the needs for housing, business, community services and infrastructure, in a sustainable way, protecting both the built and the natural environments.

The current plan was adopted in 2023. The Council's vision is for Wandsworth to maintain its

special character, connectivity and neighbourhood distinctiveness and to achieve high levels of growth in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way, bringing benefits and opportunities for all.

The Housing and Regeneration Department supports the policy objectives of this plan through the development of this strategy. The Local Plan, Policy LP23 sets the framework of how the Council seeks the maximum reasonable level of affordable housing on development, subject to financial viability.

Wandsworth Tenancy and Rent Strategy and Tenancy Policy

In line with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, the Wandsworth Tenancy and Rent Strategy and Tenancy Policy sets out the Council's policies in relation to types and lengths of tenancies granted by the Council. These include when a tenancy will be granted, how the Council considers the needs of vulnerable households and the Council's approach to succession, tenancy management and housing advice. These policies include the types of tenancies offered, and in 2022 the Council supported the use of secure (lifetime) tenancies as the default tenancy type in most cases, and to offer new secure (lifetime) tenancies to existing tenants on flexible fixed term tenancies in most cases.

Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy

Residents are central to our work and are best placed to tell us what works well and what could work better. The Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy sets out the ways residents can get involved through both formal and informal participation methods. The strategy encourages residents to get involved at the level of their choosing by offering a range of engagement activities.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy Statement 2022-2025

The Housing Act 1996 requires all social landlords to prepare and publish statements of policies and procedures in relation to ASB. The statement reviews what services are available to residents who experience ASB and how the Council can proactively support, protect and value its residents. The ASB Housing Policy Statement supports the Department's longstanding commitment to prevent and tackle ASB and make housing estates and neighbourhoods safer. Commitments are based on the expectations required from the Regulator's Neighbourhood and Community Standard and delivering the core activities structured under prevention, enforcement, support and diversionary activities, communication and partnership working.

Borough of Sanctuary Local Authorities Network

Wandsworth has a long and proud history of welcoming refugees, with countless numbers having found a home in the Borough, including most recently people escaping war and conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine. The Council has confirmed its commitment to becoming a Borough of Sanctuary for people fleeing persecution, a national initiative to create a network of towns and cities throughout the UK that are proud to be places of safety and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary. This can only be achieved through working with partners across the community to produce an action plan which will lead to Wandsworth being formally recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary for all refugees.

Wandsworth Housing and Homeless Health Needs Assessment

In 2022, a homeless Health Needs Assessment for Wandsworth was conducted. This was the first in the Borough since 2013. The purpose of the needs assessment is to understand the scale of homelessness in Wandsworth; to understand the health inequalities experienced by people who are homeless; to identify unmet needs; and to understand the implications for the provision of services. It focuses primarily on those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and rough sleepers. Recommendations from

the needs assessment include enabling a collaborative approach to improving health in people experiencing homelessness, reducing health inequalities in people experiencing homelessness and supporting residents and addressing their needs when there is a lack of resources.

Environment and Sustainability

In 2019, Wandsworth Council declared a climate emergency and since then has set out ambitious plans to tackle climate change. In 2022, the Council set a target to be net-zero by 2043 in order for Wandsworth to make its fair contribution to meeting the objectives of the United Nations Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To work towards this target requires engagement with residents, businesses, community groups and partners and actively lobbying Government for funding to enable these groups to make positive changes to reduce their emissions.

To achieve this, the Council has developed the Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy (WESS) which sets out the vision for the Borough and a roadmap of how to reach these climate goals as well as an action plan detailing specific actions to reduce carbon emissions.



Castlemaine Tower cladding safety check

Key achievements

The previous Housing Strategy 2019-22 focused on five key themes, each of which played an integral part in providing housing for the Borough.

Since the previous Strategy, achievements have included:

Resident leaseholders given four-year period to pay back major works bills

Introduced an interest free extension to the payment terms for council resident leaseholders with major works bills, which extends the interest free payment period to four years for bills over £3,000.

Delivering the Homes for Wandsworth programme

The Council will now deliver 1,000 council rent homes.

Reintroduction of lifetime tenancies

Re-introduced secure periodic (lifetime) tenancies and stopped the use of flexible fixed term tenancies (FFTTs) in the majority of circumstances.

Ceased the existing Disposals Policy to retain much needed houses

Reversed the policy to sell council properties to keep much needed homes. This will provide more houses to meet the complex needs of larger family households and retain more stock, likely to be ground floor and with gardens.

Successful GLA funding

Successfully bid for GLA funding in 2022/23 to increase the purchase of homes for permanent social rented housing, from 32 to 50, through the Property Acquisition Programme.

Set out investment of approximately £561 million in housing projects over the next four years

This will include £172 million on repairs and improvements of existing buildings and £353 million on new council-led development, regeneration projects and environmental improvements. The Council's capital works programme invested £120 million over the past five years.

Negotiate with developers for social housing

To address the imbalance of genuinely affordable housing in private development, the Council is committed to negotiating with landowners/ developers to maximise the level of genuinely affordable housing delivered and work to secure grant wherever possible to support affordable housing delivery in the Borough.

Celebrated 50 years of Resident Participation

Held a celebration event with the Mayor of Wandsworth and a Residents' Conference. Both successful events underlined the importance of resident engagement. Attendees included members of Residents' Associations, Resident Management Organisations and Housing Community Champions.

Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy

Held a series of resident working group meetings, to review structures and consider best practice to ensure residents can be involved at a level of their choosing and to co-produce the Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation

In July 2021 achieved the DAHA Accreditation, showing the exemplary way in which, survivors of domestic abuse are supported. The accreditation was a two-year project achieved following a five-day assessment period. The Council is one of only five London boroughs to have achieved this accreditation.

Partnered with Thinking Works to reduce fuel poverty

Following a successful pilot of 100 properties, funded a 12-month fixed-term position within Thinking Works to provide energy efficiency advice to Council tenants who are at risk of fuel poverty. The service offers energy saving and home assessments for residents, prioritising tenants who are living in the most deprived areas.

Investment in bringing properties back into use

In 2021/22, the Council invested £300,000 to bring 13 properties back into use and a further £270,000 to bring 14 properties back into use in 2022/23 (forecasted).

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy statement

A review of the ASB policy statement was completed in 2022, outlining what services are available to residents who experience ASB and how the Council can proactively support, protect and value its residents.

Reclad of Sudbury House and Castlemaine

Works to reclad Sudbury House and Castlemaine were completed in late 2020 with fire safety action plans in place and agreed with the London Fire Brigade.

New building safety inspection team

Established a new building safety inspection team to meet the requirements of the new Fire and Building Safety regime. The team are responsible for health and safety inspections, including dealing with actions arising from new legislation.

‘Everyone In’ rough sleeper initiative during Covid-19

During the pandemic (2020/21), placed 359 rough sleepers into temporary accommodation as part of the ‘Everyone In’ scheme, with 124 being moved into settled accommodation by 31st March 2021.

Increased resource for homelessness prevention

Invested in additional capacity of 23 new full-time staff, an investment totalling £1.18m.

Successfully bid for government funding to tackle climate change

Successfully accessed government funding, including through the BEIS Social Housing Decarbonisation Technical Assistance Pilot, to develop a strategy that identifies the costs, approach and outcomes of achieving net zero carbon. The Council also accessed Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery One and Two funding, to enable small-scale retrofitting projects to street properties, and used the Energy Company Obligation 3 funding, to install cavity wall insulation to over 170 properties.

