

Watford Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 – Consultation outcomes

Total number of consultation responses received: 63

When consultation took place: 10 February to 22 March 2020

Consultation – raising awareness: consultation mini-web site, lunch and learn session with staff (9 March 2020, 5 staff attended); raised at Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum on 26/2/20 and Housing Policy Advisory Group on 3/3/20; E-mails to everyone on the Housing Register, housing sector bodies, charities in the town, special interest groups, all Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum members; article in resident e-news 29/30 February; electronic adverts throughout the town centre; all WBC Members and local MP contacted; full social media campaign.

Question 1: How far do you agree or disagree with the mission statement for Watford Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy?

The mission statement:

“Watford will be a place where no-one needs to sleep rough and there is support available for everyone threatened with being or actually homeless”

Response	No. of responses
Strongly agree	41
Agree	16
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total responses	61

There was overwhelming agreement with the proposed mission statement. Thirteen people also provided comments. Many of the comments, in addition to supporting the mission statement, reflected concern about rough sleeping in Watford and whether there would be resources to assist.

Question 2: How far do you agree or disagree that preventing homelessness (Key Priority 1) is the right priority for Watford?

Response	No. of responses
Strongly agree	32
Agree	17
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	0

Response	No. of responses
Strongly disagree	1
Total responses	50

Most respondents agreed with the proposed Key Priority 1, Preventing Homelessness.

The majority of comments reflected on the importance of dealing as early as possible with issues that could lead to homelessness.

Question 3: How far do you agree or disagree that providing services to homeless households and homeless vulnerable adults relevant to their needs (Key Priority 2) is the right priority for Watford?

Response	No. of responses
Strongly agree	30
Agree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	2
Total responses	49

Again there was clear agreement with the second key priority by those that responded. The personalisation of homelessness services was a key theme in the comments from respondents to this question.

Question 4: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy?

Nineteen responses were received to this open-ended question which covered the following views:

- A number of practical ideas around turning empty boarded up buildings into accommodation for homeless people, not mixing families with children and those with drugs or mental health issues in temporary accommodation, paying Local Housing Allowance direct to landlords where homeless households have a history of losing their homes due to rent arrears, run the winter shelter all year round, advertising progress with Strategy implementation
- Agreement that prevention of homelessness was best
- Criticism that the draft Action Plan did not include information on resources to fulfil the proposed actions
- Support for the Strategy but concern about whether the council had the “teeth” to stand up to private landlords on standards of accommodation, for example.

Demographic information about respondents

Respondent's perspective in responding to the consultation	No. of responses
Watford resident	38
A private sector organisation/partner organisation	1
A third sector organisation/partner organisation	1
A council employee	2
Total	42

Organisations / partners who responded included:

- Gokula Café, Food for All Charity
- Greater Change
- A Hertsmere resident who was a regular New Hope donor and purchaser

For those who lived in Watford, respondents lived in the following Wards

Watford Ward	No. of respondents
Callowland	5
Central	4
Holywell	6
Meriden	3
Nascot	1
Oxhey	1
Park	2
Stanborough	2
Tudor	3
Vicarage	4
Woodside	7
Total	38

Gender of respondents

Gender	No. of respondents
Female	31
Male	16
Prefer not to say	1
Total	48

Female respondents made up 65% of all those who engaged with the survey whilst male respondents comprised 33%. Watford's overall gender composition is 50% for both male and female residents. Female respondents to this survey were over-represented compared with their representation in Watford's resident population.

Respondents' ages

Age group	No. of respondents
15-19 years	2
20-24 years	1
25-34 years	8
35-44 years	10
45-54 years	13
55-64 years	3
65-74 years	6
75+	4
Prefer not to say	1
Total	48

Nearly half (48%) of respondents were aged between 25 and 54. The top three population bands in Watford are aged 0-10 (15,609), 31-40 (16,893) and 41-50 (13,994). The age of respondents in this survey reflect the population ages in Watford. Unusual for this kind of survey, but nonetheless welcome, were the two respondents in the 15-19 age bracket.

Health and disability of respondents

Were day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?	No. of respondents
No	31
Yes, limited a little	9
Yes, limited a lot	5
Prefer not to say	2
Total	47

The majority (66%) of respondents who answered this question did not have any limiting health or disability-related issues. The borough's demographic information states that around 85% of the population have good health and just under 14% record a disability.

Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnicity	No. of respondents
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	33
Any other White background	6

Indian	3
Any other Asian background	1
White and Asian	2
White and Black Caribbean	2
Prefer not to say	2
Total	49

Together, respondents from English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British heritage or Any other White background made up 80% of respondents. In Watford these two groups comprise just under 70% of Watford's population so survey respondents were over-represented compared with the borough's resident population. It was disappointing not to have received more responses to the survey from Black and minority ethnic residents.