



# Halton Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2026



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

This strategy sits alongside the overarching Halton Homelessness Strategy 2021-2026, in response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's requirement for each local authority area to have a strategy specifically considering the impact of rough sleeping, prevention and local solutions. The strategy, and associated delivery plan, sets out the local picture in relation to rough sleeping and how Halton plans to provide specialist support for vulnerable people at risk of rough sleeping or who are rough sleeping.

Rough sleeping is defined by the Government as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations)'.<sup>i</sup>

Prolonged periods of rough sleeping have a significant impact on someone's mental and physical health. When rough sleeping becomes sustained, or is often repeated, premature death occurs at high rates, with some research suggesting an average age at mortality of 47<sup>ii</sup>. Supporting people who sleep rough to move off the streets and into sustainable accommodation can mean that they can make plans for the future, including taking courses, reconnecting with family and addressing physical and mental health and substance misuse problems

### **By implementing this strategy, the vision is to make Halton a borough where:**

- ✓ People are provided with early, targeted advice and intervention to prevent the loss of their accommodation
- ✓ Effective action is taken in a timely manner to relieve rough sleeping/ street homelessness where it has not been preventable. Working with partners to ensure support is aimed at ending, not reinforcing, rough sleeping
- ✓ People are supported with the issues that can lead to rough sleeping, to prevent repeat rough sleeping/street homelessness
- ✓ We understand the causes of rough sleeping to prevent rough sleeping from become entrenched in communities
- ✓ Stakeholders work together to protect and increase local housing options.

### **We will work towards this vision by:**

- **Prevention** Understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk through developing and improving services and communication across all stakeholders. Improve data collection for recording and assessing rough sleeping. Compiling the data to target our interventions, which will enable the Local Authority to determine trends and future service needs at client groups at highest risk of becoming a rough sleeper
- **Intervention** Helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances, including building upon the success of the substance misuse service and explore further options for joint outreach with specialist partner agencies.

- **Recovery** Supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives through establishing a rapid rehousing pathway response to incidents of rough sleeping, which incorporates a multi-agency and voluntary sector response, and explore the viability of launching a Housing First model of support to the most complex and vulnerable to sustain tenancies.

For more information about this strategy or housing, rough sleeping or homelessness services in Halton, please contact:

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Or visit

[www.halton.gov.uk](http://www.halton.gov.uk) and search for '*Housing & Homeless Advice*'

## 2.0 Foreword

Welcome to the Halton Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021 – 2026. The strategy will run parallel with the Homelessness Strategy, which recognises and builds on the excellent work that is already taking place to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. I acknowledge that although the numbers of people sleeping rough in Halton are low, it is our aim to have a ‘no second night out’ approach.

This document outlines the co-ordinated approach required to tackling and preventing rough sleeping within the Borough. People sleeping rough is dangerous and can damage lives permanently. Life on the streets detrimentally impacts on physical and mental health and wellbeing, and presently the average life expectancy of a rough sleeper is just 47 years of age, which is 30 years younger than the general population.

The longer an individual remains on the streets, the more likely secondary issues such as begging, drugs or alcohol misuse can occur. These anti-social behaviours can also impact upon the community and local businesses.

This document is structured around the journey from identifying rough sleepers, engagement with services, accessing accommodation provision, through to independent and sustainable living. The strategy sets out a number of ambitious actions to be undertaken by the Council and its partners over the next five years, which are detailed within the action plan and will be taken forward and monitored in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy.

***Councillor Joan Lowe***

*Portfolio Holder Physical Environment*

### 3.0 Introduction

This strategy sits alongside the overarching Halton Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025, in response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) requirement for each local authority area to have a strategy specifically considering the impact of rough sleeping, prevention and local solutions.

The local authority has a statutory duty to house many homeless people as a result of their needs and circumstances, e.g. those vulnerable due to ill health or have dependent children. The strategy focuses upon those who sleep rough, or are at risk of sleeping rough and how Halton plans to provide specialist support.

### 4.0 Defining rough sleeping

Homelessness as a term refers to a range of different people and experiences. In accordance with legislation it means that a person or household does not have accommodation available for them to legal occupy. This includes people who sleep rough, living in hostels, shelters, refuges and the hidden homeless people who rely on friends and family for accommodation and support in unreasonable circumstances.

Rough sleeping is defined by the Government as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations)'.<sup>iii</sup>

People who sleep rough may be seen in shop doorways, in bus shelters, in car parks and in other public places. Often people will sleep rough out of sight, bedding down at different times of the day or night, moving from place to place.

