

# North Kensington Health & Wellbeing Network

24 March 2022, via Zoom

## Actions and Key Points

- Facilitated by Camila Marin Restrepo (CMR), Health and Wellbeing Project Officer (KCSC)

### Agenda

10:00-10:05 Hello and welcome

10:05-10:30 Richard Mills (Housing at RBKC) including Q&A

10:30-10:50 Julia Pena, Advice and Guidance Lead at ClementJames Centre

10:50-11:05 Carla Camilleri, Legal Advisor at ADKC

11:05-11:20 James Barrell and Lily Moghadam, Shelter

11:20-11:30 Community updates

- These monthly meetings will be held from 10am to 11.30am.
- Future meetings can be found on the website [here](#).

The presentations shown can be found [here](#).

### Welcome from Camila:

- CMR welcomed the attendees, explained the ground rules and the agenda.

### Richard Mills (Housing Solutions manager at RBKC)

The Housing Solutions team looks at housing needs, possible outcomes, and works with the people on the housing register and as well as those who are currently homeless. Part of the remit involves working with people who have a place to live that is unsuitable for a number of reasons. RBKC currently has 3,213 on housing register. 2,143 households in temporary accommodation. 26 allocations took place between January and February 2022. These figures demonstrate the difficulty in terms of having insufficient properties to allocate people to. The majority of people on the housing register are people who RBKC has accepted the duty to rehouse; people that are in temporary accommodation and waiting to be rehoused. Second category is people with medical issues, then overcrowding and then wanting to downsize. This space will be used to answer any questions about housing, and emails can be sent to [Richard.Mills@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Mills@rbkc.gov.uk) to discuss specific cases.

Question: It would be interesting to talk about the new allocation scheme that is in process at the moment, so that people are aware of how residents will be impacted.

Answer: RBKC last had an allocation scheme in 2017; the allocation scheme establishes how people are prioritised for permanent housing, it has gone out to consultation, there have

been interesting contributions from residents, a lot of talk about focusing on overcrowding. After having listened to residents, an allocation scheme draft will be drawn up and then presented and then opened to debate. It is worth keeping an eye out for that.

Question: What was the number of people housed since January and is that a lot by this stage in the year? Is there any reason for this?

Answer: 26 people have been housed from January 2022 to date; this figure is slightly low but will even out throughout the rest of the year. It has been a slow start to the year and the figures do not mean that there will be less allocations this year. These figures can be explained by a number of reasons, sometimes works need to be done to properties and there are delays in getting them up to scratch.

Question: Housing is probably the worst services in the council, especially following Grenfell. Housing comes up as an issue and it has a huge impact on people's mental health. The borough is in dire straits for a whole range of reasons, including empty homes, etc. 73% of those people are housed outside of the borough. Thinking about people's mental health, what is the criteria for temporary housing? I was led to believe temporary should be no longer than a year, now I know that people can live in temporary housing for 10-15 years. What are the statutory expectations? Also, it comes to our attention that the borough is using temporary accommodation as a cash cow, as I know of a case where an individual is paying £500 a week for rent for a two-bedroom property. These are the kind of issues we hear that are concerning.

Answer: RBKC has a lack of properties, and there are always difficult decisions to make. If we are wanting to help people in housing need, we have to look at what is available and what we can offer. Some people feel that because their families have lived in social housing, that is the only type of housing that they should be offered and that isn't realistic. The council's role is to be honest and transparent about what is available and then recommend the best that we have. As far as temporary accommodation, people are in temporary accommodation for a long time because there aren't enough properties coming up permanently, so there is a wait. There have been long discussions to rename it to interim accommodation, because the assumption with the word temporary, is that it will only last for two or three years.

Regarding the high rent in temporary accommodation, that is unfortunately how it works due to the involvement of agents. Agents will charge really high rents and there is a constant battle to procure accommodation, all councils are affected by this. Housing is an essential part of everyone's life, it is tough, there isn't enough housing, a lot of people are living in conditions that are not great. There is a lot of overcrowding in the borough, the council in its current allocation scheme states that only houses that are the most seriously overcrowded, i.e. lacking two or more bedrooms, qualify to go on to the housing register. People sometimes feel that not enough is being done to help them but there is just not enough accommodation in the borough. One of the most important things in the process of engagement with residents around the allocation scheme is to give figures and an insight into the prevailing circumstances. If there is difficulty with building new properties quickly it is important to tell people what we are doing and how we prioritise cases. Being open and honest is the best way to move forward.

