

2019 Annual review of Southwark Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2022

Introduction

Since the implementation of Southwark's Homelessness Strategy in 2018 there have been a number of significant emerging issues and developments nationally and locally relating to homelessness and rough sleeping. Since October 2018, when the Strategy was published, across the country, Local Authorities have been redesigning services to best reflect the requirements of their customers in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17) which came into force on 3 April 2018. Southwark Council was advanced with its plans through its status as an early-adopter trailblazer for the Act but was still no exception that much change has taken place since the implementation of the Act and this is still an ongoing process.

The three strategic objectives and five priority areas remain highly relevant as part of the ongoing strategic work in preventing homelessness.

To recap, the main strategic objectives:

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

Our overall aim for this Strategy is to;

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

The five priority areas are recapped in the [Action Plan Progress](#) section below.

Emerging issues and responses

This section highlights some of the emerging issues that have developed since the publication of the strategy and how Southwark has responded.

Resources for tackling homelessness in Southwark

At this stage, Government grant funding for 2019/20 includes anticipated funding the Council will be receiving. Overall the external funding from grants, including those successfully bid for, have increased on the previous two years. This extra funding reflects the additional burdens placed on local authorities as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act and national strategy to reduce rough sleeping.

| Government Grants | 2016-17 Grant Received | 2017-18 Grant Received | 2018-19 Grant Received | 2019-20 Grant Received |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| New Burdens | -226 | -484 | -435 | -411 |
| Flexible Homelessness Support Grant | 0 | -2,670 | -3,165 | -3,616 |
| London Training Academy | 0 | -690 | 0 | 0 |
| Prevention Trailblazer | -588 | -412 | 0 | 0 |
| TA Strategy/ Homeless Projects | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cold Weather Fund | 0 | 0 | 0 | -35 |
| Rough Sleeper (Housing First) | -40 | -176 | -176 | 0 |
| Rough Sleeping Outreach | 0 | 0 | -100 | 0 |
| Rough Sleeping Initiative | 0 | 0 | -615 | -598 |
| PRS Access Programme | 0 | 0 | -179 | -94 |
| Rapid Rehousing Pathway | 0 | 0 | 0 | -629 |
| TOTAL | -854 | -4,432 | -4,670 | -5,383 |

Southwark and Brexit.

The UK was due to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019, however the departure date has been postponed until at least January 2020. Southwark is home to 41,000 EU citizens and 72% of residents who took part in the referendum voted to remain in the EU. Southwark Council is extremely proud of our diverse borough and workforce. We value EU citizens who live and work in Southwark, who play a vital role in making our borough what it is.

Brexit has caused significant uncertainty for many individuals, businesses and organisations. Central government is responsible for negotiating the UK's exit from the EU and over the last year the terms of the UK's withdrawal agreement are still unclear.

The council is committed to doing everything we can to ensure that Southwark, its residents and businesses, get the best outcome from Brexit and we are working to make sure that the rights of our residents are protected.

Southwark Council has taken a number of steps to prepare for the impact of the UK leaving the EU on the borough and our residents. In July 2018 Southwark's cabinet member with responsibility for Brexit established a cross-party Brexit Panel to take evidence from local stakeholders about the potential impact of Brexit on Southwark, to help inform the council's response to Brexit. Over the last six months the panel has taken evidence from a wide range of individuals and organisations, including businesses, local public services, and voluntary and community organisations. More information about the work of the panel is available [here](#).

The panel has made a number of recommendations, based on the evidence it has gathered, to Southwark's cabinet to prepare for the impact of Brexit on the council. These recommendations were agreed by cabinet on 22 January. You can read the panel's report and recommendations [here](#).

The impact on homelessness is more directly related to the immigration status of the boroughs residents and how this may change after Brexit. The Government has published details about the EU Settlement Scheme – the new scheme which will enable EU citizens and their family members to stay in the UK after it leaves the EU. For individuals that fail to comply, it could, for example, result in households losing their recourse to public funds. This could also have a significant financial impact on local authorities which may need to house families without being able to claim back any housing benefit. The council is offering support to residents who may struggle with the application and will also be working with the voluntary and community sector to reach residents who may not be aware of the scheme.

