

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29

Draft

DRAFT

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Foreword

We are in the midst of an escalating crisis in housing and homelessness, with a record number of households, including children, in temporary accommodation in England, and rough sleeping also on the increase across London. An increase in S21 no-fault evictions, the cost of living crisis, insufficient Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and challenges around Home Office cases have been fuelling an increase in homelessness applications, whilst at the same time it is becoming increasingly difficult for the council to procure accommodation in a timely manner that meets the needs of local people. The financial implications of this for local authorities are well documented, and in some local authorities, it is also leading to the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for extended periods of time, and out of area placements, which are further and further way from a person or family's support networks. This is being fuelled by factors outside of local authority control, but we remain committed in Southwark, to providing the best possible service to those who find themselves in housing need and using our limited resources in the most effective way possible.

In order to achieve this, our draft Homelessness Strategy which is published here for statutory consultation, sets out our overarching goal, *"to work to end homelessness through the delivery of timely, effective and collaborative support which enables Southwark residents to address their housing insecurity"*. This goal underlines the importance of partnership – in Southwark facilitated by our Homelessness Forum – and of early intervention, to support residents before they reach crisis point. The draft Strategy sets out three underpinning objectives and organises our response under five priority headings. Firstly, we want to be **data-led**, and this draft Strategy is informed by a comprehensive Data Review which examines the challenges and trends specific to Southwark. As an example, we continue to have a much higher number of homelessness presentations from single men, and applications that result from eviction from friends and family. Secondly, we want to ensure that advice and support is **effective** and **timely**, and thirdly, we want to be **outcomes-focused**, always learning and open to how we can improve the quality of our support.

Our five proposed priorities as set out in the draft Strategy are to:

- 1) Prioritise Homelessness Prevention
- 2) Deliver High Quality Advice and Support
- 3) Work to End Rough Sleeping
- 4) Achieve Quality Outcomes through Housing Provision
- 5) Tackle Systemic Housing Insecurity

These priorities are supported by an Action Plan which we will work through with partners in our Homelessness Forum and also through a recurring roundtable, chaired by myself as the lead Cabinet Member to support delivery. Among other things, we want to strengthen the referrals process, develop a bi-monthly prevention forum, and explore co-location and outreach for early advice in the community. We are actively exploring options for a post-COVID service delivery model, for expanding the Housing First team, to improve

pathways through supported housing, and as a demonstration of our commitment to service improvement, we want to establish ways in which service users can provide further feedback and insights to the council.

Delivering a successful strategy is not just about our Housing Solutions team. It is about the many partners that we work with on a daily basis to address homelessness, and also about a cross-departmental approach. Our ambitions here are supported by our Exchequer Team who continue to provide Cost of Living support and administer Discretionary Housing Payments, by Adults' and Children's who commission our specialist services and support our care leavers, by a Housing Department which continues to manage the largest stock of council housing in London, and ultimately by a Council which is committed to delivering as many homes at social rent as possible, including through our council house-building programme which to date has delivered 3000 new homes either completed or on site. In the end, efforts to end homelessness will only succeed when all branches of government pull in the same direction. We had a glimpse of what is possible via the 'Everyone In' initiative, and it is our hope that through this strategy, supported by wider policy changes, we will see an end to this crisis and better outcomes for everyone in housing need.

Councillor Dennis, Cabinet Member For New Homes And Sustainable Development

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Executive Summary

Southwark's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 sets out our plan to prevent and relieve homelessness. It will build on our last strategy and from our analyses and reviews, we will set out our objectives, priorities and actions to meet current and emerging needs in our Borough. It is a strategy that will focus efforts to prevent homelessness wherever possible through existing and new partnerships, relieve homelessness with accommodation that meets residents' needs and will aim to address inequality and insecurity in the Borough for our residents.

Homelessness does not only describe the condition of people visibly sleeping rough; it also includes those households to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority. This wider definition includes those with no access to suitable accommodation such as people staying with family and friends and those in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, or those threatened with homelessness within 56 days, with no alternative suitable accommodation available to them.

Southwark has introduced and developed a number of improvements to better meet the needs of our residents through its current strategy. This has included an expansion of prevention activity with additional resources of prevention officers across teams. We have expanded the offer of support for private tenants, landlord and agents and built stronger relationships with our key partners. Through the duty to refer mechanism introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Southwark has developed clear and effective referral pathways with numerous internal and external agencies and significantly expanded our service to provide effective interventions and support for rough sleepers. However, in view of global and national events in recent years that have made already challenging circumstances more acute, we must ensure our next Strategy provides for a renewed focus to strengthen partnerships and deliver for our residents.

Southwark has continually reviewed the circumstances and needs of our residents through a significant review of data in the Borough to help form our draft strategic aim, objectives and priorities. We have also now taken this forward and completed an informal consultation exercise within the organisation and with our partners and service users to produce our draft strategy.

Introduction

The Statutory Framework to be considered

The work of delivering housing advice and support is underpinned by a number of key pieces of legislation and government strategy. These include:

Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996) sets out the definition of homelessness, and the duties that local authorities owe to applicants who are accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Council has a duty to provide accommodation if there is reason to believe that an applicant may be eligible, homeless and in priority need. If these criteria are met, interim accommodation is arranged for the applicant until a decision has been reached on their application. If the Council decides that it owes the 'main homelessness duty' to an applicant, they will be offered temporary accommodation until they find their own accommodation or are made a final offer of accommodation, or the duty ends in another way.

The Localism Act (2011) also amended the 1996 Housing Act by allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty by arranging a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) made significant changes to the Housing Act (1996) and placed a number of new duties upon local authorities. These include:

- To assess the cause of homelessness, circumstances and needs of all household members, including children.
- To develop and agree with applicants a personalised plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Extending the time frame a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that local authorities have a duty to prevent homelessness from an earlier stage.
- New duties to assess all eligible applicants (not just those unintentionally homeless and in priority need), and new duties to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- A duty on public authorities to refer service users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to the housing authority (with the consent of the individual)

- Services must be designed to meet the needs of specific groups including care leavers, people leaving hospital / prison and victims of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) places a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. It makes provision that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' status for homelessness assistance.

The Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) requires a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district, to be renewed at least every five years and consulted upon by other local or public authorities or voluntary organisations.

The Government Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 delivery plan set out the Government target of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicating all street homelessness by 2027. It provided the following updates:

- All local authorities must update their homelessness reviews and strategies and re-badge them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.
- Strategies are made available online and submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- Local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.

In September 2022 the Government updated the 2018 Strategy and set out a clear definition of what the Government means by ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

It grouped activities under four key themes - Prevention, Support, Recovery and a Transparent and Joined up System.

The Southwark Framework of Policies to be considered

Our next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy must also align and enhance the work we are undertaking in a number of key Southwark strategies, policies and initiatives:

Southwark Housing Strategy 2015 – 2043

Our long-term Housing Strategy was established in 2015 and in 2020 was refreshed with simplified clearer commitments and updated actions.

The four fundamental issues remained affordability; quality; security and pride and responsibility.

The four broad principles were re-focused on these key values as follows:

1. Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable high-quality homes that meet our residents' housing needs and aspirations.
2. Demanding safer, higher quality, energy efficient homes
3. Promoting tenure security and social support in housing, and improving the health, wellbeing and economic resilience of residents.
4. Empowering residents and communities to have pride and influence over their homes and neighbourhoods.

Achievements –

Through this Strategy, Southwark continues to deliver the largest council home building programmes in the country with over 1368 new social homes built to date and 3000 new homes delivered or currently on site for completion. It has invested in significant programmes of major works to its existing estate with high levels of support for its tenants and leaseholders. As the largest Local Authority landlord in London, we have worked hard to minimise misuse of stock and support resident involvement and interests in regeneration programmes around the borough.

The Housing Service has delivered the highest levels of new housing building nationally, providing quality homes to meet the needs of those on the housing register. Southwark will likely let an additional 1000 new homes to residents in need during 2024-2025, having let a similar level of new build in 2023-24. This will lead to a reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation and those living in unsuitable accommodation arrangements within the borough alongside a range of other medical, support and overcrowding issues which if not addressed might lead to homelessness.

Challenges –

Systemic inflationary pressures, alongside the higher cost of borrowing, will impact our delivery for further new homes development, at a time when the supply of private sector accommodation for procurement is reducing. With household incomes squeezed and those most vulnerable to cost hikes worst affected, a greater demand for earlier support is needed from Authorities now and for some time ahead.

Southwark Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 – 2022

Our last strategy has led to significant change and improved outcomes for our residents and from which we are building an enhanced response to the significant change we've seen in recent years.

Our last strategy set out the following overarching aim -

Deliver an innovative, leading and accessible service to prevent homelessness and assist homeless households in finding long term affordable and sustainable housing.

From this formed 3 objectives - -

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

To achieve these objectives, Southwark set out 5 key priorities and operational goals within these -

Priority 1 – Homeless Prevention

Priority 2 – Tackle Rough Sleeping

Priority 3 – Vulnerability and health

Priority 4 – Responding to the local housing market

Priority 5 – Responding to welfare reform

Achievements -

Our current strategy has brought about significant changes in the way services have been delivered and achieved improved outcomes in many areas, including:

Rough Sleeper Support –

Southwark has extended the commissioning of outreach services through the use of its Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant. We have introduced Navigators to engage with rough sleepers with support needs to help access accommodation and health services to build trust and maintain engagement. The service has also commissioned a specialist nurse and mental health practitioner to improve tailored support for rough sleepers with complex needs.

