



BRIEFING PAPER

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Rough sleeping (England)

By Wendy Wilson
Cassie Barton

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Contributing Authors: Cassie Barton, statistics – section 3

Summary

Local authorities in England do not have a duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society; studies have found strong correlations between homelessness and a multiplicity, and increased severity, of both physical and mental health conditions. Rough sleepers are over nine times more likely to commit suicide than the general population; on average rough sleepers die at age 47 (age 43 for women).

Successive Governments have put in place initiatives to tackle rough sleeping. The [Rough Sleepers Initiative](#) operated between 1990 and 1999 until replaced by the Labour Government's Homelessness Action Programme. Over the years some ambitious targets have been set; for example, Labour set a target in 1999 to achieve a two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping by 2002. [No One Left Out](#) (Labour, 2008) set a target of ending rough sleeping "once and for all" by 2012.

Crisis commissioned the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York to conduct a review of single homelessness in the UK between 2000 and 2010. The study, [A review of single homelessness in the UK](#), (2011) provides an overview of the history, causes and policy responses to single homelessness, and assesses how successful these policies were in tackling the issue. The study suggested some policy responses for the following decade.

The Conservative Government elected in 2015 continued with the approach initiated under the Coalition. This [No Second Night Out](#) approach was piloted in London. A key aim was to ensure that no one new to the streets would sleep out for a second night. A [Ministerial Working Group](#) was established to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The 2017 Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to **"halve rough sleeping over the course of the parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027"** by setting up a new homelessness reduction taskforce to focus on prevention and affordable housing and by piloting a Housing First approach to tackling rough sleeping. The Government supported Bob Blackman's *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* which placed new duties on local authorities in England to prevent and relieve homeless for all eligible applicants from 3 April 2018. A [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) was published in August 2018, this strategy was backed-up by £100 million in funding for two years. The [Rough Sleeping Strategy: delivery plan](#) (December 2018) provided an update on progress in implementing the strategy's 61 commitments and information on next steps. The first [Impact evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018](#) was published in September 2019 – the evaluation recorded some successful outcomes.

The [Conservative Manifesto December 2019](#) **committed to ending "the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament"** through an extension of the Rough Sleeping Initiative, Housing First and using local services to meet the health and housing needs of people living on the streets. On publication of the 2019 rough sleeper counts in February 2020 (see below), the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, announced additional funding and a review of rough sleeping to be conducted by Dame Louise Casey. A further increase in funding to tackle rough sleeping was announced as part of Budget 2020.

Despite considerable efforts, the official rough sleeper counts showed increases every year after new methodology was introduced in autumn 2010 up to the autumn 2017 count. The results of the 2017 count were published on 25 January 2018 – a 169% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 2010 was recorded. The recorded

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number of rough sleepers then fell by 2% in 2018 and a further 9% in 2019, although the 2019 count still represented a 141% increase on the 1,768 recorded in 2010. **A total of 4,266 rough sleepers were recorded in 2019, of whom just over a quarter were in London.** Robert Jenrick welcomed the decrease in numbers of rough sleepers saying, “the Government’s strategy is working” but acknowledged that “there is a great deal more to do”.

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. The latest financial year report from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database, [CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2018-19](#) reported that a total of 8,855 rough sleepers were contacted by outreach workers or building-based teams in London during 2018/19, representing an 18.3% increase on the previous year.

Factors identified as contributing to the ongoing flow of new rough sleepers to the streets include welfare reforms, particularly reductions in entitlement to Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance; reduced investment by local authorities in homeless services; and flows of non-UK nationals who are unable to access benefits.

Organisations working in the sector have called for an effective safety net and a long-term homelessness strategy backed by investment to deliver it. Some organisations support legislation to extend the priority need categories to cover all homeless people, an approach already adopted in Scotland. In December 2017, the Public Accounts Committee published a [report](#) which criticised the Government’s approach to rising homelessness:

The Department for Communities and Local Government’s attitude to reducing homelessness has been unacceptably complacent. The limited action that it has taken has lacked the urgency that is so badly needed and its “light touch” approach to working with the local authorities tackling homelessness has clearly failed.

The Department is placing great reliance on the new Homelessness Reduction Act to provide the solution to homelessness.

While this new legislation will no doubt help, it cannot be successful unless it is matched by a renewed focus across government on tackling the twin issues of both the supply and affordability of decent housing, which underlie the causes of homelessness.

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) (2018) was welcomed by the sector but organisations such as the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel called for more to be done in, for example, areas such as cross-departmental working; developing more social housing; welfare reform; and security of tenure in the private rented sector.

Other relevant Library papers

[Housing First: tackling homelessness for those with complex needs](#)

[Rough sleepers: access to services and support \(England\)](#)

[Rough Sleepers and Anti-Social Behaviour \(England\)](#)

[Statutory Homelessness in England](#)

[Households in temporary accommodation \(England\)](#)

[Comparison of homelessness duties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)

[Applying as homeless from an assured shorthold tenancy \(England\)](#)

[Coronavirus: Housing support](#) (the final section covers action taken in regard to rough sleepers during the pandemic)

1. Local authorities' duties

Local authorities' duties towards homeless people are contained in Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996* (as amended). Local authorities have a duty to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need.¹ Thus the safety net operated by local authorities does **not** extend to securing accommodation for homeless people who are deemed not to be in priority need.

Local authorities do not have a duty to secure housing for all homeless people.

On 3 April 2018, English local authorities gained additional duties which apply to all eligible² applicants irrespective of whether they fall into a priority need category. The main thrust of changes introduced by the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* (HRA) is to refocus English local authorities on efforts to prevent homelessness. Authorities now have:

- a duty to **prevent** homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness; and
- a new duty to **relieve** homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.

Housing authorities have a duty to provide or secure the provision of advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge. This advice and assistance must be made available to any person in the district "including people who are not eligible for further homelessness services as a result of their immigration status."³ The HRA amended the 1996 Act to provide that advice and information services must be designed to meet the needs of people within the district. The particular needs of the following groups must be taken into account:

Ineligible applicants should still be able to access free advice and information from a local authority to help relieve homelessness.

- a. people released from prison or youth detention accommodation;
- b. care leavers;
- c. former members of the regular armed forces;
- d. victims of domestic abuse;
- e. people leaving hospital;
- f. people suffering from a mental illness or impairment; and,
- g. any other group that the authority identify as being at particular risk of homelessness in their district.

Research has identified that these groups of people face a higher risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

In addition to direct applications from homeless people/households, **authorities may receive notifications from certain public bodies** where they believe a service user may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The public authorities subject to the **duty to refer** are

¹ The priority need categories are set out in section 189 of the *Housing Act 1996*. Note that three linked cases considered by the Supreme Court in 2015 have strengthened the test that authorities must apply when considering whether a homeless applicant should be regarded as vulnerable and therefore owed a full rehousing duty. The [Nearly Legal website](#) has detailed information on the Court's decision.

² Eligibility is largely determined by an applicant's immigration status.

³ MHCLG, [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), 2018, para 31

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specified in the [Homelessness \(Review Procedure etc.\) Regulations 2018](#) and include:

- prisons;
- youth offender institutions;
- secure training centres;
- secure colleges;
- youth offending teams;
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
- Jobcentre Plus;
- social service authorities;
- emergency departments;
- urgent treatment centres; and,
- hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care.

The Secretary of State for Defence is also subject to the duty to refer in relation to members of the regular forces. The regular forces are the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army and the Royal Air Force.

The public bodies listed above must have the consent of the individual before making a referral to a housing authority and must allow the individual to identify the authority to which the referral should be made. The individual must also have given consent to sharing their contact details with the housing authority.

Local authorities are required to **agree a personalised plan** for all eligible applicants which should identify reasonable steps that the individual and local authority will be expected to take to prevent homelessness.

Local authorities are receiving additional funding of £72.7 million to assist in implementing the HRA's provisions over two years.⁴

Is the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 reducing rough sleeping?

Research by Crisis (2014) highlighted issues with the standard of assistance provided by local authorities to people deemed not to be in priority need:

Crisis recently carried out a mystery shopping exercise in which eight formerly homeless people visited 16 local authorities to seek help for their housing need. In well over half (50) of the 87 visits, councils gave little or no help at all. In 29 cases, the mystery shoppers were simply turned away without any help or the opportunity to speak to a housing adviser, have an assessment or make a homelessness application. This was despite the mystery shoppers portraying characters in very vulnerable situations: domestic violence, loss of employment, learning difficulties and experiencing family breakdown.⁵

Additional evidence submitted to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's 2015/16 [inquiry into homelessness](#) demonstrated variations in the standard and extent of assistance

Prior to the 2017 Act coming into force, there was evidence of inconsistent standards in the advice and assistance given to homeless people who were not obviously in a priority need category.

⁴ [Homelessness Written Question – 113560, 23 November 2017](#)

⁵ Crisis, [Turned Away: the treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England](#), 2014

provided by local authorities to applicants deemed to be homeless but not in priority need. There was a reasonable likelihood that homeless people who were not successful in obtaining alternative accommodation, despite advice and assistance provided by local authorities, or who did not approach an authority for assistance, might find themselves sleeping rough.

It was hoped that focusing attention on the prevention and relief of homelessness for **all** eligible applications would result in fewer instances of rough sleeping. Section 3 of this paper shows that the autumn counts in 2018 and 2019 recorded falls in rough sleeping of 2% and 9% respectively. [Data](#) collected in London over 2018/19 recorded that 583 people seen rough sleeping for the first time had approached their Local Authority Housing Options service for help in the 12 months prior to first being seen rough sleeping:

This is 29% of those new rough sleepers for whom this information was recorded (and 11% of all new rough sleepers in the year). Of these, 530 (91%) had approached Housing Options teams in London boroughs.⁶

This is a reduction in the number recorded for 2017/18 (730),⁷ but demonstrates that may still be scope for improvements in local authority advice and assistance services to prevent rough sleeping.

Crisis published [A foot in the door: Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act](#) in March 2020. This is an interim report of a three-year study on the implementation of the 2017 Act. The research records:

- An expansion in homeless assistance, particularly for single people.
- More positive experiences when approaching Housing Options Teams for assistance.
- Some clear examples people having poor assessments.
- The intention and ambition of the HRA is constrained by the housing market, welfare system and funding.
- Significant barriers and issues with the support on offer and people's housing outcomes persist.
- The most common form of intervention offered is information on accessing the private rented sector.
- Lack of affordable housing both social and PRS means that local authorities are increasingly constrained in the realistic outcomes that they can achieve.⁸

Authorities in England have argued that the funding provided to implement the HRA is insufficient. In November 2018, the District Councils Network (DCN) reported that over half of district councils had seen an increase in requests for homelessness advice in the six months

⁶ [CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2018-19](#), June 2019, p13

⁷ [CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2017-18](#), June 2018, p13

⁸ Crisis, [A foot in the door: experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act](#), 10 March 2020

since the HRA's introduction, with some areas seeing an increase of 100%. The DCN called for additional funding on top of the £72.7 million, greater financial flexibilities for non-stock holding authorities and an early review of the HRA.⁹

Following publication of the Crisis report in March 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) called on Government to close a predicted funding gap of £400 million in council homelessness services by 2025.¹⁰

In July 2019, MHCLG issued [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: call for evidence](#) – submissions were invited up to 15 October 2019. The responses are being analysed.