The Council is providing advice and information directly through its website on [Brexit](#) and has continued to update its Brexit Risk Register, also available [online](#).

Internal partnerships - Public Health, Children's & Adults' Services and Homelessness

Southwark Council's Public Health and Housing Solutions services have been working jointly on the creation of a **Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing Working Group**. The group has developed plans for a task-finish group over one year every month.

The partnership working is exploring potential topics such as Primary Care, evaluating the success of the new Hospital Discharge Protocol and improve evidence collection and looking at how health services can better feed in to arrangements around the 'duty to refer'.

In November 2018 an audit of the health services which rough sleepers have access too was completed. The Princes Street Surgery was highlighted by some as the preferred practice for clients to attend. The group also intends to explore why this might be the case and host a focussed discussion around this topic.

Services across the Council with further representatives from SLaM, ASC, CCG, the Council Commissioning Team and the Partnership Commissioning Team have formed a joint **Mental Health Move On Working Group**. Work commenced in spring 2019 and is currently ongoing. The Institute of Public Care are leading the project with a vision that people are supported in their recovery to live a full, independent and enjoyable life. The aim is that those people in funded placements and supported accommodation, when considered fit for discharge, are able to move forward and

through the pathway, stepping down and staying well. To deliver this, a whole pathway approach is being reviewed, identifying what the blocks and issues are that prevent a person from moving forward and living a full, independent and enjoyable life.

This will involve considering system transformation to ensure the whole pathway can be optimised as pressures and blockages in any part of the system will impact on the overall flow. The aim is also that the project successfully contributes to the delivery of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy as well as aligning with Partnership Southwark.

The focus of this group is to work up the detail of the project so that this can be fed into the Strategy Group.

Consultation on HRA and Homelessness Reduction Boards

Southwark Council has been regularly attending round table and task and finish groups organised by MHCLG to provide views on the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the possible development of Homelessness Reduction Boards.

A response by Housing Solutions has been submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in relation to the HRA 2017 Call For Evidence. The response is evidence-based and outlines how the Act has impacted our services, leading to greater partnership working and also increased responsibilities for collecting data.

Housing Solutions has also provided a response to the Tackling Homelessness Together consultation run by MHCLG between February and May 2019. It supports the introduction of Homelessness Reduction Boards to further improve local accountability and partnership working. The Council is exploring the possibility of setting up a Homelessness Reduction Panel in advance of any statutory requirements.

It is considered that the functions of the Housing and Modernisation Homelessness Reduction Panel could include:

- Setting the strategic vision for reducing homelessness in the locality and monitoring progress in achieving it;
- Using data, evidence, and user and lived experience to identify the homelessness challenges in the area, including those that may apply to particular groups of people, and priority actions – helping to shape local homelessness strategies;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of service provision and interventions;
- Mapping homelessness services and the delivery chain in the locality, redesigning them where appropriate to improve effectiveness and outcomes;
- Identifying and co-ordinating across all partners the effective use of funding for homelessness services and interventions; and,

- Promoting and facilitating the joint-commissioning of homelessness services and interventions.
- Seeking evidence to change the homelessness services locally to ensure a more joined up and structural change to homelessness services across all partners.

Rough Sleeping

The Rough Sleeping Strategy was published in August 2018 by MHCLG, at this stage Southwark's draft homelessness strategy was already going through the formal approval process.

The implications were discussed directly with MHCLG contacts in the Rough Sleeping directorate and they were satisfied that as Southwark's draft strategy had included a priority on rough sleeping that it had adequately addressed the recommendations set out in the national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

At the end of 2018, in December, a Health and wellbeing needs of Southwark's rough sleepers - Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was published jointly by People & Health Intelligence, Southwark Public Health & DAAT (Drugs and Alcohol Team).

The JSNA provided compelling evidence of the links between causes for rough sleeping, the impact on physical and mental health and the consequences such as addictions and the knock on effect for GPs and A&E departments.

National data by Homeless Link in 2015 evidenced the following:

- Rough sleepers present a substantial burden on frontline health services,
- 67.0% had visited their GP at least once in the previous 6 months (23.9% over 5 times).
- 20% reported that they had been refused registration at a GP practice.
- 44.5% had attended A&E at least once in the previous 6 months (10.7% over 5 times).