Southwark also introduced and has since expanded its complex needs housing provision through Housing First and continued to expand off the street accommodation. Finally, the service has also worked jointly with Southwark Law Centre to provide immigration advice and support to regularise the status of rough sleepers and enable access to mainstream housing provision as well as building an employment and skills offer to help rough sleepers avoid returning to the streets.

Early homelessness prevention

Southwark has continued to secure high levels of funds to fully commit discretionary housing payments and our rent arrears fund in helping residents meet shortfalls of rent and help to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform over the last 5 years. The service has continued to liaise well with the DWP and other key agencies in delivering advice through

cost-of-living roadshows and we have seen continued high levels of homeless prevention for residents to sustain their accommodation arrangements across tenures.

Private Rented Sector support and advice

The last strategy enabled an expansion of services to help meet the needs of those renting privately in the Borough. With a dedicated team providing early advice to landlords, tenants and agents, the service has managed to help defend possession proceedings or negotiate with landlords where possible. The service has also worked jointly with partner agencies, such as Southwark Law Centre and Kineara an enabling third sector organisation to provide a rapid and holistic package of support with threats of eviction, the need for legal advice and additional support to manage often complex needs, which underpin their housing insecurity.

Challenges -

Our borough has universally been impacted by a worsening financial climate. Those renting have faced significant rent rises against real terms falls in household income. The pandemic placed huge strains on families and we recognise the work we must do to help sustain living arrangements wherever possible.

During the second half of 2023-24 we have seen rising levels of homelessness that cannot easily be addressed through prevention strategies, with a spiralling of residents evicted from Home Office accommodation as a decision is reached on their immigration case. Many of these decisions were part of the Streamlined asylum process (SAP) introduced to address Home Office decision backlogs. This has led to a 550% increase in homeless approaches from this group during the second 5 months of 2023/24 compared to the first 5 months of that period. The implications for service in terms of homeless assessment processes, costs of temporary accommodation and accommodation to prevent homelessness are considerable. The likely impact is increased rough sleeping, given the majority of residents are single adults without vulnerabilities. The private rented sector re-housing options are so constrained by availability and affordability issues compound the risk for prolonged homelessness for this disadvantaged group. Bespoke responses to this in 2023/24 will likely need to extend into future periods to manage the volumes of residents needing assistance.

Southwark Allocations Policy

Southwark Council is required under section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 to produce a Housing Allocation policy. The requirements of the policy are set out in Part VI Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Localism Act 2011) giving reasonable preference to those applicants defined by the 1996 Act. In June 2012 the Government further issued guidance to Local authorities on the allocation of housing stock. The homelessness strategy and the council's housing allocations policy must have due regard for each other. The current policy is being reviewed and will be available for consultation in 2024.

Southwark's Placement and Procurement Policies for Temporary Accommodation and Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO)

Building on our existing policy and Good Homes Standard commitment for temporary accommodation, Southwark is driving improvements in the allocation of affordable and suitable homes and tailoring provision to resident need through enhanced suitability assessments. Additional governance and checks through the development of a new procurement approach will help to ensure good standards and compliance. It will also be part of evolving measures to help procure further accommodation to meet our needs through work with institutional investment opportunities to create longer term options and use of our existing stock.

Southwark Stands Together

From a call to action following the death of George Floyd on 4th June 2020, Southwark established a Borough wide initiative to better understand the injustice and racism experienced by Black, Asian Minority Ethnic people, in order to help create a fairer and more equal society. This initiative spans both its internal culture and processes and service to its residents and partners. Its work will encompass the following themes -

1. Renewing and reinventing our open spaces and buildings –
To enable our Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic people in Southwark to collaborate in developing diverse and inclusive open spaces to the public that establishes best practice standards shapes key policies and celebrates our communities
2. Education theme –
To enable our young Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are participating fully and meaningfully in an environment where their heritage is reflected in teaching as well as receiving exposure to new opportunities and excellent support for their transition into the world of work
3. Health theme -
Harnessing the passion and commitment of our Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities to address health inequalities hearing their views on effective health and care and working with a fully mobilised health sector.
4. Culture theme –
To provide greater opportunities for our Southwark based Black, Asian and minority ethnic artists to receive support in the development of new products and show casing their work with increasingly diverse and supportive organisations.
5. Communities theme –
To enable Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities play key roles in shaping their services, supporting their neighbours, creating together spaces that are vibrant warm and welcoming and sharing equally in local resources, such as spaces and funds.
6. Interaction with policing theme –
Supporting a community that can celebrate good news stories where Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents are working closely with the police and developing increasing levels of trust and confidence through positive engagement models.
7. Employment and business theme -
Many people from diverse backgrounds across Southwark are accessing quality jobs. Locally inspired Black, Asian and minority ethnic-led small business are also thriving, backed by accessible and effective business support.
8. Council staff engagement theme -

Creating a culture where everyone can be themselves at work and are supported to achieve their full potential in an organisation that is representative of the community and that has pledged to become an anti-racist organization.

Given the known systemic inequality that exists in the Borough and manifests in housing insecurity and an overrepresentation in those approaching for support, we must ensure our strategic aims echo this commitment and supports all aspects of its work to make Southwark a fairer Borough.

Southwark 2030

Southwark 2030 is a new strategy for the Borough and its partners to achieve change for our residents. It will be an ambitious vision which has been driven by consultation with residents, local organisations, businesses and council staff. It sets out 7 goals that our strategy will align to as these take shape during 2024. These cover - Housing, health and wellbeing, economy, environment, opportunity, safety and neighbourhoods; with children and young people more clearly represented.

National and Local Context

The National context –

The UK economy has in many ways recovered from the shock of the pandemic, but by the latter half of 2022, inflation rose significantly impacting the poorest households most severely due to the large share of their budget spent on essentials. Energy, food and other prices, compounded by the war in Ukraine, are driving a cost-of-living crisis and drop in disposable income.

The Government has delivered packages for addressing the cost-of-living crisis, including lump sum payments to those in receipt of means-tested benefits and payments to reduce fuel bills to all householders. Locally, Southwark has match funded its allocation of grant from the Household Support Fund to establish a Cost of Living Fund worth almost £12 million in helping those most in need. By the end of 2023-2024, Southwark will have will have distributed more than £40 million in extra Cost of Living support to residents. Nonetheless, we know the poorest households will continue to be hardest hit by this systemic insecurity that is exacerbated by increasing housing costs. Support to uprate Universal Credit in April 2023 in line with inflation will have had a positive impact, however, due to cuts and freezes in the basic rate of benefit entitlements since 2010, significant pressure remains for many households. The further measure to restore Local Housing

Allowance (LHA) rates to 30th percentile of market rent determined in September 2023 will see a boost in housing costs support for many. However, with the benefit cap formula remaining unchanged, many out of work households will be affected with minimal to no increase in support. We understand this will most likely impact those renting privately with children most acutely. The indication that this is a 1 year increase only will not provide the market confidence required. With recent Government borrowing and expenditure, national debt stands at 98.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Government has announced aims to reduce inflation and debt and grow the economy. With these factors and drivers, it is understood that housing insecurity will remain an acute risk for the country for many.

Southwark – The Local context

Southwark Demographics (an overview)-

For an in-depth analysis of Southwark including demographic, equality, and housing market information please see our Review of Homelessness. This is useful to consider when looking at homelessness and the responses to tackle these issues as they are often interlinked. The Borough is undergoing rapid and continual change with high levels of private investment and development but also has areas of high deprivation, as well as a large and diverse population with varying needs. The pandemic had a profound impact on the Borough including a significant impact on our population numbers which saw a drop of 3.8% from 2020 to 2021. This was also likely compounded by the UK's exit from the EU.

Southwark is a proudly diverse borough and 4 out of 10 people were born outside of the UK. This diversity means that we have many different communities, languages and needs to consider when looking at housing and homelessness.

When looking at household breakdown in the borough, Southwark has a high number of single person households in the north of the Borough, with the larger households (4 or more household members) in the centre of the Borough. The ten-year change since 2011 has seen a fall in single households, in 3 person households and in 4 person households. There was, however, a rise of 2.7% in 2 person households. ¹ This change may have been due to the impact of the pandemic, which saw many families move out of London.

