

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-29

Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

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Picture credit: Peter Barrett

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Foreword



The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2029 for Havering Council represents a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to safe, secure, and sustainable housing.

Building upon the achievements and lessons learned from our previous strategies, this new plan is a testament to our dedication to addressing homelessness through early intervention, comprehensive support systems, and collaborative partnerships.

Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted issue that requires coordinated efforts from various sectors, including housing, healthcare, social services, and the community.

Our strategy outlines a clear vision and objectives aimed at preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping through early intervention, partnership working and sustained support.

The review of our previous strategy (2020-2025) highlighted several achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. This new strategy addresses these findings and incorporates updated priorities and approaches to better meet the evolving needs of our community.

We have made great progress in helping people out of homelessness and into accommodation, but there is more to do. It is vital that we recognise the need for a broad approach to tackling homelessness, which includes understanding barriers to long-term stability and supporting people through their journey into a place they call home.

Our strategy signals a move towards a culture where homelessness is everyone's responsibility so that all residents have a safe, stable place to live, now and in the future. We will continue to provide strategic leadership and work closely with our partners across the public, voluntary, and community sectors to drive change and align agendas. This collaborative approach is essential to achieving our goals and ensuring that our efforts are effective and sustainable.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to making Havering a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Councillor Martin Lardner,
Cabinet Member for Housing Allocation



Section 1: Introduction and local context

Introduction

Over the past five years, Havering Council has received more than 15,000 approaches from households threatened with homelessness and individuals experiencing rough sleeping. During the same period, the Borough has seen record use of emergency accommodation, including nightly placements in chain hotels such as Travelodge and Premier Inn.

This has been a particularly challenging time for families with children. Many hotel placements were limited to a maximum stay of two weeks, requiring frequent moves that disrupted schooling, family stability, and health and wellbeing. These pressures coincided with an unprecedented set of external factors, including COVID 19, the Cost of Living Crisis, the loss of social housing stock through the regeneration programme, and the collapse of the affordable private rented sector.

Throughout this period, Havering faced two urgent priorities:

- to reduce reliance on emergency hotel accommodation as quickly as possible,
- and to secure more stable housing options for residents at risk of homelessness within an increasingly constrained housing market.

Homelessness and rough sleeping remain critical issues that require a structured, evidence-led and strategic response. This Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029 builds on the achievements and lessons from the 2020–2025 Strategy, responding to new pressures while setting out clear objectives for the next three years.

Homelessness can affect anyone. It can occur regardless of age, relationship status, or background. In Havering, relationship breakdown has been the most common cause of homelessness over the last five years, often placing significant strain on family support networks and leading to family-related evictions.

At the same time, landlords across the Borough have faced growing difficulty in sustaining affordable tenancies. Rising inflation, higher interest rates, and increased operating costs have made it harder for many landlords to continue letting homes at rents accessible to local residents, further reducing available supply.





Section 1: Introduction and local context

Our Vision

Our vision is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, reduce rough sleeping, and ensure residents who do experience housing crisis are treated with dignity, clarity and compassion. We will do this through early intervention, strong partnership working, and access to safe, secure and sustainable housing.

Our Objectives

1. Prevent and reduce rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging
2. Ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030
3. Providing a better temporary accommodation experience for those who do become homeless
4. Providing compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action



Section 1: Introduction and local context

Why do people become homeless in Havering?



Homelessness rarely has a single cause. It is often the result of multiple factors coming together over time. Poverty however is the primary driver.

For some, it begins with early life experiences. Childhood trauma, including time spent in care, significantly increases the risk of repeated homelessness and can contribute to inter-generational cycles of housing instability.

Economic factors also play a role. Long-term unemployment, lack of qualifications, or being outside education and training can increase vulnerability—particularly during periods of wider economic uncertainty.

Other people experience homelessness following key life transitions. Those leaving care, the Armed Forces, or prison without sufficient resettlement support are at heightened risk, as are people affected by substance misuse, mental ill-health, or domestic abuse. Relationship breakdown remains the most common trigger in Havering, often leading to family or relative eviction when support networks can no longer cope.

National guidance places particular emphasis on care leavers because of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and the heightened risk of homelessness during transition to adulthood. The Homelessness Code of Guidance includes specific guidance on care leavers, including the need for joint working between housing authorities and children's services, effective prevention and relief activity, assessment of priority need, and suitable accommodation. Government good practice advice also expects local authorities to have joint housing protocols in place so housing and children's services can plan accommodation pathways, support independent living and reduce the risk of care leaver homelessness. This strategy will therefore align homelessness prevention activity with care leaver pathway planning, the Local Offer for care leavers, Personal Adviser support and the Council's wider corporate parenting responsibilities.

Homeless households may have:

- lost a private assured tenancy following possession action by their landlord under the Renters' Rights Act 2025
- lost their home due to rent or mortgage arrears
- been living in accommodation that is unsafe or detrimental to health
- been forced to live apart from their family due to changed circumstances.

Every homelessness journey is different. Tackling homelessness effectively therefore depends on early intervention and a personalised, holistic approach, recognising individual circumstances and responding before crisis becomes entrenched.

Prevention will sit at the centre of delivery. The Council will strengthen early identification through referral routes with housing, health, social care, education, prisons, probation, voluntary and community partners; define service responsibilities; and monitor prevention outcomes, including whether accommodation is sustained and whether households return for homelessness assistance. The accompanying implementation plan will set out the interventions, leads, milestones and measures used to assess success.

Section 1: Introduction and local context



Supporting Armed Forces personnel

Former and serving Armed Forces personnel will not be left behind in Havering's homelessness prevention work. This is already part of the Council's wider approach to identifying people at risk early and ensuring that service history is properly considered when residents seek housing advice, homelessness assistance or access to social housing. National guidance expects housing authorities to have regard to the Armed Forces Covenant, the Homelessness Code of Guidance and statutory guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces. This includes recognising the risk of homelessness on discharge from service accommodation, responding to duty to refer notifications, considering vulnerability linked to service, and ensuring that allocation policies do not disadvantage people because of the requirements of military life. Havering will continue to align its housing advice, homelessness prevention, allocations and partnership work with these duties and expectations.

Households with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) can face homelessness without access to benefits or mainstream housing assistance. Our approach will be to understand their circumstances early and be clear about what help is available. Housing will work with Children's and Adult Social Care and our voluntary and community partners to assess needs, identify any duties owed and coordinate practical support within the law, including access to specialist immigration advice where appropriate. Having no recourse to public funds does not, in itself, remove safeguarding responsibilities or duties that may arise under children's or adult social care legislation. Accommodation and support for eligible people awaiting an asylum decision are primarily the responsibility of the Home Office, separate from the Council's homelessness and social care duties.

For families granted refugee status, or other permission to stay that makes them eligible for homelessness assistance, leaving asylum accommodation can bring a further risk of losing their home. We will work with partners to plan ahead, explain the available housing options and help prevent homelessness when Home Office support ends. Our response will reflect each family's circumstances, their eligibility and the Council's statutory duties, with clear and compassionate advice about what happens next.



Section 1: Introduction and local context

Purpose of this Strategy (2026–2029)

This Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out Havering Council's approach to preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, and improving outcomes for residents who experience housing crisis between 2026 and 2029.