*Rough sleeping* is just one dimension of the problem. '*Street homelessness*' is a much wider term than rough sleeping, taking into account the street *lifestyles* of some people who may not actually sleep on the streets. Street homeless people are those who routinely find themselves on the streets during the day with nowhere to go at night. Some will end up sleeping outside, or in a derelict or other building not designed for human habitation, perhaps for long periods. Others will sleep at a friend's for a very short time, or stay in a hostel, night-shelter or squat, or spend nights in prison or hospital.

This strategy for Halton encompasses both rough sleeping and street homelessness, as the factors that may increase a person's vulnerability to homelessness may make them at risk of either rough sleeping and/or street homelessness.

### 5.0 The scale of rough sleeping

Accurately measuring the exact numbers of people sleeping rough is challenging. In 2010 the Government introduced a snapshot method, which requires every Local

Authority either to count or estimate the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a single night each year



The count and estimates conducted on a single night each year provide useful data and a method of tracking progress around rough sleeping. However, it is extremely important to fully understand who is sleeping rough on our streets and what their particular needs are, to ensure the right level of support and partner involvement is in place.

People who sleep rough in England tend to be ;

- Male
- Between 25 and 55 years old and
- Predominantly white.
- Women sleeping rough are likely to have specific support needs, eg, domestic abuse, trauma, poor mental health

Whilst in Halton the recorded number of people rough sleeping and/or street homelessness is low, we don't want anyone to have to sleep rough in Halton and we are committed to ending rough sleeping in collaboration with our partners. The risk factors for becoming a rough sleeper/street homeless are varied, and this strategy provides a framework for working collaboratively across professions, services and organisations to unlock preventative solutions and take action where rough sleeping/street homeless has not been avoidable. The key objective is to invest in people and work with them to change lifestyle choices and have a positive move on process to integrate back into society.

## 6.0 The vision for Halton

In line with the prevent, avoid, resolve and protect approach in the overarching Homelessness Strategy, Halton will try to prevent people from becoming homeless; however, if we are unable to prevent homelessness, we will do our best to avoid the need for the person to sleep rough and, if they are already sleeping rough, we will try to help them leave the streets as quickly as possible before they become entrenched and we will work to protect a range of accommodation options that can be made available to people sleeping rough.

**By implementing this strategy, the vision is to make Halton a borough where:**

- ✓ People are provided with early, targeted advice and intervention to prevent the loss of their accommodation
- ✓ Effective action is taken in a timely manner to relieve rough sleeping/ street homelessness where it has not been preventable. Working with partners to ensure support is aimed at ending, not reinforcing, rough sleeping
- ✓ People are supported with the issues that can lead to rough sleeping, to prevent repeat rough sleeping/street homelessness
- ✓ We understand the causes of rough sleeping to prevent rough sleeping from become entrenched in communities
- ✓ Stakeholders work together to protect and increase local housing options.
- ✓ We understand the causes of rough sleeping

It is not just local and central government that has a part to play, there is an opportunity for communities to come together to ensure that we are all doing what we can, so that no one has to sleep rough.

Local partners are key to the delivery and sustainability of reducing rough sleeping within Halton. Key partners include

- Social and Private Landlords
- Support agencies
- Mental Health and Substance misuse agencies
- Police
- Probation
- Prisons
- Health Services
- Voluntary and Faith sectors