The Government released its 2018 rough sleeping count figures for England. Based on the count or estimate from each local authority, the figures show that 4,677 people slept rough on a single given night in Autumn 2018.

Whilst the figures show a 2% decrease compared to 2017, overall there has been a 94% increase since 2013, and 165% increase overall since 2010.

Meanwhile, the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) has also released new figures revealing 3289 people rough slept across London alone from October to December 2018, a 25% increase on the 2630 people sleeping rough from the same period last year.

The only way to end homelessness for good is to tackle the root causes of rough sleeping.

It's a damning reflection of our society that night after night, so many people are forced to sleep rough on our streets – with numbers soaring in the capital – especially when we know that with the right commitment, rough sleeping could be ended for good.

Living on the streets is one of the most dangerous experiences anyone could face. Not only will rough sleepers experience extreme isolation and often severe weather conditions, but we know they have a high risk of dying young and research shows they are 17 times more likely to experience abuse than the general public. No one should have to live like this.

If the government is serious about its pledge to end rough sleeping within the next decade, it must do more to address the root causes. This includes ensuring that housing allowance truly covers the cost of renting, and building significantly more social housing to meet the needs of people across the country. It's the only way to prevent all forms of homelessness in the first place and truly end rough sleeping for good.

Key findings of the JSNA included:

- Primary health issues affecting rough sleepers include substance misuse, mental health problems, access to acute healthcare, chronic illness and communicable disease.
- Current service provision involves a number of individual services, both commissioned and non-commissioned, working alongside one another, with interactions between services facilitated by outreach and homeless pathways teams.
- A number of areas for improved co-ordination between services and barriers to appropriate access despite these services have been identified, in addition to a number of further opportunities to enhance co-operation between services.
- Accordingly, future commissioning of services must be directed towards enabling services such as the outreach team to better co-ordinate and signpost to appropriate services, in addition to tackling barriers to accessing services.

Tying in with this strategy, the JSNA recommendations included:

- Building on aspects of the Southwark Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 and the RSI audit, consider the development of a strategic group to oversee the development of a rough sleeping action plan which addresses the health and wellbeing need of our street population.
- Development of a dedicated primary care service specific to rough sleepers in Southwark, drawing on successes made in neighbouring boroughs such as Lambeth.

Coordinated leads such as CCG and Housing & Modernisation were identified for all of the recommendations and progress will be reported in future annual updates.

The Council Plan 2018/19-2021/22

The Council Plan was updated for the period 2018/19-2021/22. This document sets the aims and objectives of the Council as a whole organisation and all local services, including homelessness, are steered by this vision.

The Fairer Future vision for Customer Experience (which contains the Housing Solutions business unit) includes the relevant commitments -

'Standing in our customers' shoes' we will design and deliver services in a way we would be happy for a member of our own family to access. We will encourage and enable residents to make their own decisions and stand on their own feet whilst always providing appropriate support for the most vulnerable. We will:

Seek to deliver excellent customer services through all communication channels; electronic communication, telephone and face to face

Develop our on-line service offering, improving end to end self-service tools to enable customers to access services 24 hours a day.

Work with voluntary sector organisations and private sector landlords to prevent homelessness

Look for housing solutions that consider how children will have the best start in life

Give local residents a say in any new homes being developed on their estate

This is followed by relevant mission commitments which, in particular, will guide our plans to improve online services to homeless households -

Deliver a customer experience where services can be accessed at a time convenient to residents and businesses

Improve digital functionality so that many more services can be delivered as self service

Manage homelessness and temporary accommodation effectively, leading to better outcomes for residents

Work with partners to provide an integrated housing solution service which seeks to deal with the customer in a holistic way to identify a successful answer to their housing needs

Southwark Works and Beam

The council launched the BEAM initiative on the 5th August to help homeless households into employment and thereby potentially eliminate future homeless issues for these households.

This work was also expanded with the partnership work with Thames Reach/Southwark Works to further promote employment opportunities for homeless households.

Restructure and political leadership change

The completion of a restructured Housing Solutions service was arrived at by May 2019. The main drivers for the restructure were to redesign the service in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act and continued reductions in local authority budgets, more specifically to provide three distinct service areas, namely;

- Housing Demand (homeless advice, assessments, prevention and relief of homelessness)

- Housing Choice & Supply (provision of emergency and interim temporary accommodation and permanent accommodation in the private and social sectors)
- Programme, Policy & Change (providing strategic, project and administrative support).

