

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

**Report to:** Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

**Date:** 12/11/2024

**Subject:** Rough Sleeping Update

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## SUMMARY

The report provides an update on rough sleeping in the borough and the services that are in place to house and support rough sleepers. A rough sleeper in the context of this report is someone who has been verified as rough sleeping by the Council's outreach service and registered on the rough sleeper database, known as CHAIN.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

For the committee to review, feedback and comment on the information set out in this report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Our Values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the <a href="#">H&amp;F Corporate Plan</a> and the H&amp;F Values</b>
Building shared prosperity	A priority for the homelessness and rough sleeping services is to work with rough sleepers to prevent rough sleeping where possible and keep incidents of rough sleeping brief and non-recurring.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	The needs of rough sleepers are often complex. Officers work with individuals to encourage engagement with services and identify housing solutions based on their individual circumstances.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	A person-centred approach is taken to assess need and identify housing options for rough sleepers.

Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The Council aims to prevent rough sleeping wherever possible and maximise access to the services available for this population to avoid the need to place into expensive temporary accommodation.
Taking pride in H&F	The Council aims to achieve the best outcomes for all homeless applicants and to perform well in meeting the Council's homelessness duties.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Where the Council has its housing properties, we are rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency.

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## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

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## Overview

Rough sleeping in London has grown significantly, with a 58% increase in the ten years since 2014. In 2023-24, 11,993 people were recorded on the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) as having at least one night sleeping rough in London – an increase of 19% on the previous year. The most recent quarterly figures record 4,332 individuals rough sleeping between April and June 2024, representing a 20% increase compared to the same period in 2023. (London Councils October 2024).

The needs of rough sleepers are diverse and often complex. The Rough Sleeping Service work with a wide range of services and partners to meet the needs and deliver the best outcomes for rough sleepers and this report provides an overview of the effective joint working that is in place to meet the needs of this population.

## The local picture

### Recording and reporting rough sleepers

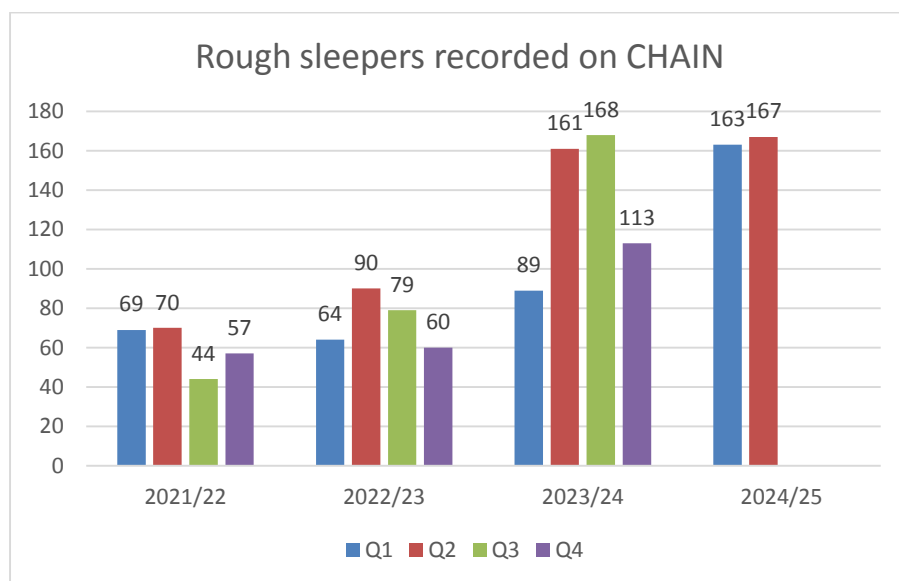
StreetLink is a website service for England and Wales, which enables members of the public to send an alert to local outreach teams when they see someone sleeping rough. This includes anyone who is sleeping outside, preparing to bed down, or sleeping somewhere not designed for human habitation. Once an alert is submitted via StreetLink, the details are automatically sent to the relevant local outreach teams.

