



BRIEFING PAPER

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Rough sleeping (England)

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Summary

Local authorities in England do not have a duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. Those who approach an authority for help who are deemed to be homeless but not in priority need may find themselves sleeping rough. 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 it was replaced by Labour'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 have been in tackling the issue. The study suggested some policy responses for the next 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 sleeps out for a second night. A [Ministerial Working Group](#) was established to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The current 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 tackle rough sleeping. The Government also supported Bob Blackman's *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* which will place additional duties on local authorities in England to prevent and relieve homeless for all eligible applicants from April 2018.

Despite these considerable efforts, the official rough sleeper counts have risen in each year since new methodology was introduced in autumn 2010. **The most recent statistics published on 25 January 2018 (revised on 16 February) recorded a 169% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 2010.** Existing programmes have recorded successes in helping individuals to exit rough sleeping, but the flow on to the streets continues. The UK Statistics Authority declared DCLG's Rough Sleeping statistics to not to meet the standard to be regarded as National Statistics in December 2015.

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. The latest financial year report from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database, [CHAIN Street to Home Annual Report 2016-17](#), shows that a total of 8,108 rough sleepers were contacted by outreach workers or building-based teams in London during 2016/17.

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

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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.

Other relevant Library papers

Separate briefing papers cover [statutory homelessness in England](#) (01164) and the [placement of statutorily homeless households in temporary accommodation](#) (02110). For an overview of statistical indicators see: [Homelessness: Social Indicators](#) (02646). There are now significant variations in approaches to homelessness in Scotland and Wales – these variations are outlined in [Comparison of homelessness duties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#) (07201). See also: [Rough sleepers: access to services and support \(England\)](#) and [Rough Sleepers and Anti-Social Behaviour \(England\)](#).

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. If a homeless single adult or couple approaches a local authority for assistance and, following an assessment, is told that they are unintentionally homeless but not in priority need, the duty on the local authority is to "ensure that the applicant is provided with advice and assistance in any attempts he or she may make to secure that accommodation becomes available for his or her occupation."² In addition, authorities should assess the applicant's housing needs before providing advice and assistance.³

The [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), to which authorities are obliged to have regard when implementing their duties under Part 7 of the 1996 Act, suggests:

The housing authority might, for example, provide assistance with a rent deposit or guarantee to help the applicant to obtain accommodation in the private rented sector, or advice on applying for an allocation of accommodation through the social housing waiting list or through another social landlord.⁴

Homeless people who are not successful in obtaining alternative accommodation, despite advice and assistance provided by local authorities, or who do not approach an authority for assistance, may find themselves sleeping rough. Research by Crisis has 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

Local authorities do not have a duty to secure housing for all homeless people. Note that authorities will gain additional duties from April 2018 under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

There is evidence of inconsistent standards in the advice and assistance given to homeless people who are not in a priority category.

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 Section 192(2) of the *Housing Act 1996*

³ Section 192(4) of the *Housing Act 1996*

⁴ CLG/DoH, [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), 2006, para 14.25

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

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Additional evidence submitted to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's 2015/16 [inquiry into homelessness](#) demonstrates variations in the standard and extent of assistance provided by local authorities to applicants deemed to be homeless but not in priority need. [Data](#) collected in London over 2016/17 recorded that 702 (around 13%) of 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.

In [Smajlaj, R \(on the application of\) v London Borough of Waltham Forest](#) ⁶ the homeless applicant sought judicial review of, inter alia, the council's failure to carry out a housing needs assessment under section 192(4) and to provide advice and assistance under section 192(2). The High Court held:

...that the defendant has failed properly to carry out its duties under s.192(2) and (3) and a mandatory order requiring the defendant to make lawful decisions in respect of s.192(2) and s.192(3) and, in that context, a "housing needs" assessment. ⁷

The judgment did not address the adequacy of "advice and assistance" provided, but Giles Peaker of the [Nearly Legal Housing Law News and Comment website](#) said "it is a helpful reminder that a s.184 decision is not necessarily adequate as an assessment of housing need for s.192 purposes" and that the case should act as "a reminder to local authorities that an assessment of housing need is required under their s.192 obligation, and the clear implication of the statute is that advice and assistance should be tailored to that need, as should any decision on the exercise of discretion to accommodate under s.192(3)." ⁸

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Some of the provisions in this Act are a response to the variable standards of advice and assistance given to non-priority need homeless applicants. The Act started its life as a Private Member's Bill introduced by Bob Blackman. The Bill attracted Government and cross-Party support – the provisions are expected to come into force in April 2018.