A change in cabinet member for Housing and Modernisation was confirmed at the Annual Council Meeting in spring 2019. Councillor Kieron Williams took on the new role from Councillor Stephanie Cryan who stepped into the role of cabinet member for Jobs, Skills and Innovation, which was previously occupied by Cllr Williams.

The new cabinet member for Housing and Modernisation has since established a target date of January 2021 for eliminating usage of nightly rate interim temporary accommodation and approving innovative projects to improve customer access into the private rented market. Further details on the progress of these initiatives can be found in the [Action Plan Progress](#) section below.

Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043 refresh

Southwark's Housing Strategy team hosted a series of workshops to consider new initiatives and plans for elements of its housing strategy. The principles in the strategy are remaining the same but service areas within the authority have agreed a number of smart (measurable) actions to strengthen accountability. The actions include a continued commitment to hold quarterly homelessness forums to encourage partnership and collaborative working and reference the aims and plans in this homelessness strategy and wider corporate aims of reducing and prevention homelessness, set out in the Council Plan 2018/19-2021/22.

Further national policy development

Despite the positive development of a national rough sleeping strategy, there is still an urgent need for a national homelessness strategy. A national strategy would help align departments across government and avoid counter-productive activities that lead to homelessness. One of the three main objectives of our homelessness strategy is 'to use our position as a leading trailblazer authority to make a positive contribution to national policy around homelessness and welfare reform'. We will continue to use our position and communicate the message in favour of a national homelessness strategy.

The government committed to reviewing the Vagrancy Act (1824) as part of its new national Rough Sleeping Strategy. Homelessness should not be a crime. But the Vagrancy Act, which goes back to 1824, as its name, from another era suggests, makes it a crime just to sleep rough or beg in England and Wales. Crisis, Cymorth Cymru, Homeless Link, Shelter Cymru, St Mungo's, the Wallich and all the #ScraptheAct campaign supporters are calling for the Vagrancy Act be scrapped. Southwark Council is supportive of this campaign.

The Vagrancy Act does nothing to resolve the root causes of homelessness. In fact, it's more likely to push someone further from the vital services that help them to move away from the streets.

The Government is soon to review the Vagrancy Act, but hasn't said that they will repeal it – yet. Until they do, vulnerable people will continue to be pushed even further from support.

Local evidence and data analysis

The implementation of the HRA17 led to a shift in the way local authorities collect data for governmental reporting. The new government requirements were for case level data, rather than aggregate data which required far greater detail than ever before on our customer base, their backgrounds, needs, situation and outcomes. This has helped produce far greater detail for us to analyse and over time see trends in how changes to our services impact on our residents, so we can ensure that the changes we make are having positive outcomes for everyone.

An accompanying report, *Analysis of Homelessness Data 2018-19*, uses our annual H-CLIC data for the first time to assess how homelessness and housing need is changing in Southwark and considerations for further actions required as a result.

An *Equality Monitoring Analysis* report has also been produced to accompany this report.

Action Plan Progress

This section highlights some of the achievements in the last 12 months. The updated Action Plan appendix details progress for each action set out since the strategy was published. Overall, the Action Plan illustrates that strong progress has been made across all priority areas.

The five strategic priorities are:

Priority One: Homelessness prevention.

We will deliver a leading prevention service building on our early adopter trailblazer project to meet the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Southwark's homelessness service continues to be recognised for its excellent homelessness prevention services. It became only the second London borough, and 15th borough overall, to achieve the **National Practitioner Support Service Gold Standard**. The achievement involved a diagnostic practitioner review and then demonstrating that Southwark has in place a comprehensive prevention focused service for all customers. This involved meeting 10 challenges such as evidencing that no families had been placed for over six weeks in shared B&B accommodation and to have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs. A presentation was held in April 2019 to receive the accreditation.

The [live government tables on homelessness](#), last published quarter Jan-Mar 2019, show Southwark was joint 35th (7th in London) out of 326 Local Authorities. This places Southwark just outside the top 10% nationally for securing successful homeless preventions. In total, during this quarter, Southwark achieved 111 successful preventions.