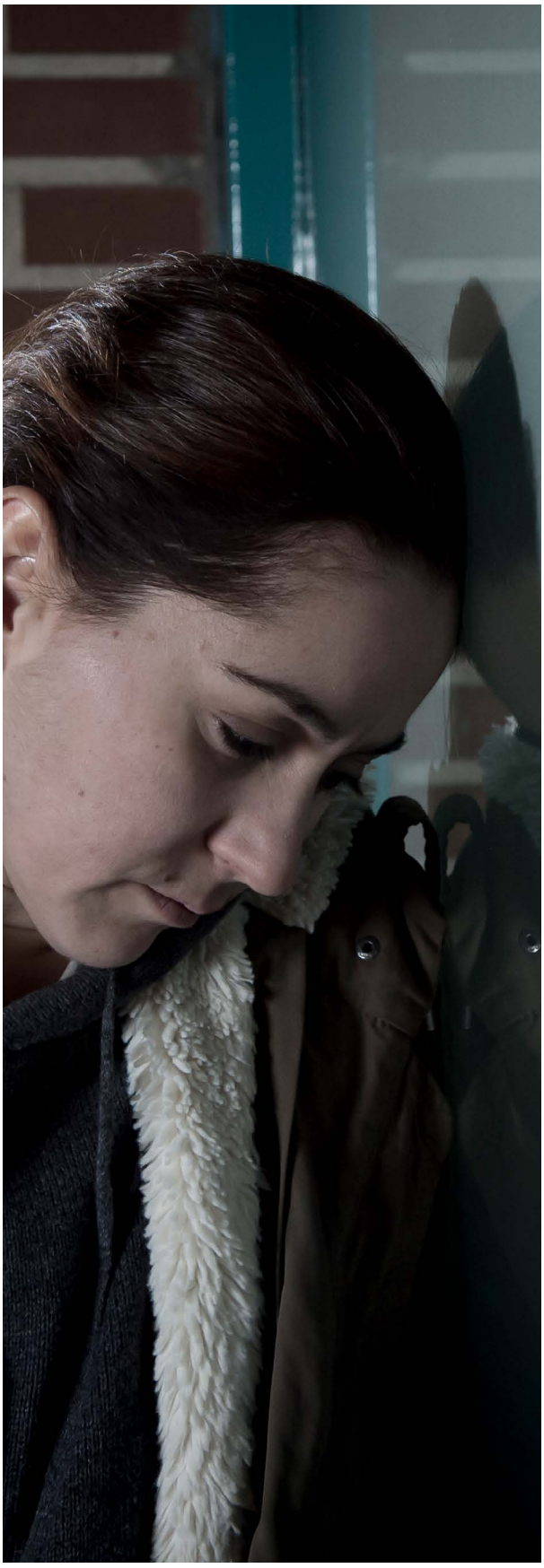
While earlier drafts referred to a longer five-year period, this strategy deliberately focuses on the next three years. This reflects the fact that homelessness services in Havering are in a period of transition — responding to changing patterns of need, funding uncertainty, and evolving national policy — and therefore requires a clear, deliverable, and adaptable framework rather than a fixed long-term blueprint.

This strategy builds directly on the achievements and learning from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2020–2025, taking forward what has worked in Havering while responding honestly to new and emerging challenges.

Homelessness in Havering: What has changed

Homelessness in Havering does not mirror the scale or visibility seen in many other London boroughs. Over the past five to six years, the Council has consistently maintained very low numbers of people sleeping on the streets, often in single digits. This has not happened by chance.

Our 2020–2025 Strategy set out to end long-term rough sleeping by 2022, and we achieved that ambition through sustained outreach and close working with our voluntary and community partners. Ahava Community, formerly Hope 4 Havering, played an important part through its night shelter and the earlier 'pack and go' service. Together with the Salvation Army and other partners, their support has helped people leave the streets and contributed to keeping rough sleeping numbers very low.





Section 1: Introduction and local context

Behind those numbers are people who have been supported to find safety and stability. Achieving the 2022 ambition did not mean that nobody would become homeless or sleep rough again. Our task now is to build on that work, respond early when someone comes onto the streets and help people sustain their accommodation, so they do not return.

Havering's approach has been rooted in relationship-based outreach, persistence, and trust-building rather than enforcement or short-term interventions. Monthly evening street counts, daily engagement with individuals sleeping rough, and close partnership working have allowed the Council to understand not just who is on the street, but why.

A key learning from this work is that street presence and street begging do not always equate to street homelessness. Some individuals who appear to be sleeping rough do in fact have accommodation but are caught in cycles of exploitation, substance dependency, coercion, or control by others. These dynamics are often hidden and require time, consistency, and skilled engagement to uncover.



Relationship-led outreach: A Havering approach

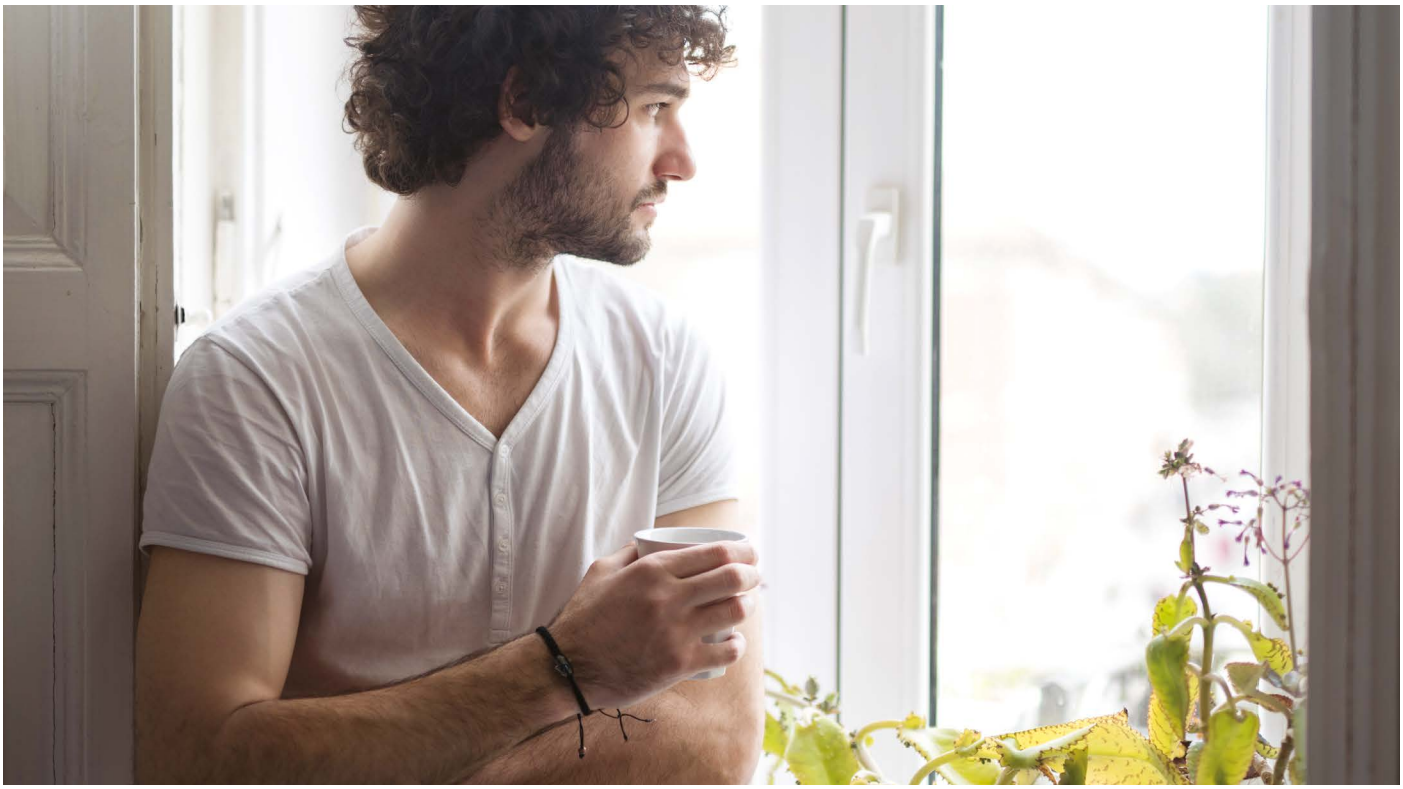
Havering has adopted a non-conditional, relationship-led model of engagement with people on the streets.