Other needs that need to be considered are disability and support needs. When looking at disability and carers in Southwark, there are estimates that there are over 25,000 unpaid carers which are expected to be disproportionately made up of women, people from Black African ethnic backgrounds and those that also have a disability/complex needs.² A more in-depth analysis of the borough by our Public Health department is

¹ [Household size - Census Maps, ONS](#)

² Southwark JSNA Annual Report: 2022

available [here](#). It is also important to note that since 2011, the percentage of people reporting a disability under the equality act fell by 4%. ³

21% of Southwark's population ranked within the most deprived nationally. According to the Urban Health Index, which looks at 68 neighbourhoods across Southwark and Lambeth, in the South of the borough, all neighbourhoods were ranked in the top 20 of areas, whilst several of the neighbourhoods in the middle and towards the North of the Borough were ranked in the bottom 20. Southwark has a more polarised distribution of neighbourhoods compared to neighbouring borough of Lambeth for example.⁴

There are also disparities between areas in the borough. As noted above, the North and centre of the Borough has more inequalities than the South. In the Faraday Ward which covers areas of Walworth and Burgess Park, 32% of children under 16 live in poverty compared to 5% in Dulwich Village, (1.5 miles away.) When comparing the same wards further, we see that male life expectancy in Faraday is 79 years compared to 87 in Dulwich.⁵

We also need to consider the impact of Covid-19 on the health and wellbeing of Southwark's population. As already discussed, Southwark has a high population of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are living in the more deprived areas of Southwark. Within these areas, we saw higher risks to Covid-19 due to many working in front facing roles, higher vaccine hesitancy from social, historical and religious factors and a higher presence of co-morbidities associated with Covid-19 complications.⁶ Mortality rates in the most deprived areas were double those in the south of the borough.⁷

When looking at employment, Southwark has around 233,400 working age people with 40,200 people not in work. The most common reasons for this are the high number of students (c.16, 500) and those with medical needs preventing them from working (c.10, 000). Average incomes are in line with national averages at £33,848. However, 44% earn below £30,000 per year. ⁸

A Breakdown of Housing Tenure in Southwark

The percentage of social rent properties has been decreasing annually for some time but Southwark remains the largest council landlord in London and has ambitious council house-building plans, with over 3,000 new homes either built or currently on site. In 2010 Southwark housing stock made up 31.4% of all housing in the borough. By 2021 this had fallen to 25.9%. There has, in turn been an increase in private rents in the Borough, whilst those owned outright/owned with mortgage have remained steady. 31% of all households in Southwark own their property (largely towards the south of the Borough), or own with a mortgage. 40% are socially rented, still a relatively high proportion, (largely the centre and

³ Southwark JSNA Annual Report: 2022

⁴ Southwark JSNA Annual Report: 2022

⁵ The value of partnership working to support residents during COVID-19; Southwark's Annual Public Health Report 2022

⁶ The value of partnership working to support residents during COVID-19; Southwark's Annual Public Health Report 2022

⁷ Southwark's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027

⁸ Southwark JSNA Annual Report: 2022

North of the Borough) and 29% are private rented (mostly evenly spread from the very centre of the borough and the north).⁹

There are other necessary considerations when looking at the increase in private rented properties. Many people in Southwark can be considered vulnerable in terms of their health needs, low incomes, and household composition and will be reliant on welfare benefits to help pay their rent. From the table below, we can see that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is much lower than upper quartile rents and in most cases it is below lower quartile rents also. It is becoming increasingly harder to source affordable rents for those receiving welfare benefits. We are also seeing an increase in the amount people spend on rent as a percentage of their total income, this is happening across all income brackets. The ONS has estimated that in London, only those on a higher income quartile would be able to rent without spending more than 30% of their income.

Southwark's average private rents compared to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) (2023)

ROOM SIZE	Mean (£)	Lower Quartile (£)	Median Q (£)	Upper Q (£)	LHA (£)
Room rate	768	700	745	900	515
Studio	1156	1050	1112	1250	1146
1 bedroom	1542	1300	1500	1750	1146
2 bedroom	1988	1600	1850	2250	1346
3 bedroom	2517	2000	2450	2863	1670
4 bedroom +	3332	2775	3275	3650	2194

Source: ONS, London Rental Statistics

It is important to consider whether these homes are overcrowded, occupied or under occupied based on the number of bedrooms available. In 2021, 48% of households reported to be occupied, or in other words, using all bedrooms, without being overcrowded or under occupied. The most overcrowded area, was around Burgess Park and Peckham North with an average of 16% being overcrowded by at least one bedroom. Conversely, in the south of the borough around Dulwich Park and Herne Hill, 52% of households were under occupying by 2 or more bedrooms.¹⁰

Homelessness in Southwark– an overview and key findings from our data review

Our Homelessness Data Review can be found in the appendix. The following are some key data points that give a good overview of the picture of homelessness in the Borough including demand for the service, approach reasons, supply of accommodations and outcomes for applicants.

⁹ [Tenure of household - Census Maps, ONS](#)

¹⁰ [Occupancy rating for bedrooms - Census Maps, ONS](#)

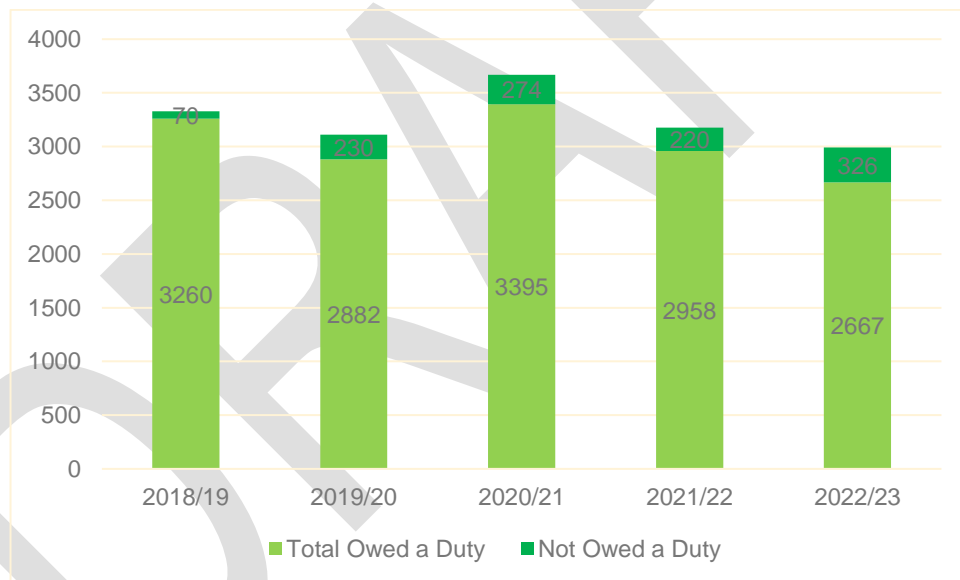
Applications

1. Homeless applications taken fell by 10% between 2018/19 and 2022/23 (excluding 2020/21 during the height of the pandemic)

The review of homelessness in 2017 showed that the number of homelessness applications received had increased considerably in 2016-2017. The chart below shows the number of homelessness applications owed a duty in Southwark has increased significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and rose especially in 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic but has started to level out in the years since.

The increase in applications is due to two important factors: the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, which allowed the council to help residents sooner with their housing issues by broadening the reasons residents can approach for assistance; and a reduction in the number of homes that residents can afford. Affordability issues are complex but welfare reform and increasing costs of the private rented sector in the Borough have been continuing factors.

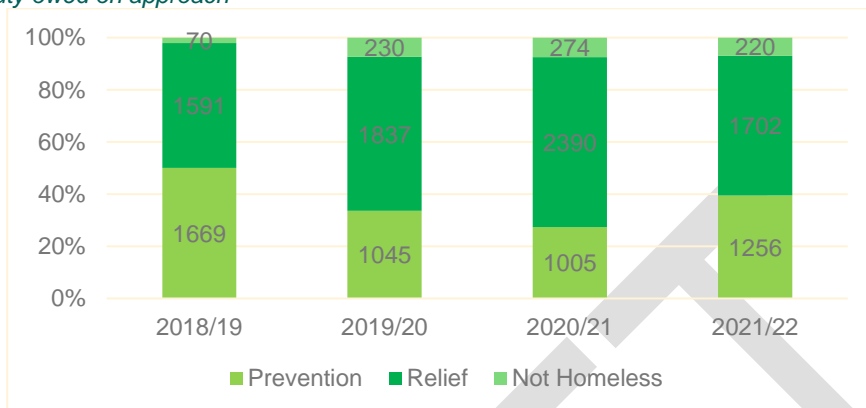
Breakdown of applicants owed a homelessness duty on approach



Southwark takes a significantly higher number of homeless applications than the average for England and London. When broken down further, inner London takes comparatively more than Greater London with Lambeth and Ealing the only borough's to take more applications than Southwark (3107 & 2985 compared to Southwark's 2936 in 2022/23.) This shows the strain on services in the south and south east of London and is reflective of the lack of affordable housing in the area. Another notable difference is that in 2020/21, Southwark's homelessness applications increased when those in England and London reduced slightly. This can partly be put down to the fact that whilst Court proceedings were paused for the majority of cases for those renting by Secure or Assured Tenancies, the hidden homeless were not protected under Government initiatives to prevent homelessness during lockdown. In Southwark there are many households that suffer with overcrowding and poor quality housing.

Therefore, with the nature of the virus requiring households to have space to shield and self-isolate, many were therefore at risk of homelessness due to the very nature of their housing circumstances. Also, Southwark has a large social housing stock, so whilst formal evictions were stopped, there were still friends/family exclusions to consider.