Priority Two: Tackle rough sleeping.

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

The Southwark Quarterly Homelessness Forum has continued to provide regular liaison between the commissioned Street Population Outreach Team and partnership services. This ensures that services are rightly held to account and provide best value for money and reduce rough sleeping across the borough.

Southwark's successful bid for a £615,000 share of the Government's £30m Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant has seen a greater number of fully trained police officers, nurses, outreach officers and domestic abuse support workers in Southwark. The council pays the Met police and the NHS for these officers to exclusively work in Southwark.

The Housing Solutions service has successfully adopted a Housing First model and is sustaining 15 tenancies for ex-rough sleepers with complex support needs. A model which has a strong evidence base and is proving successful internationally.

The Council continues to offer a No First Night Out (NFNO) provision for single adults immediately at risk of homelessness and has already prevented 24 households from homelessness by finding accommodation in the private rented sector in the 2019 financial year to the end of August.

Priority Three: Vulnerability and Health.

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

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

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

In September 2018, just prior to the publication of the strategy, Southwark Housing Solutions became the first housing service in a local authority to achieve the **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation**. Further highlighting the Council's commitment to tackling domestic abuse, in August 2019 the Housing Solutions service proudly received **accreditation for White Ribbon** supporting the mission to end male violence against women.

Southwark Council has continued to strive and protect the most vulnerable residents in its borough. This was emphasised by the report "'A Safe Home' **Breaking the link between homelessness and domestic abuse Campaigns report**", produced by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for ending homelessness. The report commented "There are already some local authorities taking the lead in terms of ensuring everyone made homeless as a direct result of domestic abuse is treated as a priority need. This is the case in Southwark where they supported 263 people fleeing domestic abuse between 1st April 2018 and 31st December 2018, 58% of which were single people.

‘Since March 2017, Southwark Council adopted a new approach towards domestic abuse and Homelessness. All customers fleeing domestic abuse will be provided with accommodation and no customer will return to the place they left due to domestic abuse. A non priority customer will be treated exactly the same way as a priority needs customer. The Homelessness Reduction Act trailblazer work certainly assisted the service to change the culture of services provided and to place the customer at the centre of all of our work.

The customer fleeing domestic abuse will be seen by the Housing Solutions service alongside Solace Women’s Aid who are based within the Housing Solutions service office and this partnership work provides an empathetic, and customer focussed service. Solace Women’s Aid provide independent housing advice and advocacy for all domestic abuse customers.

Southwark Council had the largest number of people approaching the council fleeing domestic abuse compared to any other council in London according to the most recent homelessness Government data, and Southwark is proud of its innovative work towards domestic abuse. For council and housing association tenants we also aim to move people through the Pan London Reciprocal arrangement if this is the choice of the customer and then evict the perpetrator when it is safe to do so. Southwark Council has the largest number of Pan London Reciprocal moves compared to any other council and Housing Association landlord in London. The council will never allow a person fleeing domestic abuse to return to the place they fled from and non priority needs customers are provided with the same service, protection and housing offer as a priority need customer. If Southwark Council can do this then any one can.’ – Ian Swift, Head of Housing Solutions, London Borough of Southwark”.

Southwark will continue its commitment, publicity and campaign work for **Priority Need status for all Domestic Abuse victims** to protect the most vulnerable households in our society.

A target was agreed in June 2019 to **eliminate the use of all nightly rate temporary accommodation** by 1 January 2021. The service has produced weekly reports to its strategic director to track progress. **As of end of November 2019, performance is ahead of target and numbers have reduced by 38% since April.** The majority of households have either been accommodated in the private rented sector or moved to more stable, affordable forms of temporary accommodation such as leased. Once completely eliminated, nightly paid accommodation may be utilised from time to time for emergencies only, for example residents fleeing Domestic Abuse or other similar emergencies.