The Welsh experience

A similar approach to the HRA was adopted in Wales under the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* which came into force on 27 April 2015. Statistics on rough sleeping in Wales released on 4 February 2020 showed a **17% increase** in the numbers sleeping rough in 2019 compared to 2018.¹¹ In 2019, Shelter Cymru commented on why rough sleeping could be rising in response to the 2018 count which recorded an increase on the previous year. Shelter Cymru identified the following contributing factors:

- The inadequacy of monitoring data resulting in a lack of information on the nature and extent of rough sleeping which, in turn, impedes the development of effective solutions.
- The complexity of the factors involved: "Austerity and benefits cuts have certainly been contributing factors, along with a severe lack of affordable housing."
- A lack of Housing First accommodation in Wales and inadequate/unattractive emergency provision.
- Inadequate local authority assistance:
We regularly see clients who are sleeping rough and have been told by their council that they aren't vulnerable enough to be classed as priority need – despite Welsh Government guidance saying that people sleeping rough 'are likely to be vulnerable due to the health and social implications of their situation'.
- Insufficient service provision:
...there are not enough services out there that work flexibly and non-judgmentally enough for people who are street homeless. We need more services that understand rough sleepers' needs and can help them with employment and skills; money and benefits advice; and help to access and sustain tenancies.¹²

⁹ Local Government, "[New homelessness duties impacting on half of district councils](#)," 2 November 2018

¹⁰ [LGA Responds to Crisis report on Homelessness Reduction Act](#), 10 March 2020

¹¹ Welsh Government, [National Rough Sleeper Count: November 2019](#), 4 February 2020

¹² Shelter Cymru Blog, [Why is rough sleeping on the rise in Wales?](#) (undated)

A [Post-implementation Review](#) of the new homelessness duties in Wales (published in July 2018) found many positive outcomes but recorded:

...significant variation across Wales and also within local authority areas regarding the extent to which the ethos of the new Act has been adopted and the effectiveness of prevention and reasonable steps: this is a concern.¹³

Commenting on the 2019 count, Julie James, Welsh Minister for Housing and Local Government, said she was disappointed but not surprised by the increase. She referred to the UK Government's austerity policies and welfare reform, and to the complexity of the issues faced by rough sleepers.¹⁴

¹³ [Social Research Number 46/2018](#), Post-implementation evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report, Welsh Government, 19 July 2018

¹⁴ *Inside Housing*, "Number of rough sleepers in Wales rises by 17%", 6 February 2020

2. Causes of rough sleeping

There are some similarities in the reported causes behind the first episode of rough sleeping and those given by households to whom authorities usually owe a full rehousing duty. For example, relationship breakdown remains a significant factor. However, single homeless individuals tend to have experienced more chaotic lifestyles.¹⁵

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database contains information about rough sleepers in London who have been contacted by outreach teams or who have accessed accommodation for rough sleepers in London. CHAIN is used by people working with rough sleepers in London and it is maintained by St Mungo's, a London-based homeless charity. [The CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2018-19](#) recorded the reasons given by 2,641¹⁶ new rough sleepers for leaving their last settled base, shown in the table overleaf.

A significant number of the new rough sleepers in 2018/19 (34%) recorded their last settled accommodation as private rented housing. Restrictions to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)¹⁷ implemented in April 2011, together with the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to single people and couples with no children up to age 35 in January 2012,¹⁸ are identified as factors which make it more difficult for single people to find and retain affordable private rented housing, particularly in London. LHA rates were frozen for four years (with some limited exceptions in areas with the highest private sector rents) from April 2016. There is evidence of some private landlords being reluctant to let to people in receipt of the LHA.¹⁹

A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experienced institutional life, such as being in local authority care, prison or the armed forces. They are also associated with a having a high level of support needs:

The most frequently reported support need amongst people seen rough sleeping in 2018/19 was mental health, with 50% of those assessed during the period having a need in this area. Alcohol was the second most prevalent need, at 42%, while 41% of rough sleepers were assessed as having a support need relating to drugs.²⁰

A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experienced institutional life.

¹⁵ DCLG, [Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness](#), August 2012, paras 17-20

¹⁶ The total number of new rough sleepers recorded in 2018/19 was 5,529 but a number did not record the reason for leaving their last accommodation.

¹⁷ This is the Housing Benefit paid to people living in the private rented sector.

¹⁸ The SAR limits the Housing Benefit that a single person or couple (with no children) up to age 35 can claim to an amount to cover a room in a shared house. For more information see Library note SN/SP/5889 [Housing Benefit: Shared Accommodation Rate](#).

¹⁹ See Library Briefing Paper: [Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?](#)

²⁰ The [CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2018-19](#), section 4.8

REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST SETTLED BASE		
People sleeping rough in London, 2018/19		
	Number	with recorded reason
Asked to leave or evicted	820	31.0%
<i>Asked to leave</i>	437	16.5%
<i>Evicted - arrears</i>	189	7.2%
<i>Evicted - antisocial behaviour</i>	49	1.9%
<i>Evicted - end of tenancy agreement</i>	23	0.9%
<i>Evicted - other</i>	122	4.6%
Employment and education	447	16.9%
<i>Seeking work - from outside UK</i>	134	5.1%
<i>Seeking work - from within UK</i>	130	4.9%
<i>Financial problems - loss of job</i>	182	6.9%
<i>Study</i>	1	0.0%
Relationships	342	12.9%
<i>Relationship breakdown</i>	292	11.1%
<i>Move nearer family/community</i>	33	1.2%
<i>Bereavement</i>	17	0.6%
Financial problems	117	4.4%
<i>Debt</i>	28	1.1%
<i>Housing benefit</i>	12	0.5%
<i>Other</i>	77	2.9%
End of stay in short or medium term accommodation	111	4.2%
<i>Evicted - given non priority decision</i>	9	0.3%
<i>End of stay - hostel</i>	16	0.6%
<i>End of stay - asylum</i>	22	0.8%
<i>End of stay - other</i>	64	2.4%
Victim of violence, harassment or	106	4.0%
<i>Domestic violence - victim</i>	35	1.3%
<i>Harassment/abuse/violence</i>	66	2.5%
<i>Tenancy hijack</i>	5	0.2%
End of stay in institution	109	4.1%
<i>Prison</i>	99	3.7%
<i>Hospital</i>	10	0.4%
Housing conditions	27	1.0%
Perpetrator of violence, harassment or abuse	15	0.6%
Transient/travelling around	38	1.4%
Other	509	19.3%
Total (excl. not recorded)	2,641	100.0%
Not recorded	2,888	

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Work carried out by Homeless Link and St Mungo's on behalf of the Department of Health (2012) found that more than 70% of homeless people discharged from hospital returned to the streets without their housing or underlying health problems being addressed.²¹

In the [Homelessness monitor England 2018](#), an annual state-of-the-nation report commissioned by Crisis which looks at the impact of economic and policy developments on homelessness, authorities surveyed in 2017 referred to welfare reform when accounting for a rise in rough sleeping in their areas.²² Other issues more specific to rough sleeping were also mentioned:

...particularly reduced access to support and social care services. Unsurprisingly, given the widespread nature of this reported rise in rough sleeping, nearly two thirds (64%) of responding authorities felt that there was a need for additional resources and/or provision of accommodation/services in order to properly address rough sleeping in their locality. The kinds of expanded provision that respondents had in mind often involved additional emergency or night shelter accommodation. Others called for more supported housing suitable for people with complex needs or referenced the need for 'Housing First' provision. For a number of participants, the establishment of outreach services was considered a priority.²³

Homeless Link's report, [Young & Homeless 2018](#) (April 2018) highlighted similar issues contributing to homelessness amongst 16-to-24-year-olds.

On 14 January 2019, then Minister at MHCLG, Heather Wheeler, responded to a PQ on whether the Department would commission research into the causes of homelessness:

Following a recommendation by the Public Accounts Committee the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions jointly commissioned a feasibility study into researching the wider causes of homelessness, including households' experience of the welfare system as well as other factors such as housing affordability or relationship breakdown.

The feasibility study was completed by an independent supplier, Alma and comprised of three strands:

- a rapid evidence assessment on the causes of homelessness in the UK
- a critique of existing models of homelessness and homelessness projections; and
- identification of options for developing a predictive, quantitative model or suite of models on homelessness.

The Communities Secretary and I are working with the ministerial teams across the DWP to decide how best to take this work

²¹ [Improving hospital admission and discharge for people who are homeless](#), March 2012. Note that hospitals are now subject to the duty to refer subject to the person giving their consent – see section 1, p5.

²² 61% of authorities reported an increase in rough sleeping in their areas.

²³ Suzanne Fitzpatrick; Hal Pawson; Glen Bramley; Steve Wilcox; Beth Watts & Jenny Wood, [Homelessness monitor England 2018](#), April 2018 (Executive summary) p11.

forward. We will write to the Public Account Accounts Committee shortly setting out our plans for next steps.²⁴

On 5 February 2019, James Brokenshire, then Secretary of State, said that the research commissioned by the DWP and MHCLG into the causes of homelessness, including the impact of welfare reform, would assist the development of “a predictive model of homelessness and rough sleeping in the long term.”²⁵

Alma’s reports were published on 25 March 2019:

[Causes of homelessness and rough sleeping: rapid evidence assessment](#)

[Causes of homelessness and rough sleeping: review of models of homelessness](#)

[Causes of homelessness and rough sleeping: feasibility study](#)

Commenting on the findings in response to a PQ, the then DWP Minister, Will Quince, said:

The causes of homelessness are numerous, varied and complex. A joint study between the Department and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has shown that there is not a direct causal link between welfare and homelessness.

[...]

Attributing homelessness to a single Governmental policy would simplify the issue, and this approach would wrongly deny it the multi-faceted approach which we’re committed to delivering.²⁶

On 30 August 2019, the then Director General of Housing and Building Safety at MHCLG, Jeremy Pocklington, [wrote](#) to the chair of the Committee of Public Accounts, Meg Hillier, to update her on progress following the publication of Alma’s research. Briefly, the DWP and MHCLG are working together on a programme of research and analysis which will lead to the development of a predictive model of homelessness trends and which will enable the appraisal of future policy changes on levels of homelessness.²⁷

On 11 March 2020, Budget 2020 announced that the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR)²⁸ exemptions would be **extended** to cover:

- Rough sleepers aged 16-24;
- Care leavers up to age 25; and
- Victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking.²⁹

²⁴ [Written question – 206896, 14 January 2019](#)

²⁵ [Written question – 212132](#), 5 February 2019

²⁶ [Written question – 241435](#), 10 April 2019

²⁷ [Letter from Jeremy Pocklington to Meg Hillier MP](#), 30 August 2019

²⁸ SAR limits the amount of assistance with rent payments a single claimant under age 35 living in the private rented sector can get to the cost of a room in a shared house or flat (subject to Local Housing Allowance rates).

²⁹ [HC 121, March 2020](#), para 1.190

3. The number of rough sleepers

Summary

- Local authorities currently produce an annual count or estimate of rough sleepers in their area.
- There were an estimated **4,266** rough sleepers on any given night in autumn 2019, down 9% on the year before but up 141% on 2010.
- There were **1,136** rough sleepers in London in the 2019 estimate, 27% of England's total.
- In London, the CHAIN database records the number of rough sleepers in contact with services across the whole year. There were **8,855** rough sleepers in contact with services in 2018/19.

3.1 Past approaches to counting rough sleepers

Rough sleeper counts 1996-2008

The DETR's 1999 evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative acknowledged that there were difficulties in producing accurate counts of the number of people sleeping rough.³⁰ The problems include: formulating a clear definition of rough sleeping; identifying a transient and often hidden population; and distinguishing between stock counts taken at one point in time and flow counts of the number of people sleeping rough over a period of time.

From 1996 local authorities were asked to provide annual estimates of rough sleeping in their statistical returns to the Department as part of the Housing Investment Programme process. Authorities were encouraged to work with voluntary sector homelessness agencies to conduct head counts of people sleeping rough in their areas where there was a known rough sleeping problem. Policy on how these counts were to be conducted is described below:

- at least two counts a year in areas with a substantial number of rough sleepers (20 or more on a single night);
- at least one count a year in areas with between 10 and 19 rough sleepers on a single night; and
- counts in a selection of areas estimating fewer than 10 rough sleepers on a single night to spot check the validity of those estimates.³¹

The figures from the single night street counts in 1998 produced an estimate of 1,850 rough sleepers in England on any one night. The same count in 1999 produced an estimate of 1,633, of which 635 were in Greater London.³² The 1998 figure was taken as the baseline figure for the Labour Government's target to reduce rough sleeping by two thirds by 2002.

In May 2000 Hilary Armstrong, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, reported that street counts in January 2000 showed a fall of

³⁰ Homes for street homeless people, December 1999

³¹ HC Deb 10 December 2001 c574W

³² HC Deb 15 December 1999 c193-4W

around one third in the number of people sleeping rough in central London since June 1998.³³ The June 2000 street count found 546 rough sleepers in Greater London and 1,180 in England as a whole, indicating that the downward trend was continuing.³⁴ The Rough Sleepers Unit predicted that if the fall in rough sleeping continued at that rate the unit would have met its target by August 2001.³⁵

On 3 December 2001 the Labour Government announced that the RSU *had* achieved its target of reducing rough sleeping by at least two thirds by 2002. The November 2001 count found 532 people sleeping rough in England.³⁶

On 12 September 2005 the ODPM reported that rough sleeping had fallen to its lowest level ever:

Annual rough sleeping figures for 2005 show a 75 per cent reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 1998, from 1,850 to 459.