Thames Reach provide the Council's outreach service and carry out shifts each weekday. Whilst out on a shift, outreach staff will visit sites which are known to be used by rough sleepers and new sightings reported to them by Streetlink, often key partners will join the team on shift to provide additional support, such as RAMHP, LET and Turning Point.

All rough sleepers verified by the outreach service are recorded on CHAIN which is the London rough sleeper database managed by Homeless Link. Each person has a CHAIN reference number which can be used to track rough sleepers as they move between boroughs and can help to track the history of individuals which may be new to the streets in Hammersmith and Fulham but are known in other areas.

### Rough sleepers in Hammersmith and Fulham

CHAIN publish rough sleeper numbers reported by outreach teams across London. An increase in rough sleeping across London was reported in 2023/24, but with the highest increase in Hammersmith and Fulham. In the first half of 2024/25, the borough has continued to see a rise in rough sleeping. Further analysis of the local rough sleeper population is set out in Appendix 1



### Rough sleeping pathway

The Outreach service carry out nightly shifts across borough, targeting referrals received via Streetlink and known locations where rough sleeping is more common. If a person is identified as rough sleeping or about to bed-down they will try to engage with the individual to find out their name and what support is needed. Where possible (i.e. eligibility is confirmed and if a bed space is available), outreach will directly support the individual into accommodation at No Second Night Out (NSNO) which is a pan London provision, Somewhere Safe To Stay or the rough sleeping assessment hub (RSAH). During 2023/24, 104 rough sleepers were referred into off the street accommodation.

The Rough Sleeping Assessment Hub provides 20 beds for rapid assessment. During 2023/24 the Hub accommodated 152 rough sleepers. Ensuring swift move-on from the Hub is essential and the council's Rough Sleeping Coordinator has weekly meetings with the Hub to help facilitate move-on to longer term suitable accommodation and generate capacity for new people to move in. Depending on need and individual circumstances, a range of move-on options are available from these initial hub settings, such as referring to supported hostel accommodation of which we have 129 units across 8 buildings, resettlement support to another location if they have

a local connection or accommodation available outside of Hammersmith and Fulham, and support to access private rented accommodation.

During 2023/24, the following successful move on opportunities were secured for the service users accommodated in the Hub:

Clearing House	5
Private rented accommodation	15
H&F supported housing	33
Out of borough supported housing	9
Reconnected to another borough	13
Placed into temporary accommodation	6

If the hub is full and there is no immediate bedspace available, the outreach team and the rough sleeping coordinator manage a waiting list based on need. They have a weekly partnership meeting to go through the priority list and prepare for the move, this includes looking at the best options to support them whilst rough sleeping which may be a joint visit with RAMHP, drug and alcohol service Turning Point or the Law Enforcement Team (LET), supporting engagement with the North Kensington Law Centre, and providing advice and information on local services such as Barons Court Project. The outreach team can also provide people with mobile phones and sim cards.

### **Partnerships**

Supporting and engaging people experiencing rough sleeping, especially long term and entrenched rough sleeping, requires a partnership approach. As described above, the Outreach team work with RAMHP, LET and Turning Point joining them on select shifts, and if there is an individual they are concerned about, will arrange multi-disciplinary team meetings to get all the relevant partners in place.

The rough sleeping team work closely with local police, probation, LET, and mental health integrated network team (MINT) to try and get the best outcomes for those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

In addition, we have in-reach support services working with residents in the supported hostels. This includes 2x nurses who work across the pathway to improve health outcomes, 2 x Rapid Engagement and Support Team (REST) dual diagnosis workers to help facilitate better outcomes for individuals with substance misuse and mental health support needs, and drug and alcohol support workers from Turning point.

Housing colleagues attend hospital discharge meetings, to ensure safe discharges of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and we have strengthened engagement with the justice system, such as arranging to meet prison leavers at the prison gate to support them into pre-arranged accommodation following a duty to refer.

We have been very successful in our Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO) project which is a two year service with Westminster Council and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to fund and support accommodation in the private rented sector for ex-offenders who would not be considered in priority need. Over 100 ex-offenders have been housed into the private rented sector during the two years that the scheme has been funded.