Employed additional Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists

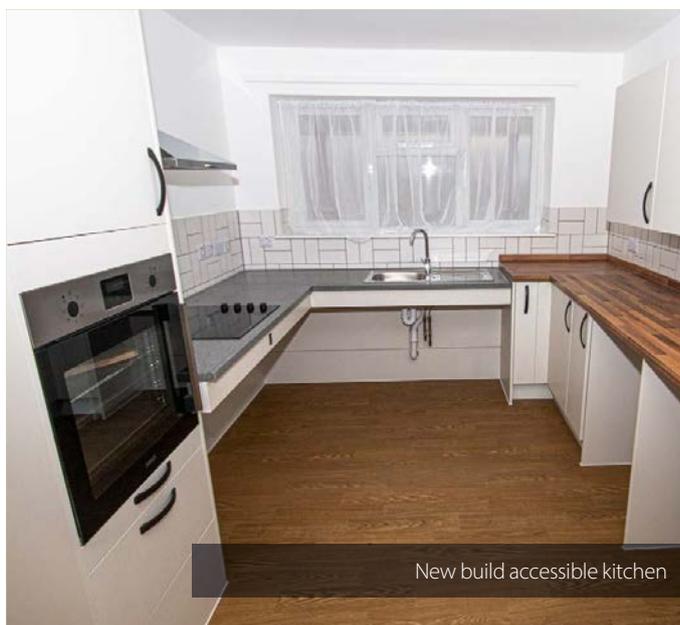
Expanded the number of Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists within the Department to ensure the provision of inclusive, adaptable, and accessible housing needs of older and disabled people are a high priority. They have written ‘accessible, adaptable, and



Resident Conference-all attendees



Building Safety Inspection Team



New build accessible kitchen



Joint Control Centre (JCC)

inclusive housing’ site briefs for Wandsworth, to ensure homes are designed and constructed appropriately.

Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists shortlisted for award

In 2022, the Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists were finalists for the Innovation in Building Diversity and Inclusion award at the MJ Awards.

Major home adaptations to help elderly and disabled residents

Over the course of the previous Strategy, between 2019 to 2022, 874 major adaptations have been completed.

New supported housing

Four new build supported or specialised housing schemes for the elderly and vulnerable client groups either completed or under construction in the Borough.

New Housing Employment Officers within Work Match

Employed dedicated Housing Employment officers within the Work Match service. Officers work with residents living on council estates

and neighbourhoods. As well as help accessing jobs, officers help residents with tips on writing CVs, application forms, interview advice and job searches.

Population density

(number of usual residents per square kilometre)

Wandsworth - 9,559

London - 5,598

Inner London - 10,664

England - 434



Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021.

Roll out of broadband

Completed the roll out of the provision of broadband to council managed blocks and estates to enable estates to be fully fibre enabled.

Creation of the Joint Control Centre (JCC)

A state-of-the-art facility located at Wandsworth Town Hall has been created for the JCC. Trained responders monitor high-definition CCTV, along with calls to out of hours emergency services across the Borough 24/7. Calls to the Wandsworth Alarm Telephone Care Helpline (WATCH), aimed at older and vulnerable residents, are also dealt with through the JCC.

Implemented a new cleaning contract

A new enhanced cleaning contract began in April 2020 having been developed with residents. A grading system has been established and is reported regularly to the Area Housing Panels.

Established a new housing IT system

Improved online services and communications with residents. A new Customer Portal allows residents to report issues including repairs, track progress, get in touch with the Council in a more accessible way and give feedback on the services they receive.

Successfully prosecuted or issued financial penalties to rogue landlords

One prosecution and 11 financial penalties were issued to rogue landlords and agents for offences under the Housing Act 2004. All 12 landlords/agents have been added to the GLA Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker. Between April 2019 and March 2022, 459 notices were issued

to improve housing conditions of private sector dwellings.

Launched a feasibility study of a discretionary licensing scheme within the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

Committed to develop a feasibility study of an additional PRS discretionary licensing scheme. This will improve standards in the private rented sector and crack down on rogue landlords.

Brought long-term vacant properties back into occupation

Through the Council's Empty Homes programme, between 2019 and 2022, 24 homes were brought into use as affordable housing at a cost of £540,000.

Reviewed over 100 private high-rise blocks in the Borough to ensure fire safety requirements including cladding defects were remedied

Worked closely with partners and DLUHC, National Joint Inspection Team (JIT) and London Fire Brigade to identify properties with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding and ensured that remediation was put in place.

Support for refugees

Began working towards becoming a Borough of Sanctuary and found homes for 769 Ukrainian refugees.

Additional resource for front line staff

Added additional resources to the area teams to improve resilience and officer visibility, meet statutory obligations, and improve the service provided to residents.



Randall Close hoarding artwork

Key challenges

Residents across the Borough are facing a cost-of-living crisis due to rising inflation caused by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and increased global energy prices following the war in Ukraine. Inflation rose by 8.8% in the 12 months to January 2023 due to increases such as electricity, gas, and other fuels, food and non-alcoholic beverages².

Rising inflation has severe economic consequences for residents as well as impacting the delivery of council services. It has a disproportionately negative impact on low-income householders, who spend a greater proportion of their expenditure on essential items such as energy and food.

Despite rising costs for our residents, real term wages have fallen. Between April 2021 and April 2022, median pay for full time employees in the UK fell by 2.6% despite a 5.0% increase in pay³. This comes at a time when residents have experienced a fall in wage growth and disrupted pay due to the sudden economic shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Wages are likely to continue to be impacted by Brexit and domestic inflationary pressures caused by global events. Financial difficulties will have severe impacts on residents across the Borough and will put pressure on the Council's housing queue as residents are increasingly unable to afford rents in the private housing market.

Good quality, decent housing will improve the health and wellbeing of Wandsworth residents. Secure, long-term housing allows residents to form key relationships with neighbours and community institutions such as health care, schools, and community groups. The impacts of poor housing will only increase the need for essential services. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on housing inequality, with housing playing an important role in living, working, learning, playing and experiencing isolation, especially those in poor quality housing.

Social housing rents rose by less than inflation for council tenants in April 2023, following a decision by the Council to increase rents by 7% in line with

the Government's statutory cap. This is projected to have a real-terms funding cut to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of 4.1%, equivalent to £4 million per annum, or £47 million over the next 10 years. The Council manages over 32,700 properties and is the biggest stockholder in the Borough. Inflationary pressures and the impacts of a below inflation council rent increase, will put further pressure on the HRA and on the ability to maintain long-term investment in the Council's stock, deliver social rented homes, and provide services to residents.

Economic pressures will have an impact on the ability to address key challenges which will impact residents and council resources over the course of this strategy. These include tackling climate change, damp and mould, and responding to building safety legalisation, as well as maintaining stock at decent levels, supporting the investment in the delivery of affordable housing and improving and expanding council services to tenants.

Affordable Housing Completions



² Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2023

³ Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2022

The Government and Wandsworth Council have both declared a climate emergency over the course of the previous Strategy. The Council must reduce emissions from both social and private sector housing across the Borough. To meet net zero carbon targets (84% carbon reduction) within the Council's housing stock, it is estimated to cost more than £2.9 billion or £17,985 per property. This will require a significant investment and will require a shift in how the Council invests into its major works programme as well as seek opportunities for external funding.

Within the private rental market, average monthly rent for all property types was £2,032 between October 2021 and September 2022. Private rent in Wandsworth is above the average rent in both Inner London (£1,964 per month) and Outer London (£1,444 per month)⁴. Monthly private sector rent across the UK, particularly in London, is the highest on record and is expected to continue to rise. According to Rightmove, the average annual rent change for Inner London properties saw an increase of 16.8%, in 2022⁵.