Its main thrust is to refocus English local authorities on efforts to [prevent](#) homelessness. It will place new duties on English local authorities including:

- a new duty to prevent homelessness for [all](#) eligible⁹ applicants threatened with homelessness; and
- a new duty to relieve homelessness for [all](#) eligible homeless applicants.

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

A 2016 case has highlighted the need for local authorities to carry out a housing needs assessment before offering advice and assistance.

This Act will require authorities to agree steps with individuals aimed at preventing homelessness from April 2018.

⁶ [2016] EWHC 1240 (Admin)

⁷ [Smajlaj, R \(on the application of\) v London Borough of Waltham Forest](#) [2016] EWHC 1240 (Admin)

⁸ [Nearly Legal Housing Law News and Comment website](#), 29 May 2016

⁹ Eligibility is largely determined by an applicant's immigration status.

The Act will not place a duty on local authorities to actually provide accommodation for all homeless applicants.

The Government published a series of [policy fact sheets](#) on each clause of the Bill by way of background as it progressed through Public Bill Committee.

Local authorities will receive additional funding to assist in implementing the Act's provisions of £72.7 million.¹⁰

The 2017 Act will introduce provisions similar to those introduced in Wales under the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* which came into force on 27 April 2015. Statistics on rough sleeping in Wales released on 1 February 2018 showed an increase in the numbers sleeping rough in 2017 compared to 2016.¹¹

2. Causes of homelessness

Professor John Greve's 1990 report on homelessness noted the "striking degree" to which single people and families share the same kinds of reasons for becoming homeless.¹² The report listed the most important immediate causes as the breakdown of relationships (including those between young people and their parents or guardians), the failure of sharing arrangements in rented accommodation and unemployment.

In November 1990 the Department of the Environment (DoE) commissioned the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York to conduct a survey of single homeless people in order to collect comprehensive and up to date information on single homelessness in England. The results of this research, which involved interviews with 1,346 hostel or bed and breakfast dwellers, 351 users of day centres and 156 users of soup runs who were sleeping rough, were published in 1993. The survey's findings on the immediate causes of homelessness are set out in the table below.¹³

Many of the same factors result in single people and families becoming homeless such as relationship breakdown and loss of employment.

¹⁰ [Homelessness Written Question – 113560, 23 November 2017](#)

¹¹ Welsh Government, [National Rough Sleeper Count 2017](#), 1 February 2018

¹² Professor John Greve Homelessness in Britain, February 1990, p15

¹³ DoE Single Homeless People, 1993, p71

Main reasons and final reason for leaving last home (%)

England: 1991

	Hostels and B&Bs		Day Centre		Soup run	
	Main reason	Final reason	Main reason	Final reason	Main reason	Final reason
Family relationship reasons						
Relationship breakdown	14	11	19	16	10	7
Domestic violence/abuse (a)	2	2	1	2	5	5
Parents - conflict	8	6	8	8	8	5
Parents - positive decision	5	6	6	5	5	2
Death	5	4	5	4	5	5
Accommodation related reasons						
End of tenancy/sharing	3	2	3	3	-	1
Move into other accom	3	3	1	1	2	2
Problems with rent/HB	5	4	12	8	6	5
Problems with mortgage	1	1	-	-	1	2
Eviction	5	7	8	8	8	9
Accommodation closed/changed	3	3	3	3	2	2
Employment related reasons						
Look for/take up work	10	9	9	8	13	10
Lost job/tied accom	5	3	5	4	3	3
Left armed forces	-	-	-	-	2	2
Institutional related reasons						
Discharge from psychiatric care	-	-	-	-	-	-
Discharge from custody	-	-	1	1	2	2
Discharge from hospital	-	-	1	1	2	1
Given custodial sentence	2	3	-	1	2	2
Had to leave care	1	1	1	-	2	2
Other specific reasons						
Political situation	7	7	1	-	-	-
harassed/insecure accom	5	3	6	4	7	9
Health reasons	3	3	2	1	2	2
Drink problem	3	3	6	4	4	4
Wanted to travel/change	7	5	7	7	8	8
Other	15	14	12	13	12	9
Vague	1	1	3	2	1	2
Total	na	100	na	100	na	100
Base	1,051	1,031	315	313	134	129