## **New housing provision**

With its strategic ambitions to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping in the Borough, the Council secured grant funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) to purchase 321 Lillie Road which will provide 13 additional units of supported housing. The building is currently being refurbished and will be ready for occupation in the new financial year.

## **Challenges going forward**

### **Winter / SWEP**

Whilst efforts are made throughout the year to support people rough sleeping in the borough into off the street accommodation, during winter there is the higher chance of severe weather which can increase the risk to those rough sleeping and will trigger the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). During SWEP the council will find a bed space for every individual found rough sleeping during the active SWEP alert, this could be in SWEP beds which are distributed across existing provision in supported accommodation, such as living rooms / office space. These beds are available during the night only. The winter night shelters will also open for the period.

Councils have not received any dedicated government funding for this activity, despite the pressures it brings to services and increasing costs to already overstretched housing budgets.

### **Annual count**

Every year local authorities are required to complete a rough sleeping snapshot, known as the annual count, to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The intention is to indicate the number of people sleeping rough in the area on a 'typical' night. This will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> November and will involve volunteers going around the borough and counting anyone seen rough sleeping or about to bed-down. Last year LBHF counted 14 individuals, and 7 the previous year.

## **Funding**

A number of rough sleeping services are funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Grant from MHCLG. The last funding round was a 3-year programme which commenced in 2022 and will end on 31 March 2025. The total RSI allocation for LBHF over the three-year period was £3,048,817. The services funded through RSI are detailed in Appendix 1, at present it is not known if or what level of funding may be available from the start of the next financial year.

## **Conclusion**

Rough sleeping presents as one of the housing pressures in the borough but there is an effective rough sleeping pathway in place to assist people off the streets. Successful support services are in place for those experiencing rough sleeping and great examples of partnership working across key stakeholders to find the most appropriate housing outcomes. It is not yet clear what the funding arrangements will be after March 2025, but officers meet regularly with MHCLG advisers and will respond swiftly to any funding announcements that are made to ensure existing services continue to be available rough sleepers.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1:** Rough Sleeping Categories

## Rough sleeping categories

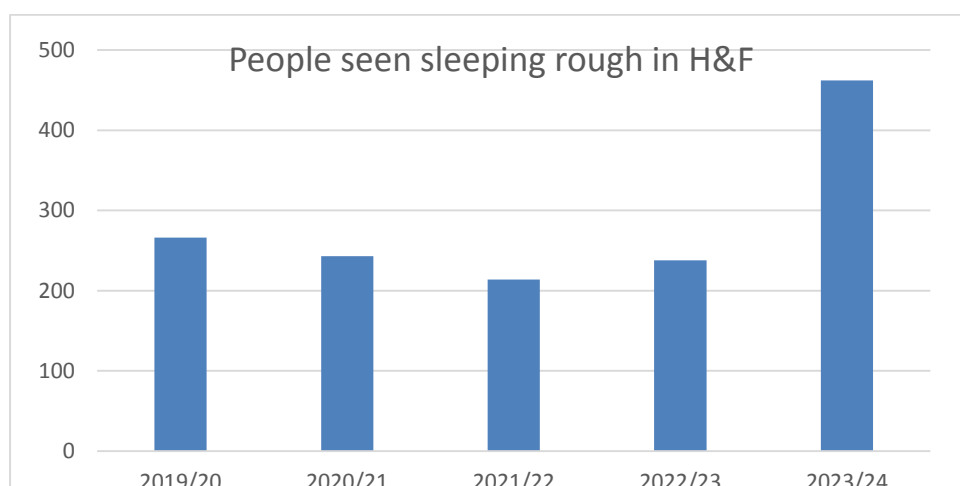
The data on CHAIN is recorded by categories to help build a picture of rough sleeping locally and Pan-London.

- *New Rough Sleepers* - A person is considered 'new' if they have not been seen sleeping rough in the 5 years preceding their first rough sleeping contact during the month.
- *Returning* - A person is considered 'returning' to rough sleeping if they have not been seen rough sleeping in the 180 days preceding their first rough sleeping contact during the month, but had been seen rough sleeping at some point between 180 days and 5 years previously.
- *Long Term* - A person is considered to be a long-term rough sleeper if they have been seen rough sleeping in at least 3 of the 12 months preceding the reporting month, including the reporting month itself.