The estimated population of Wandsworth in 2021 was 327,413 and it is projected to grow to 362,837 by 2043⁶, making it the second most populated borough in Inner London. A growing number of people want to settle in the Borough, putting increasing demand on social and private housing. However, the current economic situation will impact housing development across London and make it harder for private developers to deliver affordable housing as part of new developments. Essential workers and local people who form a vital part of the community and provide important employment and investment are unable to afford to live in Wandsworth.

Over the course of the previous strategy, the number of people in temporary accommodation in Wandsworth has risen significantly to over 3,500 people. The Council considers social rents as the most suitable form of tenure for low cost rented homes to help support these families. A key priority of this Strategy is to deliver 1,000 council rent homes via the Homes for Wandsworth programme as well as an ambition to achieve 50% affordable homes on all new private developments. The Council works closely with Registered Providers who have completed the delivery of 264 social/affordable rented homes between 2022/23.

Some population groups are at a greater risk of becoming homeless, with homelessness in London disproportionately affecting families with children and people from Black and minority ethnic groups. People from ethnic minorities and more deprived backgrounds are more likely to live in overcrowded housing.⁷

Wandsworth is a diverse borough, with a rich history of migration as well as supporting refugees to relocate to the Borough. Over the course of the previous Strategy, conflicts in countries such as Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan and South Sudan has increased the number of refugees seeking asylum. This has an impact on housing in Wandsworth and it is important that the Council continues to be a compassionate borough and support former refugees and asylum seekers to reside here.

Analysis of the key challenges has allowed the Council to develop a Housing and Homelessness Strategy which seeks to meet the needs and ambitions of local residents. The Council will meet these challenges through innovative thinking and partnership working.



⁴ Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2022

⁵ The Rightmove Rental Trends Trackers Q4 report (October – December 2022)

⁶ Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021

⁷ The Health Foundation (2020)

Theme One:

Delivering for our council tenants and leaseholders



McKinney House is completed

The Council manages 32,700 properties, of which 17,000 are tenanted and 15,700 are leasehold. Of these properties, 148 are high-rise blocks (18 metres and over).

Local authorities must respond to the requirements laid out in the Social Housing Regulation Act refocussing attention on building safety, decent homes and engaging with residents. The Council is committed to meeting the aims of this Act to ensure standards are strengthened through transparent performance and decision making, putting things right when they go wrong, effective resident engagement and providing good quality, safe and decent homes. Through organisations

such as ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) and London Councils, the Council will continue to liaise with Government on sectoral changes making the case for new burdens funding where appropriate.

Whilst there are ongoing financial challenges, the Council is in a good position and has already met many requirements of the Act. A review of the service standards for council tenants and leaseholders has been undertaken, through a series of resident working groups, to reflect the increased focus on driving sector-led improvement.

Housing management

For the first time in over 20 years, additional resources have been agreed for the Area Housing Teams to ensure new statutory responsibilities are met. This will provide more visibility for residents on estates and will improve the service provided. Increasing the staffing levels allows more time for training and the move towards the greater professionalisation of housing management roles advocated by the Act.

Tenants have a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in matters. The Council celebrated 50 years of resident participation in 2022 and works continuously to engage with residents through both formal and informal approaches. These include using resident feedback to inform policy, performance reporting, and scrutinise decision making. The Council also works with Resident Associations to improve blocks, estates, neighbourhoods, or Sheltered Housing Schemes through the use of the Small Improvement Budget to make environmental improvements to estates such as bicycle storage, additional lighting and establishing community gardens.

The review of the Council's Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy, approved in January 2020, brought together the different ways residents can get involved to a level of their choosing. During the life of this Strategy a further review of resident

engagement will be undertaken to ensure the wider council resident voice is heard.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation was achieved in July 2021 and will be reviewed every three years. This accreditation demonstrated the Council's commitment to ensuring survivors of domestic abuse feel supported. The Council will maintain, evolve, and improve on current practices when dealing with cases of domestic abuse and is committed to maintaining DAHA Accreditation.

The Council will offer secure periodic (lifetime) tenancies to tenants in the majority of cases to provide stability. This change allows for cohesive and stable neighbourhoods where families can confidently put down roots in terms of schools and employment and become part of the community without the fear of having to move on. There are some circumstances in which FFTTs (Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies) will still be offered for larger households due to the shortage of larger properties that are in high demand.

Downsizing is a key priority as this can free up larger homes for those families in greatest need. In 2023 this scheme was relaunched with a dedicated team to help residents who would like to move to smaller properties. In order to encourage residents to downsize, new build developments are ring-fenced for under-occupiers and financial incentives are provided. For 2023/24, 143 such moves are forecast.

With an increased focus on cases of damp

and mould, a robust system is in place should tenants raise mould concerns in their property. An immediate removal of the mould prior to an inspection will be arranged to ensure the issue is dealt with as soon as possible. This proactive response has been adopted in line with industry best practice. Data is being reviewed to identify blocks where reports of mould growth are more common and to follow up with tenants to ensure measures previously undertaken have been successful. In addition, a rapid response service using in house staff or specialist contractors has been established to ensure cases of reported mould growth receive quick responses. This service has a dedicated email and phone number for ease of reporting.

Capital works

As part of the Social Housing White Paper, the Government commenced a review of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and a new standard is expected during the course of this Strategy.

There is a comprehensive capital works programme in place to maintain decency and improve existing standards over the last five years, £120 million was invested with a further £170 million programmed to be invested over the next four financial years. Capital works include roof and window renewal, upgrades to external decorations, lifts and heating systems, and kitchen and bathroom replacements as well as routine repairs and maintenance. The capital works programme ensures that blocks are maintained on a cyclical basis and now includes



Wandsworth gardening winners

energy improvement measures, such as solar panels and loft insulation, where feasible.

A stock condition survey was carried out in 2022/23 with results provided in 2023. This will help to improve and further inform the capital works programme and ensure the Council is in a strong position to maintain compliance with the DHS. The stock condition survey will also feed into the Housing Asset Management Strategy which will be presented to Housing Committee in 2024. The housing asset management strategy will outline how the Council will meet its obligations in relation to compliance and building safety, tackling damp and mould, energy efficiency and decarbonisation, meeting the DHS and improving asset data and service delivery.

Ensuring our residents are safe in their homes and neighbourhoods is a priority and the Council will continue to respond to recommendations and legislative requirements following the Grenfell Tower fire. Building safety remains a key area of focus with additional works to improve our blocks being undertaken. This includes retrofitting sprinklers in sheltered and hostel accommodation, and re-cladding blocks where appropriate. Regular reporting on progress will be carried out to ensure the Council meets the emerging requirements of the building safety regime.

In 2019, Wandsworth Council declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming carbon neutral as an organisation through the Council's

Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy (WESS). Improving the energy efficiency of council stock will not only reduce emissions but will reduce the amount of energy used, lower residents' energy bills and provide healthier, more comfortable homes.

Through the capital works programme there is a programme of planned works to improve our estates and blocks which will improve energy efficiency. The council looks to utilise government funding streams, such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and will continue to bid for available funding to enable improved energy efficiency measures to be installed.

The Council will continue to encourage residents to move away from carbon powered private vehicles to electric vehicle (EV) vehicles and bicycles. There are currently 1,143 cycle spaces on estates, in a mix of hangars, individual lockers and secure rooms, and the Council is actively looking for opportunities to expand this. Following a pilot of EV charging points the Council will seek to identify grant funding to expand these across estates subject to both the results of the pilot and demand. In addition, the Housing and Regeneration Department's Estate Services vehicle fleet will be replaced with EVs to reduce carbon emissions.