Notes: Base: all three samples (those who stated a last home)

na - not applicable as more than one response possible

(a) this category includes both domestic violence by a partner and physical sexual abuse of a young person by a parent/guardian

Sources: *Single Homeless People, DoE, 1993, Ch. 5*

Similarly, a 1991 study of the experiences of 400 young people in the Surrey/Hampshire area who had left their family home found that over 50% had left before the age of 16.¹⁴ Most of these young people had left to go into care while nearly a quarter left at age 16. The most commonly cited reason for leaving was "because of arguments," but the researchers noted that this sometimes concealed reasons such as physical or sexual abuse. Over one quarter left home as a direct result of violence and 13% indicated that they left (unprompted) because of sexual abuse. Over 80% intimated that they would not return home or were unable to do so. Over half of the young people in the study had experienced some kind of family breakdown at some stage.

The Social Exclusion Unit considered the issue of rough sleeping in 1998; the Unit's findings were reported in July 1998.¹⁵ On the subject of who sleeps rough, the Unit found:

¹⁴ Joseph Rowntree Foundation Housing Research Findings No 89, *Young people at risk of homelessness*, May 1993

¹⁵ SEU, *Rough Sleeping*, 1998

- there were very few rough sleepers aged under 18;
- around 25% are between 18 and 25;
- 6% were over 60; and
- around 90% were male.

The report confirmed the findings of earlier studies on the main causes of rough sleeping. The single most common reason given for the first episode of rough sleeping was relationship breakdown, either with parents or a partner. Research with homeless young people across the country by Centrepoin found that 86% had been forced to leave home rather than leaving out of choice. A survey in Scotland found that a quarter of young homeless people had a step-parent compared with the 4% average for Scotland as a whole. Homeless agencies continue to report that physical or sexual abuse lies behind a significant minority of family conflicts.

Older homeless people have also identified family crises as a key factor in their situation. Widowhood and marital breakdown figure largely as causes of homelessness, as do eviction, redundancy and mental illness.

A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experienced some kind of institutional life such as being in local authority care, prison or the armed forces.

Around 30-50% of rough sleepers have been found to suffer from mental health problems, although very few of these people have ever been in a long-stay hospital and have become homeless upon discharge. A high percentage of rough sleepers (around 50%) have been found to have a serious alcohol problem. Drug problems are more prevalent amongst younger rough sleepers; the Rough Sleepers Unit noted that research carried out in 1996 found that 39% of people sleeping rough under 26 had a drug problem.

The Unit also highlighted the impact of changes to social security policy (e.g. the abolition of grants for rent deposits and furniture and the imposition of single room rent restrictions) on the ability of younger people to find privately rented housing.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM): Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee carried out an inquiry into homelessness in the 2004-05 parliamentary session.¹⁶ Chapter 2 of the Committee's 2005 report, [Homelessness](#), considered, amongst other things, what factors can lead to homelessness.

St Mungo's, a charity dealing with rough sleepers (now merged with Broadway), carried out a survey of outreach workers in 2011, the findings of which were published in October of that year: [Battered, broken, bereft: why people still end up sleeping rough](#). The report highlighted relationship breakdowns, domestic violence and mental

A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experienced some kind of institutional life.