The data for LBHF shows majority of people experiencing rough sleeping are new and may spend one night in the borough before finding a housing solution. Long term rough sleeping may be the result of multiple factors, such as non-engagement with services including refusal of offers, no recourse to public funds or in rare circumstances very high risk (e.g. arson) reducing the options available.

### Status of rough sleepers

Month	Jan	Feb	Ma	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
New	27	22	26	32	26	37	40	31	17
Returning	4	4	4	5	14	10	8	8	10
Long term	6	12	11	15	22	23	28	22	27



Some of the factors behind this increase include people leaving NASS accommodation, often making informal arrangements which then break down. LBHF is a big transport hub which sees a lot of people passing through. There has also been an increase in individuals returning to the streets after being supported into accommodation, with their return often linked to substance misuse. Table 1

summarises the main reason for leaving their last settled accommodation, where the individual has been willing to provide a reason:

**Table 1 – Primary reason for leaving last settled accommodation 2023-24 (CHAIN report 2023-24)**

Relationship breakdown	21
Evicted	27
Left of own accord	21
End of time limited stay (including NASS accommodation)	46
Still has accommodation	6
Other	10

### 2024-25 rough sleeping figures

In the first half of 2024/25 LBHF have continued to see a rise in rough sleeping across the borough, from Apr-Sep 2024 outreach teams have recorded 420 incidents of rough sleeping in the borough compared to 303 in the same period the previous year which represents a 39% increase.

The number of people experiencing rough sleeping is rising across London. Table 2 shows the total number of people experiencing rough sleeping over the last 12 months across all of London by borough. Rough sleeping on bus and tube lines are also recorded as separate entries.

**Table 2 – Total rough sleeping figures across London from Oct 2023-24 (CHAIN)**

Borough / Location Order	Location	All Rough Sleepers Oct 2023-Oct 24	All London RS Oct 2023-24	% of All RS in Location
1	Westminster	2702	16,042	16.84%
2	Camden	1082	16,042	6.74%
3	City of London	916	16,042	5.71%
4	Ealing	849	16,042	5.29%
5	Southwark	733	16,042	4.57%
6	Lambeth	658	16,042	4.1%
7	Islington	625	16,042	3.9%
8	Newham	624	16,042	3.89%
9	Brent	592	16,042	3.69%
10	Tower Hamlets	581	16,042	3.62%
11	Hammersmith and Fulham	572	16,042	3.57%
12	Croydon	552	16,042	3.44%
13	Haringey	525	16,042	3.27%
14	Hillingdon	455	16,042	2.84%
15	Greenwich	442	16,042	2.76%



16	Lewisham	388	16,042	2.42%
17	Hounslow	375	16,042	2.34%
18	Heathrow	342	16,042	2.13%
19	Hackney	333	16,042	2.08%
20	Redbridge	309	16,042	1.93%
21	Enfield	264	16,042	1.65%
22	Kensington and Chelsea	249	16,042	1.55%
23	Barnet	239	16,042	1.49%
24	Waltham Forest	231	16,042	1.44%
25	Wandsworth	205	16,042	1.28%
26	Barking and Dagenham	169	16,042	1.05%
27	Bromley	164	16,042	1.02%
28	Bexley	142	16,042	0.89%
29	Kingston upon Thames	141	16,042	0.88%
30	Harrow	132	16,042	0.82%
31	Richmond upon Thames	111	16,042	0.69%
32	Bus route	107	16,042	0.67%
33	Merton	94	16,042	0.59%
34	Havering	81	16,042	0.5%
35	Sutton	50	16,042	0.31%
36	Tube line	8	16,042	0.05%

### Institutional departures

LBHF has low figures of rough sleeping from individuals who have departed institutional settings such as hospital, prison, care or the armed forces. Departing asylum accommodation contributes the largest number of people experiencing rough sleeping following departure from an institutional setting as shown in table 4 but the numbers have been decreasing. We have been making use of the pan London service known as Bridges which helps single persons leaving asylum support accommodation to find private rented accommodation, we have had a number of successful outcomes (11) and still have some going through the process. Unfortunately, the funding for this service will be ending in November 2024.