We will:

- By June 2023 have reviewed the service standards for council tenants and leaseholders through a series of resident working groups to reflect the increased focus on driving sector led improvement.
- Continue to hold repairs contractors to account including consideration of a resident repair panel to review poor performance.
- Through collective organisations, lobby the Government on sectoral changes that require new burdens funding, such as fire safety and the green agenda.
- Offer secure periodic (lifetime) tenancies to tenants in the majority of cases to provide stability for tenants.
- Review resident engagement arrangements and hold an annual resident conference.
- By 2024 have fully recruited to the additional posts in the Area Housing Team.
- Continue to maintain the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

We will:

- Aim to assist 143 tenants to downsize who are under occupiers.
- Invest more than £170 million into stock towards repairs and improvements over the next four financial years.
- Use the findings of the stock condition survey to further inform the Council's capital works programme and housing asset management strategy. This will improve stock data to make data driven decisions.
- By 2023 establish a new team dedicated to responding to damp and mould issues.
- By 2023 recruit a new building safety lead to ensure the Council is well placed to operate under the Building Safety Regime and to support existing teams to meet required legislation.
- Replace cladding at Eliot and Wentworth Court with works due to commence on site in 2023/2024.
- Continue to install energy efficiency improvements to Council owned properties, as well as provide improvements to Council estates, such as installing solar PVs, EV charging points and LED lighting.
- Install low-carbon systems as communal heating systems need replacing and where feasible.
- Carry out retrofitting projects to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock and bid for Government and GLA funding for energy efficiency measures and improvements where appropriate.
- Proactively work with residents to install individual metering and billing systems to monitor energy consumption.
- Review the pilot of EV charging points on the Fitzhugh Estate, to consider the installation of additional charging points.
- As part of the renewal of the gardening contract in 2025, consider carbon reductions and sustainability measures as new requirements.
- Continue to work with Thinking Works to provide free energy support through the WRAP Extra programme to council tenants.
- By the end of 2025, move to an electric vehicle fleet for our Estate Services officers.
- Over the next 2 years to complete energy efficiency works to up to 100 void properties.
- Continue to train existing staff to become retrofit assessors.

Theme Two:

Building More Homes

The Council's own housebuilding programme – Homes for Wandsworth

The council has embarked on a significant programme of council house building under its Homes for Wandsworth Programme to deliver 1,000 council rent homes.

As part of this programme, the council is committed to genuine community engagement through consultation with residents that goes above and beyond the minimum requirements necessary for a planning application. We will ensure schemes add value to the wider community, including environmental improvements such as new play spaces, gardens, and landscaping.

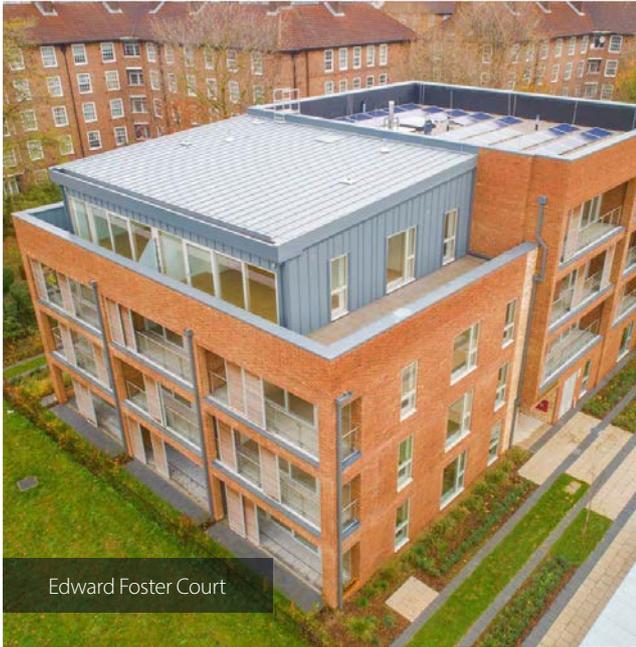
Properties built under the Homes for Wandsworth Programme will meet and aim to exceed environmental and energy efficiency standards to minimise their overall environmental impact. Part of this includes reductions in CO2 beyond mandatory Building Regulations targets. The development programme will stop installing new gas boilers in properties which are not yet in the design phase, instead using green technology such as individual and communal air-source-heat pumps.

Energy and Sustainability strategies are submitted with every planning application demonstrating the rationale behind each chosen solution. Wherever possible, proposals are developed to protect, enhance, create, and manage nature conservation and biodiversity throughout the wider estate, including through new tree planting and other landscaping improvements, and will seek to mitigate or avoid adverse impacts to existing species and habitats.

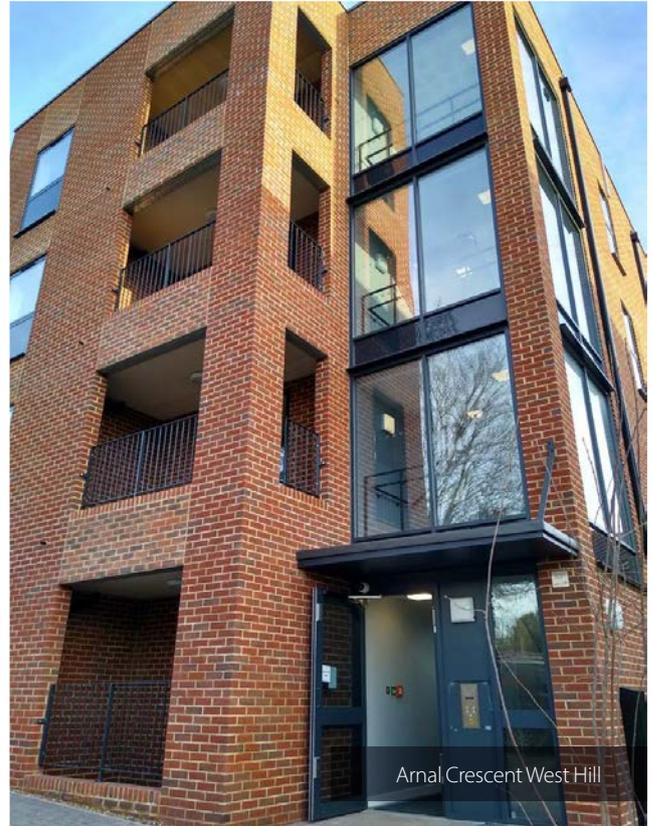
In line with the London Plan and local planning policy, 10% of all new homes will be built to fully wheelchair accessible standards and the other homes will be built to adaptable and accessible standards. Design and build will be genuinely inclusive, adaptable, and accessible which will not only comply with regulations, but follow good practice principles and incorporate modern, inclusive innovations. There are many benefits to this approach, including being less disruptive to residents, long-term cost-savings, and reduced environmental impact by reducing the need for costly future adaptations. Three Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists (OTs) have been employed, two of whom work on all new build affordable housing developments in the Borough, to ensure their design and construction meets the standards required. The Council has developed 'accessible, adaptable and inclusive housing' site briefs for Wandsworth, to ensure homes are designed and constructed appropriately. The work of the specialist OTs is becoming recognised both regionally and nationally.

The changes proposed to the Council's development programme will directly help increase the supply of council rent homes. The Council is maximising its use of external grant and as an example secured £5m of GLA grant since May 2022, to support the acquisition of 51 homes on the open market to provide permanent social rent housing. This is in addition to £49m secured from the GLA to date in support of the Homes for Wandsworth Programme.