...National statistics also published today show the number of people becoming homeless was 17 per cent lower than in the same period the previous year.³⁷

When announcing the new strategy to end rough sleeping by 2012, the Minister, Iain Wright, referred to street count figures which indicated that there were around 483 rough sleepers across the country on any given night.³⁸ On 15 July 2010 DCLG reported that the numbers of rough sleepers in England had hit an 11-year low: 70 councils had conducted street counts and reported that there were 440 rough sleepers in England on any given night. In comparison, in 2009 76 councils conducted street counts and recorded 464 rough sleepers.³⁹

Homelessness charities had long questioned whether street sleeping had been reduced by the extent claimed. Philip Burke of the Simon Community reportedly said that the 2001 figures "do not reflect the full picture" because "the figures centre on some major cities and London Boroughs, and are only a sample reflecting one night of the year."⁴⁰ The final estimates were the sum of all counts conducted by local authorities, but each year the majority of local authorities did not conduct a count.

The Simon Community's July 2002 newsletter claimed that, prior to the November 2001 head count, the RSU decanted rough sleepers into bed and breakfast accommodation and held all-night parties to draw the homeless off the streets in order to push down the count figures.⁴¹ The

³³ HC Deb 9 May 2000 c630

³⁴ HC Deb 15 November 2000 c655W

³⁵ 'Rough Sleepers Unit on schedule to achieve its goal', *Housing Today*, 24 August 2000

³⁶ RSU Press Release, Government meets target on reducing rough sleeping, 3 December 2001

³⁷ ODPM Press Release 2005/190, 12 September 2005

³⁸ DCLG Press Release, New Goal to end rough sleeping, 18 November 2008

³⁹ DCLG Press Release, Rough sleeping hits an eleven year low, 15 July 2010

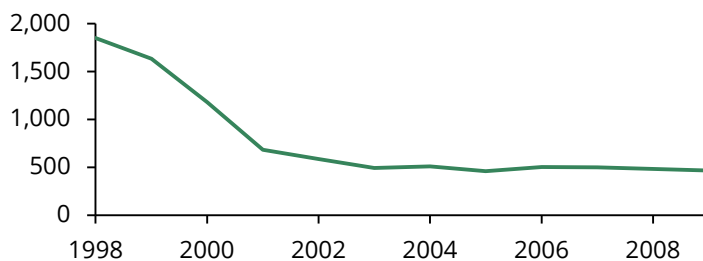
⁴⁰ "Rough sleeping figures are 'quick fix' says charity chief", *Inside Housing*, 8 September 2000

⁴¹ Simon Star, Issue 89, July 2002

RSU and Lord Falconer (Minister for Housing at that time) denied these allegations.⁴² Questions on the methodology of the counts were asked in the House.⁴³

In January 2007 *Inside Housing* reported that the number of people sleeping rough could be “as much as four times higher than the official figure because of the way the statistics are collected.”⁴⁴ Authorities recording between zero and 10 rough sleepers during the June 2006 count had had their results rounded down to zero. DCLG conceded that the counts did not represent a comprehensive picture of homelessness but said they “provide a useful snapshot of the number sleeping rough on a particular night.”⁴⁵ [Revised guidance on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping](#) was published in March 2007.⁴⁶

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ROUGH SLEEPERS IN ENGLAND, 1998-2009



Notes: The England total is the sum of all local authorities providing a count, but the majority of local authorities did not produce a count during this period.

Source: MHCLG, [Rough sleeping in England: Total street count and estimates 2010](#), 23 July 2010

Rough sleeper counts 2008-2010

As part of the November 2008 announcement, the Labour Government said it would adopt a new approach to assessing the number of rough sleepers:

While we will keep the local counts as a useful measure, we know that they provide a limited snapshot. They should be the start of the process not the end. We want to use the counts and other sources of data to bring together a fuller picture of the different needs of people sleeping rough, the services offered and the outcomes achieved. We want to make sure that people are getting the help that they need.

This information needs to drive further action to tackle rough sleeping. So we will:

- launch a new approach to help local authorities monitor progress and track people sleeping rough, ensuring that

⁴² “Falconer defends rough sleeper count,” *Housing Today*, 24 January 2002

⁴³ HC Deb 5 March 2002 c186W

⁴⁴ *Inside Housing*, “Number of homeless could be four times official figure”, 12 January 2007

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ DCLG, [Guidance on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping – 2007 revision](#), March 2007

counts are not just an opportunity to identify levels of need but more importantly to do something about it;

- launch “Street Needs Audits” to give us a much better understanding of the needs of people on the streets; and
- develop new ways of using data to understand and monitor outcomes for people who have slept rough.⁴⁷

Alongside the publication of the rough sleeper counts in July 2010, the new Housing Minister at that time, Grant Shapps, said that he would “shortly consult” on an overhaul of the rough sleeping count methodology. He said:

Today's figures show that rough sleeping is at an 11-year low - but I am sceptical that these figures reflect the situation on the streets.

Only councils considered to have a rough sleeping problem have been required to conduct counts - so in some of our biggest cities, while local people would be acutely aware of the problem of rough sleeping, official street counts were not conducted.

That's why I will shortly publish plans for a complete overhaul of the way the problem of rough sleeping is assessed so councils and charities can be given a credible measure of the problem in their area.⁴⁸

A consultation document, [Proposed changes to guidance on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping: Consultation](#), was published on 23 July 2010 and consultation closed on 3 September 2010. On 14 September 2010 the Coalition Government issued new guidance for local authorities, [Evaluating the Extent of Rough Sleeping: A new approach](#).

The new methodology has been applied by authorities since October 2010. The guidance is “aimed at getting a clearer picture of the scale of the problem in each area so more targeted support can be provided to some of the most vulnerable in society.”⁴⁹

3.2 Rough sleeper counts 2010-present

The first annual rough sleeping statistics produced under the new guidance were published in February 2011, and are published annually. The latest figures are for autumn 2019.

The new guidance asks local authorities to produce either a formal count or an estimate of the number of rough sleepers in the area. Counts are to be conducted between 1 October and 30 November each year. Estimates should be produced in consultation with agencies working with rough sleepers in the area, although a small number of local authorities have produced estimates without any external consultation.

In 2019, 78 local authorities carried out a count and 239 carried out an estimate. 104 out of these 239 had their estimate informed by a ‘spotlight street count’, where a partial count is undertaken in particular

⁴⁷ DCLG, [No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping](#), 18 November 2008

⁴⁸ CLG Press Release, Rough sleeping hits an eleven year low, 15 July 2010

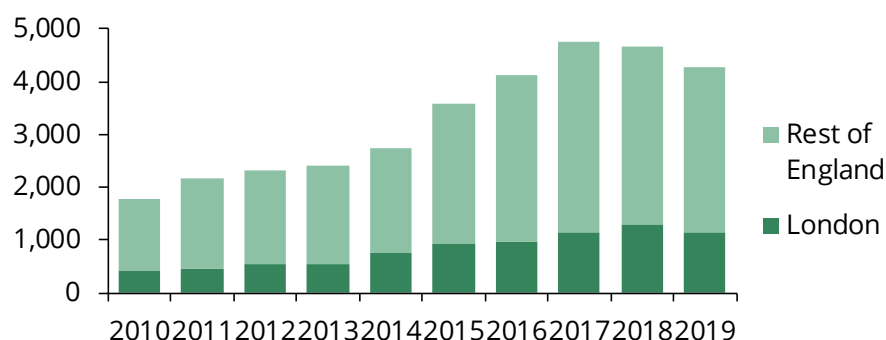
⁴⁹ HC Deb 25 October 2010 c89W

18 Rough sleeping (England)

locations. All responses in 2019 were verified by the charity Homeless Link.⁵⁰ The resulting statistics are understood not to give a complete picture of rough sleeping – quality issues are discussed further on pp. 19-20 of this briefing.

A total of 4,266 rough sleepers were recorded in 2019. The table and chart below show the estimated number of people sleeping rough on a single night in England from 2010 up to the latest figures for 2019.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ROUGH SLEEPERS 2010-2019				
	England		London	
	Number	% change on prev. year	Number	% change on prev. year
2010	1,768		415	
2011	2,181	23%	446	7%
2012	2,309	6%	557	25%
2013	2,414	5%	543	-3%
2014	2,744	14%	742	37%
2015	3,569	30%	940	27%
2016	4,134	16%	964	3%
2017	4,751	15%	1,137	18%
2018	4,677	-2%	1,283	13%
2019	4,266	-9%	1,136	-11%



Source: MHCLG (2019). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#), Table 1

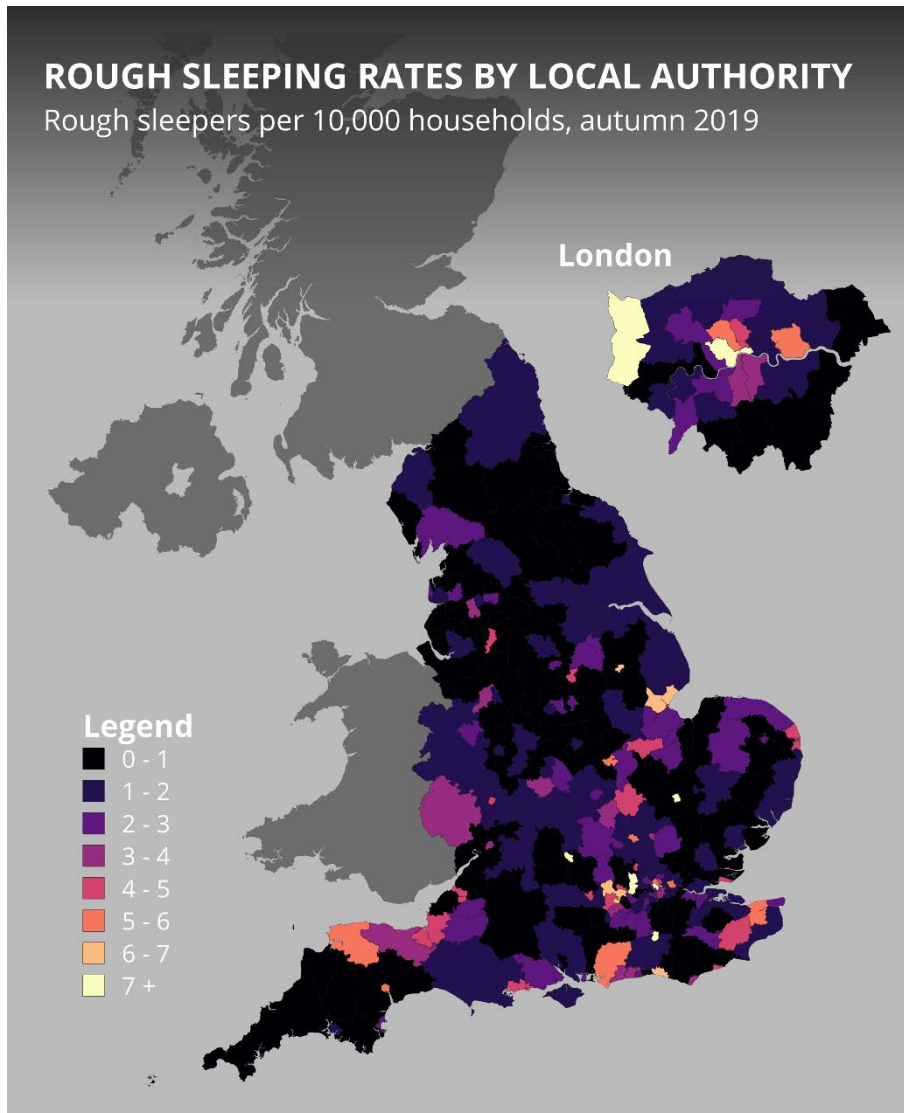
The estimated number of people sleeping rough on a given night increased each year from 2010 up until 2017. Since then, it has started to decline – the estimate for 2019 is 9% lower than the estimate for the year before. Overall, the estimate has increased by 141% from 1,768 in 2010 to 4,266 in 2019.