Breakdown of Duty owed on approach



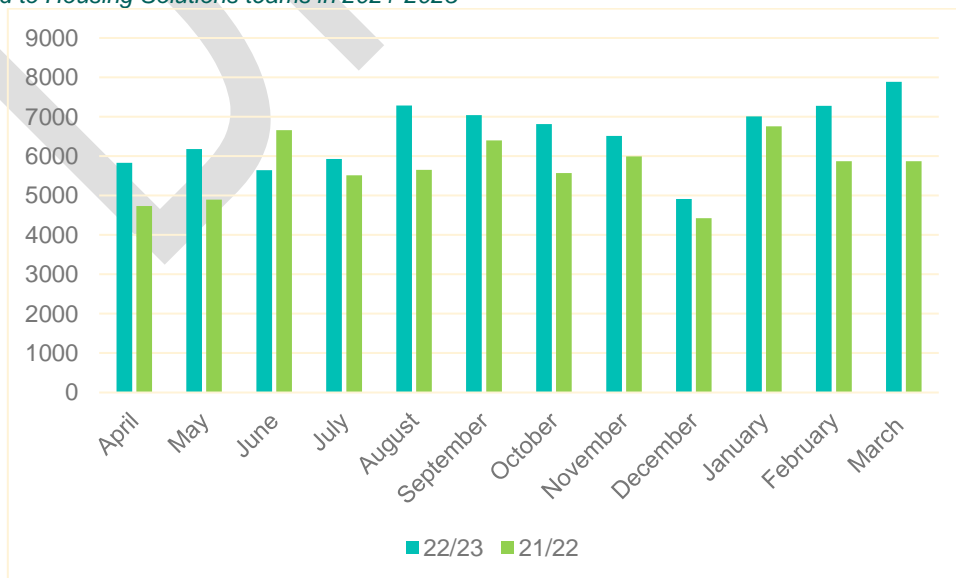
The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 allowed for applicants to approach the council for assistance earlier when experiencing instability with their housing. In 2022/23, 40% of approaches were given a Prevention Duty.

Demand for service delivery

2. The Service received an average of 6500 calls to the service each month in 22/23

Demand for assistance from the Housing Solutions service has continued to grow over the past 3 years following the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the UK’s departure from the EU. Below we can see this demand in our call numbers has increased in the past two years.

Calls received to Housing Solutions teams in 2021-2023



3. Family and friends evictions remain the highest homelessness approach reason in Southwark followed by the termination of Assured Short hold Tenancies. The largest increase in approach reason was seen in Domestic Abuse.

The chart below sets out the main causes of homelessness in Southwark over the last four years. The most common cause of homelessness over this time has been that parents, friends or relatives are no longer willing to accommodate the individual or household in question (27% in 2022/23). There had been a significant growth over time in the termination of assured short hold tenancies; which accounted for 30% of homelessness in 2015/16. However, as the chart shows, this was lower in 2022/23 (17%). This is likely due to the eviction ban which was introduced during the initial lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant landlords were required to serve longer notices and were not able to obtain court orders to formally end tenancies until this ban was lifted in June 2021.

Another notable change is that approaches due to Domestic Abuse have increased significantly, these approaches made up 7.5% of approaches in 2022/23. It is important to note the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which introduced automatic priority need for those who have been made homeless for this reason. The increase in approaches from this cohort can also be accredited in part, to our joint working with Solace, who co-located with the Housing Solutions service from 2018. Our service continues to invest in training and accreditation in this subject area and has encouraged officers to become Solace Champions, meaning they have up to date training as well as refreshers to keep their knowledge relevant.

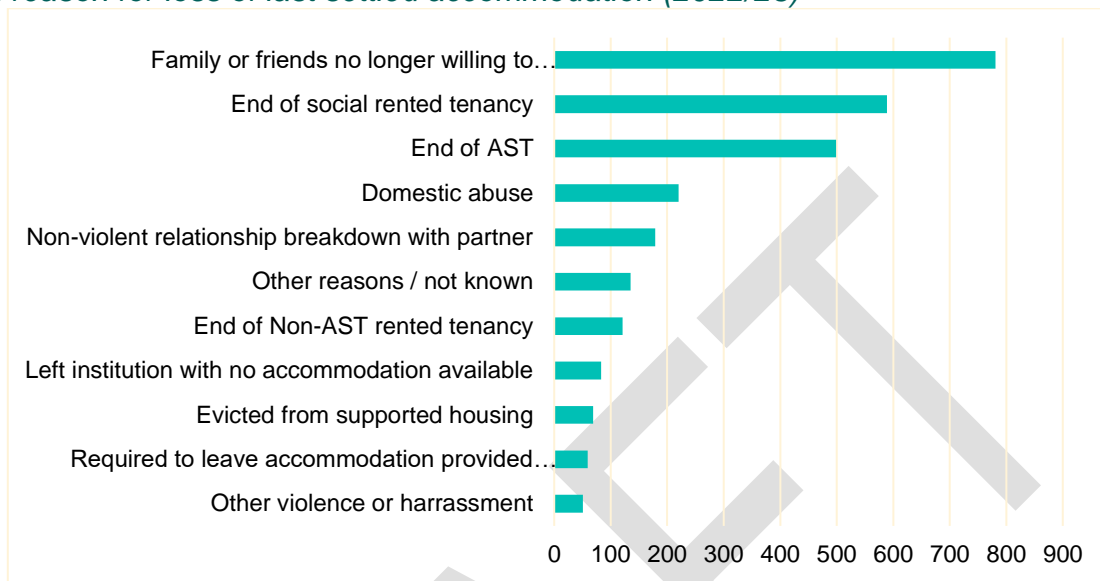
We can also see from this data that there are a number of approaches due to 'End of social rented tenancy'. This is due to HCLIC reporting categorisation and does not reflect the number of Southwark tenancies that were ended in 2022/23. This categorisation is used for any tenant who approaches with an issue with their tenancy, for example; rent arrears issues, who would be assisted with a prevention duty and helped to apply for DHP etc. This proactive approach to tenancy issues, is why this figure is our second highest approach reason.

This data also contains a significant number of records stating the "the main reason for homelessness" as "other", this can partly be put down in the first few years due to local authorities getting to grips with the new reporting system, and it is important to note that these responses decrease over time and will continue to do so in following data years as several more answers have been added to the HCLIC responses which have meant less reason for officers to use the 'other' option when recording data.

During the second half of 2023-24 the numbers of those approaching the service as a result of immigration decision began to climb rapidly as a result of the Streamlined Asylum Processing (SAP) work undertaken by the Home Office. By January 180 households, only 11% of whom were families, had approached the council for housing assistance as a result of receiving a negative decision. The options for this group were extremely

difficult given the short periods of notice and the challenges in securing private sector solutions.

Main reason for loss of last settled accommodation (2022/23)

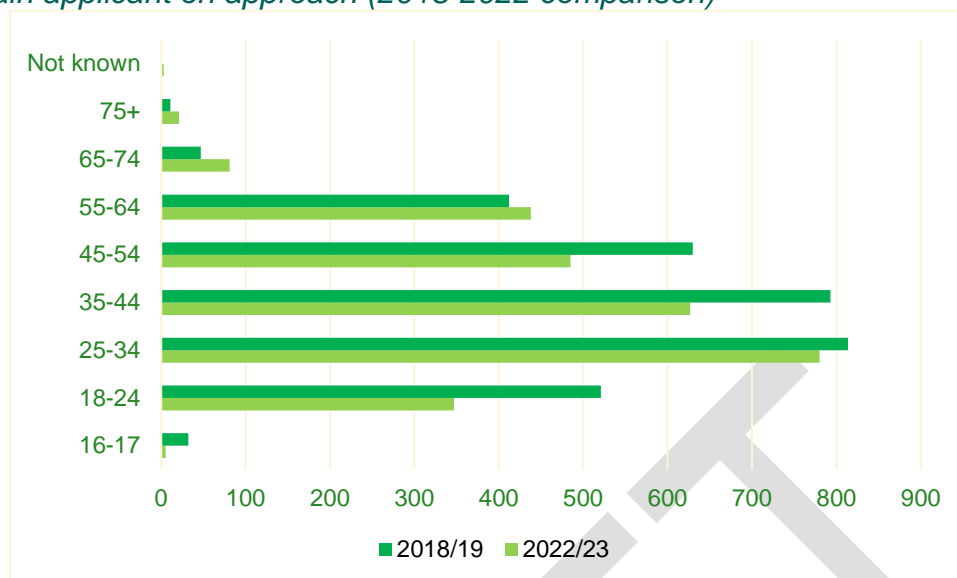


Age Profile of those approaching

4. The percentage of over 55 year olds presenting to the service for a homelessness assessment increased 14% between 2018 and 2022/23

The majority of main applicants accepted as owed a homeless duty are under 45 years of age (63% in 2022/23). The largest cohort of applicants were between the ages of 25-34, making up 28% of applicants in 2022/23. This represents an increase in younger applicants on previous years. The chart below shows how this has changed over the past 4 years. The largest change has been in the number of over 65 year old approaching the service which increased 14% over this time. The causes of this are complex but there are links between this and housing suitability as people age, properties may no longer be fit for their needs. It is also necessary to consider the financial impact of the cost of living and fuel poverty among this group.