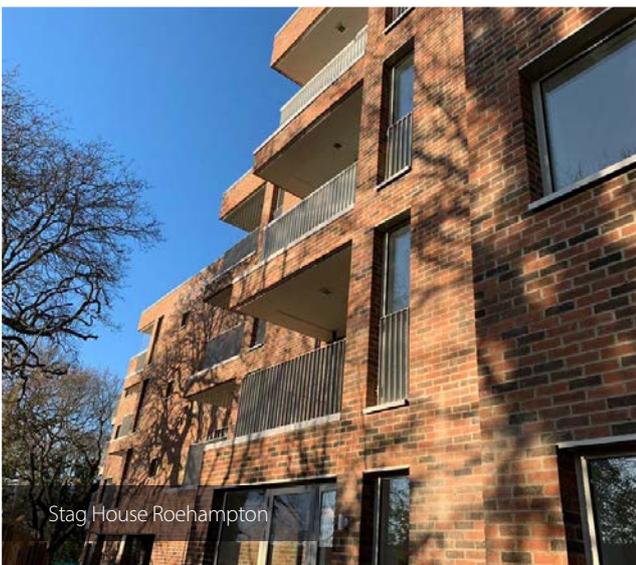
Regeneration proposals for the Winstanley-York Road estates continues to make progress with 46 new homes for existing estate residents having been completed at Mitchell House, Grant Road and a further 126 due to be handed over to the Council in early 2024.



Edward Foster Court



Arnal Crescent West Hill



Stag House Roehampton



Gideon Road

Building new homes – working with developers and housing associations

The Council continually seeks to work with landowners, developers, and registered providers to both maximise genuinely affordable housing and address the needs of those households in the Borough in greatest priority for social housing. Whilst there is a strong track record of delivering intermediate housing products, such as shared ownership, there is now a greater priority to maximise the delivery of social rented homes within affordable housing developments.

Due to historic planning permissions on private sites, affordable home completions by housing

associations in the Borough will initially be weighted towards intermediate housing rather than social rent.

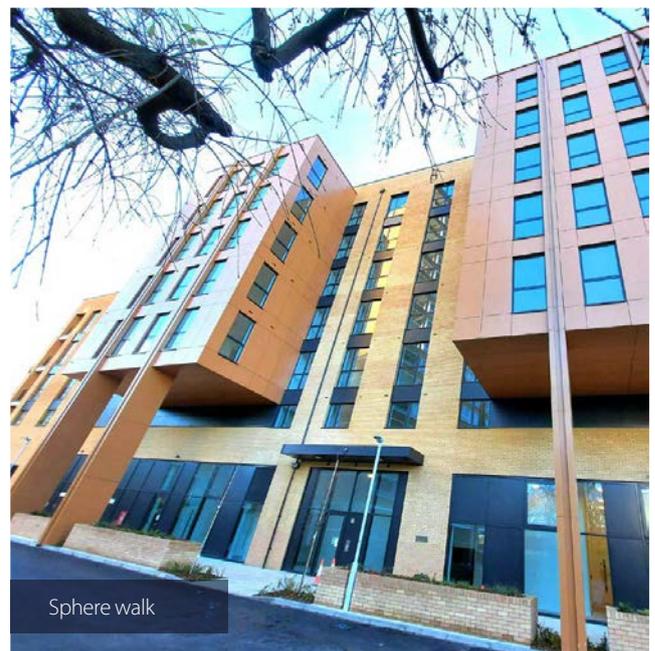
Given this trend it is a priority within this Strategy to re-focus negotiations with developers to achieve a greater proportion of social rent housing wherever possible. The Council will aim for 50% affordable homes on all new development sites through ensuring that developments on private land deliver genuinely affordable homes that truly meet the needs of our communities. The Council's Housing Association partners are committed to achieving 90% accessible and adaptable and 10% fully accessible wheelchair user homes, to ensure requirements are achieved.

We will:

- Ensure the Homes for Wandsworth programme delivers homes at council rent, rather than sale.
- Continue to meet and exceed environmental and energy efficiency standards to minimise the overall environmental impact of our Homes for Wandsworth developments.
- Stop installing new gas boilers in properties which are not yet in the design phase, instead using green technologies such as individual and communal air-source-heat pumps.
- Work with developers to ensure they meet the needs of residents, including requiring 50% affordable housing subject to viability on all major developments.
- Ensure local people have a genuinely affordable place to call home.
- Prioritise the delivery of Social Rented housing over other forms of affordable housing wherever possible.
- Work in partnership with key external stakeholders and funders to ensure that all opportunities are taken to bring investment into the Borough and to maximise streams of available funding to support affordable housing delivery.
- Work in partnership with external stakeholders to ensure the London Plan and Local Plan requirements of 90% M4(2) accessible and 10% M4(3) wheelchair user homes are achieved.
- Continue to ensure homes built through the Homes for Wandsworth programme are inclusive, adaptable and accessible and suitable for all our residents. Ensure 80 properties are built to M4(3) standard by 2028 above requirements set out within the London Plan.
- Continue to work with Housing Associations partners to build over 100 M4(3) homes to be completed by the end of 2028.



Front of Stag House, Roehampton



Sphere walk

Theme Three:

Improving Standards for Private Renters

Private housing makes up a large proportion of the Borough's housing market, with 36.3%⁸ of households renting from a private landlord in 2021, in comparison to 28.9% in Inner London boroughs, and 24.4% in London. The average monthly rent for all property types was £2,032 between 2021 and 2022, which is above the average rent for Inner London.⁹

Trends suggest that there will be an increasing demand for privately rented homes. The 2021 Census indicate that there are 49,830 privately rented properties, an increase from 41,317 reported in the 2011 Census.

The number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) has increased over the past three years to 615 and the Council has received an increase in the number of service requests, from 742 in 2021/22 to 999 in 2022/23. This is likely due to legal requirements for more HMOs to hold licenses and increased awareness of appropriate housing standards in the private rented sector.

Private housing plays a key role in meeting housing demand and providing good quality homes for residents. Although many private landlords provide good quality and well managed homes to renters in the Borough, some properties fail to meet basic standards and the Council will intervene to assist renters to take action.

Government legislation has increased its focus on enforcing standards and dealing with rogue landlords and lettings agents. These changes have included the ability to issue fixed penalty notices of up to £30,000 to a landlord or agent, authority to seek banning orders and extended rent repayment orders to cover illegal eviction. Locally, this is important to ensure Wandsworth's 48,000¹⁰ private renters live in good quality homes.

In addition to financial penalties the Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a database of rogue landlords and property agents, banning orders and the extension of rent repayment orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of planning order and certain other offences.

Where private properties fail to meet basic standards, the Council will take action to improve conditions, and this is managed through the Regulatory Services Partnership's (RSP) Private Sector Housing Team. In 2021/22, the Council intervened in 217 cases to deal with complaints of disrepair or poor conditions. This team will work with landlords and agents to provide support to help

 Average monthly rent
Wandsworth
£1,873

 Average monthly rent
London
£1,605

 Average monthly rent
England
£829

⁸ Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021

⁹ Office For National Statistics, 2022

¹⁰ Office For National Statistics, 2021

drive up standards in the private rented sector, whilst also cracking down on rogue private landlords.

As a team of environmental health professionals, the team ensures that privately rented homes are fit for purpose. Where a hazard, such as damp and mould, is deemed severe enough to warrant the service of an improvement notice, officers will ensure that the root cause of any hazard is identified through external specialists in the event the officer is unable to identify the cause. Particular regard will be made to high scoring damp and mould hazards, as directed within the Housing Act, so as to appropriately safeguard tenants encountering such conditions.

The Council will continue to enforce the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations. Currently, MEES regulations require all new tenancies to be an EPC rating minimum E with all existing leases to be brought to the same standard by April 2023.

To improve and maintain conditions in the private rented sector the Council needs to consider the use of all the tools it has available. Licensing is a vital part of this approach which can increase the intelligence available of conditions within the private rented sector, in turn supported by a stronger legislative framework to help deal with issues such as poor property conditions. The Council is currently reviewing the feasibility of introducing discretionary licensing to improve standards in the private rented sector and to crack down on rogue landlords.