Rough sleepers in London made up 27% of the England total in 2019. In London, rough sleeping has increased by 174%, from 415 rough sleepers in 2010 to 1,136 rough sleepers in 2019.

The map below shows the rate of rough sleepers per 10,000 households in each local authority in England. The highest rates in 2019 were in the City of London (119 rough sleepers per 10,000 households),

⁵⁰ MHCLG (2020). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#)

Westminster (29), and Hillingdon (10). The highest rate outside of London was Oxford (8).



Source: MHCLG (2019). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#), Table 1
Maps © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. House of Commons Library
100040654 (2020)

The table overleaf shows the number of rough sleepers in each region, as well as the rate per 10,000 households. London had the most rough sleepers per 10,000 households (3.2), followed by the South East (2.4) and the South West (2.0).

ROUGH SLEEPER ESTIMATES BY REGION, 2019		
Region	Rough sleepers	Rate per 10,000 households
North East	67	0.6
North West	349	1.1
Yorkshire & the Humber	242	1.0
East Midlands	305	1.5
West Midlands	319	1.3
East of England	458	1.8
London	1,136	3.2
South East	900	2.4
South West	490	2.0

Source: MHCLG (2019). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#), Table 1

Demographics of rough sleepers

Demographic information about rough sleepers was published for the first time for 2016, and has been published annually since. The table below summarises the 2019 figures. Most rough sleepers (83%) were recorded as male, while 14% were female. 83% were aged over 25, while 5% were aged 25 or under. In some cases, demographics were not identified (particularly age and nationality) so these figures come with some uncertainty.

ROUGH SLEEPER DEMOGRAPHICS, 2019				
	England		London	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Gender				
Female	614	14%	148	13%
Male	3,534	83%	948	83%
Not known	118	3%	40	4%
Nationality				
UK	2,735	64%	367	32%
EU (non-UK)	937	22%	481	42%
Non-EU (non-UK)	151	4%	84	7%
Not known	443	10%	204	18%
Age				
Under 18	6	0%	0	0%
18-25	201	5%	36	3%
Over 25	3,542	83%	848	75%
Not known	517	12%	252	22%

Source: MHCLG (2019). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#), Tables 2a, 2b and 2c

Nationality was also recorded: 64% were UK nationals, 22% were EU nationals and 4% were nationals of non-UK, non-EU countries. In

London, rough sleepers were more likely to be from overseas: 42% were EU nationals and 7% were from non-EU, non-UK countries.

Quality of official rough sleeping statistics

The rough sleeping statistics published by MHCLG are understood not to give a complete picture of the number of people who sleep rough during a given year, and do not capture data on other forms of homelessness. MHCLG describes the statistics as a 'snapshot' of rough sleeping and notes that "accurately estimating the number of people sleeping rough within a local authority is inherently difficult given the hidden nature of rough sleeping".⁵¹

The figures do not have [National Statistics](#) status, which means that they do not meet the standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA's) Code of Practice for Statistics. UKSA published an assessment of compliance in December 2015 in which the rough sleeping statistics were deemed not to meet the standard of National Statistics:

For the Rough Sleeping statistics, this report concludes that there is work to be done in respect of the three pillars of National Statistics - trustworthiness, quality and value - and I consider that the key first step in this will be for the statisticians to demonstrate greater control over decision making around these statistics.⁵²

MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in August 2018, included a commitment to "improve the evidence base" around rough sleeping:

[A]cross the strategy, we have made a number of commitments to piloting new approaches to inform wider roll-out, improving data and building the evidence base. We have already introduced the H-CLIC data collection arrangements through which local authorities will be gathering and reporting on the causes of homelessness, and the accommodation and support needs of people asking for help, including single people threatened with homelessness and those sleeping rough.⁵³

UKSA has also previously expressed concern about the differing methodologies used by local authorities to generate their figures.

Local authorities may carry out a direct count of rough sleepers on a single night, or an estimate with input from local agencies. Both approaches have strengths and pitfalls and may be appropriate in different circumstances. However, the proportion of local authorities carrying out a count has risen from 16% in 2017 to 22% in 2018 and 25% in 2019.⁵⁴

In March 2019, UKSA responded to a letter from then Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, John Healey, about whether this change in the mix of approaches had affected the overall rough sleeping count:

The latest official statistics show a significant change between 2017 and 2018 in the way many local authorities are recording rough sleeping, with many more authorities taking a street count or spotlight count approach than in recent years. This is

⁵¹ MHCLG (2020). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#)

⁵² UK Statistics Authority, [Statistics on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in England \(Department for Communities and Local Government\)](#), December 2015

⁵³ MHCLG, [The rough sleeping strategy](#), 13 August 2018, p20

⁵⁴ MHCLG (2020). [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019](#)

particularly apparent for areas receiving additional funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). More could have been done to acknowledge and explore this apparent methodological change this year and its impact in particular on the RSI areas. We welcome the substantially expanded statistical narrative and quality information in the latest statistics but expect greater clarity about what is driving this change in methods, the relationship to RSI funding, and the extent to which it may have affected comparability of the series.⁵⁵

The letter also criticised the timescale for the commitments made in MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy:

Rough sleeping statistics have never been designated National Statistics, and the Secretary of State acknowledged that they may never satisfy the requirements to achieve that status. Nevertheless, MHCLG did commit to improvements.

The department's Rough Sleeping Strategy includes welcome plans for that. However the only timetable in the plan is to make the improvements over the next nine years. This seems to us so lengthy a period that it could be taken as not really being a commitment. We have been in contact with the department to urge greater speed and clarity about the plans.⁵⁶

MHCLG has since published an [evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative](#) (2018) that attempts to account for the shift in methods used by some local authorities receiving funding between 2017 and 2018. It found that rough sleeping did appear to decrease overall in areas that received RSI funding, compared with trends in rough sleeping in a control group that didn't receive funding.⁵⁷ However, the control group had lower levels of rough sleeping overall than the RSI group, meaning that it was not completely comparable.

The Commons Library Insight article [Rough sleeping statistics: how reliable are they?](#) looks at the quality of rough sleeping statistics in more detail.

3.3 Statistics from the London CHAIN database

As noted earlier, the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database contains information about rough sleepers in London who have been contacted by outreach teams or who have accessed accommodation for rough sleepers in London. CHAIN is used by people working with rough sleepers in London and it is maintained by St Mungo's. The data does not include people from "hidden homeless" groups such as those "sofa surfing" or living in squats, unless they have also been in contact with an outreach team, day centre or assessment hub.

⁵⁵ [Letter from Sir David Norgrove, Chair, UK Statistics Authority, to Rt Hon John Healey MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing](#), 25 March 2019

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ MHCLG, [Impact evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018](#), 12 September 2019

The report for the latest available financial year (2018/19) shows that a total of 8,855 rough sleepers were contacted by outreach workers or building-based teams in London over 2018/19, an 18.3% increase on the year before. The number of rough sleepers recorded has risen by 123% since 2010/11.⁵⁸

ROUGH SLEEPERS IN LONDON		
At any point in financial year		
	Number	% change on previous year
2010/11	3,975	
2011/12	5,678	+42.8%
2012/13	6,437	+13.4%
2013/14	6,508	+1.1%
2014/15	7,581	+16.5%
2015/16	8,096	+6.8%
2016/17	8,108	+0.1%
2017/18	7,484	-7.7%
2018/19	8,855	+18.3%

Source: [CHAIN Greater London Full Report, 2018/19](#)

5,529 of these rough sleepers (62%) were seen for the first time in 2018/19. 23% had also been seen the year before, while 14% had been before 2018/19 but not during that year. 2,379 (27%) of rough sleepers seen were helped into accommodation or to return to their home area in 2018/19.

583 people seen rough sleeping for the first time ever in 2018/19 were recorded as having approached their Local Authority Housing Options service for help in the 12 months prior to first being seen rough sleeping. This represents 11% of all new rough sleepers in the year. Of these, 530 (91%) had approached Housing Options teams in London boroughs.

CHAIN also provides a detailed breakdown by nationality. The table overleaf shows the change in the number of rough sleepers in each broad nationality category between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The number of rough sleepers identified as UK nationals increased by 4%, while the number from Central or Eastern European (CEE) countries increased by 50%. Overall, UK nationals made up 45% of all rough sleepers, while rough sleepers from CEE countries made up 28%. 8% of rough sleepers did not have their nationality identified.

Around 11% of rough sleepers seen in 2018/19 in London had contacted a local authority for assistance **before sleeping rough.**

⁵⁸ Mayor of London (2019). [CHAIN Greater London full report, 2018/19](#)

NATIONALITY OF LONDON ROUGH SLEEPERS			
Across 2018/19 financial year			
	2017/18	2018/19	% change
UK	3,862	4,023	+4%
CEE	1,677	2,518	+50%
Other Europe	646	697	+8%
Rest of world	953	916	-4%
Not known	346	701	
Total	7,484	8,855	

Source: [CHAIN Greater London Full Report, 2018/19](#)

The table below shows the ten most commonly-reported nationalities.

10 MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES		
London rough sleepers, 2018/19		
1	UK	4,023
2	Romania	1,279
3	Poland	665
4	Lithuania	193
5	India	144
6	Italy	130
7	Bulgaria	128
8	Ireland	120
9	Portugal	98
10	Eritrea	65

Source: [CHAIN Greater London Full Report, 2018/19](#)

The CHAIN Street to Home reports and bulletins for previous years, which provide a more detailed breakdown of the characteristics of rough sleepers with whom contact has been made, are accessible online on the [St Mungo's website](#). The reports and bulletins for 2018/19 are on the [Greater London Authority's website](#).

4. Tackling rough sleeping (1990 to 2010)

Crisis commissioned the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York to conduct a review of single homelessness in the UK between 2000 and 2010. The study, [A review of single homelessness in the UK](#), (2011) provides an overview of the history, causes and policy responses to single homelessness, and assesses how successful these policies have been in tackling the issue. The study suggested some policy responses for the following decade.

4.1 Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) 1990-99

The RSI marked a significant attempt to tackle rough sleeping. Originally envisaged as a short-term initiative, the RSI incorporated a range of approaches and schemes – its broad aim was to make it unnecessary for people to sleep rough on the streets of London.

The programme ran for nine years and spanned both Conservative and Labour Governments. Over the period of its operation the RSI recorded some significant successes. It was replaced in 1999 with Labour's Homelessness Action Programme. More information can be found in Library Briefing Paper 07121, [The Rough Sleepers Initiative \(RSI\) 1990-99](#).

4.2 After the RSI: reducing rough sleeping by two-thirds by 2002

The Minister for Housing, Nick Raynsford, described in some detail the steps the Labour Government was taking to tackle youth homelessness in response to a [PQ in February 1999](#).⁵⁹

The Homelessness Action Programme replaced the RSI and section 180 funding from the end of March 1999.

Annex C to the Social Exclusion Unit's (SEU) report, *Rough Sleeping*,⁶⁰ set out the Labour Government's action plan for dealing with rough sleeping. The Unit's recommendations for tackling rough sleeping contained three main strands. First, the relevant Government departments should address the major flows into rough sleeping – people leaving care, the armed forces and prisons. Second, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) should disseminate best practice in preventing and dealing with rough sleeping. Third, local bodies should co-ordinate the actions of central Government, local authorities, voluntary agencies and business.

The SEU set a target of reducing the number of people sleeping rough by two thirds by 2002. It had found that around 1,850 people slept

⁵⁹ [HC Deb 8 February 1999 c9-10W](#)

⁶⁰ Cm 4008, July 1998

rough each night and that 10,000 people slept rough over the course of a year (1998).

The Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU), headed by Louise Casey, was established within DETR in April 1999 and assumed responsibility for national rough sleeping policy from September 1999. The Unit was set the task of implementing the recommendations of the Social Exclusion Unit by working on a radical new approach to help vulnerable rough sleepers off the streets, rebuilding the lives of former rough sleepers and preventing the new rough sleepers of tomorrow from developing.

