

# Lewisham's housing strategy 2020–26



## Easy read version



# The housing crisis

Lewisham, like the rest of London and the country, is facing the severe effects of a housing crisis. With nearly 10,000 households on the Council's housing waiting list, we cannot support everyone into council housing but are working hard to deliver more genuinely affordable homes

Having asked the people of Lewisham for their opinions, we have drafted the below strategy in response to all comments and suggestions. We hope that this strategy will meet all requirements of the residents in housing need.

## Housing in Lewisham

### The private rented sector

The private rented sector means properties that are rented out by private landlords. Lots of Lewisham residents rely on the private rented sector for their homes. Unfortunately private rents have increased more than people's incomes. This means that renting privately is less affordable than ever before.

### Social housing

Social housing means homes that are rented out by councils or social landlords. These homes are a lot cheaper than private rented properties. However, there are not enough social homes in Lewisham for all the people that want them. It would take us over nine years to provide social homes to everyone waiting at the moment.

### Homelessness

Homelessness in Lewisham is high. About 2,500 households come to us every year because they are homeless, or they are at risk of homelessness. This is usually because their landlords are ending their tenancy, or because they are no longer able to live with their family and friends.

We have to help people as early as possible to prevent them from becoming homeless in the future.



## **The strategy**

A strategy is a plan. This strategy is our plan to help people in Lewisham access safe, secure homes that they can afford.

We have grouped our strategy into five subjects, or themes:

- 1. Delivering the homes that Lewisham needs**
- 2. Preventing homelessness and meeting the housing need**
- 3. Improving the quality, standard and safety of housing**
- 4. Supporting our residents to live safe, independent and active lives**
- 5. Strengthening communities and embracing diversity.**

Since we started writing this strategy, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has taken place. This has changed some of the ways we will be working.

As part of this work, we will need to make sure that all our residents are given equal chances, or opportunities, to have safe, stable and affordable homes.

We will also ask central Government to think about changing some of their laws and actions to help us create enough housing for all of Lewisham.



# Priority 1: Delivering the homes that Lewisham needs

We need to build more homes for Lewisham residents. These homes need to be genuinely affordable. This is where the rent is set at or lower than the London affordable rent rate.

## **We will:**

### **Make as much social housing as possible, by:**

- building more social housing
- working with partners to build more social housing
- finding land that we own where we can build social housing
- using modern building methods that will allow us to make as many homes as possible.

### **Make places where people want to live, by:**

- designing good quality housing with lots of open space
- making sure that homes are close to /facilities that a community needs, like parks, shops and doctors
- building homes that are suitable for lots of different people with different needs
- building homes that can be easily managed and looked after.

### **Increase the amount of high-quality homes, by:**

- building homes with different types of rent to suit different people
- building our own private rented homes
- improving the temporary homes that people have to move into whilst waiting for social housing
- making use of homes that are currently vacant
- making use of council-owned properties for housing purposes.

## Priority 2: Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need

We need to support people as early as possible so that they do not become homeless. We will provide urgent support to people and families who are homeless. As part of this work,

### **We will:**

#### **Support people as early as we can, by:**

- always improving our face-to-face housing advice services
- working with groups in Lewisham to help families as soon as we can
- increasing the number of groups we work with
- using the information we have to help us identify when people might be in housing need.

#### **Support Lewisham residents at times of urgent need, through:**

- working with groups in Lewisham to make sure people are given the right help and information
- helping vulnerable children and young people
- helping people who suffer domestic abuse
- helping people who are sleeping on the streets to find somewhere to live
- making sure our social housing is given to those who most need it.

#### **Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, through:**

- putting less people in bed and breakfasts
- putting less people in temporary homes shared with other people
- finding private rented homes for families waiting for social housing
- finding more homes for people with different needs, for example homes for people in wheelchairs.



## Priority 3: Improving the quality, standard and safety of housing in Lewisham

We need to make sure that Lewisham residents live in good quality homes that are safe and warm. In order to achieve this,

### We will:

#### **Improve private rented homes, by:**

- licensing more homes. This helps us to make sure landlords provide good quality homes
- using the information we already have to find more homes that need improving.

#### **Invest in homes in Lewisham, by:**

- improving existing social housing in Lewisham
- helping homeowners to access money to improve their homes.

#### **Lead on health and safety, and fire safety, by:**

- improving fire safety in the borough
- punishing private landlords for breaking health and safety rules.

#### **Lead on addressing the climate emergency, by:**

- making sure our homes are energy efficient. This means using as little energy as possible to keep homes warm
- helping homeowners to access money to make sure their homes are energy efficient
- reducing the carbon footprint of our staff. This means trying to cut down our use of fossil fuels, like coal, petrol and gas.



## Priority 4: Supporting our residents to lead safe, independent and active lives

People need safe, secure and affordable housing to be able to live happy, independent lives.

### **We will:**

#### **Help residents to be independent, by:**

- supporting people to stay in their homes where they can
- adapting more properties for people with disabilities
- making sure we have the right homes for older Lewisham residents
- making sure people have a smooth journey in and out of supported accommodation. These are homes where support and sometimes care services are provided.

#### **Support the physical and mental wellbeing of Lewisham residents, by:**

- helping people understand what support they can access to help them live independently
- helping people become more active
- making sure housing providers provide good support to vulnerable residents.



## Priority 5: Strengthening communities and embracing diversity

It is important that residents feel able to tell us their opinions, and that they are listened to.

COVID-19 has shown that not all people have the same access to healthcare and other services. This is often because of prejudice and injustice in society.

We want Lewisham to be a welcoming place of safety for all. We are proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and oppression. To help ensure that we achieve these goals,

### **We will:**

#### **Ensure residents have a meaningful voice, by:**

- ensuring the rights of residents on estates that we are re-developing
- supporting a private renters union
- asking residents their opinions on the future of their estates
- being more open in how we are doing our work
- supporting residents' associations
- ensuring new work delivers social value. This means that new developments will bring about improvements for the community.

#### **Embracing diversity and tackling inequality, by:**

- pushing our partners to recognise diversity and equality in their services. This means making sure services are designed to include everyone
- helping refugees and migrants who need our help settling in Lewisham
- pushing for equality and fighting injustice
- making sure that we, and our partners, fight inequalities for people who are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities (BAME).