Residents will continue to be signposted where applicable to tenancy relations services, for example contract issues related to deposits. The Safer Renting programme will continue to be provided, to protect tenants who are victimised by criminal landlords by providing specialist advice, advocacy, and support. This support helps to prevent homelessness and support private renters to negotiate better conditions in their homes.

The Council continues to work proactively with the London Fire Brigade and owners of private high-rise blocks to ensure fire safety standards are met and to identify all private residential high-rise buildings with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) in the Borough, to ensure these buildings are safe, with appropriate remedial measure undertaken where required. Following the commencement of this work all but two high-rise buildings with ACM have been remediated.

The Council is proactively working with partners, ensuring the approved remediation schemes on the remaining two buildings are completed in the near future. Focus also remains on the ongoing remediation of high-rise buildings (18 metres and above) with non-ACM combustible cladding systems. Liaison with owners continues to ascertain their intentions for removal and replacement of cladding and to encourage building owners to communicate effectively with their residents throughout the process and not to pass on charges for planned works. Where appropriate assistance is provided, signposting responsible parties to the Government's Building Safety Fund, which provides funding to address fire safety risks associated with cladding on non-ACM high rise residential buildings.

Empty Homes Programme

Tackling empty properties has the benefit of providing much needed homes in the Borough and improving neighbourhoods where homes may otherwise lay derelict. The Empty Homes Programme aims to encourage homeowners to return empty homes into use and utilise them as affordable temporary accommodation. In 2021/22, the Council invested £300,000 to bring 13 properties back into use and a further £270,000 to bring 14 properties back into use in 2022/23 (forecasted). Homeowners can apply for a grant of up to £25,000 per home towards renovations to return an empty home back into use, on the condition that the home is let to households in need of accommodation and nominated by the Council for at least five years.

We will:

- Continue to implement the Mandatory licensing scheme to ensure all larger houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) comply with the improved HMO standards to protect the health and safety of our residents.
- By September 2023, carry out a feasibility study for Additional and Selective Licensing in Wandsworth, which will improve landlord standards across the Borough. This will consider the options available to allow the Council to license properties that are not currently covered by Mandatory Licensing, for example smaller HMOs and single occupancy dwellings.
- Work with partners and owners of private high-rise blocks to ensure fire safety standards of buildings 18 metres and above with non-ACM combustible cladding are met using the Government's Building Safety Fund where appropriate.
- Take action to improve conditions where privately rented properties fail to meet basic standards, with a focus on hazards associated with damp and mould.
- Improve conditions in the private rented sector through education, informal intervention with landlords and appropriate enforcement action when required.
- Crack down on rogue landlords and lettings agencies, publicising successful prosecutions and utilising financial penalty notices as a deterrent to others.
- Put landlords and agents who are prosecuted or issued with a Financial Penalty Notice on the 'Rogue Landlord Database' which members of the public can check before renting a property and publicise the database through the Council's web pages.
- Tackle long term empty properties bringing them back into use as affordable housing via the use of grant funding.
- Utilise powers under The Energy Efficiency Regulations to ensure privately rented homes are sufficiently energy efficient and meet regulations.
- Continue to support government sponsorship schemes, for those seeking refuge from war (such as Homes for Ukraine) by ensuring private housing is suitable for accommodation.

¹⁰ Planning permission subject to S106 legal agreement

Theme Four:

Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

This section of the Strategy constitutes the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It will be updated annually via the Housing Resources and Commitments paper, published every summer.

Homelessness presents a significant challenge for all London local authorities, and the number of homeless households in Wandsworth has been rising year-on-year from 3,198 in April 2022 to 3,590 in April 2023. The consequences of being homeless are far-reaching, causing financial, educational, social, emotional, and mental strain on households, and can lead to serious physical and mental health problems. It is essential that a robust response is in place to minimise homelessness and the impact it can have on people's lives.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly changed homelessness services by putting an emphasis on preventing homelessness and extending statutory services to assist households who were not deemed as being in priority need. Since the introduction of the Act, homeless approaches have doubled in the Borough, with an overrepresentation of households from minority ethnic groups and larger family households becoming homeless. It is therefore essential that all households are given tailored and long-term support, with the core focus being on early intervention to ensure that clients are engaged at earlier stages for successful homeless prevention, and this will be achieved via effective outreach services.

Homelessness can have a short and long term impact on people's health and wellbeing, and quite often households with complex needs or those with protected characteristics are more likely to experience homelessness. A multifaceted support system made up of partner agencies (including adults and childrens' social services) has been

created. This enables officers to identify the warning signs and support the needs of households so that tailored housing pathways can be provided with the aim to prevent homelessness and to minimise repeat homelessness.

The increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation (TA) has been challenging and since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the demand for in-borough TA placements is high which is partly a result of larger family households becoming homeless, who accounted for 38% of all TA placements during the financial year 2021/22.

The number of private landlords offering their properties for let to households in need of TA has also significantly decreased, adding more pressure on the service to source suitable and local properties. In response, the Council has reduced the number of households accommodated in B&B and outside the Borough which has been achieved by using the Council's own housing stock as TA units. In addition, a review is in place to improve the quality of purpose built TA sites by making the grounds more family friendly and to potentially install new facilities, such as washing machines. The Council is determined to continue to provide good quality TA, which is self-contained, well managed and in-borough (or in a neighbouring borough where possible), and the Council's TA allocation guidance ensures households are fairly allocated properties based on their housing needs.

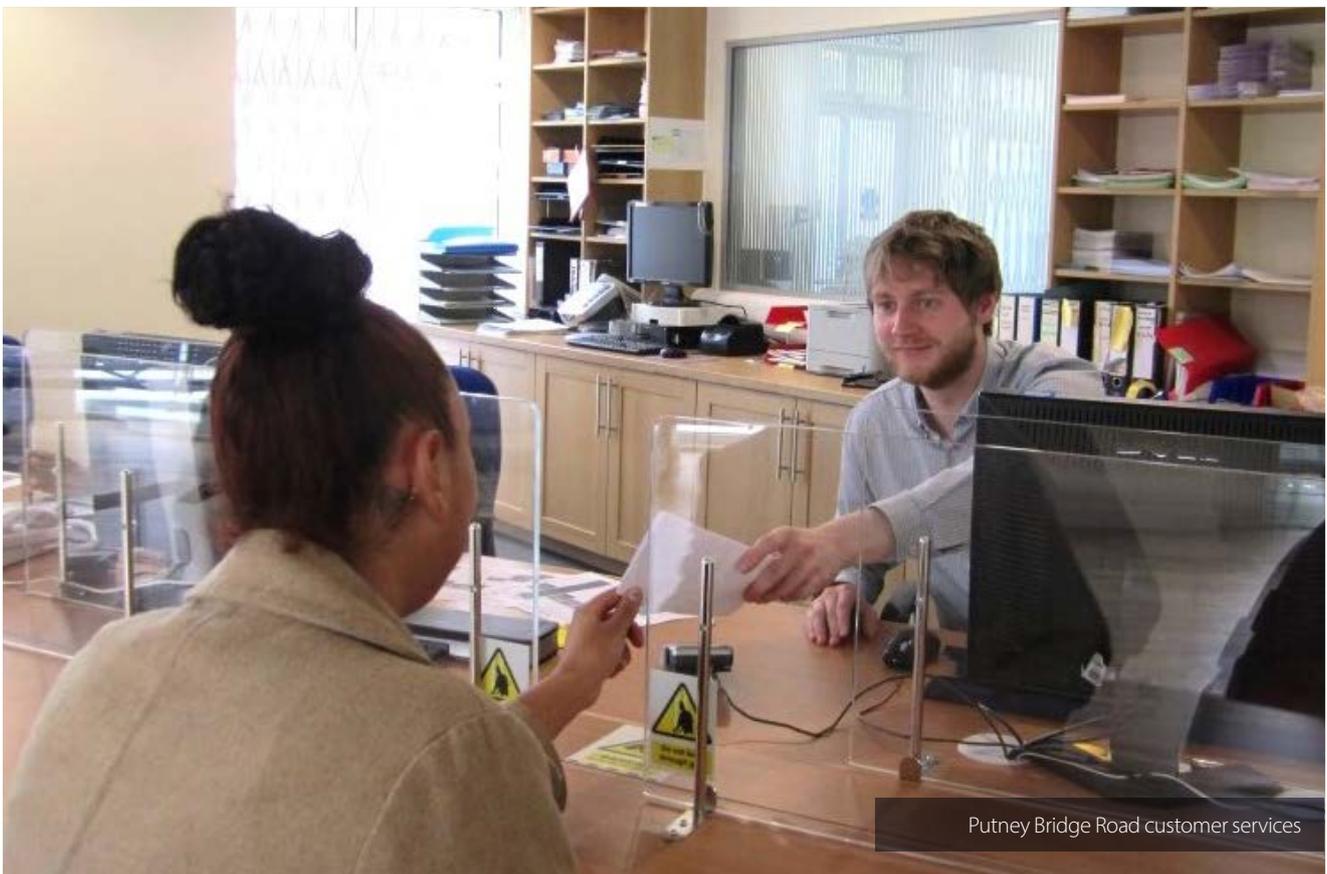
The shortage of affordable homes locally and nationally is a driving cause of homelessness. Welfare reform measures, such as the overall