The DETR published its first [Annual Report on Rough Sleeping](#) in August 1999. This report described the Labour Government's work on tackling rough sleeping since the publication of the SEU report in July 1998. The report noted the Government's achievements including:

- better co-ordination of Government departments, local authorities and voluntary agencies;
- setting up the Rough Sleepers Unit;
- establishing the £34 million Homelessness Action Plan outside London;
- tailoring the New Deal and other employment initiatives to meet the needs of rough sleepers.

The Labour Government published [Coming in from the cold: the Government's Strategy on Rough Sleeping](#) in December 1999. This report detailed a package of measures devised by the Rough Sleepers Unit to assist vulnerable rough sleepers with alcohol, drug and mental health problems.⁶¹

A companion document, [Coming in from the Cold: delivering the strategy](#), was published in January 2000. This strategy started in April 2000; it was hoped that it would achieve the Government's aim of reducing rough sleeping in England by at least two thirds by 2002.

In July 2000 the Rough Sleepers Unit unveiled schemes aimed at preventing ex-offenders from ending up on the streets.⁶² Policy recommendations aimed at preventing ex-offenders from becoming rough sleepers can be found in the report, [Blocking the Fast Track from Prison to Rough Sleeping](#).⁶³

In September 2000 the Unit announced schemes specifically aimed at preventing young people from ending up on the streets.⁶⁴ Safe Stop for young people sleeping rough in London provided short-term accommodation for people aged between 16 and 24. Centrepont was given funds to provide a care-leaving strategy support service to local authorities in London to ensure young people made a successful transition from care to independent living.

⁶¹ DETR Press Notice 1201, 15 December 1999

⁶² Cabinet Office Press Release 258/00, 17 July 2000

⁶³ DETR, July 2000

⁶⁴ Cabinet Office Press Release 303/00, 18 September 2000

Around the country the Unit funded schemes to educate young people on the challenges of independent living, i.e. in Newcastle, Brighton and Oxford. Alone in London was funded to provide family mediation and returning home services for young people in Safe Stop, rolling shelters and day centres. Emergency Nightstop accommodation was funded in Bristol and developed in new areas throughout the UK. The RSU published research into the specific needs of care leavers in September 2000⁶⁵ to which the then Government responded later that month.

The RSU published its first progress report on the Labour Government's strategy for tackling rough sleeping in October 2000⁶⁶ a second progress report followed in August 2001.⁶⁷

A new Homelessness Directorate was established in January 2002 to "bring together and invigorate existing work to help homeless people, as well as develop new work to help prevent homelessness, and investigate its underlying causes."⁶⁸ The Directorate brought together the RSU, Bed & Breakfast Unit and a new team to advise local authorities on tackling homelessness.

In 2003 the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions launched [More Than a Roof](#), which set out the Labour Government's new approach to tackling homelessness.⁶⁹

On 13 December 2004 the Labour Government announced a £150 million funding package for action to "prevent and reduce" homelessness. An additional £90 million was targeted at improving the condition of hostel accommodation and services aimed at helping rough sleepers make a permanent move away from the streets. An allocation of £60 million was shared between local authorities and voluntary agencies over 2005/06 "to deliver front line services and take forward other initiatives to reduce homelessness."⁷⁰ The press release stated that this funding came "via the Spending Review 2002 and was confirmed through the Spending Review 2004." A [policy briefing](#) on improving hostels through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme was published in September 2006.

4.3 Extending the priority need categories - 2002

Local authorities have never had a duty to secure accommodation for *all* homeless people. As explained in section 1, to qualify for a full

⁶⁵ Leaving Care: a Time for Change

⁶⁶ [Coming in from the Cold: progress report](#), 2000

⁶⁷ Coming in from the Cold: progress report, August 2001

⁶⁸ RSU Press release, Government meets target on reducing rough sleeping, 3 December 2001

⁶⁹ DTLR, More Than a Roof, 2003

⁷⁰ ODPM Press Release 2004/0313, 13 December 2004

rehousing duty an applicant has to fall into one of the priority need categories set out in section 189 of the *Housing Act 1996* (as amended).

In 2001 the Labour Government consulted on proposals to extend these categories to include homeless people who are vulnerable because they have an institutionalised or care background, all 16 and 17-year-olds and people fleeing harassment or domestic violence. A statutory instrument to introduce these new categories came into effect on 31 July 2002. The Labour Government hoped that the extension of these categories would, in turn, reduce the number of people forced into rough sleeping.

In addition, the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2001* came into force in October 2001. This Act placed a new duty on local authorities to ensure that care leavers are provided with suitable accommodation, which does not include temporary accommodation.⁷¹

Organisations dealing with the homeless welcomed these changes, particularly the extension of the priority need categories, but expressed concern that the burden might be too great for some local authorities to cope with. Organisations giving evidence to the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee's 2004-05 inquiry into homelessness repeated these concerns:

As the ODPM admitted in their evidence, the greater number of categories has led to a substantial increase in the number of acceptances. Local authorities complain that they have not been given adequate resources to cope with this foreseeable of the 2002 Order. Norwich City Council said that the successful implementation of the Order was being affected by a 'lack of appropriate/suitable temporary and permanent accommodation.'⁷²

A further criticism levelled at the Government was that the extension of the categories did not go far enough. The Connection at St Martin's suggested the inclusion of:

A person who is vulnerable as a result of having become entrenched in a pattern of street living through a sustained period of rough sleeping.⁷³

The Government's response to the Committee rejected further extensions to the priority need categories.⁷⁴

4.4 Labour's target to end rough sleeping by 2012

In April 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a discussion paper [Rough Sleeping 10 years on: From the streets to independent living and opportunity](#), to inform the development of an updated Government strategy.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has extended local authorities' duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.

⁷¹ HC Deb 10 June 2002 c1079W

⁷² ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee, HC 61-I, Third Report of Session 2004-05, Homelessness, para 45

⁷³ Ibid., para 46

⁷⁴ Cm 6490, para 9

Responses received to this paper were summarised in [Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the streets to independent living and opportunity - Analysis of responses to discussion paper - Executive summary](#).

On 18 November 2008, the Labour Government announced a new goal to end rough sleeping by 2012. A new action plan was issued, backed by an allocation of £200 million.⁷⁵

The full 15-point action plan, [No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping](#), which was developed with leading rough sleeping charities, involved action, advice and assistance across England to prevent the flow of people on to the streets, as well as to support those already there to get off the streets into stability. The plan called on communities to get more involved in supporting those in their area at risk of rough sleeping, to help stop the flow on to the streets, ensuring that the right resources reach the right people at the right time.

Progress against the 2008 action plan was set out in *No One Left Out: communities ending rough sleeping - An annual progress report: November 2008 - November 2009 (November 2009)*. DCLG issued a press notice on the launch of this progress report which highlighted the following achievements:

One year on from the launch of the 'No One Left Out' strategy to end rough sleeping further action to stem the flow of new rough sleepers coming on to the street and reach entrenched rough sleepers is well underway, according to a progress report published today.

Funding has been provided to help hundreds of rough sleepers find homes in the private rented sector through the Small Grants programme. Through this, councils can help provide deposits so that rough sleepers are able to secure privately rented accommodation.

A mentoring and befriending scheme has also been established for vulnerable housed rough sleepers to help them stay in their accommodation and begin to make friends and new social support networks in their community.

Ian Austin, Homelessness Minister, said:

"We have achieved a lot in the past year, kick-starting the new and innovative ideas outlined in the Rough Sleeping Strategy. But meeting our target of ending rough sleeping by 2012 will depend upon the continued hard work of Government departments, local authorities, the voluntary sector and other agencies dealing with rough sleeping.

"Together we must maintain this momentum and continue the drive to find, and put in place, long-term solutions to tackle rough sleeping."

Other achievements outlined in the report include:

- Close working between the health service and other agencies to make sure that rough sleepers who find themselves in hospital or provision don't just end up back on the streets when they are discharged

⁷⁵ DCLG Press Release, *New Goal to end rough sleeping*, 18 November 2008

- A bus outreach team in London funded by CLG and Transport for London to engage and help rough sleepers who are sleeping on the back of buses in the capital
- Advisory visits by a team of experts to more than 80 local authorities across England to support councils in taking steps to tackle rough sleeping in their area
- The establishment of a variety of reconnections services for destitute rough sleepers from the Eastern European states that have seen hundreds of rough sleepers voluntarily returned to their home countries with the necessary support to make that move a positive one.

Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of Homeless Link, the national umbrella organisation for agencies working to end homelessness, said:

"Tremendous progress has been made in the last year towards our goal of ending rough sleeping by 2012. We are particularly encouraged by CLG's leadership in driving support from other national government departments and their willingness to pilot approaches, such as the hospital discharge protocol, in partnership with the NHS, which aims to prevent people leaving hospital with nowhere to go. We know we need to join up support so that people can rebuild their lives. But we must not become complacent, especially at this time of intense economic and social pressure. We must constantly seek to learn from others and push ahead if we are finally to close the door into rough sleeping in every community." ⁷⁶

Organisations working with the street homeless drew attention to increased demand as a result of recessionary pressures in terms of growing redundancies and repossessions.⁷⁷ Calls were made for more help from the prison service and NHS to ensure patients and ex-offenders do not become homeless on discharge.⁷⁸ In 2009 DCLG published good practice guidance for local authorities on the prevention of homelessness in respect of ex-offenders, [Homelessness Prevention and Meeting Ex-Offenders' Needs](#).⁷⁹ A key issue identified by commentators was how success would be defined in terms of achieving the 2012 target.⁸⁰

London

In London, the area of the country with the highest number of rough sleepers, the London Delivery Board (LDB)⁸¹ was charged with meeting the 2012 target; the Mayor, Boris Johnson, endorsed the target. The LDB's annual progress report was published in February 2010; it listed the following achievements:

- Helped three quarters of London's 205 most entrenched rough sleepers off the streets;

⁷⁶ DCLG Press Release, 27 November 2009

⁷⁷ *Inside Housing*, "Everyone indoors", 26 February 2009

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Now archived.

⁸⁰ *Inside Housing*, "Everyone indoors", 26 February 2009

⁸¹ A partnership body established in 2008 which was chaired by the Mayor's Housing Advisor and which brought together central London boroughs, government departments, the voluntary sector and key stakeholders.

- Created a new outreach service to tackle rough sleeping on London's buses;
- Established a street doctor service, starting in March, to work with vulnerable long term rough sleepers still living on the streets;
- Re-launched the Pan-London Reconnection Protocol to help rough sleepers reconnect with their home areas;
- Developed a targeted programme to prevent vulnerable rough sleepers returning to the streets from hostel or other accommodation;
- Agreed a system with London's boroughs to help rough sleepers accessing services across several boroughs;
- Promoted volunteering opportunities for those wanting to end rough sleeping.⁸²

In December 2010, the Mayor announced that funding of £750,000 had been secured for a homelessness outreach scheme to ensure no-one would be forced to sleep on London's streets for more than one night – the "[No Second Night Out](#)" project. The scheme, which began as a pilot in April 2011 and which was extended to all 33 London boroughs on 1 June 2012, had the aim of helping the Mayor reach the target of ending rough sleeping in the capital by the end of 2012.⁸³ The target was not achieved but the Mayor retained a target to end rough sleeping in the capital; in May 2013 it was announced that homelessness charity Broadway (now St Mungo's) had won a £5 million two-year contract to run London's No Second Night Out scheme from June 2013.

