

# Housing Update

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- Housing features in the Healthy Place domain of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Housing has an impact on the health and wellbeing of residents
- Housing Update on:
  1. Homelessness
  2. Damp and mould
  3. Increasing the quality of existing council homes
  4. New affordable homes

# 1. Homelessness

## **Severe housing affordability crisis**

- Cost of living and changes in the Private Rented Sector (PRS)
- Increase in average rents
- Limited housing options locally for families who need help with housing costs (HB/UC/Benefit Cap)
- Most common cause of homeless in Harrow = loss of private rented accommodation
- Small social housing stock so PRS accommodation is the main housing solution
- Important to seek help early and try to prevent homelessness
- Over 1000 households now in temporary accommodation
- B&B elimination strategy
- Outreach programme of housing advice in the community
- Refresh of housing needs leaflets.

# 1. Homelessness

## **Rough Sleeping initiatives:**

- Outreach Team with specialist council officers
- First Stage Rough Sleeping Hub- a safe place to stay for 28 days (5 bedrooms)
- Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) scheme- 9 flats with Housing First style support service delivered by EACH Counselling & Support- project funded by GLA.
- Annual street count- night of 23 November.

## **Partnership Working**

- Harrow Homelessness Reduction Board (including Public Health and Health/NHS)
- Operational Sub-Group of Harrow Homelessness Reduction Board
- Partnership working with statutory and VCS orgs on single homelessness and rough sleeping
- Close working with Adult Social Care and Children's Services on hospital discharge, mental health, move on from supported housing, care leavers, etc.

## 2. Damp and Mould

- Toddler Awaab Ishak died in 2020 because of a severe respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his home environment, leading to respiratory arrest.
- His father said he repeatedly raised the issue with his landlord Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH).
- The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) said RBH had failed to "treat Awaab Ishak's family with fairness and respect" and that it had found "significant failings in the way Rochdale Boroughwide Housing deals with damp and mould across the organisation".
- The case has focused attention on:
  - the responsibility of all registered providers of social housing (councils and housing associations) to ensure that the homes they provide are well maintained and of a decent standard
  - the serious effects that having damp and mould in homes can have on people's health
  - the importance of listening to the concerns of social housing tenants, understanding their diverse needs, removing barriers to accessing services and responding promptly.

## 2. Damp and Mould

- Condensation, damp and mould can have a serious effect on people's health, especially if they have respiratory problems/illnesses, allergies and asthma. Can affect immune system.
- Damp can be caused by condensation (from cooking, bathing, drying wet clothes indoors) or by issues such as leaks or blocked gutters. Damp can lead to mould growth.
- There are basic steps that residents can take to reduce condensation and to address damp and mould.
- Problems with damp and mould should be reported to the landlord (private, housing association or council).
- If the landlord does not address the issue the resident should contact Environmental Health.
- Environmental Health also use residential licensing to drive up standards in the private rented sector (mandatory and additional HMO licensing across the borough, selective licensing for PRS in specific wards)

## 2. Damp and Mould

- Processes already in place- not a new issue.
- New Cross-Council Damp and Mould Working Group with representatives from different services including Housing, Environmental Health, Public Health and Health/NHS.
- New Communication Plan- new materials and guidance for staff and residents, new leaflet being sent to all council tenants as an insert in Homing In magazine
- Support with energy efficiency and costs, including:
  - Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE)- fuel poverty referral network and free energy advice service for Londoners: <https://shine-london.org.uk/>
  - New Harrow Energy Advice and Support with the Cost-of-Living project- free service to households and eligible organisations in Harrow to help with reducing energy usage and bills, delivered by Groundwork Green Doctors. Via 0300 365 3005 or [online referral form](#). Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

### 3. Increasing the quality of existing council homes

- Ambition for all council tenants to have good quality, secure, well-maintained homes
- Successful bid to the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for £2.1m (and £3m investment by the London Borough of Harrow) for a 2-year programme targeting more than 236 council homes
- 3-year Capital Investment Programme to improve energy efficiency and bring EPC rating up to band C and above
- Improvements such as new windows, doors, roofs, and ventilation
- Programme of new kitchens and bathrooms
- 'Homesafe 3' (security and compliance programme)
- New green technologies (solar panels, under floor insulation and low energy lighting)
- Council tenants will benefit from lower energy bills and warmer homes.



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### 3. New Affordable Homes

Increasing the amount of affordable housing in Harrow:

- Homes for Londoners Affordable Homes Programme
- Grange Farm Estate housing regeneration project
- Harrow Strategic Development Partnership (HSDP) with Wates
- Partnership working with Registered Providers of Social Housing (also known as housing associations or registered social landlords)
- Close working with Planning on the Affordable Housing Policy and Section 106 agreements to ensure provision of affordable housing on private developments is maximised.