¹⁶ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee, HC 61-I, Third Report of Session 2004-05, [Homelessness](#)

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health conditions as three of the main traumas leading people to sleep on the streets:

- Relationship breakdown is the largest single trigger of rough sleeping cited by outreach workers, leading to 42% of male rough sleeping.
- Among women, 35% slept rough after leaving home to escape domestic violence.
- Perhaps the most shocking finding is that 57% of outreach workers believe that the number of rough sleepers in their area with mental health problems has increased over the last five years.¹⁷

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 Street to Home Annual Report 2016-17](#) recorded the following reasons for leaving their last settled base from 2,576¹⁸ new rough sleepers:

Reason for leaving last settled base	No.	%
Asked to leave or evicted		
Asked to leave	521	18.4%
Evicted - arrears	231	7.5%
Evicted - ASB	53	1.9%
Evicted - other	153	5.4%
<i>Asked to leave or evicted subtotal</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>33.3%</i>
Employment and education		
Seeking work - from within UK	165	5.8%
Seeking work - from outside UK	202	7.1%
Financial problems - loss of job	251	8.9%
Study	2	0.1%
<i>Employment and education subtotal</i>	<i>620</i>	<i>21.9%</i>
Relationships		
Relationship breakdown	327	11.6%
Bereavement	27	1.0%
Move nearer family/community	19	0.7%
<i>Relationships subtotal</i>	<i>373</i>	<i>13.2%</i>
Financial		
Financial problems - housing benefit	17	0.6%
Financial problems - debt	22	0.8%
Financial problems - other	84	3.0%
<i>Financial subtotal</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>4.4%</i>
End of stay in short or medium term accommodation		
Evicted - given non priority decision	18	0.6%
End of stay - hostel	16	0.6%
End of stay - asylum accommodation	55	1.9%
End of stay - other	67	2.4%
<i>End of stay in short or medium term accommodation subtotal</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>5.5%</i>
Victim of violence, harassment or abuse		
Domestic violence - victim	50	1.8%
Harassment/abuse/violence - gang	8	0.3%
Harassment/abuse/violence - racial	3	0.1%
Tenancy hijack	6	0.2%
Harassment/abuse/violence - homophobic	2	0.1%

¹⁷ [Battered, broken, bereft : why people still end up sleeping rough](#), October 2011

¹⁸ The total number of new rough sleepers recorded in 2014/15 was 5,107 but a number did not record the reason for leaving their last accommodation.

Harassment/abuse/violence - other	59	2.1%
<i>Victim of violence, harassment or abuse subtotal</i>	128	4.5%
End of stay in institution		
End of stay - prison	86	3.0%
End of stay - hospital	9	0.3%
<i>End of stay in institution subtotal</i>	95	3.4%
Housing conditions		
Housing conditions	25	0.9%
Perpetrator of violence, harassment or abuse		
Domestic violence - perpetrator	17	0.6%
Transient		
Transient/travelling around	33	1.2%
Other		
Other	316	11.2%
Not recorded	2826	
Total (excl. not recorded)	5094	100%

Note: Total excluding not recorded is used as the base for percentages.

A significant number of the new rough sleepers in 2016/17 (36.3%) recorded their last settled accommodation as private rented housing.

Restrictions to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)¹⁹ 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 2012,²⁰ have been identified as factors making it more difficult for single people to find and retain affordable private rented housing, particularly in London. There is evidence of some private landlords being reluctant to let to people in receipt of the LHA.²¹

During the July 2015 [Summer Budget](#) the Chancellor announced that Housing Benefit entitlement for certain 18 to 21-year-olds would be removed (with some exceptions) from April 2017 and that LHA rates would be frozen for four years from 2016 (with some provision for rent increases in the most expensive areas):

Restricting Housing Benefit entitlement for young people – From April 2017, those out of work aged 18 to 21 making new claims to Universal Credit will no longer be automatically entitled to the housing element. Parents whose children live them, vulnerable groups, and those who were living independently and working continuously for the preceding 6 months will be exempt from this measure.²²

Organisations such as Shelter, Crisis and Centrepoint are actively lobbying against the removal of what they describe as an “essential safety net” which can offer a lifeline to young people faced with homelessness. More detailed information on the restriction of Housing Benefit for young people can be found in Library Briefing Paper 06473, [Housing Benefit: withdrawing entitlement from 18-21 year olds](#). The

¹⁹ This is the Housing Benefit paid to people living in the private rented sector.

²⁰ 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](#).

²¹ See Library Briefing Paper 07008, [Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?](#)

²² [Summer Budget 2015](#), para 2.111

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impact of welfare reforms since 2010 is discussed further in **section 9** of this paper.