Summer 2019 also saw a significant new policy agreed by the cabinet member for Housing & Modernisation, to progress with **discharging our rehousing duty into the private rented sector**. On the 18th July 2019, the council implemented its first [Private Rented Sector Discharge policy](#). This work will assist the council in reducing the numbers of homeless households living in temporary accommodation, provide more affordable housing solutions for homeless households and reduce the council’s expenditure in this important area of work. Southwark considered that the fairest way, in line with its corporate values, was to help secure private rented sector (PRS) accommodation for households threatened with or actually homeless. This being supported by multiple sources of evidence that PRS accommodation is more stable and suitable than temporary accommodation, particularly for families with children. The challenge was finding a supply of PRS or temporary

accommodation of any type in Southwark that met the demand. Therefore the new policy also introduced an option for all households that accept a PRS offer to be able to continue to bid for social housing in Southwark. This means households are able to return to Southwark should they bid successfully even if they have been accommodated in PRS outside of the borough, but still within the M25 in line with the policy. Such households would be awarded a higher banding than had they decided to stay in temporary accommodation. This policy recognises the social impact and high costs of supplying nightly rate accommodation. A finalised, updated allocation policy is also scheduled to follow in due course, subject to consultation feedback and corporate agreement.

A new, detailed, **Hospital Discharge Protocol** was finalised in November 2019 and demonstrated strong partnership working across health and housing. This was agreed by all three major hospitals across Southwark.

Priority Four: Responding to the local housing market.

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

Southwark was awarded £368,000 for a successful joint-funding bid to develop a **transition insurance** product to help households secure accommodation without the need to raise a deposit. Southwark as lead bidder will also project manage progress reports to MHCLG. This progress will assist with improving access into the private rented sector for our customers, which is a significant focus of this strategy. To further underline this, a partnership with Help 2 Rent launched in summer 2019 to provide digital hubs in its expanding Homesearch Centre prevention hub for households to search for affordable properties online. The hubs will be installed in autumn 2019 and the service will provide floating support to further improve access for customers wanting to take control of resolving their own housing needs.

Southwark's homelessness strategy set out clearly to not simply respond to national policy but to challenge, lobby and campaign for a system that can end homelessness for good. That is why it has supported *Crisis'* strong messages for change. Through joint publicity, leadership commitment and data sharing with *Crisis* and other lobbying groups, Southwark has continued to press for change in response to the affordability and access to local housing.

Southwark Council support ***Crisis' End Homelessness Now*** campaign asking the future government to put in place a plan that commits to:

- Improving access to truly affordable housing
- Strengthening support through the welfare system
- Providing long-term, guaranteed funding for services which prevent homelessness and quickly get people off the street and into a stable home.

Priority Five: Responding to the Welfare Reforms.

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

The Council has continued to pursue innovative solutions to prevent repeated homelessness. Southwark agreed a partnership with **Beam**, commencing August 2019, to launch a pioneering approach to helping homeless people get the training and support they need to access skilled jobs. Beam crowdfunds employment training for individual homeless people through its website. Southwark will provide 50 households as part of an initial pilot.

As part of our upward-looking strategy, representatives from Southwark have presented at national events in north, central and south of England, hosted events locally including a visit from Luke Hall, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government shortly after he was appointed in July 2019. This demonstrates that Southwark continues to maintain a strong presence and representation that helps the service contribute and constructively challenge wider issues around housing and welfare reform that will shape the futures of the residents we serve.

The four-year freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) from 2016. LHA, commonly known as housing benefit in the private-rented sector, have fallen way below rents across most of Britain. **Crisis have launched a campaign 'Cover the Cost'** to restore LHA and prevent homelessness. Their research found that consecutive cuts to this benefit means that in 94% of areas in Britain, one in five or less private rented homes are affordable for young single people, couples, or small families who need housing benefit. People are locked in a struggle to pay their rent and cover the basics like food and bills – in the worst cases, this is causing homelessness. And when homelessness does occur, people can't find another home due to the low level of LHA rates.

Southwark Council is fully supporting this campaign. One of the three main objectives of this strategy is 'to use our position as a leading trailblazer authority to make a positive contribution to national policy around homelessness and welfare reform'. To support the campaign fully, Housing Solutions were invited to speak at the launch event for the campaign. Southwark Council has been working jointly with Crisis to collate local evidence of the impact and costs to public services the frozen LHA levels are generating. The evidence collected has shown the stark realities of the consequences produced as a result of the frozen LHA amid rising rent levels. The outcomes of this collaboration will be known in the next annual report.