benefit cap and Local Housing Allowance caps have made it increasingly difficult for residents to secure and retain a home, particularly for those on low incomes. The cost-of-living crisis is also putting a strain on households who are struggling to keep up with rising rental costs and an increase in those evicted from the private rented sector (PRS) is being seen. These factors combined have created a reluctance from private landlords to let to households who are reliant on welfare benefits, thus making the PRS hard to access for many local families. The Council is determined to bridge the gap between affordability and homelessness and will continue to work with partner agencies to provide advice and support to residents.

Although the PRS provides a challenge it also offers an opportunity in preventing and resolving homelessness. Dedicated housing officers work with residents, partner agencies and landlords to maintain and support residents into long term settled accommodation in the PRS. In addition, a new communications strategy has been launched to attract more landlords to increase the number of suitable permanent placements in-borough, and to source suitable in-borough TA placements.

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has led to this becoming one of the biggest causes of homelessness, with 25% of all households admitted into TA in Wandsworth, for this reason in 2021/22. Despite this challenge, the Council is in a strong position to provide the best possible support to domestic abuse survivors experiencing homelessness, having achieved the DAHA accreditation in 2021 demonstrating robust policies and processes in place to support survivors. The Council is committed to maintaining these standards and continue to invest in support for domestic abuse survivors, working with services to prevent and relieve homelessness where possible and provide suitable alternative accommodation where needed.

The number of individuals becoming homeless through institutional release – via prison or hospital discharge as an example – also presents a challenge. The Council’s homelessness service must be modelled to work proactively with partner agencies prior to the release of an individual so an effective action plan can be put in place. This can help prevent any first-time instance of rough sleeping or homelessness and ensure that homelessness does not become an entrenched



Putney Bridge Road customer services

lifestyle. The Covenant Duty came into effect in November 2022 which places a legal duty on local authorities to have regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant that recognises that the Armed Forces Community may face disadvantages to accessing housing assistance due to their unique circumstances. The Council has a well-established support system in place that predates the Covenant Duty so that members of the Armed Forces Community can be identified and assessed at the point of application for housing assistance.

While building on the Council's proactiveness as a homeless service, it is important to recognise that there is some uncertainty on the impact that future national challenges will have on homelessness locally, such as the cost-of-living crisis, long term impacts of the pandemic and rising rental costs. The Council must remain flexible in its response to further challenges to tackle the impact of homelessness.

Despite these issues and challenges, the Council is committed to reducing its use of TA over the period of this Strategy, building on the investment in new staffing. In June 2023, 23 new posts were added and, in 2022/23, TA began to stabilise. Plans are in place to maintain TA levels during 2023/24 and reduce usage, and associated spend, during 2024/25 and through 2025/26.

Rough Sleeping

Between the financial years of 2019/20 to 2022/23 the Council secured grant funding of £7.5m to establish a range of services for rough sleepers in the Borough, and an additional £4.8m in government funding has been issued to support rough sleeping initiatives throughout 2023/24 to 2024/25. The focus of this work has been to develop housing pathways so that sustainable housing solutions for rough sleepers are provided by bringing together support services and suitable accommodation. This work is led by a Rough Sleeper Team which works closely with partner agencies to provide a co-ordinated response to rough sleeping across the Borough.

The Council aims to ensure that rough sleeping is rare, that any incidence is short to avoid entrenchment and that services have the flexibility to respond to crises to prevent rough sleepers returning to the streets. To provide targeted services, the root causes of rough sleeping must be understood alongside the complex needs of rough sleepers. Analysis indicates that triggers for rough sleeping within the Borough include individuals becoming homeless after release/discharge from institutions such as prison and hospital, loss of PRS tenancies and a loss of home after a relationship breakdown. There has also been rising incidents of rough sleepers amongst residents who are not British nationals and struggling to find employment.

A multi-agency and multidisciplinary team approach is used, creating a full profile of every rough sleeper, including those who are 'at risk' of rough sleeping, with a clear communication between the Council's rough sleeping team and partner agencies, such as SPEAR (Rough Sleeper Service), partners in the NHS and across the council. A more proactive approach has been adopted since the pandemic which has allowed the team to spot early warning signs of rough sleeping. Throughout 2020/21, 359 rough sleepers were placed into TA as part of the 'Everyone In' scheme, with 124 being moved into settled accommodation by 31st March 2021. When the Everyone In scheme ended, rough sleepers continued to be supported and a further 207 were placed into TA with 120 being moved onto a settled rehousing pathway by April 2022. The success of permanently rehousing rough sleepers is possible through strong partnership working with other agencies, and the Council is committed to continuing this good work by providing a comprehensive package of support across the Borough, focussed on prevention, intervention and recovery.

To tackle homelessness, we will:

- Engage people who are at risk of homelessness at earlier stages; through stronger networks with partner agencies with the aim to continue to provide services across the Borough.
- Work with outreach services, and partner agencies to map a client's journey and empower residents to solve problems by making advice, information and support more bespoke and accessible at earlier stages.
- Provide tailored support to households with protected characteristics by working alongside partner agencies in creating robust housing needs plans that acknowledge and tackle any disadvantages.
- Re-energise successful prevention schemes that have been impacted by the pandemic, such as the New Generation Scheme which reduces homelessness via mediation with family and friends, and the sheltered housing prevention scheme that prevents homelessness by offering eligible residents an offer of a sheltered property.
- Improve the procurement and provision of suitable accommodation and explore ways of working with private landlords to increase the supply of suitable homes.
- Continue to invest in and publicise the Rent Deposit Scheme and widen options for residents by offering private landlords' financial incentives where appropriate.
- Join bespoke lettings agencies that have high rates of success in rehousing households who are experiencing homelessness.
- Improve how we connect residents to services where they can obtain debt and financial advice.
- Strive to increase the provision of TA placements in-borough by using the TA allocation guidance introduced to improve placements and suitability for the most vulnerable households.
- Ensure that households at risk of homelessness have the skills and resources to maintain a tenancy through specialist advice from officers and partner agencies.
- Through strong partnership with supporting agencies, make advice and assistance more accessible to all domestic abuse survivors.
- Maintain the Stay Put Stay Safe Scheme and ensure officers and partner agencies are making residents aware of the scheme.
- Be flexible by offering remote, virtual and face-to-face contact, and ensuring the least vulnerable households are not forgotten and are provided with sufficient support.
- Support officers in Adults and Children's Services to become familiar with the warning signs of homelessness so they can alert housing officers as soon as a resident becomes at risk of homelessness.
- Continue to respond and bid for government funding programmes.