One example involved a resident who had been sleeping in a highly unsuitable outdoor location for an extended period. Outreach staff maintained regular contact, not to impose solutions, but to demonstrate consistency and build trust. When the resident decided they were ready, they accepted an offer of accommodation and have since sustained it.

This approach has been replicated across multiple cases and reflects Havering's commitment to preventing entrenched rough sleeping through persistence, trust and practical support. It reflects a core belief of this strategy: lasting change happens at the pace of the individual, not the system.



Objective 1



Prevent and reduce rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging

People who are seen begging or living chaotic lives in public spaces are not “other”. They are residents of our communities — people who have experienced significant trauma, loss, and disconnection over time.

For many, homelessness and street activity are not the starting point, but the end of a long process of breakdown: childhood trauma, domestic abuse, adverse experiences, mental ill-health, substance dependency, and fractured relationships. In many cases, individuals have become completely disconnected from their family support networks, not because families do not care, but because relationships have been overwhelmed by behaviours that have become unmanageable.

Parents, siblings, and wider family members often continue to love the individual, but are no longer able to cope with the chaotic or risky behaviours associated with unresolved trauma, addiction, or mental distress. These fractures are frequently driven by pain on all sides and can result in individuals becoming isolated, distrustful, and disengaged from mainstream services.

This strategy recognises that disconnection is not the same as rejection, and that healing often requires time, safety, and the rebuilding of trust — not just housing.

Rebuilding Connection: Family, community and belonging

Where it is safe and appropriate, Havering Council will work to support individuals to reconnect with their family networks, recognising that this cannot be rushed or imposed. In some cases, families themselves require support to understand the impact of trauma, addiction, and mental ill-health, and to rebuild relationships in a way that does not re-trigger harm.



Objective 1

There may be opportunities to explore structured, supported contact, similar in principle to supervised or mediated contact models, where:

- Conversations are facilitated by trained professionals
- The individual's voice is heard safely and clearly
- Families are supported to understand behaviours rather than blame individuals
- Past harms and co-created dynamics can be acknowledged and addressed.

This strategy however, is also clear that family reconnection is not always possible or appropriate. In some cases, family environments may remain unsafe, unavailable, or part of the cycle of abuse and trauma.

Where this is the case, the Council's role — alongside partners — is to help individuals build alternative forms of connection: supportive accommodation communities, trusted professionals, peer networks, and local services that can act as scaffolding while people rebuild their own sense of identity, structure, and stability.

Belonging does not have to start with family. It starts with being seen, believed, and valued somewhere.

From connection to stability

Once individuals begin to experience consistent care, acceptance, and safety, they are better able to:

- Develop internal resilience
- Reduce chaotic or risky behaviours
- Improve physical and mental health
- Engage meaningfully with support
- Consider repairing or redefining family relationships over time

This is why Havering's approach prioritises relationships before outcomes. Housing, treatment, and recovery are most effective when people feel that they matter — not just to services, but to a community.

Supporting people who are being exploited through begging

Why this objective matters

Intelligence gathered through outreach, partner agencies and service users shows that some individuals are coerced into begging to repay drug debts, controlled by others involved in substance misuse or criminal activity, or unable to exit harmful relationships without intensive support.



Objective 1

Alongside this safeguarding and support response, Havering recognises that street begging can also create community safety concerns and may, in some circumstances, be linked to anti-social behaviour, organised exploitation or criminal activity. Enforcement will therefore be used proportionately and in partnership with Community Safety, Police, outreach, safeguarding and substance misuse services. The focus will not be to criminalise vulnerability, but to address persistent harmful behaviour, disrupt those who exploit others, protect residents and businesses, and ensure that people begging are offered a clear route into support.

What Havering has already put in place

Over recent years, Havering has developed a strong infrastructure to support people with complex needs:

- Delivery of approximately 81 units of complex needs accommodation, including former schemes such as Farringdon Avenue, which demonstrated the effectiveness of high-support models before transitioning into an approved premises model.
- Ongoing provision of complex needs accommodation through a mix of low- and higher-need providers, with partners such as Penrose agreeing to deliver enhanced support where required.
- A Housing First-informed approach, with placements agreed through the CNAP (Complex Needs Accommodation Panel) involving Housing, Adult Social Care, Probation, NHS and Change Grow Live.
- Strong partnership working enabling informed placement decisions that balance risk, support needs, and sustainability.

These arrangements have allowed Havering to move beyond crisis responses and focus on long-term stability for individuals who would otherwise cycle between the streets, custody, hospital, and temporary accommodation.

Emerging challenges

Despite these strengths, new pressures are emerging

- Exempt housing benefit constraints, particularly affecting community interest companies and non-registered providers, creating uncertainty around funding models for high-support accommodation.
- Reduced capacity within the voluntary and faith-led “pack and go” service, traditionally supporting people during extreme weather through mobile provision.
- Increasing need to review emergency and contingency provision, including the potential use of existing assets, alongside existing night shelter arrangements.

These challenges reinforce the need for a coordinated, strategic response rather than reactive solutions.



Objective 1

Under Objective 1, Havering Council will focus on four core action areas:

Action Area	Commitment
1. Targeted Support and Rehabilitation	We will continue to invest in outreach, complex needs accommodation, and Housing First style provision, including exploring options to: • Expand Housing First placements from 20 to up to 40 units • Increase modular and self-contained accommodation options for single people • Strengthen pathways away from exploitation through multi-agency working. • Work with the voluntary sector to increase emergency accommodation and support.
2. Disrupting Exploitation	We will work with partners to raise awareness identify and disrupt coercive relationships, support individuals to safely exit exploitative situations, and use proportionate enforcement where street begging is linked to anti-social behaviour, coercion or criminal activity. Enforcement will sit alongside outreach, safeguarding and recovery pathways so that action is targeted at harm, exploitation and persistent community impact, not vulnerability itself.
3. Alternative Giving	We will promote safe and effective alternatives to street giving, ensuring public generosity supports recovery rather than exploitation
4. Public Education and Awareness	We will change the narrative around street begging in Havering — moving away from judgement and towards understanding, compassion, and informed action.