Question: A client with a learning disability was in the process of leaving an abusive relationship at home and she became homeless. She was being supported to find

accommodation with the council in emergency temporary accommodation but there was no further support for her. She is someone who has difficulty nourishing herself and struggles with keeping herself clean and safe. Is there any emergency supported accommodation for people who are vulnerable? There is a gap in terms of service provision, ideally there would need to be an emergency worker who can potentially support people with severe learning and physical disabilities.

Answer: In the first instance the primary objective would be to find emergency accommodation; a colleague who works on supported accommodation will be more equipped to give you those answers. If you send over an email, this can be discussed with her as she manages supported accommodation.

Question: From the people I speak to, how long did the housing department know that there is lack of housing and what have they done about it?

Answer: Forever, there has always been a demand for social housing, and over time the criteria changes. Many decades ago, workers of the council were able to access council housing but that is no longer possible. There is always a demand if subsidised housing is available but now there is an even greater demand, and from people who are highly vulnerable. People tend to be fixated on social housing, our Housing Solutions job is to find other options. Our responsibility is to find other ways around people waiting for years in temporary accommodation. Sometimes people are so fixated on a specific resolution, that they do not consider other options. Families who have been in the borough for years have moved to other boroughs on the outskirts of London and this has meant that they are able to have a garden and more space, which made all the difference. We are always trying to maintain a balance.

Question: How many stages are there in the complaints process? There is a big issue around housing, you cannot expect people to wait 20 years to move from temporary to permanent housing that isn't fit for purpose. You also will need to change your attitude because when you talk about people fixating, that is very wrong. There is also available housing in housing associations who can offer the council properties but the council doesn't take them. The housing conditions for council properties is in very bad condition also.

Answer: There used to be three now there are two. I would like to invite you to meet with me as you have raised some very important points there and I am sorry if you felt the word fixated was inappropriate. There is a lot of things you brought up with that I do not have an explanation for but we can have a discussion, please meet with me and we can discuss further.

Question: I also am concerned with the word fixated; we are more than aware that people who live in accommodation that is owned by private landlords means they often have to move property and this creates a lack of stability for them and their children's wellbeing. They may have to change school often, rents go up, so they need to move further and further way. In my opinion, social housing offers security but private housing doesn't. The borough will need to work much harder than it already does to ensure families and vulnerable people have the basic level of security, which is housing.

Answer: Apologies for using the word fixated. If someone is desperately needing to move due to health problems or other issues, when waiting for social housing, the waits are long. If someone wants to do that, they are missing out on other ways to address their situation. If

you want to get out of your situation the quickest way possible, then please consider other options. It is Housing Solutions' job to say what is available, why there is only that much available, what is being done about it and so forth.

**Julia Pena from Clement James Centre (Advice and Guidance lead)**

[See presentation here](#)

As an organisation we offer advice on housing, but also welfare benefits, grant applications, complaints, school exclusions. There is an employment support programme and wellbeing projects, as well as homework club for kids.

Question: Can you support people who are homeless but sofa surfing?

Answer: It is via a case by case basis, in general, we want to forward homelessness to housing specialists. If they are in a stable place, then we can support them with housing applications then yes, but if they are in a place for a short period of time then that would be considered an emergency.

**Carla Camilleri, Legal Advice Coordinator from Acton Disability Kensington and Chelsea**

There are various services at ADKC, and within legal advice, clients can be supported in other aspects aside from housing, such as welfare benefits and reasonable adjustments. The service is for adults with physical, hidden or sensory impairments for adults in RBKC. ADKC is not the best organisation for someone whose main impairment is a mental health condition.

When it comes to housing, there is a number of issues that come up. Interventions are looked at on a case-by-case basis. Help is provided with housing disrepair, where the complaints procedure is the place to start, cases rarely get past the ombudsman stage. Another issue is allocations, ADKC doesn't generally get referrals for clients who are street homeless, but instead, common cases may be a client living on a higher floor with no lift, or inappropriate housing more generally. Accessible housing is so scarce, people waiting several years for a move is very familiar. There has to be some focus on improving stock of accessible housing. For 2019-2020: RBKC uses the London accessible housing register, category A will be wheelchair accessible throughout, whereas category C will have wider corridors. In that year, there were 6 category C properties given to people in that year. There were no category A properties and two in category B. It is difficult to tell someone that is in need that this is the reality. Accessibility is not just about having wide enough doorways, it can be about having a lift that opens automatically, for example.