Age of main applicant on approach (2018-2022 comparison)

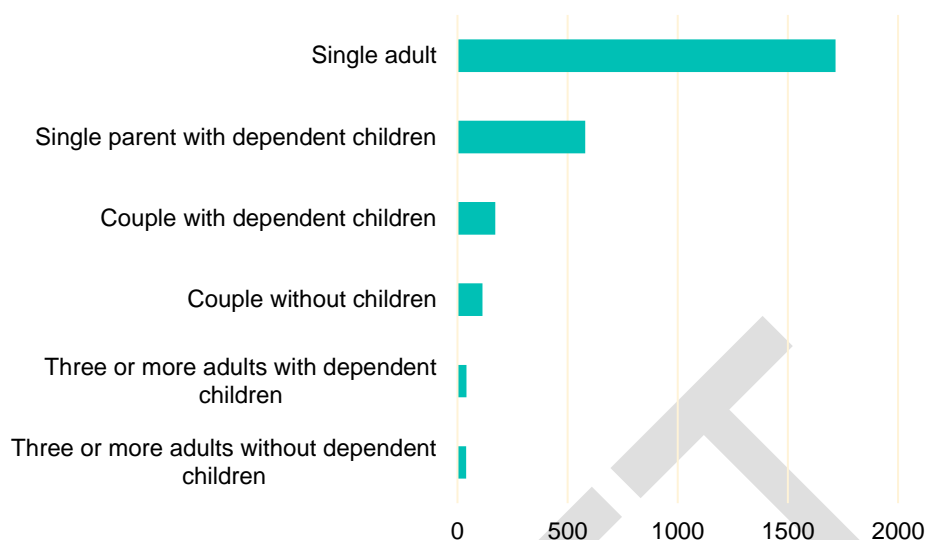


Household composition of approaches

- 5. The largest household type presenting to the council in 2022/23 was single adults. The percentage share of this group has reduced since 2018 (70% down to 64%) and those with children has increased**

The chart below sets out the range of household types accepted as owed a homelessness duty over the last four years. Lone parent households headed by a female account for the majority of homeless duty acceptances in Southwark. We have also seen a sharp increase in the number of single homeless applicants approaching our service since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as access to prevention and relief options were broadened. This group now make up the largest demographic of approach cases. In 2015/16, single applicants made up 14% of applications owed a duty compared to 62% of applications in 2022/23.

Household composition of approaches in 2022/23

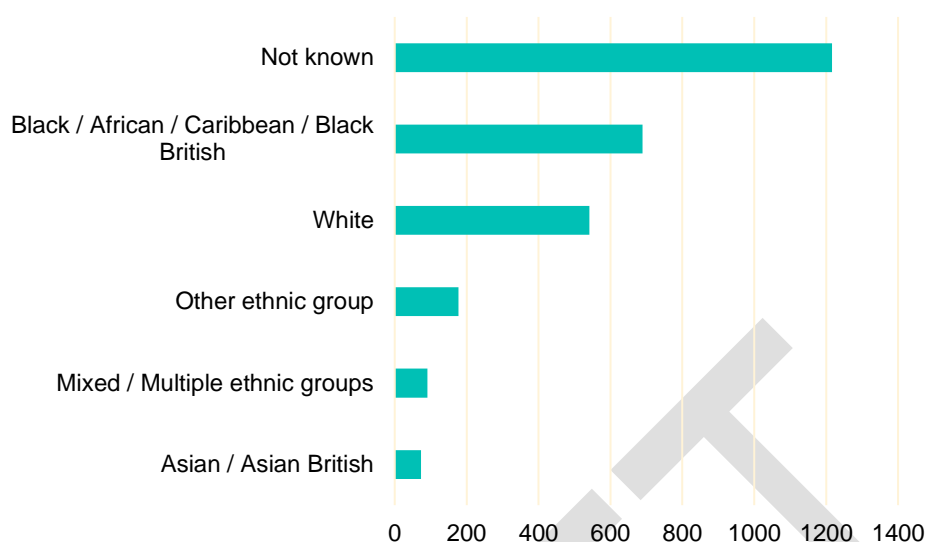


Ethnicity of household main applicant

6. Those identifying with Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnicity made up 25% of approaches in 22/23

This chart looks at the ethnic origin of households approaching as homeless or threatened with homelessness. There has been an increase in the number of households that have chosen not to state their ethnic origin in their initial application, this may be reflective of new remote working procedures which allowed customers to fill in a registration form themselves in which 'ethnicity' is not a mandatory question. This has since been changed and we should see a reduction in the use of this response in coming data uploads. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British make up our largest approach ethnicity other than those 'not known'.

Ethnicity of Main Applicant in 2022/23



Support needs

7. The biggest support needs identified by service users were physical ill health and mental health needs

We can see from the data that homeless households in Southwark are slightly less likely to have a support need to report than the London average. Notably, Southwark applicants report higher levels of physical ill health and disability than England as a whole, as well as higher levels of repeat homelessness. Conversely, Southwark has lower levels of drug and alcohol dependency and applicants with a reported offending history approaching.

The below table shows the reported support needs of applicants in 2022/23, this data shows 52% of homeless applicants had one or more reported support need. When breaking these down, the most reported support need was 'physical ill health or disability' followed by a 'history of mental health problems', & 'at risk of/has experienced domestic abuse'.

It is important to note that these assessments are self-assessments made by the main applicant during a homeless application. It must be considered that not all applicants would report their needs in this way due to the categorisation of these field or simply not feeling comfortable to do so.

Support needs reported by households in 2022/23

Number of support needs reported in 2021/22				
	1 support need	2 support needs	3+ support needs	% of households reporting any support need (of total apps)
Southwark	658	345	441	52%

London	12,750	4,360	4,260	37%
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Most reported support needs reported by households in 2022/23

Support need	Southwark
Physical ill health and disability	52%
History of mental health problems	47%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	21%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	20%
History of repeat homelessness	16%
History of rough sleeping	16%
Learning disability	14%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	8%
At risk of/ has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	8%
Drug dependency needs	7%
Alcohol dependency needs	6%
Offending history	6%
Former asylum seeker	5%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	5%
Access to education, employment or training	4%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	2%
Old age	2%
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	1%
Young person aged 16-17 years	<1%
Served in HM Forces	<1%

Successful Homelessness Preventions and Reliefs

8. The service prevented homelessness in 84% of all prevention duty cases issued compared to 20% of relief cases

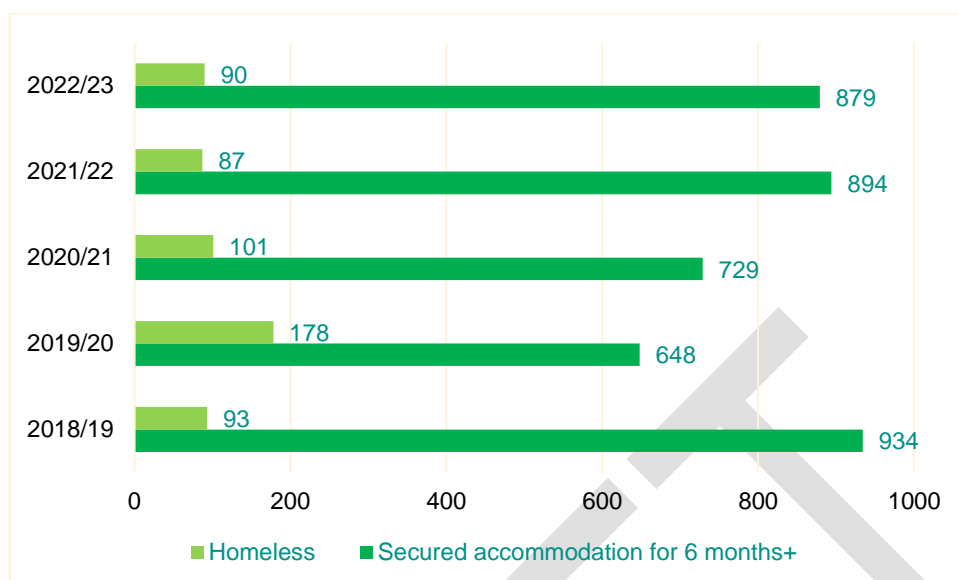
The introduction of the HRA17 allowed us to get involved in cases of homelessness earlier. This has proven very successful as prevention cases have an 84% success rate compared to 20% in relief cases. This shows the importance of getting in earlier in housing insecurity cases to resolve issues before they reach crisis point.

Below highlights the importance of this work, as we can see that more cases in prevention were successfully assisted to secure accommodation than were subsequently homeless at the end of their prevention duty. Outcomes of this will include; securing PRS properties, negotiating renewals on existing tenancies and advocacy to end eviction proceedings.

Positive Prevention outcomes v. Positive Relief Outcomes (2018/19-2022/23)

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
% Positive prevention outcome	86%	68%	83%	85%	84%
% Positive relief outcome	16%	18%	27%	21%	20%

Prevention outcomes: Secured accommodation v. Became Homeless (2018/19-2022/23)



With the changing affordability of private rented properties in the Borough along with the cost-of-living crisis, positive outcomes for prevention cases are harder to obtain through securing new tenancies as shown below in the reducing number of PRS scheme moves achieved after the highs of the pandemic years.