Measuring success

Success under this objective will be measured not simply by numbers on the street, but by:

- Sustained accommodation outcomes
- Reduced repeat rough sleeping
- Increased engagement with support services
- Safer, more informed community responses



Objective 2

Ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030

Why this Objective matters

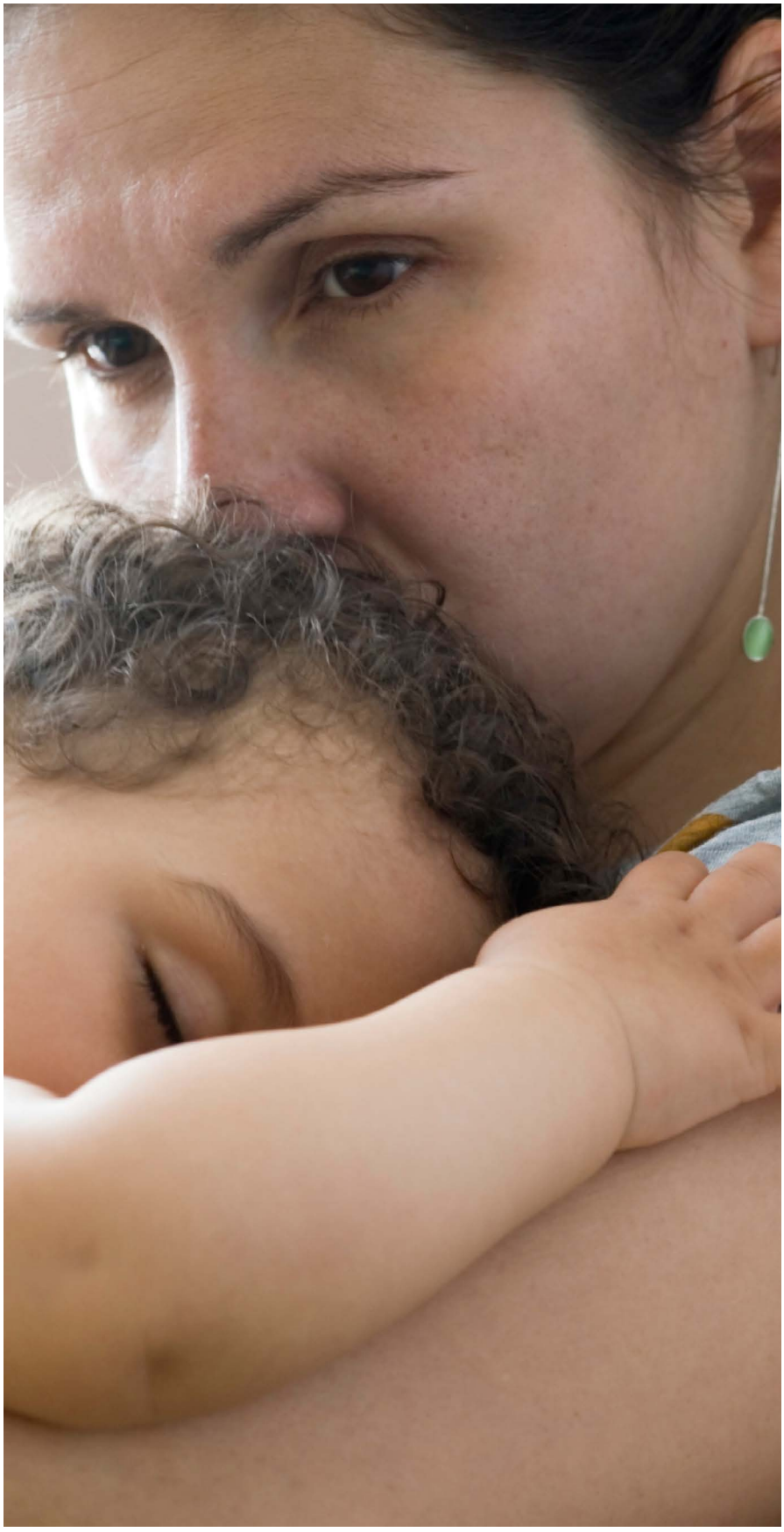
The use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation is not a policy choice for Havering Council — it is the visible outcome of a series of systemic market failures that have intensified over the last five to six years.

This period has been shaped by a sequence of external shocks:

- The COVID-19 pandemic
- The invasion of Ukraine and its economic consequences
- A prolonged cost-of-living crisis
- The new tax on rent instead of profit for private rentals
- Sustained higher interest rates and inflation

Together, these events have fundamentally altered the private rented sector (PRS), particularly at the lower end of the market where local authorities traditionally secure accommodation for homeless households.

This objective is therefore about restoring stability, reducing financial risk, and ending reliance on emergency measures that are unsuitable for families, costly for the Council, and unsustainable over time.





Objective 2

Collapse of the Private Rented Sector: The Havering experience

Havering has experienced what can reasonably be described as a collapse of the ordinary private rented market for homeless households.

Over recent years:

- Landlords have exited the market as tax and mortgage costs outstripped rental income
- Rent increases sought by landlords exceeded what Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and homelessness subsidy could support
- Letting agents increasingly imposed barriers such as blanket exclusions affecting households receiving benefits, guarantor requirements, credit checks, and previous landlord references — excluding homeless households by default
- Some landlords, under financial pressure, pursued illegal evictions, while households were not always aware of their rights. Under the Renters' Rights Act 2025, the Council will consider and use any relevant enforcement action available where applicable.

Evidence indicates that a significant number of PRS properties — particularly those within the lower 30th percentile — have left the market altogether. The direct consequence has been a sharp reduction in accommodation available to local authorities. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 has now reformed the private rented sector, including abolishing Section 21 evictions and introducing revised possession grounds. Havering will consider and use any relevant enforcement action available under the Act where applicable, while monitoring the impact of the reforms on the availability of affordable rented accommodation.

In Havering, this is reflected in the loss of private sector leased (PSL) properties, falling from around 800 units to approximately 400 over this period.

The Council will maintain an evidence-based assessment of the contraction of the private rented sector, drawing on local supply, rent, affordability, homelessness demand, landlord exit and access data. Housing Demand will work jointly with the Private Sector Housing Licensing Team to review the impact of selective licensing and wider landlord market changes. Findings will inform prevention activity, landlord engagement, accommodation procurement and future updates to the delivery plan.