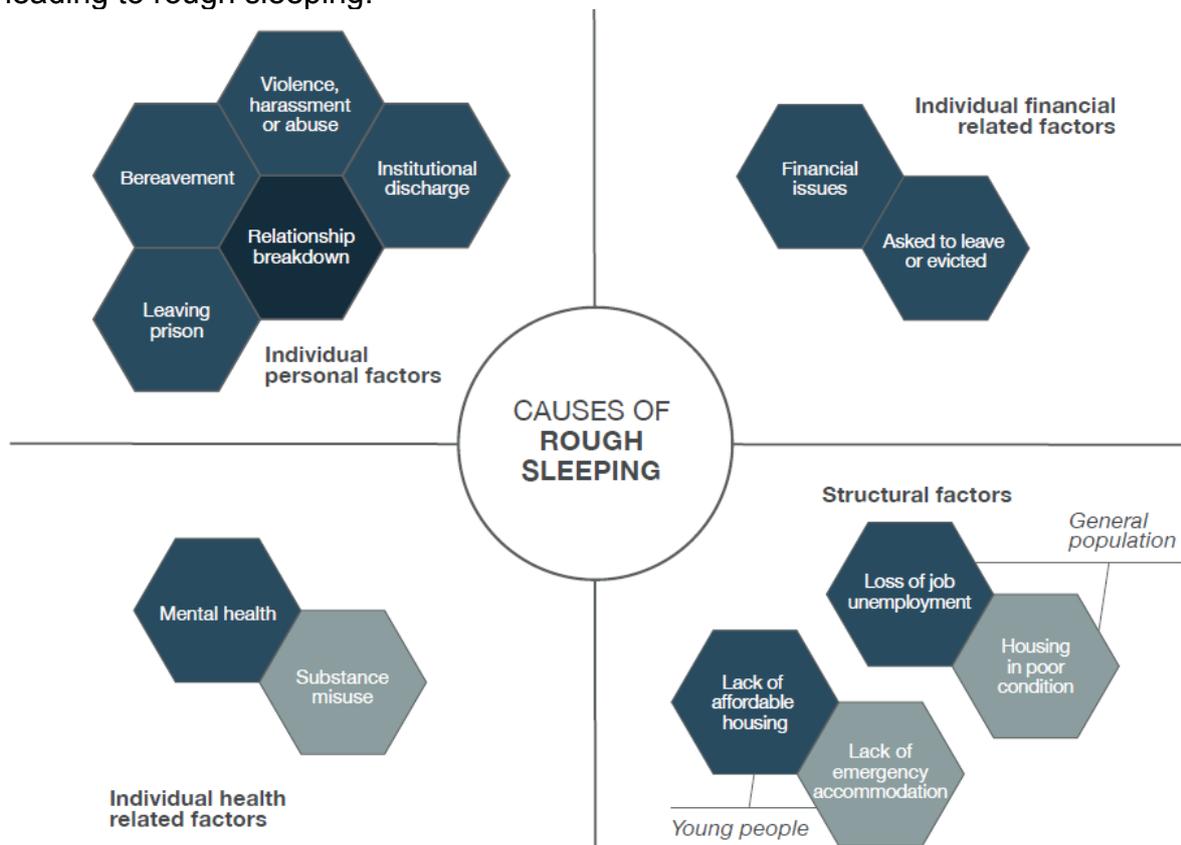
## 7.0 Causes of rough sleeping

A decade of national austerity measures may have had an impact on the levels and types of homelessness. Welfare reform, supply and demand changes within the housing sector, insecurity of private sector renting and flexible, unsecure low-paid work can create circumstances that can make some people more vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Austerity measures may have also had an impact on the capacity or availability of services that vulnerable people have previously relied upon for support.

The effects of austerity can be compounded at an individual level where people's personal circumstances such as relationships, mental and physical health are poor. Specific triggers can lead to loss of secure housing, placing people at greater risk of becoming a rough sleeper or street homeless. Triggers include: eviction from rented property, conflict with family, relationship breakdowns, people with no recourse to public funds and leaving prison. People who are sleeping rough have often spent time as 'hidden homeless' (McDonagh, 2011) and exhausted their accommodation options.

The Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Evidence Assessment paper (2019) identifies these specific risk factors associated with rough sleeping, shown in the diagram below. The darker the hexagon the stronger the evidence is for this factor leading to rough sleeping:



*Structural* factors create the conditions within which homelessness can occur and people with *personal* factors are more vulnerable to these adverse conditions than others. Therefore, the high concentration of people with negative personal factors in the homeless and rough sleeping population can be explained by their *susceptibility* to structural forces and *not* solely by their personal circumstances (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

## 8.0 Why do we need to focus on rough sleeping?

### For the person

Prolonged periods of rough sleeping have a significant impact on someone's mental and physical health. The longer someone experiences rough sleeping for, the more likely it is they will develop additional mental and physical health needs, substance misuse issues and have contact with the criminal justice system (collectively known as complex needs). The more complex needs someone has, the more help they will need to move on from homelessness and rebuild their lives.<sup>iv</sup>

People who sleep rough regularly over a long period are more likely to die young than the general population<sup>v</sup>. They are also much more likely to die from injury, poisoning

and suicide (eight times greater risk in men, 19 times in women). When rough sleeping becomes sustained, or is often repeated, premature death occurs at high rates, with some research suggesting an average age at mortality of 47<sup>vi</sup>.

A 2016 report by the charity CRISIS presents the findings from a face-to-face survey with 458 homeless people who had experienced rough sleeping across England and Wales in the 12 months prior to the research taking place. The findings show the high levels of abuse and violence experienced by people that took part in the survey and the impact this has on their health and wellbeing.

- Seventy seven per cent (353) of survey respondents reported anti-social behaviour and/or crime against them in the past 12 months.
- Three in ten (30%/139) rough sleepers reported being deliberately hit or kicked or experiencing another form of violence in the past 12 months (women proportionally more).
- Members of the public, who the survey respondents did not know, were the leading perpetrators of incidences of violence and abuse. Perhaps equally troubling is that over half (53%/157) of the latest incidences of abuse and violence rough sleepers had experienced were unreported to the police. The main reason for this was due to the expectation that nothing would be done by the police.
- Fear and isolation affected rough sleepers' health and wellbeing. Those who shared their experiences with us often linked the incidences that took place with negative patterns of behaviour such as alcohol and drug abuse. For some people their experience of rough sleeping also affected their physical health.
- Rough sleepers reported how living on the streets meant living in fear and having to navigate constant risk and uncertainty about their safety. This was largely caused by the dilemma of who to trust and whether to remain hidden or close to busy areas. For many people who took part in the survey and interviews, their experiences took a toll on their mental wellbeing pushing some to question the relevance of their existence and undermining their confidence to move on from their circumstances.