Inside Housing reported in September 2010 that the Government had "refused to confirm their support for the target [to end rough sleeping by 2012]."⁸⁴ However, in its [Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide](#) (July 2011), the Coalition Government said it "fully supports the Mayor's commitment to end rough sleeping in London by 2012."⁸⁵

⁸² [Progress report on ending London's rough sleeping.](#) [accessed on 4 January 2016]

⁸³ [Local Government Executive Press Release](#), 20 December 2010

⁸⁴ *Inside Housing*, "Government shies away from 2012 rough sleeping pledge," 24 September 2010

⁸⁵ p12

5. Tackling rough sleeping (2010 onwards)

5.1 The Coalition Government

A press release issued by DCLG on 15 July 2010 confirmed that the new Minister for Housing at that time, Grant Shapps, would “do all he can to safeguard homelessness funding in the face of tough economic times.” The press release went on to say that, despite in-year savings of £6.2 billion across Whitehall, and the emergency Budget which outlined further measures to cut the deficit, Government funding for tackling homelessness had “remained unchanged.”⁸⁶

A [Ministerial Working Group](#) was established to prevent and reduce homelessness. The working group’s initial focus was on a vision to end rough sleeping:

The Ministerial Working Group will focus on those living on the streets and those in temporary or insecure accommodation, such as hostels, shelters and squats, who are at significant risk of rough sleeping. People being assisted under the legislation may also be considered where there are specific -government issues to address.⁸⁷

As previously noted, Boris Johnson announced that funding of £750,000 had been secured for the [No Second Night Out](#) (NSNO) project in December 2010. The scheme was eventually rolled-out to all 33 London boroughs on 1 June 2012. The aim was to help the Mayor reach the target of ending rough sleeping in the capital by the end of 2012.⁸⁸ The target was not achieved but the Mayor did retain a target to end rough sleeping in the capital. Broadway (now St Mungo’s) won the £5 million two-year contract to run London’s NSNO scheme from June 2013.

On 6 July 2011 Grant Shapps announced an additional £20 million for a Homelessness Transition Fund to be administered by the umbrella group Homeless Link. This funding enabled the countrywide roll-out of NSNO. Full details of the Coalition Government’s commitment to rough sleepers can be found in [Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide](#) (July 2011). The Fund was to run to March 2015.⁸⁹

As the name of the scheme suggests, NSNO aims to increase the proportion of new rough sleepers who are prevented from spending a second night sleeping rough. Teams of outreach workers bring rough sleepers to an assessment hub where they are assisted to exit rough sleeping by a variety of means, including reconnection with their home areas. A rough sleeping phone line and NSNO website have been set up to encourage and enable the public to report rough sleepers when they

⁸⁶ DCLG Press Release, Rough sleeping hit eleven year low, 15 July 2010

⁸⁷ The [minutes of the Group’s meetings](#) can be accessed online.

⁸⁸ [Local Government Executive Press Release](#), 20 December 2010

⁸⁹ [An evaluation report and case studies of the Homeless Transition Fund](#) can be found on the Homeless Link website.

see them. A [briefing](#) on the key elements of the scheme was published in April 2012 (the briefing focused on London).

An [evaluation](#) of the first six months of NSNO (April to September 2011) was published in December 2011. The researchers found that the project had been “highly successful in meeting its aim of supporting more new rough sleepers to move off the streets more quickly” and that new rough sleepers were less likely to return to rough sleeping in London.⁹⁰

An assessment of [No Second Night Out Across England](#) was published in February 2014. The report recorded some successes. In particular it showed that around seven in 10 (67%) rough sleepers across England were being helped off the streets the day they were found, and that nearly eight in 10 (78%) did not return after receiving help. Tackling rough sleeping quickly has been found to yield benefits in terms of preventing the development of a long-term problem. The report also observed that although most local authorities had signed up to the principles of NSNO, “not every area had developed a specific new service response.”⁹¹ The need for continued investment was stressed:

...the progress that has been made in the last two years can only be sustained through sufficient investment. 91% of NSNO services in the sample were funded by the Homelessness Transition Fund, but with this funding due to end in March 2015, there is a real risk that the good work will be undone through lack of funding.⁹²

The Department of Health (DOH) made £10 million available (the Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund) for projects to improve the identification of homeless people in hospital and to provide suitable accommodation on discharge. The closing date for bids was 8 July 2013 – in September 2013 the DOH announced that 52 projects had been awarded a share of the £10 million.⁹³ An evaluation of the scheme’s operation was published in January 2015.⁹⁴

The Minister, Marcus Jones, was tasked with leading on homelessness for the Coalition and, initially, the 2015 and 2017 Governments. Marcus Jones summarised work undertaken by the Coalition Government to tackle rough sleeping during a speech at a conference organised by Homeless Link on 8 December 2015:

Over the last Parliament, we have made great strides in ensuring that homeless people have the right support that they need to get back on their feet. Through the central investment that government has made to support local areas to tackle and prevent homelessness, we have delivered a lot together.

Our £8 million [Help for Single Homeless Fund](#) has allowed 168 local authorities to partner up together to help some of the hardest to reach individuals. These projects are offering support

⁹⁰ Broadway, York University & Crunch Consulting, [No second night out: an evaluation of the first six months of the project](#), December 2011

⁹¹ Homeless Link, [No Second Night Out Across England](#), 2014

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ [DOH Press Release](#), 6 September 2013

⁹⁴ Homeless Link, [An evaluation of the Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund](#), January 2015

to help people turn their lives around and find a long term solution that supports their needs.

Our [Access to the Private Rented Sector programme](#), which we have funded Crisis to run, has helped over 9,000 people access and sustain privately rented accommodation. This isn't just about putting a roof over someone's head, but ensuring that they get the support they need to rebuild their lives.

The pioneering [StreetLink](#) service, which we have funded, has led to nearly 15,500 rough sleepers being found and connected with local services. The service is making it easier for the public to help someone that's sleeping rough. Not with a cash handout, but with the valuable alternative of practical support.

We have pioneered 2 of the world's first Social Impact Bonds in homelessness – the [Fair Chance Fund](#) for young people, and the Social Impact Bond for the entrenched rough sleepers in London.

And I have seen first-hand the work of the [No Second Night Out](#) hubs in London, which have successfully helped over 4,000 people exit rough sleeping. More widely, the [Homelessness Transition Fund](#) has helped people find stable homes and jobs to get their lives back on track.⁹⁵

This flexible homelessness support grant includes £20 million for local authorities to use as a rough sleeping prevention fund. The grant was introduced from April 2017.

The Minister noted some specific concerns raised by the sector, notably:

- a challenging funding environment;
- the need to draw in partners from health, the probation service, Job Centres and others; and
- missed opportunities to help individuals with complex needs.⁹⁶

5.2 The Conservative Governments 2015 and 2017

Marcus Jones confirmed that the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness had been reconvened, and went on to set out the Government's approach to homelessness, following the Spending Review 2015:

In the last Parliament, we made £109 million available to local areas on top of Homelessness Prevention Grant. This investment meant that we could roll out No Second Night Out nationally through the Homelessness Transition Fund. It also allowed us to invest in StreetLink; the Fair Chance Fund; Help for Single Homeless; and the Access to the Private Rented Sector Scheme.

So in this Spending Review, we have chosen to reaffirm our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable in society.

Whilst my department has reduced its overall resource budget by nearly 30%, we have taken the decision to increase the dedicated central funding that we provide to local areas to tackle homelessness.

⁹⁵ [DCLG Press Release](#), 8 December 2015

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Over the next 4 years, we will increase central funding by making £139 million available for innovative programmes to prevent and reduce homelessness. In addition:

- we make additional Discretionary Housing Payment funding available to local authorities; this will allow them to help some of the most vulnerable people, including those in supported accommodation
- we are putting local government in control of their own finances, allowing them to respond efficiently and flexibly to local need; by the end of this Parliament, local government will be spending the same in cash terms as it does today
- we have devolved additional responsibilities, meaning that the temporary accommodation management fee will no longer be paid through the benefits system; instead, councils will receive this money upfront; we are maintaining at current levels and providing an additional £10 million a year, so that they can give more freedom and flexibilities to local authorities
- and whilst I cannot say any more on Homelessness Prevention Grant until we publish the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement later this month, I want to assure you that I have listened very carefully to the representations that have been made by you on its importance.⁹⁷

Some of the initiatives listed above, e.g. the funding for temporary accommodation, are not relevant to rough sleepers.

The sector had been concerned that Homelessness Prevention Grant funding would be reduced as part of the 2015 Spending Review. Crisis launched a [campaign](#) in support of its retention on the basis that preventing homelessness saves the Government between £3,000 and £18,000 for each individual helped.⁹⁸

Marcus Jones announced the protection of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for local authorities on 17 December 2015 as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.⁹⁹

Information on Department of Health (DOH) funding under the Homelessness Change and Platform for Life programmes was provided on 22 December 2015:

Homelessness Change is designed to improve hostel accommodation and facilities so that better healthcare can be delivered in them, and help rough sleepers avoid unnecessary hospital stays. It also gives people extra support such as education and training.

The Platform for Life scheme aims to provide shared rented accommodation for young people aged 18 to 24 who are at risk of homelessness. The money will fund time-limited tenancies that are linked with participation in work, further education, or to maintain employment and have a healthy and successful life.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Crisis, [Preventing and tackling single homelessness](#), September 2015

⁹⁹ [DCLG Press Release](#), 17 December 2015

Communities Minister Marcus Jones said:

Homelessness is not just about getting a roof over people's heads, it's also about ensuring people never become homeless again. Today's announcement demonstrates the cross-government commitment to tackling homelessness and providing support to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

This funding targets resources on initiatives to improve the life chances of homeless people through a combination of health, education and work support programmes. Ultimately these initiatives will work to prevent anyone facing a homelessness crisis again.

See a full list of the [60 projects and how much funding each will receive](#).¹⁰⁰

[Budget 2016](#) made further provision for supporting rough sleepers to get off the streets:

To further support rough sleepers off the streets and to help those who are recovering from a homelessness crisis, Budget 2016:

- invests £100 million to deliver low-cost 'second stage' accommodation for rough sleepers leaving hostel accommodation and domestic abuse victims and their families moving on from refuges. This will provide at least 2,000 places to enable independent living for vulnerable households and individuals, freeing up hostels and refuges for those in most acute need
- invests £10 million over two years to support and scale up innovative ways to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, particularly in London, building on the success of the No Second Night Out initiative
- doubles the funding for the [Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond](#) announced at the Autumn Statement 2015 from £5 million to £10 million, to drive innovative ways of tackling entrenched rough sleeping, including 'Housing First' approaches
- takes action to increase the number of rough sleeping EU migrants returning to their home countries. Building on the success of the Operation Adoze pilot, the government will roll out a new approach in which immigration officials work with Local Authorities and outreach workers to connect rough sleepers to services that can return them home.

There is a separate Library paper on [Housing First: tackling homelessness for those with complex needs](#)

Commenting on the Budget, the Chartered Institute of Housing welcomed the additional funding to tackle rough sleeping as "good news" but went on:

It will go some way to responding to rising levels of rough sleeping and we hope it marks the start of more action to come to end homelessness in this country. Homelessness is increasing and we would like to see additional investment in services to prevent homelessness and in increasing the supply of affordable housing.

The measures also do not address some of the fundamental causes of homelessness and we remain concerned about the

¹⁰⁰ [DOH Press Release](#), 22 December 2015

possible impact of further welfare cuts - in particular, the extension of LHA rates to the social sector.¹⁰¹

The [Autumn Statement 2016](#) announced that funding for the Rough Sleeping Fund would be doubled to £20 million:

Rough Sleeping Fund – The government is committing a further £10 million over two years to the Rough Sleeping Fund. This will double the size of the fund, which will support and scale up innovative approaches to preventing and reducing rough sleeping, particularly in London.¹⁰²

The National Audit Office's (NAO) report on [Homelessness](#) (September 2017) noted:

The Department is not currently monitoring the social impact bond areas because these projects have not yet started. It provides funding for these projects after the areas have supplied evidence of outcomes, as opposed to the homelessness prevention trailblazers and rough sleeping grant, which are provided in advance.¹⁰³

The 2017 Government announced that LHA caps **would not** be applied to social housing tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit/UC as previously planned.

Halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027

The Conservative Government was elected in 2017 with a manifesto commitment to halve rough sleeping over the course of the Parliament and eliminate it by 2017. The [Autumn Budget 2017](#) set out the Government's first steps towards achieving this commitment:

Rough sleeping – The Budget sets out the government's first steps towards its commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022, and to eliminate it by 2027, including the launch of the Homelessness Reduction Taskforce, which will develop a cross-government strategy to work towards this commitment.

Housing First pilots – The government will invest £28 million in three Housing First pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands, to support rough sleepers with the most complex needs to turn their lives around.