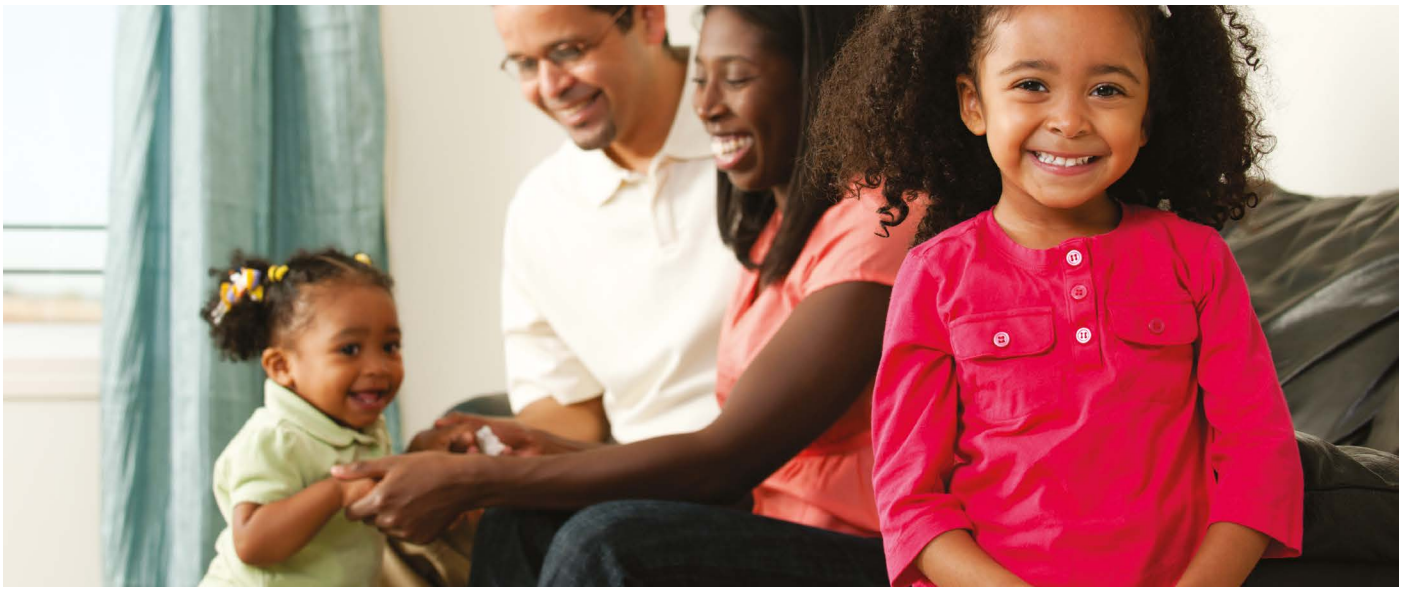
Wider developer market pressures

Havering's housing pressures have also been affected by wider instability in the housing development market. The same economic conditions that have reduced private rented supply — high inflation, increased interest rates, rising construction costs and weaker investor confidence — have also affected the viability and pace of new housing delivery.

Across London, developers have faced higher borrowing costs, increased build costs, regulatory complexity and more cautious sales and investment conditions. This has led to schemes being delayed, re-phased or reassessed, with affordable housing delivery through the planning system becoming less predictable.



Objective 2



For local authorities, this creates a double pressure. At the same time as more households are being pushed out of the private rented sector, the wider housing market is less able to deliver new affordable supply quickly enough to replace what has been lost. Registered Providers and institutional investors are also operating in a more constrained financial environment, which can limit appetite for new commitments unless schemes are clearly viable and supported by long-term certainty.

This means Havering cannot rely solely on the general development market to resolve homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures. The Council must therefore take a more active role in shaping supply through acquisitions, modular accommodation, long-term leasing, build-to-rent nominations, QLM and partnership models that provide greater certainty over cost, timing and use.

The collapse of the PRS and the slowdown in wider development delivery should therefore be understood as connected parts of the same housing system failure. Havering's strategic response is to move from dependence on market availability to planned, controlled and purpose-led supply.

From PRS failure to hotel dependence

During the early stages of the pandemic, Government instruction to "bring everyone in" led to the emergency use of hotels to accommodate people at risk of COVID-19. Initially, this was focused on single people and short-stay chain hotels with strict booking limits.

As the Cost-of-Living Crisis deepened, the impact spread to families, and the scale of need outpaced the Council's ability to secure self-contained PRS accommodation. This led to:

- Repeated hotel bookings and re-bookings
- Escalating costs and operational pressure
- Increased scrutiny and audit challenge around unforecast spend

These pressures were not the result of poor planning, but of intense operational pressure in an unprecedented market environment.



Objective 2

Strategic response: Moving away from emergency provision

During Despite these pressures, Havering has not stood still.

In response to the collapse of the PRS and the unsuitability of hotels, the Council has taken decisive steps to replace emergency accommodation with planned, controlled supply, including:

- Opening Jubilee Court (71 units) and a Family Welcome Centre (74 units), offsetting the loss of schemes such as Abercrombie House and Queen Street Hostel
- Investing in modular accommodation (18 demountable units) as the first phase of a scalable approach
- Developing acquisition and leasing models with institutional partners following early market testing with organisations such as Mears
- Amending the Housing Allocation Scheme to enable move on from temporary accommodation and preventative housing in the PRS.
- Progressing a build-to-rent, long-term nominations model through the Inspired Solutions partnership, delivering up to 600 units at Local Housing Allowance-linked rents for 40 years
- Establishing the Council-linked Community Interest Company, QLM, to manage and stabilise accommodation supply, including future schemes such as Chalkhill, mother and baby provision, and potential sites such as Angel Way.

These interventions represent a fundamental shift away from reliance on the PRS and nightly paid accommodation, towards a model that is:

- Affordable
- Predictable
- Long-term
- Designed around family stability and child wellbeing

Ending nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030

Based on detailed financial modelling and trajectory planning — including work led by Housing, Finance, and Business Partnering — Havering will work towards exiting nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030. This reflects the scale of market failure, the time needed to deliver new supply, and the need to avoid setting a target that is not credible or deliverable.

This objective is underpinned by:

- Phased delivery of new supply through acquisition, modular, and build-to-rent models
- Reduced exposure to volatile nightly paid markets
- Long-term nominations agreements that provide certainty for both households and the Council
- Ongoing cost avoidance and subsidy reduction as high-cost placements are replaced

While some delivery programmes remain in progress, early performance demonstrates that the direction of travel is correct, even where delivery timescales have extended.



Objective 2

To deliver Objective 2, Havering Council will focus on the following actions:

Action Area	Commitment
1. Exit the Private Sector Lease (PSL) Model	Reduce dependency on short-term, high-risk Private Sector Lease arrangements that no longer provide value, affordability, or long-term stability for households or the Council.
2. Deliver Long-Term Affordable Supply	Provide sustainable housing through build-to-rent schemes, acquisitions, office-to-residential conversions, and modular housing, ensuring predictable and affordable options over the long term.
3. Stabilise and Repurpose Existing Assets	Repurpose hostel and temporary accommodation assets as new supply comes on stream, ensuring existing buildings continue to support housing need in a planned and efficient way.
4. Reduce Financial Risk and Subsidy	Replace nightly paid and hotel accommodation with controlled, predictable cost models that reduce financial volatility and reliance on subsidy..
5. Influence and Scale	Use Havering's delivery model to support wider learning across London and contribute to discussions about how homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures can be addressed at scale.

Measuring success

Success will be measured through:

- Elimination of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030
- Reduction in average placement cost from approximately £83 per night towards an LHA-linked level of approximately £41 per night, where supply and subsidy conditions allow.
- Increased length of stay and stability in settled accommodation, with a minimum five-year stability objective where appropriate.
- Improved outcomes for families and children

Strategic transition statement

Ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation is not simply a cost-saving exercise. It is a statement of intent: that families deserve stability, children deserve continuity, and homelessness responses must move beyond emergency containment.

This objective represents Havering's commitment to rebuilding a functioning housing pathway where the market has failed.



Objective 3

Providing a better temporary accommodation experience for those who do become homeless

Why this Objective matters

For many residents, homelessness is not only a loss of housing — it is a disorientating, traumatic life event. How people are treated at this point can either compound harm or become the foundation for recovery.

Havering recognises that anyone can experience homelessness. Job loss, relationship breakdown, illness, business failure, or wider economic conditions can place households only a few pay cycles away from crisis. This objective is therefore grounded in a clear principle: homelessness is not a personal failure, and people should not be made to feel ashamed for seeking help.

This objective focuses on ensuring that when homelessness cannot be prevented, the experience of temporary accommodation and contact with services is clear, humane, supportive, and stabilising, particularly for children and families.

Transactional and relational practice: Creating consistency across services

Across Housing Demand, different teams have historically operated with different practice cultures:

- The Housing Solutions (front door) service has necessarily been more transactional, focused on assessment and statutory decision-making.
- The Complex Needs and Rough Sleeping teams operate in a highly relational way, building trust over time.
- The Hostels and Temporary Accommodation Management Officers combine relational support with practical housing management.
- Parts of the Homeless Accommodation function remain predominantly transactional, focused on placements, bookings, and administration.