Supporting people who sleep rough to move off the streets and into sustainable accommodation can mean that they can make plans for the future, including taking courses, reconnecting with family and addressing physical and mental health and substance misuse problems. However, people may experience high levels of anxiety around moving into accommodation and long-term, personalised support after resettlement may be required.

### For communities

Rough sleeping is often associated with activities such as begging, street drinking, substance misuse and other anti-social behaviour, and these can have a negative impact on the wider community. However, it is important to note that not all rough sleepers/street homeless engage in such activities.

Rough sleeping/street homeless can have a negative impact on neighborhoods. In particular, businesses where rough sleepers congregate in doorways, damage to property and, in some circumstances, public health risks may occur. Anti-social behaviour, abandoned belongings or drug paraphernalia can pose a risk to members of the public, as well as other people who are sleeping rough in the area.

The Council welcomes referrals from the public and professionals who have information or concerns about anyone they believe to be sleeping rough anywhere in the Borough. There is a facility on the council website to report a rough sleeper or contact the designated officers for [advice.www.halton.gov.uk/homelessness](https://www.halton.gov.uk/homelessness).

Maintaining safe and vibrant neighbourhoods for every community in Halton will support economic prosperity and community cohesiveness

### The 'cost' of sleeping rough

Helping people before they get to the point where they see no other option but to sleep rough or become street homeless will not only reduce the human cost, it will also help to reduce costs to the wider public sector.

The combination of often complex needs, which people who sleep rough invariably have, will mean that they come into contact with a range of public bodies. This often incurs costs of providing health care in an acute setting due to not being registered with a GP (for example, A&E), drug and alcohol treatment, emergency services and costs to the criminal justice system.

Estimates of the costs of rough sleeping to the public purse vary depending on the methodology followed and the data used. It is difficult to be precise with cost estimations, however, in the 2015 'Hard Edges' report Professor Glen Bramley and co-authors estimated the costs of rough sleeping to the public purse to be between £14,300 and £21,200 per person per year. The higher cost being incurred if rough sleeping occurred alongside substance misuse and offending. This is three to four times the average cost to public services of an average adult (approximately £4,600). The estimated cost of rough sleeping, excluding the cost of benefits, is therefore between £7,100 and £15,200 per person per year.

Preventing and quickly resolving rough sleeping / street homelessness is, almost certainly, typically much less expensive for the public sector than allowing rough sleeping/street homelessness to be experienced for sustained periods or on a repeated basis.

## 9.0 Drivers for change

Overall homelessness is increasing in England, and there has been a sharp upward trend in the most visible form of homelessness – rough sleeping<sup>vii</sup>. Nationally, regionally and locally, knowledge of who sleeps rough and why is imperfect. Accurately measuring the exact numbers of people sleeping rough is challenging. In autumn 2017 the government estimated that 4,751 people slept rough on a typical night. This was an increase of 15% on the previous year<sup>viii</sup>.

There are a number of national drivers to address homelessness, and rough sleeping specifically;

**The National Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the government’s vision for halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027.**

**The Government’s Rough Sleeping Initiative: funding a broad range of local schemes which meet local need.**

**The Homelessness Reduction Act fundamentally changes the way local authorities work to support homeless people in their areas, giving them new prevention responsibilities towards more people.**

**Increased focus on rough sleeping in the Controlling Migration Fund.**

Other local strategies and partnerships working across children’s and adult’s services, health, social care, housing, education, judicial system and the voluntary and community sectors play their part in addressing rough sleeping in Halton, including:

- The One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Halton Borough Council Housing Strategy
- Halton Youth Strategy
- One Halton Board
- Halton Health and Wellbeing Board
- Halton Borough Council Strategic Partnership Boards

## 10. Local Picture

### Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to Covid-19 and Government guidelines, the Local Authority adopted an ‘all in’ approach. The commitment was that *all* homeless people would be offered temporary accommodation to prevent rough sleeping or the imminent risk of rough

sleeping (not just those that met the usual of priority of need categories). The statutory homelessness criteria would not be applied, whereby irrespective of priority need or previous actions, all clients would be temporarily accommodated.

### Statutory eligibility arrangements during COVID-19

The Government's 'everyone in' approach extended existing arrangements in line with the regional and national lockdowns up to December 2020. In Halton it was agreed that the everyone in approach would be extended up to April 2021, to ensure that all vulnerable clients previously rough sleeping were offered suitable temporary accommodation.