Private rented sector access schemes: support for households at risk of homelessness – The government will also provide £20 million of funding for schemes to support people at risk of homelessness to access and sustain tenancies in the private rented sector.¹⁰⁴

Following the publication of the rough sleeper statistics for 2017, the Government was questioned on the action being taken to reduce rough sleeping. Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth said:

My Lords, the Government are providing over £1 billion of funding to combat homelessness and rough sleeping, implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and piloting a housing-first approach for rough sleepers with complex needs. We are committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it altogether by 2027. To achieve this, we have established a task force to drive forward a cross-government

¹⁰¹ CIH Member Briefing on the Budget 2016 (accessed on 6 April 2016)

¹⁰² [Autumn Statement 2016](#), para 5.12

¹⁰³ [HC 308](#), 13 September 2017

¹⁰⁴ [Autumn Budget 2017](#), 23 November 2017, paras 5.33-35

strategy. It will be supported by a panel of experts, who met for the first time this morning.¹⁰⁵

Membership of the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel tasked with developing a national strategy was published on 30 November 2017.¹⁰⁶

The Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) March 2018

Heather Wheeler was appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Housing and Homelessness) on 9 January 2018.

On 30 March 2018, the then Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, announced a [new initiative to reduce rough sleeping](#) which consisted of the following a pack of measures:

- a new Rough Sleeping Team made up of rough sleeping and homelessness experts, drawn from, and funded by government departments and agencies with specialist knowledge across a wide-range of areas from housing, mental health to addiction
- a £30 million fund for 2018 to 2019 with further funding agreed for 2019 to 2020 targeted at local authorities with high numbers of people sleeping rough; the Rough Sleeping Team will work with these areas to support them to develop tailored local interventions to reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets
- £100,000 funding to support frontline Rough Sleeping workers across the country to make sure they have the right skills and knowledge to work with vulnerable rough sleepers.
- The government is also working with the National Housing Federation to look at providing additional, coordinated move-on accommodation for rough sleepers across the country. This builds on the existing 3,750 'clearing house' places already provided in London.¹⁰⁷

He described how cross-government work would support these measures:

- Department of Health and Social Care - which will make available experts in mental health and drug treatment services to help support the new outreach teams, including in hostels
- Ministry of Justice - which will focus on making sure prison and probation work with local authorities and outreach teams to identify prisoners and offenders serving community sentences who are at risk of sleeping rough
- Home Office - will encourage the policing sector to work in partnership with local authorities on rough sleeping, including enforcement where appropriate, and to identify and share best practice
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport - which will work in partnership with MHCLG to explore opportunities

¹⁰⁵ [HL Deb 1 February 2018 c1707](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Government to lead national effort to end rough sleeping](#), 30 November 2017

¹⁰⁷ [MHCLG Press Release](#), 30 March 2018

for new Social Impact Bonds that build on the success of existing programmes providing effective and innovative support to rough sleepers¹⁰⁸

August 2018 saw publication of the Government's [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) which built on the 30 March 2018 announcement.

The document was described as “the beginning of a nine year policy to ensure no one has to sleep rough again”. It included specific actions but also an intention to test different approaches, learn from them and scale up and roll out new programmes. The strategy was backed-up by £100 million in funding for two years.¹⁰⁹ Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme, the then Communities Secretary, James Brokenshire, said that some of the funding had been “reprioritised from existing budgets”.¹¹⁰

The strategy's core pillars are prevention, intervention and recovery.

The Executive Summary to the strategy (pp8-11) lists the key measures being taken forward, with reference to funding allocations as appropriate. A summary of the measures was provided in a [Written Statement](#) on 4 September 2018:

We will prevent rough sleeping by providing timely support to those at risk by, for example:

- piloting suitable accommodation and tailored for those leaving prison so they do not end up on the streets;
- researching the nature and scale of LGBT homelessness to determine what measures need to be put in place to prevent this;
- ensuring that local authorities investigate rough sleeper deaths to understand and tackle the root causes; and
- implementing the duty to refer on certain public bodies as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act, to ensure that more people get the help they need faster.

We will intervene to help people already on the street get swift, targeted support by, for example:

- rolling out a new initiative, Somewhere Safe to Stay, to help up to 6,000 people who are new to the streets or vulnerable to rough sleeping, offering support to rapidly identify issues that led them to sleeping rough;
- introducing ‘navigators’ – specialists who will act as trusted confidantes – who will help people sleeping rough access the appropriate services and accommodation;
- providing up to £30 million for health services for people sleeping rough, informed by the findings of a health provision audit to be carried out this year; and
- providing training for frontline staff on how to best help people under the influence of Spice, those who are victims

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ MHCLG, CM 9685, [Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018](#), August 2018, Executive Summary

¹¹⁰ The Independent, [“Government's £100 million' plan to eradicate rough sleeping is not new money, minister admits”](#), 13 August 2018

of domestic abuse, modern slavery, as well as how best to support homeless LGBT people.

We will help people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives by, for example:

- providing affordable accommodation for those leaving hostels and domestic abuse refuges, and to support them in managing this accommodation;
- investing money from dormant bank accounts into housing for those on the streets or at risk of rough sleeping;
- launching a new fund to help up to 5,000 former rough sleepers and those at risk to sustain their tenancies by working with them to boost financial independence and access training and employment opportunities; and
- launching a £50 million fund for homes outside London for people ready to move on from hostels or refuges but need additional support.¹¹¹

There was a commitment to “refresh the Strategy on an annual basis, setting out the progress we have made and ensuring that our interventions remain relevant and targeted.”¹¹²

MHCLG published the [Rough Sleeping Strategy: delivery plan](#) on 10 December 2018. This document provided an update on progress in implementing the strategy’s 61 commitments and information on next steps.

The first [Impact evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018](#) was published in September 2019 – the evaluation recorded some successful outcomes:

The Rough Sleeping Initiative – a cornerstone of the government’s ambitious Rough Sleeping Strategy – has provided £76 million to 246 councils across the country to date, supporting rough sleepers in their area off the streets and into secure accommodation where they can get the help they need to rebuild their lives.

The report published today (12 September 2019) shows that the Rough Sleeping Initiative has reduced the number of vulnerable people sleeping rough by 32%, compared to the number it would have been had the initiative not been in place.

The analysis estimates the impact of the initiative from its launch in March 2018 until autumn that year and takes account of a range of factors, including whether councils submitted estimates or counts in the official annual rough sleeping statistics, the weather on the night the data was collected, and local housing and labour market conditions, to zero in on the effects of the initiative.¹¹³

¹¹¹ [HCWS931, 4 September 2018](#)

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ [MHCLG Press Release](#), 12 September 2019

5.3 The Conservative Government 2019 - ending rough sleeping by the end of the Parliament

The [Conservative Manifesto December 2019](#) committed to ending “the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament”. This is a more ambitious target than that announced by the 2017 Conservative Government. The Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) and the delivery plan remain relevant.¹¹⁴

Increased funding for the third year of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (launched in March 2018) and the rapid rehousing pathway¹¹⁵ was announced on 28 January 2020. Funding for these schemes has been brought together in a consolidated pot for 2020/21.¹¹⁶ The MHCLG press release noted:

- Councils to share £112 million Rough Sleeping Initiative funding to help get people off the streets and into accommodation
- Analysis shows numbers are 32% lower in funded areas than they would be without the Initiative
- Third year of the Rough Sleeping Initiative will fund up to 6,000 bed spaces and 2,500 support staff.¹¹⁷

Successful bids for the 2020/21 funding are listed in this document: [Funding allocations for the rough sleepers initiative over 2020/21](#).

Commenting on the rough sleeping statistics published on 27 February 2020, Robert Jenrick welcomed the decrease in numbers of rough sleepers saying, “the Government’s strategy is working”. He went on to announce that **Dame Louise Casey would lead a review of rough sleeping:**

There is a great deal more to do and we must be honest with ourselves about the scale of the challenge and tackle it head-on with renewed vigour. That is why I am pleased that the Prime Minister and I are today announcing that Dame Louise Casey will lead a review of rough sleeping. This work will consider the links between 24-hour street activity and rough sleeping, particularly physical and mental health issues, and provide advice to me and to the Prime Minister on how we can best use the levers of central and local government to support this group and continue to reduce rough sleeping across the country. I know that Dame Louise’s vast experience, rigour and candour, and the fact that she has worked across party for many years, mean that she is the right person to look at what is needed and help to get the job done. I

¹¹⁴ [Sleeping rough: Written question – 3770](#), 24 January 2020

¹¹⁵ The rapid rehousing pathway approach involves funding for Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs and support to people who are already, or at risk of, sleeping rough; specialist navigators, who act as a single point of contact to support people from the streets into settled accommodation; the establishment of local lettings agencies to source, identify, or provide homes and advice for rough sleepers or those at risk; and funding for supported lettings initiatives, which will provide flexible support to help individuals sustain their tenancies.

¹¹⁶ [HCWS69, 28 January 2020](#)

¹¹⁷ [MHCLG Press Release](#), 28 January 2020

want to support Dame Louise to move at a pace commensurate with the seriousness and urgency of the action we must take now.¹¹⁸

Dame Louise's recommendations will support MHCLG to develop their Comprehensive Spending Review bid in summer 2020.¹¹⁹

The Secretary of State went on to announce a series of other measures:

- £236 million of new money for 'Housing First style' move-on accommodation.¹²⁰
- An extension of the cold weather fund arrangements whereby the most affected authorities were able to assist EEA nationals sleeping rough to 31 December 2020:
"...when the transition period ends and the new immigration system will be in place. I will work closely with the Home Secretary on how we address those challenges at the end of the transition period."
- A commitment to build 250,000 new affordable homes by March 2022 through the affordable homes programme.
- A focus on work to provide specialist help and support for those suffering from mental ill health, "backed by £30 million of additional funding from NHS England."
- Working to implement and test models of community-based provision across six projects "designed to enable access to health and support services for people who are sleeping rough with both mental ill health and substance dependency needs."¹²¹

Adam Holloway MP has been appointed as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Robert Jenrick with specific responsibility for rough sleeping.¹²²

On 11 March 2020, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, **announced additional funding to tackle rough sleeping as part of the 2020 Budget:**

Rough sleeping – The Budget confirms the £237 million announced by the Prime Minister for accommodation for up to 6,000 rough sleepers and provides a further £144 million for associated support services and £262 million for substance misuse treatment services which, when fully deployed, is expected to help more than 11,000 people a year. This will enable people to move off the streets and support them to maintain a tenancy for the long term.¹²³

The Budget included a 2% Stamp Duty Land Tax surcharge on non-UK residents buying residential property in England and Northern Ireland

¹¹⁸ [HC Deb 27 February 2020, cc501-2](#)

¹¹⁹ [Rough Sleeping Review: Written question – HL1988](#), 10 March 2020

¹²⁰ He said this was in addition to the £437 million already announced for homelessness and rough sleeping in 2020/21. The £437 **includes** the £112 million announced on 28 January 2020.

¹²¹ [HC Deb 27 February 2020, cc501-4](#)

¹²² [Prime Minister's Office Press Release](#), 27 February 2020

¹²³ [HC 121, March 2020](#), para 2.63, p75

which will become effective from 1 April 2021. The money raised will be used to address rough sleeping.¹²⁴

As noted in section 2, Budget 2020 also announced an extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate exemptions to cover:

- Rough sleepers aged 16-24;
- Care leavers up to age 25; and
- Victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking.¹²⁵

London

London accounts for the majority of rough sleepers. Sadiq Khan's 2016 Manifesto contained the following commitments relevant to tackling street homelessness:

- Set up a 'No Nights Sleeping Rough' initiative – a London-wide taskforce to oversee the implementation of the Mayor's rough sleeping work and funding priorities.
- Focus on help for young people facing homelessness, who are increasingly caught in a trap as they struggle to find somewhere to move on to, including prevention measures such as family mediation and steps to help young people into work.¹²⁶

In October 2016 the Mayor [announced](#) the establishment of a '[No Nights Sleeping Rough](#)' taskforce:

...to bring together key players to help rough sleepers and prevent rough sleeping. The group will focus efforts across the capital to tackle rough sleeping - identifying what new interventions may be needed to tackle specific problems, and lobbying government for support where necessary.¹²⁷

On 20 December 2016, Sadiq Khan [announced](#) that £50 million from London's Affordable Homes Programme funding of £3.15 billion would be used to deliver properties specifically earmarked for people needing to move on from hostels and refuges.¹²⁸

The Mayor's [London Housing Strategy](#) (May 2018) listed "tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers" as one of its top five priorities. The strategy said:

Helping rough sleepers off the streets: It is unacceptable that anyone has no choice, or feels they have no choice, other than to sleep on London's streets. The Mayor's aim is to make sure there is a route off the streets for every single rough sleeper in London. His 'No Nights Sleeping Rough' taskforce will provide leadership and coordination. He will work with councils, charities, Government, and others to boost services beyond the £8.5m a year he has committed toward support for rough sleepers. He will

¹²⁴ Ibid., para 2.212

¹²⁵ Ibid., para 1.190

¹²⁶ [Homes for Londoners](#), 2016

¹²⁷ [Mayor launches taskforce to tackle 'shameful' levels of rough sleeping](#), 6 October 2016

¹²⁸ [Sadiq sets out plans for £50 million fund to help homeless people](#), 20 December 2016

invest in improving and expanding London's network of hostels and refuges.¹²⁹

June 2018 saw publication of the [Mayor's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action](#).