This variation has resulted in inconsistent experiences for residents as they move through services.

The aim of this objective is to make the temporary accommodation journey clearer, safer and more consistent, while retaining statutory compliance and operational efficiency.

Supporting staff to deliver better temporary accommodation services

Improving the temporary accommodation experience depends on staff having the confidence, support and capacity to work consistently with residents in difficult circumstances.

Officers regularly hear accounts of:

- Domestic abuse



Objective 3

- Family breakdown
- Childhood trauma
- Exploitation and loss

Within Objective 3, this means:

- Embedding reflective practice as a core management discipline
- Supporting managers to actively monitor wellbeing, not just performance
- Creating space for staff to process complexity safely and professionally

Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)

Providing accommodation alone is not sufficient. The environment itself matters.

Havering will continue to develop psychologically informed environments across:

- Hostels
- The Family Welcome Centre
- Jubilee Court
- Willow Perrin
- Modular and supported accommodation
- Outreach and community-based settings

PIE principles will focus on:

- Safety and predictability
- Dignity and respect
- Clear information and expectations
- Opportunities for connection and routine

Even where engagement happens outside traditional buildings — such as street outreach or community cafés — the same principles will apply.

From transaction to relationship: Technology as an enabler

To support more relational practice, Havering has introduced digital tools to reduce the administrative burden on officers, improve evidence capture and support timely case decisions, helping keep caseloads safe and manageable.

By allowing conversations to be captured and structured automatically:

- Officers can focus on listening and relationship-building



Objective 3

• Assessments become less interrogative and more conversational

• Decision-making is based on clearer, more accurate evidence

The use of approved digital support tools will further support this shift by:

• Assisting with evidence collation and statutory reasoning

• Creating distance between the person and the decision

• Reducing the emotional burden on individual officers

Officers remain accountable for decisions but are supported by systems that reduce pressure and improve consistency.

Over time, this may reduce the need for officers to focus primarily on decision-making tasks, allowing capacity to shift toward advocacy, support, and navigation — helping people move forward rather than simply process cases.

Clearer information and positive experiences

Many people in temporary accommodation say that uncertainty makes a difficult situation worse. Clear information, predictable processes and respectful communication help people feel safer and more able to plan.

Our Commitment	What This Means in Practice
1. Normalising homelessness as a life event	Acknowledging that homelessness can affect anyone and is often the result of circumstances beyond an individual's control.
2. Reassuring households it is not their fault	Communicating clearly and consistently that seeking help is the right step and that residents will be treated with dignity and respect..
3. Making processes transparent and predictable	Explaining decisions, timescales, and next steps in plain language so households are not left uncertain or confused.
4. Clarity about what happens next	Ensuring every household understands the stages of their journey and what to expect at each point.
5. Clear explanations of decisions	Setting out what decisions are being made, why they are necessary, and how evidence has been considered.
6. Visibility of available support	Making sure households know what support is available to them, both from the Council and from partner organisations.



Objective 3

Inclusion, community and opportunity

Providing compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action

Havering will work to ensure that households — particularly children and families — can continue to access:

• Leisure facilities

• Cultural and creative activities

• Parks and community spaces

• Digital access and Wi-Fi

• Food support and community resources

The Council will work with partners to develop financial and access models that support inclusion, recognising that positive experiences build resilience, aspiration, and recovery.

The Live Well Havering JOY App, talking therapies, arts programmes, public health services, and community-based support will be actively promoted as part of the homelessness pathway, aligned with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and wider public health priorities.

Supporting families and children experiencing trauma

Families experiencing homelessness often carry significant shame and may struggle to seek help for their children's emotional or behavioural needs.

Havering will explore:

• Earlier access to psychological expertise

• Family-focused trauma support

• Better integration between housing, public health, education, and social care

• Safe spaces for families to talk about need without fear of judgement

The aim is to support families before crisis escalates, and to ensure children are not left carrying trauma alone.

Practice weeks, assurance and continuous improvement

To ensure the experience described in this strategy is genuinely delivered, Havering will introduce practice weeks across services.

These will:

• Test whether the service being provided matches the service described

• Review communication quality and clarity



Objective 3

- Gather feedback from residents
- Provide assurance to leadership and Members

This approach ensures accountability without blame and learning without defensiveness.

What this Strategy will do (2026–2029)

Under Objective 3, Havering Council will:

- Make the temporary accommodation pathway clearer, safer and more consistent
- Support staff to provide consistent and proportionate support to residents
- Create psychologically informed accommodation environments
- Use technology to improve clarity, evidence capture and consistency
- Improve information, expectations and communication for households in temporary accommodation
- Ensure inclusion, opportunity, and positive experiences — especially for children

Strategic statement

Providing a better temporary accommodation experience is not about comfort alone. It is about stability, dignity, and hope.

If we get this right, temporary accommodation becomes not a place where people are stuck — but a place where people begin to recover, rebuild, and move forward.





Objective 4

Providing compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action

Why this Objective matters

Objective 3 focuses on the experience of temporary accommodation and the environments in which people live when they become homeless. Objective 4 goes wider. It is about how Havering listens and responds across the whole homelessness system — to residents, children, partners, professionals and communities — and how housing acts as a system enabler, not just a statutory service.

Compassionate customer care does not begin when someone presents as homeless. It begins when:

- a partner cannot access housing pathways
- a family does not understand a process
- a child's voice is unheard
- a professional feels blocked by system design

Listening to residents, children and families

Compassionate customer care means listening beyond the immediate housing question.

For adults, this means:

- being heard the first time
- understanding what is driving the crisis, not just documenting it
- knowing what will happen next and why

For children and young people, listening requires different methods. Children experiencing homelessness often do not have:

- language to describe instability
- confidence to speak openly
- trusted forums to express how homelessness feels

This strategy commits to improving how children's voices are heard, including exploring:

- engagement through schools
- age-appropriate workshops on housing and homelessness
- partnership with education to understand lived experience
- safe, non-stigmatising ways for children to express impact.

The aim is not consultation for its own sake, but understanding impact early enough to respond.



Objective 4

Removing barriers to access and participation

Why This Objective Matters

For many residents, housing systems can feel complex, digital, and difficult to navigate. This is particularly true for people with limited digital access, low confidence or literacy, neurodiverse residents, and those for whom English is not a first language.

As housing processes — including the Allocations Policy — have become increasingly digital, this strategy recognises the risk of exclusion if alternative routes are not actively maintained.

Objective 4 commits to reducing these barriers by ensuring that access to services is practical, easy-to-understand, inclusive and proportionate. This includes providing digital inclusion support where needed, offering assisted access to housing processes, using clear and plain-English communication, and maintaining more than one route into services rather than relying on a single “front door”.

To strengthen equality assurance, the Council will use equality analysis, service data and resident feedback to test how homelessness services, the Housing Register and allocation processes affect people with protected characteristics. Accessibility, reasonable adjustments, assisted digital support and alternative communication routes will be kept under review, with disproportionate outcomes or barriers escalated through the strategy’s performance and governance arrangements.

Access is a prerequisite for compassion

Listening to partners: Housing as a system enabler

Compassionate customer care also means listening to our partners, not just residents.

Housing is often the point at which wider systems succeed or fail. It can enable — or block — the work of children’s services seeking suitable residential provision, adult social care requiring step-down or supported housing, and health partners working to discharge patients safely from hospital or stabilise people in the community.