Mobility scooter storage can often be an issue as RBKC tenancy agreements state they cannot be kept in communal areas. This can be an issue that is difficult to solve. We can also help to apply for local support payments or discretionary housing payments. We are a disabled people's organisation; the issues need to be disability related.

Question: Is advice at the organisation given from a legal point of view?

Answer: Often times it is, but sometimes it is not. If someone needs a solicitor ADKC can signpost them. When it comes to housing issues, such as disrepair, there is the option of going down that route with the Ombudsman. It depends on the issue.

Question: Does someone with cancer count as disabled?

Answer: We are not asking people for medical evidence; we would absolutely help. The criteria that we start from is hidden sensory and physical impairments. I cannot remember the last time we turned someone away. If there is someone you are not sure about, you are welcome to get in touch and ask.

Question: I am interested in statistics around the availability of disability adapted properties in the borough. From experience, it seems that this is incredibly small which means that there is nowhere for people to go and they have to continually endure awful conditions.

Answer: The more accessible property you need the longer it will take you to be housed. Even for properties that are level access or minimal stairs, you are looking at a much longer wait. The council knows this. We have asked that as a matter of routine, when there is a void, for the council to go in and check if any accessibility adjustments can be made. The council said they already do this. There are difficulties in that many of the properties are old converted houses. There was an early consultation with Newman Francis with a lot of statistics, and RBKC published this information.

**James Barrell and Lily Moghadam, Advisors at Shelter**

[See presentation here](#)

Question: Would it be possible to refer someone who doesn't live at RBKC, but Westminster? Also, regarding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), could you just repeat what you mentioned please.

Answer: There is a Westminster team but their funding means that they can only take homelessness prevention cases: [westminster@shelter.org.uk](mailto:westminster@shelter.org.uk) Shelter also has a pan-London service too. Unfortunately, the threshold for social landlords to move tenants based on anti-social behaviour is incredibly high. Cases would be looked at to see if they meet those thresholds. What it comes down to is trying to maximise resources and working on cases where Shelter can be a positive impact. ASB is also very difficult to prove, we also recommend the client to record every instant, have a journal and call the noise nuisance team. If they do not deem the noise levels high enough, then Shelter will also be unable to do anything about the case. There will be more information on the Shelter website about the noise thresholds. There have also been cases of racial discrimination ASB, or homophobia. If it is discriminatory ASB then definitely.

Question: Do you have any face-to-face appointments for people who do not have a phone or email? For someone with a significant learning disability who needs supported emergency accommodation, do you know of any help to get to the accommodation i.e. physically getting there or supervision whilst in the accommodation?

Answer: Support aspect is significantly limited. Most of what has been seen in RBKC is supported hostels. Spaces are few and far between but they do have the ability to put someone in a supported hostel. The issue may be that there is no room, if it is an emergency

situation. Temporary accommodation still has to be suitable. You can only challenge suitability of temporary accommodation is through judicial reviews, so often these cases will be referred to solicitors for them to challenge. For the transport aspect, you can demand that RBKC pays for cab or van. There has been success for this in the past.

### Community Updates

- Next forum is on 28<sup>th</sup> April at 10am.
- KCSC is recruiting for three roles, Contracts Officer, Community Accountant, Community Worker. More information on KCSC website.
- Community Bazaar, Ramadan special at Al-Manaar Mosque 11:30am-3pm on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 2021.

### Close

### Attendance:

21 Individuals from 19 organisations attended.

<b>Organisation</b>
Open Age
KCSC
Dalgarno Trust
The ClementJames Centre
Turning Point
Nucleus
ADKC
Shelter
Moroccan Community Forum
Pamodzi
PohWer
IAPT NHS
Campden Charities
Hodan Somali Organisation
Bay20
NHS Community Connectors
Social Prescribing Link Workers
Volunteer Centre K&C
NHS Grenfell Community Connectors

**Next meeting:** [Thursday 28th April 2022, 10am – 11.30am](#)