The Local Authority will reintroduce the statutory homelessness criteria with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021, to determine homelessness eligibility. Halton made a commitment to all those currently accommodated to source alternative sustainable options. However, for clients who have been accommodated, but their direct behaviours or actions cause the loss of that accommodation, the legislation will be applied. This will ensure that the Local Authority is fully compliant with the statutory duty to provide housing for all during the pandemic.

### Responding to the relaxation, and possible future escalation, of COVID restrictions

As the country proceeds along the Government's Roadmap out of lockdown, the Local Authority is exploring all funding options to increase temporary accommodation options to assist rough sleepers off the streets. In the event of further lockdown restrictions, the Local Authority will look to commission temporary accommodation on a short term lease basis. Further measures will be put in place to ensure that an effective pathway plan is instigated to ensure that a planned approach across the temporary accommodation provision is implemented.

### The main challenges for Local Authority during COVID-19 response

- Meeting the Government instruction for 'all in' approach increased demand for accommodation.
- Lack of temporary accommodation.
- Financial impact
- Increased demand for social Housing / lack of one bed properties
- The closure of B&B and hotels further reduced accommodation options, resulting in homelessness clients being placed temporarily out of area.
- Restrictions around social distancing further reduced face to face contact and support
- Increased pressures placed upon homelessness services and housing providers.

### Measures explored to respond to the challenges

- Use of social housing properties as short term temporary accommodation

- Working with private landlords to secure furnished tenancies.
- Explore all options with all social housing providers and the private rented sector to increase housing provision and to enable the Local Authority to meet the increased demand.
- Make better use of decommissioned services to fully utilise and refurb accommodation available.
- Block booking and spot purchase of bed spaces across none commissioned services, hotels and B&Bs
- Acquired assistance from local business and voluntary sector to provide furniture packages, to enable clients to undertake tenancies.
- Planned approach towards the commissioned temporary accommodation provision that is specific to the COVID response
- Commissioning additional accommodation provision within the private rented sector on a short term lease.
- Use of b&b and hotel provision to respond to pandemic.

## Rough Sleeper Annual Counts

The Government recognises that there is not one single solution to end rough sleeping and a strategic approach to tackling the causes of homelessness and the health and well-being of rough sleepers is as important as the supply of affordable homes and supported housing.

The numbers of rough sleepers remains low within Halton, but is no less important in our efforts to reduce homelessness. The rough sleeper counts are conducted annually, to give a snapshot of people sleeping rough on one particular night. The figures represent a core group of rough sleepers with multiple complex needs such as drug and alcohol addictions, mental and physical health issues.

YEAR	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21*
<b>National</b>	4134	4751	5251	5815	5633
<b>Halton</b>	4	4	8	9	0

\* In accordance with Government Guidelines, each Local Authority must complete an annual rough sleeper count. This can be an estimated figure, based on the details from partner agencies, or a full count, involving all partner agencies walking around the Borough to identify rough sleepers.

The area count involving partner agencies is considered more effective, whereby, Halton will continue to implement the process on an annual basis.

Previous years, Halton has completed a full count, involving all agencies, however, due to the pandemic restrictions, the count in 2020 was completed by the commissioned outreach team. The team visited all the hot spot areas across the Borough to identify any rough sleepers within the Borough, however, due to the everyone in approach, all rough sleepers had been previously accommodated.

## 11.0 How is Halton responding?

Halton is committed to reducing rough sleeping within the Borough and will deliver services to reassure the community and tackle the issues by;

- Improve the visibility of the Homeless Outreach Team's contact details on the Council website.
- Expand the Outreach Team to provide a case management approach to rough sleepers.
- Improve data sharing between agencies involved with rough sleepers.

### Commissioned temporary accommodation provision within Halton

Halton Lodge, Runcorn	64-bed hostel for single homeless
Grangeway Court, Runcorn	10 self-contained units for families / couples
Brennan Lodge, Widnes	36 bed hostel for single homeless
DA refuge	14 self-contained units for victims of Domestic abuse
PRS	Procured additional self-contained units with Myspace and Columba Hall.
B&B	Spot purchase hotel provision for homelessness clients.
Direct Match process.	Agreement with local social housing provider to direct match all vacant properties to homeless clients
Intensive Outreach Support Whitechapel	continue to conduct weekly area checks to support rough sleepers into accommodation

### Housing Solutions Team

During office hours (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm), if the Local Authority received information that someone may be rough sleeping and in need of help, they will visit and or make contact with the individual to offer advice and assistance to resolve the identified issues. A caseworker from the Housing Solutions team will complete a full assessment and refer to the necessary services for support.