This strategy commits to using housing development and commissioning — including build-to-rent, acquisitions, modular housing and mixed-use schemes — to anticipate partner needs, rather than responding only once crisis has occurred.

Where appropriate, this will include factoring children’s residential needs into development planning, enabling recovery and step-down pathways from hospital, and aligning supported housing provision with adult social care commissioning priorities.

By doing so, housing becomes a facilitator of system flow, reducing pressure elsewhere and enabling more compassionate outcomes across services.

The aim is not consultation for its own sake, but understanding impact early enough to respond.



Objective 4

From reaction to proactive design

Reactionary systems are rarely compassionate.

When services are overwhelmed, decisions can become defensive, empathy is squeezed out, and communication deteriorates. This impacts residents and staff alike.

Objective 4 commits to designing pressure out of the system by planning supply with partner need in mind, strengthening pathways before crisis point, and using data and insight to better anticipate demand.

A proactive system is not only more efficient — it is more humane.

Compassionate leadership and workforce support

Compassionate customer care depends on leadership that supports staff to make clear, fair and humane decisions under pressure.

This strategy recognises that housing staff routinely work with complex need, distress and financial pressure. Leaders must create the conditions for good decision-making, reflective supervision and safe caseload management.

Training, induction and leadership development will embed trauma-informed practice, curiosity-led engagement (the “curious facilitator” approach), financial confidence in decision-making, and assurance awareness without creating a culture of fear.

Clear decisions, case closure and assurance

Compassion and empathy must be practical. For Havering, this means saying what we mean, doing what we say, and making sure households understand where they stand at each stage of the homelessness process.

The “back door” of the service means the way the Council brings homelessness duties and casework to a clear, lawful and timely conclusion. This includes how duties are ended, how cases are closed, how caseloads are managed, and how managers gain assurance that decisions are accurate, fair and properly explained.

This is not a softer or less rigorous approach. A compassionate service gives people clarity, even when the answer is difficult. Residents should not be left in uncertainty about whether the Council owes a duty, what steps are being taken, why a duty is ending, what review rights exist, and what practical options remain available to them.

This approach reflects the statutory framework for ending prevention and relief duties, where clear notices, reasons, review rights and timely communication are central to good administration and resident understanding.

Havering will therefore strengthen management oversight of case closure, including routine checks of decision quality, duty-end letters, timeliness, evidence use, personal housing plans and follow-up actions. This will support safe caseload management and ensure that no household is left unclear about the Council’s position or their next steps.

The ambition is to develop a gold standard approach to homelessness service delivery: lawful, transparent, timely, trauma-informed and accountable, with assurance built into everyday practice rather than treated as a separate exercise.



Objective 4

Empowering communities and building resilience

Compassion is not dependency.

Objective 4 focuses on enabling people and communities to understand systems, navigate processes, and build confidence and agency. This includes community-based information and workshops, partnership with voluntary and faith sectors, and encouraging peer support and shared learning.

Resilience grows when people feel informed, connected and respected — and when systems are designed to support, not overwhelm.

What this strategy will do (2026–2029)

Under Objective 4, Havering Council will:

- listen consistently to residents, children and families, using feedback to improve services and identify barriers early
- maintain practical, easy-to-understand inclusive access routes for residents who need support to navigate housing processes
- work with partners so housing acts as an enabler for health, social care, education, community safety and children's services
- design pathways and accommodation supply around anticipated need, rather than responding only at crisis point
- support staff and managers to make clear, fair and humane decisions under pressure
- strengthen assurance around case closure, duty-end decisions, communication quality and resident understanding
- build community confidence, resilience and shared responsibility for preventing homelessness.

Measuring success

Success under this objective will be measured through:

- improved resident understanding of decisions, next steps and available support
- increased use of resident, child and partner feedback to shape service improvement
- reduced avoidable complaints linked to poor communication, delay or lack of clarity
- stronger evidence of timely, lawful and well-explained case closure
- improved partner confidence in housing pathways and joint planning
- greater staff confidence in delivering trauma-informed, clear and compassionate services.

Strategic statement

Compassionate customer care is not an add-on to statutory services.

It is how statutory services are delivered.



Objective 4

When people feel heard, respected, and clear about what is happening:

- conflict reduces
- outcomes improve
- trust grows
- systems work better

Objective 4 ensures that Havering's homelessness response is not only lawful and efficient — but humane.

The accompanying action plan and annual review arrangements will also draw on the MHCLG homelessness strategy and action planning toolkit, using it as a practical reference point for setting local targets, strengthening governance, clarifying partner responsibilities, keeping delivery under review and ensuring that prevention, accommodation and support activity is focused on measurable resident outcomes.

Following Overview and Scrutiny consideration, further assurance has been built around equalities, prevention, private rented sector pressures, delivery planning, resident and staff feedback, performance monitoring and future reporting.

The strategy will be supported by a detailed implementation and financial plan rather than duplicating project-level detail in the strategic narrative. For each commitment, the plan will identify the lead officer and delivery partners, actions, milestones, completion dates, dependencies, risks, anticipated costs, confirmed or potential funding, expected benefits and any funding gap or consequence for delivery.

Progress will be reviewed through established governance, with exceptions, remedial actions and changes to delivery assumptions recorded.

A comprehensive performance framework will accompany the strategy, with baselines, targets and measurable success criteria for each objective. It will combine service activity with resident outcomes and distinguish, where relevant, between successful, unsuccessful, repeat and unknown outcomes. Measures will include prevention and relief, repeat homelessness, sustained accommodation, temporary accommodation use and duration, rough sleeping, access and equality, resident understanding, complaints learning and staff confidence.

Resident and frontline insight will be gathered consistently across the homelessness journey, including before, during and after assistance. Feedback will be sought from residents who achieve successful outcomes, those receiving unsuccessful or less favourable outcomes, people who return for assistance, and staff delivering services.

The Council will report the themes identified, the service changes made in response and whether those changes improve outcomes over time.

A formal progress report will be presented to the People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee no later than 12 months after adoption. It will assess delivery against the implementation plan and performance framework, explain delay or underperformance, summarise resident and frontline feedback, and set out remedial action. It will also include learning from repeat homelessness presentations and evidence on whether housing outcomes have been sustained.



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Objective 1: Rough sleeping, exploitation and street begging

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Targeted support and rehabilitation	Continue outreach, complex needs accommodation and Housing First style provision, including options to expand placements and self-contained accommodation for single people.	Housing Demand; outreach providers; Adult Social Care; Probation; Change Grow Live; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Sustained accommodation outcomes and reduced repeat rough sleeping.
Disrupting exploitation and street begging harms	Raise awareness identify and disrupt coercive relationships, support safe exit from exploitation, and use proportionate enforcement where begging is linked to anti-social behaviour, coercion or criminal activity.	Housing Demand; Community Safety; Communications; Police; safeguarding partners; outreach; substance misuse services.	2026–2029	Improved safeguarding responses and reduced persistent harmful street activity
Alternative giving	Promote safe alternatives to street giving so public generosity supports recovery, outreach and support pathways rather than exploitation.	Housing Demand; Communications; voluntary and faith sector partners.	2026–2027	Increased public awareness and greater use of safe giving routes
Public education and awareness	Promote informed, compassionate and practical community responses to street activity and rough sleeping.	Housing Demand; Communications; Community Safety; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Safer and more informed community responses.