PRS scheme moves successfully completed (2018-2022)

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Self Help Scheme's processed	38	69	463	233	167
Finder's Fee Scheme moves	154	225	320	158	79

Temporary accommodation numbers

9. 3627 homeless households are in TA, 851 of which are in nightly paid accommodation

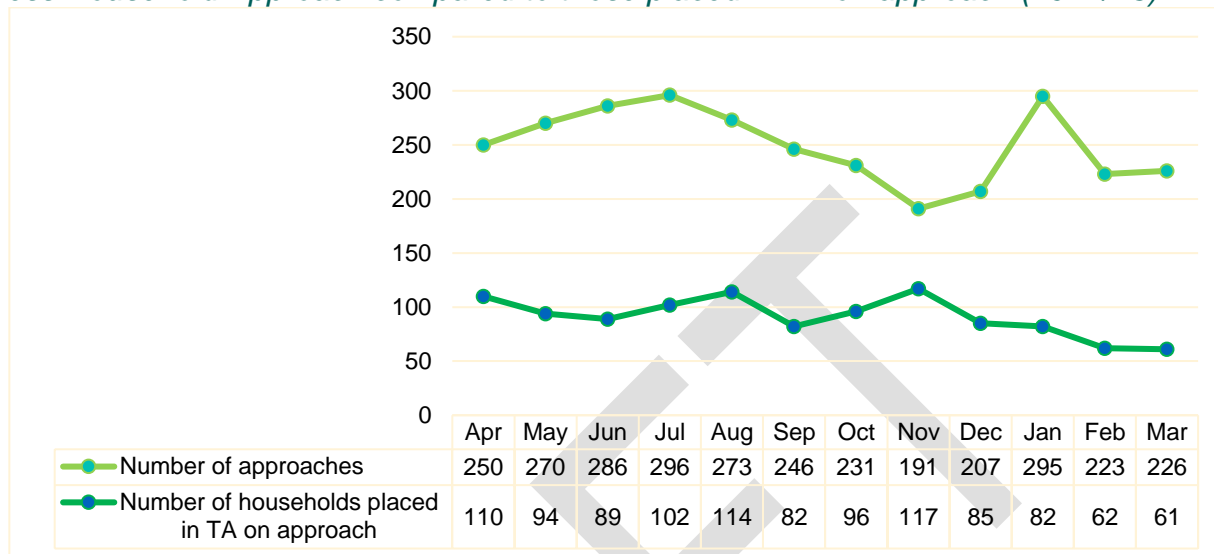
We have a high number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) compared to the London and Inner London average. Sourcing TA is being an increasingly difficult task as well as sourcing quality and size appropriate accommodation for our need.

Comparison of TA numbers (Southwark, London, Inner London, 2023)

Local Authority group	Number in TA
London (average)	1,876

Inner London (average)	1,412
Southwark	3,627

Homeless Household Approach compared to those placed in TA on approach (2022/23)



Not all households will be placed in TA when they approach the council for assistance with their homelessness, the chart above shows that around 37% of approaches are placed in TA when they first contact us for a homelessness application.

During 2023/24 research by London Council's has shown numbers in TA across the capital rising for more than a year. It also highlighted homeless demand increasing sharply with greater use of bed and breakfast accommodation, including greater numbers of placements of over six weeks in breach of statutory regulation. The supply of accommodation in the private sector to prevent homelessness, or as temporary accommodation has reduced. This has led to increases in costs per unit and declining standards. Southwark has avoided the use of bed and breakfast and retained numbers in temporary accommodation, which had been stable for more than a year, but numbers began to rise rapidly in the second half of the year as housing market pressures, accommodation availability and cost of living all combined to produce an acute pressure.

The Housing Waiting List

10,17462 households are on the waiting list for social housing in Southwark with 1034 social lets made last year.

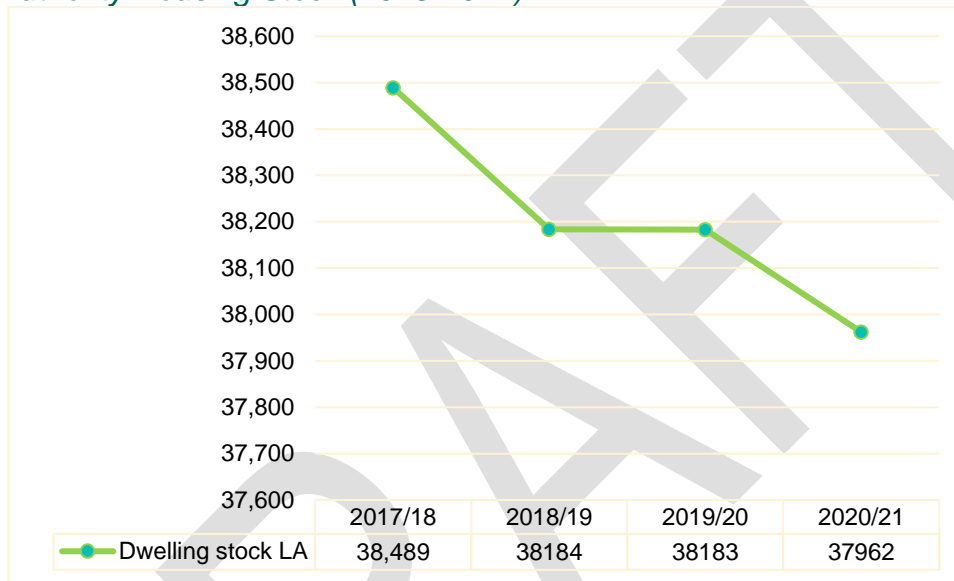
Our housing waiting list continues to grow as the housing crisis has worsened. We have over 17,000 households on the list currently with around 400-500 new applications received each month. We made 1034 lets from the register last year which shows the growing disparity between the supply and demand here.

Bed need of households on the housing waiting list 2022

Bed Need	Total Households
1	8440

2	4360
3	2911
4	1127
5	314
6	60
7	19
8	2
Unknown	42
TOTAL	17275

Local Authority Housing Stock (2018-2021)



Southwark has one of the largest local authority housing stocks in the country but levels of housing need have been growing substantially in recent years. In response to this the Council has delivered high levels of new supply with a commitment to the delivery of even more, Meeting need remains a challenge which is made more difficult as stock is lost to right to buy.

Southwark's housing register is split into priority categories. Overcrowding is the most common reason for an applicant to join the register. This is followed by homelessness and then medical needs. The table above shows that there is the greatest need for 1-bedroom properties. When looking at households who are on the register due to overcrowding, the greatest need is for 3 bed properties.

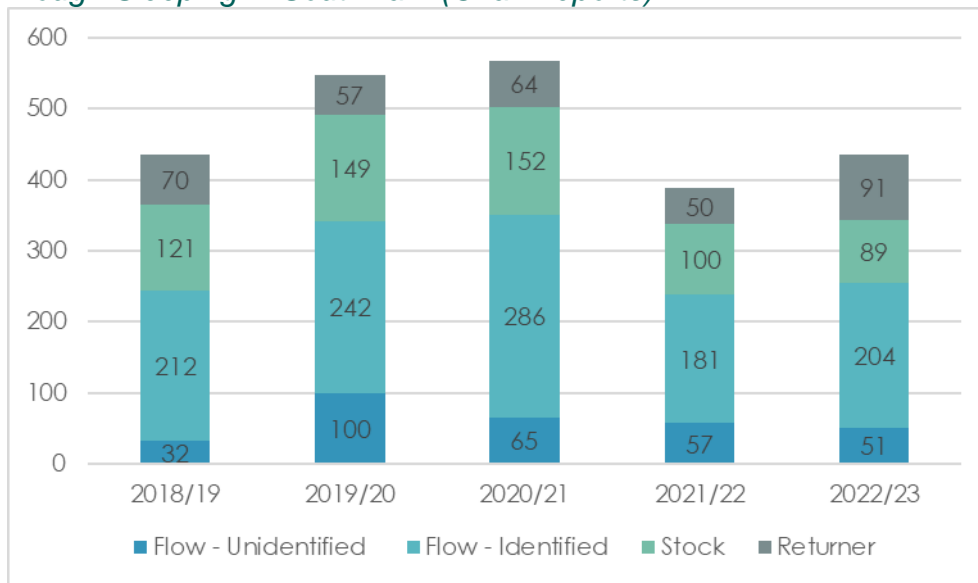
Rough Sleepers

11. Rapid rehousing navigators rehoused 132 rough sleepers in 22/23

Rough sleeping numbers have reduced in Southwark since the Pandemic. The Rapid Rehousing Navigators have been successful in expanding our off the street provision in the past 2 years as shown in the rehousing numbers. The Rapid Rehousing Project has

achieved 138 new Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenancies in 2022-2023. And since the beginning of this project in late 2019 the project has been able to sustain 96% of tenancies procured.

Levels of Rough Sleeping in Southwark (Chain reports)



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The New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

The Overarching aim

To work to end homelessness through the delivery of timely, effective and collaborative support which enables Southwark residents to address their housing insecurity.

The 3 objectives

1. To use a data-led and joined up approach with our partners to identify and support those at the earliest stages of housing difficulty.
2. To ensure effective and timely advice and support is provided to help make real and lasting change for our residents.
3. To improve the outcomes of residents in the quality of our support and work together to tackle the root causes of homelessness.

The Five Priorities

Prioritise Prevention

- Improving timeliness and effectiveness of mediation and support to sustain accommodation.
- Greater use of our Homelessness data and deprivation data collected within the Council to identify and target support for 'at risk' groups.
- Improved pathways for people leaving institutions and from our statutory and community sector partners.

Key Data to consider

The most common cause of homelessness over the past 5 years has been that parents, friends or relatives are no longer willing to accommodate the individual or household in question (27% in 2022/23).

Of cases owed a duty in 2022/23, 42% were prevention compared to 58% relief, in 2021/22 preventions were 40% and relief 60%.

In 22/23 Southwark was ranked 5th highest local authority in England for successful homelessness preventions (3rd in London)

There has been an increase in approaches from PRS households between 2018 and 2022/23 (14% increase)

Those approaching with rent arrears issues has increased as can be seen in our DHP and Rent Arrears Fund data. There were 891 successful applications for DHP in 2022/23 with an average award of £1366 (this is 63% more than the average award in 2018).