To tackle rough sleeping, we will:

Prevent

- Use the £4.8m Government funding to work to establish a rough sleeping hub that brings together Council services and other partner agencies to provide a single point of access for rough sleepers.
- Identify needs gaps and work with institutions such as hospitals, prisons and hostels to create pathways of support for those at immediate risk of rough sleeping.
- Further build relationships with partner agencies to identify the causes of rough sleeping and risks of repeat rough sleeping.
- Provide residents with the skills, knowledge and support to maintain their tenancies, particularly residents with complex needs.

Intervene

- Provide a co-ordinated focus for rapid assessment of needs and tailored pathway planning for rough sleepers.
- Aim for the rough sleeping hub to include elements of emergency and short stay provision so that rough sleepers are moved straight from the street with immediate rapid assessments and housing pathway planning.
- Meet gaps in the rough sleeping provision by having specialist officers in post who can support rough sleepers and offer wraparound support for people with complex needs, including mental health, and substance misuse, and provide support in accessing statutory services.
- Ensure that all support services work together on a tailored action and exit plan to overcome entrenched barriers to keep people engaged in the service.
- Rough sleepers who do not need such intensive support or residential care will still be offered ongoing help, support and full encouragement to maintain contact and engagement with the service to ensure previous instances of rough sleeping do not re-occur and become entrenched.

Recover

- Apply a multi-agency approach which enables support services to have the flexibility to intervene in times of crisis and to meet the longer term needs of rough sleepers.
- Ensure the newly established tenancy sustainment team continues to support residents to sustain tenancies, with the ultimate goal of helping them to develop the skills knowledge and resilience to sustain a tenancy in mainstream housing.
- Continue to put in place effective protocols with supported housing providers which will improve accessibility and transfers to and from local supported housing schemes, so residents have the best possible outcomes.
- Extend the flexibility of the rough sleeper personal budgets to support residents who are at risk of leaving their settled home due to struggles with the cost of living.

Theme Five:

Supporting Residents with Additional Needs

The Council's commitment to supporting housing requirements of residents with additional needs is supported by the Social Care White Paper (SCWP) an implementation plan, which states that "every decision about care is a decision about housing". Published in 2021 this aims to actively shape the specialist housing market, to establish and consolidate local strategic leadership and create incentives for local areas and housing providers to invest, including in new and innovative models of provision.

Theme Five focuses on the housing needs of vulnerable client groups, with health conditions or impairments such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental illness, mobility difficulties, permanent sensory impairments, terminal illness, neurodiversity, and dementia.

Departments will continue to work closely together to identify and deliver suitable housing options for vulnerable client groups through the Housing Strategy Group (HSG), which provides a platform for cross-departmental collaborative working. The HSG will work towards increasing supply and identifying supported housing development opportunities for both the Council and registered providers. The London Plan already requires 10% of all new build properties on schemes above ten homes to be wheelchair user homes, and 90% to be adaptable and accessible, and we will also identify sites specific for supported and specialist housing as the borough requires and as advised by our Social Care colleagues.

Supported housing is crucial to help residents with additional needs in the Borough and provides a positive impact on resident's physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life. It is therefore vital to plan for the housing requirements of residents with additional needs, providing a range of tenures for people in supported housing.

The Council is committed to protecting the welfare

of children and vulnerable adults and is well placed to identify risks. A dedicated housing officer within Children Services as been employed to support housing colleagues to safeguard vulnerable families and children. In addition, the Department participates in a range of multi-agency panels and is a partner on both the Adults and Children Safeguarding Boards and carries out an annual review of safeguarding procedures and training.

The Council is committed to helping residents maintain their independence and building partnerships is key to supporting vulnerable residents. Close working with Adult Social Services (ASS) takes place to identify need for refurbishment or development of new supported housing, to support existing housing schemes delivered by registered providers and to support the building of inclusive and accessible homes.

It is vital to support residents to live independently at home and to support the well-being of residents with additional needs through making adaptations to both private and council homes and delivering telecare services to support independent living. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) works to enable residents to remain living independently in their homes by delivering home adaptations. Adaptations on Council tenanted properties are funded through the Housing Revenue Account, and owner occupiers, private rental sector properties and



Level access shower with contemporary products

housing associations from the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Programme, which provides funding for people who are disabled and need to make adaptations to their home of up to £30,000.

The Council has developed a discretionary DFG policy to help a greater number of older and/or disabled residents live independently, which includes using the funding more flexibly to improve accessibility and increase independence. The SCWP (Social Care White Paper) implementation plan highlights the flexibility of local authorities to use DFG funding to fund supplementary services that are agile and help people stay independent, support hospital discharge and make minor adaptations, for example through the commissioning and delivery of Home Improvement Agencies. The Government has committed additional funding to provide more of these supplementary services and any changes will be considered in the Council's policy.

Alongside the DFG greater independence to residents is promoted through its Telecare service. A range of advice and services are offered to help

residents stay independent in their own home by adapting or installing home alarms in case there is an emergency to ensure residents feel safe and comfortable. The Council delivers a package of telecare services to residents, such as environment sensors which can be installed depending on the resident's needs and requirements. When sensors are activated, officers speak to clients through an attached telephone.

Within Housing, Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists (OTs) are funded to provide advice on inclusive design of housing as part of the Homes for Wandsworth Programme, regeneration schemes, as part of the work with housing associations to provide affordable housing and on our supported housing developments, as well as supporting the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) who provide adaptations to people in their own homes.

The Council has supported a large number of Ukrainian refugees across the Family Visa and Homes for Ukraine schemes, and has a dedicated team focusing specifically on this work. Work is continuing with Government in response to the resettlement of Afghan refugees and funding for bridging accommodation is due to be announced by the GLA in spring 2023. The Council is committed to becoming a Borough of Sanctuary for people fleeing persecution and has confirmed a Borough of Sanctuary action plan. The Department will work constructively with partners and refugee/migrant groups to improve the Council's processes for refugees.



Carey Gardens Sheltered Housing Christmas meal



We will:

- Work closely with Adult Social Services to ensure the needs of the Borough's client groups are met through the Council's new supported housing provision and to plan for the future needs of the population through robust analysis, determining the types of accommodation required for all client groups.
- Explore opportunities to provide more integrated care, support and housing services for those with deteriorating conditions and work to ensure the design and build of developments are fit for purpose.
- Continue to fund dedicated Specialist Housing Occupational Therapists to provide advice and support on the design of new inclusive, adaptable, accessible and supported housing, adaptations to homes, and working with disabled and older people.
- Deliver a programme of new build supported housing in the Borough including working with registered providers or housing association partners to deliver 40 extra care homes for frail elderly over the next three to four years and completing supported housing schemes to deliver a minimum of 20 homes for disabled residents including residents with mental health support needs.
- Seek to increase the provision of accessible, independent housing options to provide choice and alternatives to residential care.
- Continue to deliver home adaptations for residents who may need more support in the home funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Programme and other available funding sources.
- Continue to provide a range of telecare services to help residents remain safe and independent in their home for longer, alongside ASS (Adult Social Services) community equipment and care technology to support people to live at home.
- Continue to participate in multiagency panels to identify residents at risk to find joined up solutions.
- Work towards meeting the Department's actions within the Council's Borough of Sanctuary action plan.



Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028