### Accommodation options

There are a number of off the street accommodation and longer-term housing options for those experiencing rough sleeping in the borough:

Service	Availability	Details
Rough Sleeping Assessment Hub (RSAH)	LBHF referrals only	20 bed assessment hub, staffed 24 hours. Provides immediate access to accommodation. Intended as a short term, off the street accommodation, to allow for further assessment of needs.
No Second Night Out (NSNO)	Pan-London	There are 3 hubs across London, LBHF falls under NW London hub in Brent. Only outreach teams can

		refer in and it is for individuals who are experiencing their first time rough sleeping, intended as an immediate off the street option.
Somewhere Safe to Stay (SSTS)	West London boroughs	Short term assessment centre with 20 beds, available for north west London boroughs to refer to. Intended as an immediate off the street offer.
Supported accommodation	LBHF referrals only	Residents will typically move to supported accommodation from one of the above settings. Intended as medium length accommodation to access support to enable independent living in more settled accommodation.
Temporary accommodation	LBHF referrals only	Could be used as an option for eligible individuals as off the street whilst waiting for a vacancy in supported accommodation. Hestia rough sleeping floating support or Navigators can offer support in this setting.

Other options which can be used as appropriate includes:

- Referrals to a female only hub in Brent. This offers high support and is available to west London boroughs. Limited space but we have had some successful outcomes, including one example where a female with complex needs facing eviction has been referred to prevent rough sleeping.
- Reconnection to existing accommodation or where they have a local connection.
- Night shelters (winter period only).

### **Funding and services provided by partners in place for Rough Sleepers**

The main funding available for rough sleeper services is Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Grant from MHCLG. The last funding round was a 3 year programme ending 31 March 2025 and the total RSI allocation for LBHF over the three year period was £3,048,817. The services funded by this programme are:

- i. Rough Sleeping Assessment Hub.  
The Assessment Hub opened in summer 2020 and was initially located in borough at Meliora House. Unfortunately, the service had to relocate in March 2024 as the freeholder would not agree to a further application to extend the Planning Permission. The Hub currently operates from Cromwell Road in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

The hub consists of 20 bedspaces, providing immediate off the street accommodation for rough sleepers. Referrals are made by the outreach team in LBHF and our Rough Sleeping coordinator. Included in the 20 beds is an allocation of 4 beds available for rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds who need help and support whilst they are awaiting a positive outcome of their immigration status.

The service is managed by St Mungo's who assess the residents needs and help link them into relevant services to meet their needs, such as mental health and drug and alcohol support, benefit applications, and referrals for more stable housing. They also assist with addressing residents health needs by ensuring GP registration and site visits from nurses and drug and alcohol support workers.

- ii. **Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL)**  
This service provides specialist trauma-informed assessment; advice; training; reflective practice with designated services for rough sleepers and people at risk of homelessness to improve the capacity of services to deliver better outcomes for homeless residents. There is some additional funding provided by Public Health.
- iii. **Floating Support**  
Hestia provide floating support to former rough sleepers who have moved to more settle accommodation or at risk of becoming homeless from their settled accommodation. This service supports former rough sleepers to maintain their accommodation and access local services
- iv. **Navigators**  
The Navigator service provides in depth support for rough sleepers to help relocate to where they have a local connection, link with support services, benefit maximisation, set up bank accounts and prevent a return to rough sleeping.
- v. **Housing First**  
This service, managed by Thames Reach, provides long term support prior to and following a move into a housing first long term settled accommodation. Thames Reach provide ongoing support and help to access necessary services and to maintain their tenancy. We recognise that Housing First (rather than the more traditional supported hostel route) is the most sustainable method of ensuring former rough sleepers don't return to the street.
- vi. **Flexible surge funding and personal budgets**  
Surge funding is used to provide personal budgets to rough sleepers to help provide goods or services they need to resettle or maintain their

accommodation, such as white goods, decorative items, taxi's, mobile phone etc.