On 21 October 2019, the Mayor announced that funding to address rough sleeping would double to £19.2 million to help more people off the streets.¹³⁰

On 10 January 2020 the Mayor launched a new Streetlink service for London's rough sleepers.¹³¹

5.4 The emergency response to Covid-19

On 17 March 2020, Robert Jenrick announced emergency support for rough sleepers during the pandemic:

- Communities Secretary announces £3.2 million of emergency funding to help rough sleepers to self-isolate
- Funding represents an initial first step to help local authorities and frontline services be fully prepared and put emergency measures in place
- Councils will be reimbursed for the cost of providing accommodation and services to rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, who are suffering from or at risk of coronavirus¹³²

The Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, Luke Hall [wrote to local authority leaders](#) on 26 March 2020 to update them on plans to protect rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The letter asked local authorities to "bring in those on the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission" and to **support rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless into appropriate accommodation by the end of the week**. There is a separate Library paper which discusses the response to Covid-19 in detail: [Coronavirus: Housing support](#). Jon Sparkes, CEO of Crisis, described the Government's approach as "a landmark moment".¹³³

¹²⁹ Greater London Authority, [London Housing Strategy](#), May 2018

¹³⁰ [London Assembly Press Release](#), 21 October 2019

¹³¹ [London Assembly Press Release](#), 10 January 2020

¹³² [MHCLG Press Release](#), 17 March 2020

¹³³ [Crisis Press Release](#), 27 March 2020

6. Comment

Despite considerable efforts, the official rough sleeper counts rose every year after autumn 2010 to 2017. The estimates for 2018 and 2019 recorded reductions in rough sleeping of 2% and 9% respectively. Section 3.2 considers views on the quality of this data.

6.1 Views on the Rough Sleeping Strategy

The publication of the [Rough Sleeping Strategy \(2018\)](#) was welcomed by the sector but there were calls for more action. The housing and homelessness organisations who make up the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel issued a joint statement saying:

This strategy is a significant step towards the government's goal of ending rough sleeping by 2027, which will make a real difference to people's lives. As members of the advisory panel, we welcome the new funding commitment for dedicated outreach teams and for emergency bed spaces, while the announcement of nationwide trials of a 'somewhere safe to stay' duty² and the review of the vagrancy act have the potential to pave the way for desperately needed reforms, preventing people sleeping rough.

However, for the strategy to work, the government must also set out bold, cross-departmental plans to tackle the root causes of all forms of homelessness, and prevent it from happening in the first place. This must include plans to build significantly more social housing, to foster greater security for renters, to ensure people have access to benefits and other support they need to help them keep their homes. We also need to see a reversal of policies that leave migrants homeless and destitute, and healthcare, mental health and substance misuse services that are available and truly accessible to those who need it.

To end rough sleeping by 2027, the government must build on today's welcome announcement and set out plans to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. The ambitious target that the government has set itself will only be achieved if it is equally bold on addressing the policies that cause rough sleeping.¹³⁴

Rick Henderson, CEO of Homeless Link, a body also represented on the Panel, reportedly told *Inside Housing*:

"There is a fairly big difference between what we recommended and what is in the final document, he admitted.

I don't think the strategy goes far enough – the big issues we raised on welfare reform and housing supply have not been addressed to the extent we would have liked."

Mr Henderson called for a national roll-out of Housing First, a modern approach to helping the long-term homeless that started in New York and has been growing in the UK. Pilots are being funded in Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands, and the government has pledged an extensive evaluation of these.

But Mr Henderson said: "You are talking about people at the bottom of the housing ladder – not even on it – and the only light at the end of the tunnel was Housing First. The evidence base is

¹³⁴ [Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel Joint Statement](#), 13 August 2018

already very compelling, we don't agree that it needs to be piloted."

He added that the cash announced by the government to back the strategy, while welcomed, was not enough.

"A hundred million pounds over two years is a significant amount of money. But I feel it will not be enough to meet the target of ending rough sleeping in 10 years. We don't need short-term gimmicks, we need a long-term strategy backed by long-term resources," he said.

"We will press for a longer-term funding settlement and I would like to see the money reaching the homelessness charities working on the front line. I don't want to see it disappearing into a local authority black hole."¹³⁵

Lord Porter, chair of the Local Government Association, welcomed the strategy but called for more resources:

Councils want to end all homelessness by preventing it from happening in the first place. This means allowing councils to build more social homes, reviewing welfare reforms and ensuring councils have the certainty, resources and tools they need to bring together services around people at risk of becoming homeless.¹³⁶

London Councils said:

London accounts for a huge percentage of the total number of homeless households in England and there are unique pressures facing the capital that must be addressed - principally the chronic shortage of affordable housing.

Reducing homelessness in London requires a massive increase in social housing provision, which is why the government must empower boroughs to build more council houses as a matter of priority. This would be a major boost to tackling homelessness in London.¹³⁷

The then Shadow Communities Secretary, John Healey, was reportedly critical of the strategy's lack of urgency:

The strategy was dismissed as "a feeble plan that lacks any urgency to tackle the crisis of rising rough sleeping" by Shadow Housing Secretary, John Healey MP. He said: "The scale of the problem is clear today but the Government's target means waiting almost a decade to deal with this crisis. The funding announced will barely register compared to the reckless Conservative cuts to affordable housing, social security benefits and homelessness services that have caused this crisis."¹³⁸

6.2 Welfare reform

Numerous reports referred to in this paper have identified welfare reform, specifically restrictions in Housing Benefit/LHA entitlement, as a contributory factor in leading to street homelessness. A PQ tabled on 3 September 2018 probed the Government on whether restrictions would be removed:

¹³⁵ *Inside Housing*, "Rough sleeping strategy must address welfare and supply", 15 August 2018

¹³⁶ [LGA Response to Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), 15 August 2018

¹³⁷ [London Councils Response to Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), 13 August 2013

¹³⁸ NAEA, [Government announce rough sleeping strategy](#), 13 August 2013

Sir Mark Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing reductions in the level of housing benefit to meet the Government's homelessness reduction target by 2027.

Justin Tomlinson: The Government has set out its plans to eradicate rough sleeping by 2027 in the recently published Rough Sleeping Strategy.

A copy of the Rough Sleeping Strategy can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>¹³⁹

On 14 January 2019, Heather Wheeler, confirmed that a feasibility study on research into the wider causes of homelessness, including experiences of the welfare system, had been completed.

The Communities Secretary and I are working with the ministerial teams across the DWP to decide how best to take this work forward. We will write to the Public Account Accounts Committee shortly setting out our plans for next steps.¹⁴⁰

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy \(2018\)](#) includes the following commitment:

In the longer term, government has begun work to look at affordability in the private rented sector, with a view to developing policy options for post-2020 when the current Local Housing Allowance freeze ends.

In order to inform this thinking we want to gather evidence from stakeholders, including the homelessness sector and local authorities, regarding the challenges in local areas and options to address.¹⁴¹

Budget 2020's announcement of an extension of exemptions from Shared Accommodation Rates to cover more groups at risk of rough sleeping was welcomed, as was the end of the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in place since April 2016. LHA rates were due to be uprated by 1.7% from April 2020 but, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, they are being increased to cover at least 30% of market rents in each Broad Rental Market Area.

6.3 The funding context

In 2017, Homeless Link commented on investment aimed tackling homelessness in its [Annual Review of support for single homeless people in England](#):

Over the past year there has continued to be investment in tackling homelessness at a national level. This includes investment of £139m to tackle homelessness, which was announced in the 2015 spending review for the current spending period, during which funding for the homelessness prevention grant for local authorities was protected. In the most recent budget in Autumn 2017, there was additionally £20m funding pledged for private rented sector access and support, and £28m to pilot Housing First in three areas in England.

¹³⁹ [Written question – 169032, 7 September 2018](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Written question – 206896, 14 January 2019](#)

¹⁴¹ MHCLG, CM 9685, [Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018](#), August 2018, para 106

There has also been investment to support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which became an Act of Parliament on the 27th April 2017. The Act amends part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and places new legal duties on councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to support, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

[...]

£72.7m has been made available to support LAs implement the HRA between now and 2020.

Homeless Link identified a reduction in funding at the local level for services aimed at rough sleepers over 2016/17 – housing related support (previously Supporting People funding) has faced pressures:

There is, however, evidence that funding at a local level on single homelessness, particularly housing related support, has fallen over recent years. A report by the National Audit Office published in 2017 found that spending on overall housing services has fallen by 21% in real terms since 2010, including a 59% real terms decrease in Supporting People funding (housing-related support).¹⁴²

[...]

- There are currently 1,121 accommodation projects for single homeless people in England.
- A total of 196 day centres currently operate throughout England.
- Homeless England data identifies a reduction in both the number of accommodation projects (-5%) and the number of day centres (-8%) in the past year.
- The number of bed spaces has decreased by 3% in the past year, and now stands at 34,497 in total.
- 39% of the responding accommodation providers reported a decrease in funding, with 38% reporting no change in funding over the past 12 months. 15% reported an increase in funding.
- Day centres continue to rely primarily on fundraising and donations as their main funding source.¹⁴³

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy \(2018\)](#) brought with it additional funding, although commentators said that there would be a need for additional resources and long-term certainty over those resources (see section 6.1). Additional funding *has* been announced to support the 2019 Government's ambition to end rough sleeping by the end of the current Parliament. Crisis welcomed the additional funding and committed to working with Dame Louise on her review:

Commenting on this news, Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, said: "As the most brutal and devastating form of homelessness, it's right that the Prime Minister is focusing on ending rough sleeping and dedicating funding to this. But ultimately, we need

¹⁴² Homeless Link, [Annual Review of support for single homeless people in England 2017](#), p13

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p13

this money to translate into real homes rather than paying to keep people homeless in hostels and night shelters.

“We look forward to working with Dame Louise Casey on the issues that are forcing people to sleep on our streets, particularly given her experience and personal commitment to tackling homelessness. Any review must also look at the wider picture of homelessness and focus on stopping people rough sleeping in the first place through providing truly affordable homes and ensuring housing benefit covers the cost of rent.”¹⁴⁴

6.4 Cities taking the lead?

Greater Manchester was the first region to receive a devolved housing funding package of £3.8 million.¹⁴⁵ The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, made ending rough sleeping by 2020 one of his top political priorities. [A draft strategy to end rough sleeping and to lay the foundations of a 10-year homelessness reduction programme](#) was published in February 2018.

In October 2019 Greater Manchester recorded a fall in the number of rough sleepers for the second year in a row¹⁴⁶ but in November 2019 the Mayor concede that his target of ending rough sleeping by 2020 may be missed.¹⁴⁷

Steve Rotherham, Metro Mayor for the Liverpool City region, also prioritised homelessness in his ‘100 day’ plan:

In his ‘100 day plan’ Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham included the need to consider the recommendations from the Housing First report and take forward actions to tackle homelessness within the City Region. It has been agreed that the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer money and the Housing First allocation will sit within the combined authority, allowing a much needed co-ordinated approach to tackling homelessness.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ [Crisis Press Release](#), 27 February 2020

¹⁴⁵ [MHCLG Press Release](#), 12 October 2017

¹⁴⁶ [BBC News](#), 25 October 2019

¹⁴⁷ [BBC News](#), 16 November 2019

¹⁴⁸ NHF, [Devolution in the Liverpool City Region](#) [accessed on 6 February 2019]

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