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Objective 2: Ending nightly paid and hotel accommodation

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Exit the PSL model	Reduce dependency on short-term, high-risk Private Sector Lease arrangements that no longer provide value, affordability or long-term stability.	Housing Demand; Finance; Legal; property partners.	2026–2029	Reduced reliance on PSL and greater supply stability.
Deliver long-term affordable supply	Deliver sustainable housing through build-to-rent, acquisitions, conversions, modular housing and long-term nominations models	Housing Demand; Regeneration; Finance; QLM; Registered Providers; institutional partners.	2026–2030	Increased predictable, affordable and self-contained accommodation.
Repurpose existing assets	Repurpose hostel and temporary accommodation assets as new supply comes on stream.	Housing Demand; Asset Management; Property Services; QLM.	2026–2029	Better use of existing assets and reduced emergency accommodation reliance.
Reduce financial risk	Replace nightly paid and hotel accommodation with controlled and predictable cost models.	Housing Demand; Finance; Business Partnering.	2026–2030	Progress towards ending nightly paid and hotel use by 2030.
Influence and scale	Use Havering's model to support wider learning and contribute to strategic discussions on homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures.	Housing Demand; senior leadership; London partners; government stakeholders.	2026–2029	Havering's model informs wider policy and delivery discussions..



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Objective 3: Temporary accommodation experience

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Consistent pathway	Make the temporary accommodation journey clearer, safer and more consistent while retaining statutory compliance and operational efficiency.	Housing Demand; Homeless Accommodation; Housing Solutions; hostel teams..	2026–2029	Improved resident understanding of processes and next steps.
Psychologically informed environments	Develop PIE approaches across hostels, the Family Welcome Centre, Jubilee Court, modular and supported accommodation and outreach settings..	Housing Demand management team; HR; learning and development partners.	2026–2028	Improved staff confidence, wellbeing and consistency of practice..
Technology as an enabler	Develop PIE approaches across hostels, the Family Welcome Centre, Jubilee Court, modular and supported accommodation and outreach settings	Housing Demand; supported accommodation providers; Public Health; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Safer, more predictable and more stabilising accommodation environments.
Inclusion and opportunity	Use approved digital tools to improve evidence capture, reduce administrative burden and support clearer decisions.	Housing Demand; Digital; Information Governance; service managers.	2026–2028	Improved decision quality, timeliness and evidence capture.
Influence and scale	Work with partners so households, especially children and families, can access leisure, cultural, digital, food and community support.	Housing Demand; Public Health; leisure; culture; education; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Improved access to community support and positive opportunities..



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Objective 4: Compassionate customer care and system leadership

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Resident, child and family voice	Strengthen feedback mechanisms and use insight to improve services, communication and early identification of barriers.	Housing Demand; education partners; Children's Services; resident engagement leads..	2026–2029	Greater use of lived experience to shape service improvement.
Inclusive access	Maintain practical easy-to-understand access routes, assisted digital support, clear communication and more than one route into services..	Housing Demand; Digital; Customer Services; voluntary and community partners.	2026–2028	Reduced access barriers and improved resident understanding.
Housing as system enabler	Align housing development, commissioning and supply planning with health, adult social care, children's services, education and community safety outcomes.	Housing Demand; Adult Social Care; Children's Services; Public Health; Education; Community Safety; health partners.	2026–2029	Stronger joint planning and improved partner confidence.
Case closure and assurance	Strengthen oversight of case closure, duty-end decisions, personal housing plans, communication and follow-up actions.	Housing Solutions; Homeless Accommodation; service managers; quality assurance leads.	2026–2028	Timely, lawful and well-explained decisions with fewer avoidable complaints.
Community resilience	Develop community information, peer support workshops and partnership activity to help residents understand systems and build confidence.	Housing Demand; voluntary and faith sector partners; community groups; Communications.	2026–2029	Greater community confidence and shared responsibility for prevention.



Alignment with the Government Local Outcomes Framework

This strategy has been developed to support Havering's local priorities while also aligning with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework. The framework places a clear emphasis on outcomes rather than activity, with a specific national outcome to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. Havering's strategy supports this through prevention, early intervention, reduced reliance on unsuitable emergency accommodation, better temporary accommodation experiences, sustained rough sleeping pathways, and compassionate, lawful and timely casework.

The strategy also contributes to wider Local Outcomes Framework priorities, including housing quality and safety, multiple disadvantage, children and family stability, health and wellbeing, neighbourhood safety, community inclusion and child poverty. This is important because homelessness is rarely only a housing issue. It is often connected to trauma, poverty, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance misuse, family breakdown, exploitation, digital exclusion and the availability of safe, decent and affordable homes.

Havering will use the following alignment framework to ensure that delivery of this strategy can be monitored against national outcomes while retaining a clear local focus on the needs of residents, families, children and people experiencing rough sleeping or housing crisis.

Government outcome / metric	Havering strategic link	Local performance focus	How progress will be evidenced
Households with children in temporary accommodation	**Objective 2** and **Objective 3:** reducing reliance on unsuitable emergency accommodation and improving the temporary accommodation experience for families.	Reducing the number and duration of family placements in temporary accommodation, particularly where accommodation is unsuitable or disruptive.	Temporary accommodation data, placement duration, family move-on outcomes and reporting through performance and governance arrangements
Families in bed and breakfast accommodation over six weeks	**Objective 2:** ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030.	Minimising and eliminating family use of B&B, hotel and nightly paid accommodation beyond statutory limits.	Monthly monitoring of B&B and hotel use, duration of stay, exceptions, escalation and move-on planning.



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Government outcome / metric	Havering strategic link	Local performance focus	How progress will be evidenced
Percentage of homelessness duties where homelessness is prevented or relieved	**Objective 4:** clear decisions, case closure, personal housing plans and early resolution.	Increasing effective prevention and relief outcomes, reducing repeat homelessness, and ensuring lawful and timely case progression.	Prevention and relief outcome data, case closure audits, personal housing plan quality checks and complaints learning.
People sleeping rough on a single night	**Objective 1:** preventing and reducing rough sleeping through relationship-led outreach and support.	Maintaining low rough sleeping numbers and ensuring rapid, person-centred responses to new rough sleeping.s.	Street counts, outreach records, verification data and multi-agency case tracking.
Long-term rough sleeping	**Objective 1:** complex needs accommodation, Housing First style provision and sustained engagement.	Reducing repeat and entrenched rough sleeping by supporting people into accommodation they can sustain.	Sustained accommodation outcomes, repeat rough sleeping data, support engagement and CNAP pathway monitoring.
Housing quality and safety	**Objective 3:** improving the quality, safety and consistency of the temporary accommodation experience.	Ensuring temporary accommodation is safe, suitable, decent and managed in a way that supports stability and dignity.	Property standards checks, suitability reviews, resident feedback, repairs performance and management assurance.



Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Government outcome / metric	Havering strategic link	Local performance focus	How progress will be evidenced
Multiple disadvantage	**Objective 1** and **Objective 4:** support for people affected by trauma, substance misuse, exploitation, domestic abuse, prison release, mental ill-health and complex needs.	Strengthening multi-agency responses and improving pathways for residents whose homelessness is linked to overlapping needs..	Multi-agency case reviews, safeguarding activity, support engagement, CNAP outcomes and partner feedback.
Children, family stability and child poverty	**Objective 2, Objective 3** and **Objective 4:** reducing disruption for children, improving family accommodation pathways and listening to children's experiences.	Reducing the impact of homelessness on school, health, wellbeing, family stability and access to opportunity.	Family placement monitoring, school disruption feedback, child and family engagement, and joint work with education, public health and children's services.

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2029

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