For the 6 months from March 2023 to September 2023, 1115 'Entitled To' benefit calculations were completed. 47% were by council or housing association tenants, 35% were completed by private tenants.

We received 1577 'Duty To Refers' in 2022/23 with the top 5 referrers being the DWP, Probation, the Southwark No Recourse Team, NHS & St Mungo's

Of those given a prevention duty, 86% (on average) ended positively whereas only 19% of relief cases had similar outcomes.

Through co-location with other services in the borough, Southwark Housing Solutions has been able to offer financial advice and private renting support to 27 residents at 4 roadshows so far this year. Advice was provided on the bedroom tax, DHP applications, rent arrears issues and cost of living assistance.

As outlined by Priority 1 of Southwark's last Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, homeless prevention has been, and must remain at, the core of all the work we do. Southwark has continued to achieve some of the highest levels of homeless prevention in London year on year. Following a decade of welfare reform in the country that has added pressures to household budgets for many, we understand that our residents have more recently been significantly impacted by inflationary pressures nationally and globally. We have also seen the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic and its residual effects on residents and communities. We therefore need to ensure we can identify those in the Borough at risk and aim to provide help before crisis point.

We must also ensure that we improve our understanding and data collection of marginalised groups such as those identifying as LGBTQ+ and to further develop the provision of advice and tailored support in partnership with key advocacy agencies. We will also be developing staff through packages of training and development to better identify and support those marginalised due to their sexual identity. Our work will also ensure residents are aware of their entitlements for a range of support with cost-of-living expenses. Although recent Government measures to uprate rental support in April 2024, this will have limited benefit given the benefit cap in place, with families renting privately at most risk of insecurity. We anticipate further reform in the private rented sector through the Renter's Reform Bill that will seek to increase the security of tenure for tenants and includes measures of removing the s21 eviction procedure, whilst in tandem supporting landlords to recover possession in specific prescribed circumstances. Concern remains that many landlords will seek to leave the private rental market as has been seen since the covid pandemic ahead of this Bill becoming Act.

From our data review and the challenges residents face now and in the years ahead, we have set out the following broad activity areas and actions to help us achieve effective homeless prevention for the next 5 years:

Improving timeliness and effectiveness of early help to sustain accommodation.

1. Improving our joint work with debt advice and debt management agencies locally and nationally.
2. Improving our joint work with agencies that help us tackle food and fuel poverty.
3. Using improved and easy to understand tools for residents and staff to use understanding how to manage household income.

Greater use of our Homelessness data and deprivation data collected within the Council to identify and target support for 'at risk' groups.

4. Using Council data to identify those in difficulty and to target tailored support early.
5. Improving the timeliness of referrals and our response rate under the 'Duty to Refer' process with key partner agencies across housing, health, justice and welfare rights.
6. Using the Council's enforcement network of services involved in housing to promote homelessness prevention.

Improved pathways for people leaving institutions and from our statutory and community sector partners.

7. Developing bi-monthly prevention forums with social housing providers and community partners to highlight issues, share information and develop best practice.
8. Training local partners, the Police and enforcement bodies around illegal eviction and harassment.
9. Joint work with Court advocacy services and improve outcomes for those facing eviction proceedings.
10. Weekly surgeries for those receiving a home office decision to prevent homelessness, or provide a sustainable solution.

Deliver High Quality Advice & Support

- Rapid, consistent and high-quality housing advice when it's needed with improvements to our advice provision.
- To reduce the number of new households going into temporary accommodation by accessing suitable affordable private rented sector accommodation.
- Enhancing our intervention around unlawful landlord and agent activity in Southwark's private Rented Sector.

Key data to consider

The number of applications for assistance increased significantly with the introduction of the HRA17 with the expansion of provision this introduced. Applications increased 52% from 2016/17 to 2022/23.

We answered 39259 calls from customers looking for advice on homelessness and rough sleeping

We received 3813 homelessness enquiry web forms in 2022/23 a compared to 2764 web forms in 2021/22, this was an increase of 38%.

There was a significant increase in demand throughout the pandemic and numbers have since levelled out which is seen in applications taken (-18% change between 2020/21 - 2022/23)

When housing insecurity leads to homelessness, we must ensure that high quality, tailored and readily accessible advice and support is delivered promptly, that addresses our diverse needs of our residents. The Council and its partners need to work to improve mediation with family members when there is a relationship breakdown and to ensure protections for those renting privately are upheld.

Southwark is also reviewing the delivery of its hybrid homelessness and advice services to ensure that resident needs and circumstances are central to its operation. The Council will be working towards an offer of a same day initial and full homeless application wherever needed and to provide this face to face when required or requested by residents. Residents who require support in a housing related emergency will always be able to avail of face-to-face support and advice and our referral partners will be central to ensuring the advantages of a hybrid model of service delivery are utilised.

We understand that our residents may not seek the advice they need by approaching us directly and so we will be looking for even more opportunities to co-locate with our partner agencies to ensure the support is available at the earliest opportunity.

Our work will continue to provide the specialist support for vulnerable groups, such as those at risk of or victim to domestic abuse, those leaving care and our young persons, or those at risk due to their sexual identity. We'll be continuing to improve protection for those renting privately and using the enforcement powers and network of internal teams and external agencies to ensure poor landlord and agency practice are tackled. We have therefore set out the following broad activity aims and actions to achieve this over the next 5 years:

Rapid, consistent and high-quality housing advice when it's needed with improvements to our advice provision.

11. Improving the delivery and quality of the Council's housing advice offer at the earliest stages for our residents.
12. Refreshing the Council's webpages to ensure advice and information is comprehensive, up to date and provides a list of wider agencies to help as well as being readily available and accessible to all communities.
13. Exploring the co-location and outreach for early advice in the community – e.g Social Prescriber sites, food banks, LGBTQ+ support and advocacy services and other community agencies.

To meet the diverse needs of the residents we serve to access suitable affordable settled accommodation.

14. Expanding support to deliver advice in the community that helps resolve relationship breakdown.
15. Review access to Housing Solutions services post-covid and implement a new service delivery model.
16. To improve the provision of same day assessments when required for those threatened with homelessness or have become homeless.
17. To continue to provide specialist support and rapid intervention to those at risk of, or victim of domestic abuse.
18. To continue to deliver prompt and high-quality advice and support for our care leavers and young persons in meeting their ongoing housing needs.

Enhancing our intervention around unlawful landlord and agent activity in Southwark's private rented sector.

19. Improving the delivery of advice and support in the community through joint visits with enforcement teams.
20. Ensuring a joined-up approach is maintained to tackle the subletting of accommodation in the borough.
21. Delivering a robust response to criminal offences to protect residents in this sector through a rogue landlord taskforce and exploring further partnerships to help with our enforcement activities.

Work to End Rough Sleeping

- Aligning all activity to the Governments 4 key objectives of improving prevention, intervention, recovery and developing joined up and transparent systems to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent.
- Tackling new flow to the street and partnering with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to develop an improved prevention framework of activity.
- Working with Government to maximise funding for local projects that will benefit those rough sleeping in Southwark
- Expanding off the street provision and housing options and support for those with complex needs and couples.
- Developing new off the street options and expanding housing first provision for the most complex rough sleepers.

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Key data to consider

Southwark has access to over 900 supported housing bed spaces which cater to variety of needs including learning disabilities, young people and mental health needs.

638 referrals for supported accommodation were made in 2022/23

Southwark received £7.35 million in Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding in 2022/23 along with £2.09million in Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG).

The Rapid Rehousing achieved 138 new PRS tenancies for rough sleepers in 2022/23 and has been able to sustain 96% of all tenancies procured since its introduction in 2019.

29 cases were heard at the Complex Needs Advisory Panel in 2022/23

CHAIN data shows that rough sleeping increased 12% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 but has fallen 21% since 2018/19.

There was an average of 18 rough sleepers on the street in Southwark each month in 22/23, so far this year there is an average of 22.

59% of rough sleepers in Southwark (22/23) were new to the streets, 20% had been seen in the year previous and 21% had not been seen in 2021/22 but had been seen before this.

75% of new CHAIN recorded rough sleepers were homeless from a long term accommodation (this includes living with family, PRS and social housing). 13% were homeless from short/medium term accommodation such as hostels, asylum support accommodation and temporary accommodation.

We, like central Government understand that the collection of data in this area of work is in need of further development to understand the risk factors that lead too many residents to sleeping rough and know that further insight to improve our prevention and pathway from crisis point when reached is critical. Southwark will be joining organisations and Government to improve data collection, sharing and analysis. We will continue to develop our nationally recognised rough sleeping service and partnerships to use an improved data-led approach to tackle those at risk of rough sleeping. Aligning with the Government Strategy we will ensure we can enhance our prevention and intervention around rough sleeping. We'll be working to continually expand our provision, including our Housing First Programme to help rough sleepers off the streets and enable greater sustainment of longer-term accommodation for those with complex needs. This will involve making full use of grant from the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP), Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP).

We will be doing so by improving our systems and working transparently with our partners, neighbouring Authorities and Government. We have therefore set out the following broad activity aims and actions to achieve over the next 5 years:

Tackling new flow to the street and partnering with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to develop an improved prevention framework of activity.