Any person that will be rough sleeping that evening can contact the Housing Solutions team (daytime) or council's Emergency Duty Team (evening) and will be accommodated within the temporary 'sit up' service for up to 3 nights. There is no charge for this service as spaces are not guaranteed and its operation remains temporary in nature. Anyone accommodated in the sit up service will be given access to the facilities of the service, but will not be able to remain at the site during the day

## Streetlink service

The website and mobile phone app allows the public to report the location of presumed rough sleeper to a central service. The information is then referred to the relevant Local Authority to investigate and visit the location within 3 working days. Halton has made a commitment to visit and action all referrals made within 24 hours.

## The Homeless Outreach Team

The Council has commissioned an intensive support worker and two outreach nursing practitioners. The outreach team visit the hotspot areas daily to engage with people who are currently or at risk of becoming rough sleepers.

Due to the nature of many clients, engagement can be difficult and requires perseverance from staff to connect with and support the client to make lifestyle changes. The Outreach Team works throughout the Borough, with other agencies to raise awareness of the service and offer assistance to clients to access accommodation and other services such as Health, Social Care, drug and alcohol etc. to fully support the individual to engage.

## Outreach Nurse Practitioners

Halton is committed to helping people off the streets and encourage positive life style changes. Halton has commissioned a full time practitioner who will work directly with rough sleepers to address any health issues and substance misuse.

The nurse practitioner will provide healthcare intervention via the medical suite at Halton Lodge Supported Hostel. As well as offering treatment and services such as sexual health and blood-borne virus screening, referrals are made to specialist services, such as dentistry, as required.

Partners acknowledge the need to ensure that mental health and substance misuse support within hostel provision meets the needs of the client, and that appropriate placements are made for the level of support required.

## A day in the life of an Outreach Nurse Practitioner



## Community Initiatives

A range of different community-based initiatives provides services and assistance to rough sleepers on an ad-hoc basis. More can be done to further integrate current provision, using partners' respective specialisms to support homeless people. For example, Faith groups may be best placed to befriend individuals on a 1-1 basis and to divert them into activities, employment and socialising.

A more intensive, wraparound and collaborative approach to supporting rough sleepers, especially new individuals, to move off the streets, will improve the likelihood that they are diverted from a harmful lifestyle and achieve better outcomes.

## Assertive Outreach Team

The Council has commissioned an assertive outreach officer, who works alongside a variety of third sector organisations to seek out and support rough sleepers. Details of all individuals identified are recorded and the data is combined with information from partners, along with intelligence from the Police and other services. The data allows the Local Authority to build up a picture and determine trends of rough sleepers.

## Street Pastors

Halton Street Pastors initiative is delivered by local churches, working with the Police, the Council, Health and local businesses. The Street Pastors are volunteers, trained to prevent anti-social incidents and support people to access services or transport. Halton Street Pastors recognise many of the entrenched rough sleepers and will offer advice and signpost them to services.

## Funding

### Rough Sleeping Initiative

The Rough Sleeping Initiative was targeted at local authorities with the highest numbers of people sleeping rough, based on the 2017 rough sleeping snapshot.

Halton was successful with the bids submitted for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to support people sleeping rough off the streets and develop their wellbeing and stability, helping to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in both the short and longer term.

## Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding £109.000

- Sit up service
- Intensive outreach support
- PRS Move on officer
- Proportion of funding - £30.000 transferred to fund temporary accommodation placements for rough sleepers
- 2021/22 Rough Sleeper bid submitted will include all of above, with additional provision of rough sleeper co-ordinator, which will deliver a shared service across Halton and Knowsley

## Homelessness grant funding

Awarded annually to support the Local Authority prevent homelessness. The funding is divided to financially support and deliver service options for homelessness clients:

- **Implementation of Homelessness Reduction Act** - additional staffing
- **Prevention initiatives** - PRS deposits, financial assistance, Rent in advance etc.
- **Furniture packages** - starter furniture packages for new tenancies
- **Bond Guarantee Scheme** – Offers a paper bond guarantee to cover damages and rent arrears.
- **Help to Rent Scheme** – The local authority will offer a local help to rent scheme, to encourage private landlord engagement.

## Next Steps Accommodation Programme

- **NSAP** - Funding approved by MHCLG to allow the LA to work with housing partner, Halton Housing, to convert two properties into four self-contained units. The additional housing provision will provide supported housing accommodation for rough sleepers for up to 2 years.

## The Challenges

In overcoming rough sleeping/street homelessness there are a number of challenges. From addressing the structural determinants of homelessness and providing support to facilitating good mental, physical and relationship health to engaging with people who sleep rough and the view of homelessness in the wider public.