22. Improving our collection of data to improve prevention and intervention with rough sleepers.
23. Using new Government tools such as the rough sleeping prevention tool and strategic insights tool to identify those at risk or rough sleeping.
24. Working with the Home Office to fully integrate with DTR processes and ensure a joined-up approach is maintained to minimise homelessness due to Asylum claim processing.
25. Ensuring local Home Office accommodation providers work with the Council to provide early notice of decisions that enable the Housing Service and Stronger Neighbourhoods teams to identify housing solutions and wider support.
26. Asking the Home Office to provide 56 days notice before a resident is asked to leave accommodation to enable the Council to work with them for a sufficient period to meet their housing needs.

Expanding off the street provision and housing options and support for those with complex needs.

27. Continuing to secure Government grant through sole bids and those we can make jointly with our partner agencies and Authorities.
28. To continue the use of multi-agency and disciplinary panels to deliver joined up and customer focussed outcomes.
29. To improve supported hostel access and move on for rough sleepers.
30. To expand complex needs support initiatives such as Housing First.
31. To continue and develop our partnerships with Beam, St Mungo's, South London and Maudsley, NHS, Change Grow Live (CGL) Robes and other agencies to provide a holistic package of support for service users to build and maintain independence.

Quality Outcomes Through Housing Provision

- Improved timeliness of access to accommodation commensurate to residents' needs.
- Improving access to and pathway through Supported Housing.
- Learning and improving the standards of our support.
- Improving the standards of our accommodation types.
- Minimising the use and duration of interim accommodation wherever possible.

Key data to consider:

There are currently over 17,500 households on the waiting list for social housing in Southwark. We made 1035 lets in 22/23.

There were 65 'smart moves' completed in 22/23 - these are lets through our under occupiers scheme which moves households into properties that match their needs and frees up bedrooms for overcrowded households.

We have 397 households with an under occupiers category on their application, 86 with a statutory overcrowded priority and 4473 with a more general overcrowding code.

We secured 246 private rented sector lets (excluding rough sleeper lets through our navigator team) in 2022/23.

Average rents in Southwark are around 33% higher than LHA rates.

Surveys of temporary accommodation residents on the quality of their accommodation returned an average positive response rate of 91% last year.

The average stay in TA for households is around 25 months

A new visiting team has been set up to visit TA - 253 visits were completed in 6 months to check standards, talk about move on options and to check occupancy.

Understanding that all forms of suitable and affordable accommodation are reducing, it is incumbent upon Southwark to ensure we make best use of the accommodation available for our residents. Through our Housing Strategy we'll be targeting empty properties in the borough, and we will be aiming to improve all options for our Secure and Assured tenants to move to good quality and more suitably sized accommodation for their needs.

With the significant achievements in Southwark's new homes programme, we will be supporting homeless households settle from temporary accommodation, as well as enabling re-housing for those in most urgent need across the borough.

We'll also be improving access to specialist accommodation types and working with partners in accessing accommodation in the private rented sector. We'll be listening and learning from our residents to improve our services and drive-up standards across all accommodation types.

We will be improving the channels we have for feedback and introduce regular sessions with service users and initiating insight sessions through an expert panel of residents with lived experience of homelessness and housing insecurity to help inform and develop our work further. Our work will also include wider ranging strengths-based training and development with the aid of service user feedback and lived experience.

Through this work, we'll improve standards, continue to minimise the take up and duration of emergency accommodation wherever possible for the benefit of our residents and meet budget commitments. We have therefore set out the following broad activity aims and actions to achieve over the next 5 years:

Improved timelines of access to accommodation that meets the needs of residents

32. To improve housing mobility schemes within the Council to optimise the use and access to Southwark's stock including the development of Southwark's Smart Move offer.
33. To increase access to specialist accommodation types such as sheltered and extra care.

Improving access to and pathway through supported housing.

34. With better assessments of resident needs, we'll seek to improve the access to supported accommodation generally.

Learning and improving the standards of our support

35. Working across the Council to ensure our Good Homes Standard commitments are achieved.

36. Proactive monitoring of the standards of our emergency accommodation and ensuring clear information and support is provided to residents to tackle poor provision.
37. Establishing customer focus groups through our 'you said we did' feedback channel so that we can continually learn and improve our services.

Minimising the use and duration of interim accommodation wherever possible.

38. To ensure sufficient allocations of properties for homeless applicants are maintained.
39. To use local and annual lettings plans to ensure fair access to permanent accommodation is maintained.
40. To develop partnerships with housing supply providers so that quality, settled private rented accommodation is available.
41. Developing improved support for those moving and settling to new homes in and beyond our borough across all types of housing.
42. To work with council colleagues to secure an increase in the delivery of genuinely affordable housing for Southwark residents, including new council homes and through innovative schemes such as that provided by Centrepoin in Peckham.

Tackling Systemic Housing Insecurity

- Protecting communities and challenging inequality where it manifests in housing insecurity and working with internal and external partners to enhance this work.
- Improving resident access to employment, skills and eligible support to mitigate heightened financial pressures.
- Empowering residents with a realistic and comprehensive appraisal of how they can mitigate housing insecurity to make the right choices in their customer journey.
- Making the case for changes to Government for regulation, supply and support for residents.

Key data to consider:

Our Homelessness Forum which is chaired by Southwark Law Centre occurs every quarter and has an attendance of around 35 different agencies.

In 2021/22 our partnership with Beam assisted with signing up 48 residents for help with job seeking and training. They helped 29 start paid work, prevented homelessness in 9 cases and raised donations for Southwark residents totalling £83,097.

350 cases were taken by our Private Rented Sector Team in 22/23 to help with evictions and problems with private rented landlords.

A Landlord forum held this year saw 34 private landlord attend to hear on legislative update, licensing news and information on working with the council.

23% of approaches for homelessness assistance in 2022/23 were from Private Rented Tenants.

Evictions from Southwark secure tenancies totalled 18 in 2022/23, with the highest rate in 2018/19 and 2019/20 which saw 64 and 62 respectively.

We understand that Southwark Council alone cannot resolve the deepening housing crisis that is impacting our residents and communities. Southwark is committed to working in partnership with statutory and community partners to help our residents build resilience and where possible, resolve their housing issue and to be open and transparent with the help we can provide so that informed choices can be made. We will remain committed to addressing systemic inequality in the borough that manifests in housing insecurity.

With the growing insecurity we are seeing for those renting privately in the borough, Southwark will be working through the Private Renter Support Organisation. This key partnership with Citizen's Advice Southwark, will include forums for tenants and partner organisations as well as 'know your rights' sessions to build resilience of tenants and identify where to seek help at the earliest stage.

Southwark will be initiating a twice yearly strategic partnership roundtable for stakeholders to ensure our overarching aims, priorities and objectives to meet these under our strategy are reviewed, as well as reviewing the learning from insight sessions from panel experts with lived experience. The board will serve to align the activities of stakeholders and enable the collective progress and fulfilment of our work is maintained for our residents. In conjunction with our strategic roundtable.

We'll be joining other Authorities in making the case for change to central Government for the policies and resources we all need to make homelessness more generally rare, brief and non-recurrent. We have therefore set out the following broad activity aims and actions to achieve over the next 5 years:

Protecting communities and challenging inequality that results in housing insecurity. Working with internal and external partners to enhance this work.

43. To ensure our homelessness forum is continued and widened to include more partners working in health and justice.
44. To work in partnership with Southwark's private renter's organisation in driving up standards in Southwark's private rented sector.
45. To reintroduce a twice yearly strategic roundtable, Chaired by our Cabinet Member, to bring partners together to assess the progress of all stakeholders' work against the strategy and our action plan.

Improving resident access to employment, skills and eligible support to mitigate heightened financial pressures.

46. Improving the delivery of our Southwark Works programme and supporting expansion with partner agencies.
47. Working with external providers in the community that deliver employment and skills support to those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
48. To improve pathways and work with vulnerable communities such as those identifying as LGBTQ+.

Empowering residents with a realistic and comprehensive appraisal of how they can resolve their housing issues where possible and make informed choices.

49. Development of our customer access processes for our digital and face to face services.
50. To ensure a realistic appraisal of support is given. That this is understood and communicated through all partner agencies and those working with our residents.
51. That our support and advice is tailored to ensure residents can make informed choices that empower them to resolve their housing issues.

Making the case for change to Government to communicate local and regional housing need and redress to wider impacts that lead to housing insecurity and inequality.

52. Asking for a change to LHA rates and a lift on the benefit cap to improve the purchasing power of residents and Authorities to access accommodation.
53. Lobby Government to reform the temporary accommodation subsidy regime, currently linked to January 2011 LHA rates, to ensure that the costs of securing accommodation are more closely linked to the subsidy available to provide it.
54. Greater funding for NRPF rough sleepers as it is making Government strategic aims in this area impossible to achieve.
55. Develop incentives for landlords to participate in the lower end of the market.
56. Lobby for an increase in the discretionary housing payments allocation annually to reflect the valuable prevention work that can be done and wider savings achieved with an appropriate level of grant.
57. Enable public acquisition of properties leaving the market for our procurement through grant programmes such as the Local Authority Housing Fund. Ensure these solutions with adequate levels of funding to make development and acquisition viable.
58. Support new development of social homes through a grant programme that properly funds the cost of supply and supports the removal of wider barriers to building.
59. Lobby for and implement the proposals to ban section 21 evictions and make the private sector a stable option to meet housing need.