## Perceptions

The negative public perceptions of homelessness, rough sleeping or street homeless often portrayed in the media can further exacerbate the issue by influencing the wider community's understanding and empathy towards people who find themselves sleeping rough. The Evolve Housing and Support 'Through my Eyes' research (2015) into public perceptions of homelessness and rough sleeping found that 28% of people involved in the research believed that people who slept rough were to blame for ending up on the streets, with 72% believing that homeless people could get themselves off the streets they wanted to, despite barriers like poor mental and physical health.

The research highlights common misperceptions about the reasons for people living on the streets. This may indicate that greater awareness, not only amongst professionals and the voluntary and community sector partners, but also wider general public may be required in order to identify risk factors and intervene and support at an earlier stage, working to avoid homelessness occurring.

## Engagement

Some people who sleep rough may not want to / be able to interact with services for a number of reasons.

Some rough sleepers may have multiple and complex needs, including mental ill health or experience of trauma. This can make it more difficult for support workers to engage them in the first place and mean that it takes longer to support them away from the streets.

The often transient nature of sleeping rough can make it difficult for services to find individuals who have been reported as sleeping rough. Halton's Street Pastors be may be one way to help overcome barriers to engaging with rough sleepers

## European Economic Area (EEA) Nationals

As a result of the UK's withdrawal from the European Economic Union, people subject to immigration control, and other persons from abroad, may be ineligible for services and support outlined in this strategy. In establishing the eligibility of foreign nationals the current post BREXIT guidance on immigration control and status from the UK government immigration web pages will be referred to.

Halton has commissioned an officer from British Red Cross for a two year period. The officer will work with and support this client group ( with no recourse to public funds or no worker status) to ensure they have access to all the relevant services. The officer will also support and signpost the clients to access legal services, complete appeals, family reconnection etc.

## Anti Social behaviours and complaints from private land owners and business owners

Local authorities and police in England and Wales increasingly use enforcement measures to address rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour such as begging and street drinking. This could make life more difficult for rough sleepers and put them at greater risk of harm.

There are circumstances under which the local authority are required to act to remove items associated with rough sleeping (eg tents). Environmental protection legislation means we have a duty to investigate what are known as "statutory nuisances". These are activities which are – or are likely to be – a nuisance which poses a threat to health. Unless there is a statutory nuisance, local authorities do not have the power to remove

rough sleepers' belongings on private property. This includes shop and office doorways.

There is a shared acknowledgment of the need to work with Business and agencies around the reduction and improved management of the homeless community and strategies to manage and address the related issues around street begging and drinking.

Halton commitment to addressing the issues are;

- Raise awareness of the service and support provision available
- Work closely with Businesses and agencies to offer a collaborative approach to tackling rough sleeping in the Borough.
- Develop Halton Ambassadors to develop solutions to ensure the town is a safe, secure and managed environment.

## Local Challenges

Halton like many Local Authorities faces many challenges that will impact upon homelessness and rough sleeping. Welfare reform has proven difficult to manage, and resulted in a number of challenges both for the Local Authority, social and private landlords and customers. Some of the specific challenges faced in Halton are;

- Affordability – the change in legacy benefits and introduction of Universal Credit has had a large impact upon vulnerable households. The transfer to Universal Credit left clients without funds for a number of weeks, consequently, this led to increase in rent arrears and repossession proceedings.
- Shared Room Rate - The introduction of the shared room rates for under 35s is a key driver for young people, thus restricting homeless customers from accessing decent and appropriate accommodation.
- Shared Accommodation – Due to affordability, customers are being forced to explore shared housing options. However, most customers feel this is not an option that is suitable for them.
- Accommodation availability - It is becoming increasingly more difficult to source suitable accommodation that is affordable. Landlords are unwilling to offer tenancies to customers on benefits and insist on them having a guarantor and paying large deposits
- There is a shortage of smaller housing stock to meet the increasing demands and trends of homelessness.
- Repossessions - Many customers are threatened with homelessness, due to low income, benefit changes etc, resulting the loss of their home.
- COVID Pandemic - Future challenge will be reintroducing the statutory arrangements, as the Local Authority will have to source move-on accommodation for all of those clients accommodated within hotels, hostels etc. some of which are non-priority and previously excluded homelessness cases and the only suitable options available will be the private rented sector.

## Monitoring progress of the strategy

Performance and progress against each of the actions within the strategy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with members and stakeholders.

Our response to homelessness will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure our initiatives are having the desired outcomes, so that we can stay ahead of emerging trends and so that we can seize opportunities to benefit the people of Halton.

A transparent annual position statement will be produced to highlight our progress and how effective these measures have been in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Working in partnership is key to the success of the strategy. This year we have established a multi-agency forum of statutory agencies and local organisations to assist us in our efforts to tackle homelessness. We will continue to engage with, maintain and develop relationships with these organisations and agencies to develop a more cohesive set of priorities.

The strategy aims to develop these priorities in recognition of national, regional and local policy and proposes a vision for the benefit of all our residents, stakeholders and partners.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, working with the Strategic Director and Service Manager will oversee and agree the process. The Principal Manager, Housing Solutions, will lead the review of the delivery plan.

New actions and targets may be agreed if further changes are made to national legislation and policy. It is expected the Government will regularly review the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act and will seek to work more closely with Councils to implement its Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### Contact

For more information about this strategy or housing, rough sleeping or homelessness services in Halton, please contact:

Patricia Preston, Halton Borough Council Housing Solutions Manager  
[patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk)

Or visit [www.halton.gov.uk](http://www.halton.gov.uk) and search for 'Housing & Homeless Advice'

## Overcoming the challenges - Halton Rough Sleeping Action Plan

Thematic Area	Action to be taken	Lead Stakeholder	By when
<p><b>Prevention</b></p> <p>Understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk</p>	<p>We will work to stop people from becoming homeless and will strive to achieve this by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring information on Housing / Homelessness options services are easily accessible</li> <li>• Extending availability of primary homelessness prevention in primary and secondary health care settings will enable to us engage with people before homelessness or rough sleeping happens or becomes entrenched.</li> <li>• Supporting residents facing eviction so that they can remain in their existing homes.</li> <li>• Develop improved ways, across stakeholders, of recording and assessing rough sleeping.</li> <li>• Compile and use data to target our interventions at client groups at highest risk of becoming a rough sleeper</li> </ul>	<p>Principal Manager Housing Solutions Team Whitechapel MHCLG</p>	<p>Dec 2021</p>
<p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances</p>	<p>We will support those experiencing the crisis of rough sleeping, helping them recover and regain their independence. We will achieve this by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a direct HBC internal referral route for reporting rough sleeping</li> <li>• Working with people with lived experience of rough sleeping to inform the delivery of this strategy and our further work. We are especially keen to understand more about how these individuals successfully moved on from rough sleeping.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal Manager Housing Solutions Team Whitechapel Statutory and Voluntary agencies</p>	<p>March 2022</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure a targeted support approach can be called upon for rough sleepers who have been provided with accommodation to prevent them returning to the streets. This will require 'Navigators' to co-ordinate support services, and provide support, encouragement and advocacy.</li><li>• Expand the Nurse Outreach Team to provide case management and improve access to all housing options / providers.</li><li>• Work towards 'No First Night Out' ,an initiative promoted by Central Government to ensure that no person is sleeping rough for more than one night.</li><li>• Develop a support pathway through services for clients with mental Health/substance misuse issues.</li><li>• Review and improve partnership working between the statutory and Voluntary sectors to address complex needs.</li><li>• Build upon the success of the substance misuse service and explore further options for joint outreach with specialist partner agencies.</li><li>• Strengthen the joint-working response, coordinating and refocusing all partners' efforts on getting people off the streets.</li><li>• Develop procedures for closer partnership working with Faith groups.</li><li>• Explore options to develop diversionary / befriending</li><li>• Commit to accommodating people rough sleeping beyond incidents of the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) to ensure a multi-agency approach can be called upon to end their street homelessness.</li></ul>		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure those considered not in 'priority need' receive the same level of advice and assistance as those who trigger the statutory definition</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Recovery</b></p> <p>Supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in partnership with Housing Associations, voluntary and community partners to make the best use of resources that tackle factors that influence rough sleeping</li> <li>• Where appropriate, supporting recovery and independence through a personalised and trauma informed approach.</li> <li>• Establish a rapid rehousing pathway response to incidents of rough sleeping which incorporates a multi-agency and voluntary sector response</li> <li>• Explore the viability of launching a Housing First model of support to the most complex and vulnerable to sustain tenancies.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal Manager Housing Solutions Team Registered Social Landlords Public Health Combined Authority</p>	<p>Mar 2022</p>

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<sup>i</sup> The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's definition of rough sleeping.

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas, B. (2012) *Homelessness kills: An analysis of the mortality of homeless people in early twenty-first century England*. London: Crisis.  
[www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20kills%20-%20full%20report.pdf](http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20kills%20-%20full%20report.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's definition of rough sleeping.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/rough-sleepers-and-complex-needs/>

<sup>v</sup> National Rough Sleeping Strategy

<sup>vi</sup> Thomas, B. (2012) *Homelessness kills: An analysis of the mortality of homeless people in early twenty-first century England*. London: Crisis.  
[www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20kills%20-%20full%20report.pdf](http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20kills%20-%20full%20report.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> It's No Life at All Report. CRISIS 2016

<sup>viii</sup> National Rough Sleep Strategy