The Housing and Regeneration Committee of the London Assembly considered a report on rough sleeping in April 2013. The [report](#) asked why London was seeing an increasing flow of people on to its streets:

Evidence indicates that since the initiation of the No Second Night Out scheme, new rough sleepers are now more likely to be counted, therefore, partly explaining the huge spike in rough sleeping figures between 2010/11 and 2011/12. Nevertheless, there are a number of other factors that may be driving up the number of homeless including the overall increase in demand for housing which has driven up rents and reduced the availability of affordable rented accommodation and the increase in eviction rates.

The expansion of the European Union may also have had an effect - in 2010 the number of rough sleepers on the streets of London from EU countries rose to 30 per cent. Moreover, since the end of the Transitional Arrangements on A8 nationals, in May 2011, there has been confusion around the rights of this group which has in some cases led to wrong advice and unnecessary cases of homelessness.

Furthermore, there are concerns that London may see an influx of people from the A2 accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania) who joined the EU in 2007 but whose citizens currently need authorisation to work in the UK. From 2014 this restriction will be lifted. Coupled with this, steps have recently been taken to restrict migrant benefits, specifically, rights to social housing. Immigrants coming to Britain will face losing benefits unless they find work within 6 months. This inevitably will impact negatively on rough sleeping figures in London.

There are also concerns that the on-going welfare reforms will bring financial difficulties to those on low incomes which could leave some unable to afford their rent. London Councils have estimated that these changes could leave an estimated 133,000 households in London unable to afford their rent, with possible impacts on numbers sleeping rough in extreme circumstances.²³

DCLG (now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) said it was commissioning a feasibility study “which will explore whether it is possible to carry out robust and useful research on a complex issue such as the causes of homelessness” in November 2017.²⁴

²³ London Assembly, [Review of Rough Sleeping in London](#), 25 April 2013

²⁴ [Government to lead national effort to end rough sleeping](#), 30 November 2017

3. 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. After the RSI: reducing rough sleeping by two thirds by 2002

The Minister for Housing, Nick Raynsford, described the steps the Labour Government was taking to tackle youth homelessness in response to a PQ in February 1999:

Mr. Raynsford: For young people to be without a suitable home can blight their lives and future development and lead to the social exclusion that this Government are determined to tackle. The problems of youth homelessness go beyond the simple provision of accommodation; many other factors are involved and all sectors, statutory, voluntary and business have a contribution to make.

That is why we have established the Youth Homelessness Action Partnership to bring together senior representatives of central Government, local government and the voluntary sector. The Partnership is currently working on producing an agreed definition of youth homelessness and estimating the numbers involved. It will also identify what works in tackling and preventing youth homelessness, including the role of local strategies, and disseminate good practice to all the key players. The Partnership will also contribute towards the evaluation of the impact of Government policies on youth homelessness. The work of the Partnership will be underpinned by research to be commissioned later this year.

We have refocused our DETR section 180 grant programme, which provides grants to voluntary sector organisations concerned with homelessness, to give priority to projects that prevent and tackle youth homelessness £8.1 million is available 1998/99 and over 200 projects around England are benefiting from these grants.

The Government are committed to reducing the most extreme example of homelessness--rough sleeping--to as near to zero as possible in our towns and cities. The Prime Minister asked the Social Exclusion Unit to address the issue of rough sleeping as one of its first priorities. Their report sets a tough initial target of reducing the number of people sleeping rough throughout England, to a third of its current level by 2002.

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A new Ministerial Committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Housing, has been established to ensure effective co-ordination of Government policy in preventing and tackling rough sleeping. The DETR will be responsible for co-ordination of the overall strategy for England on rough sleeping; including housing, health access to employment and training and benefits.

We will establish a new body for London which will be responsible for reducing the numbers of people sleeping rough in the capital. The new body will have an integrated budget of £143 million over the three years until 2002 to combat rough and the causes of rough sleeping.

Outside London, the SEU confirmed that local authorities are in the best position to take the lead on tackling rough sleeping and single, including youth, homelessness. To support local authorities in achieving the target reduction in rough sleeping in their area we have launched a new Homelessness Action Programme which will provide £34 million over the next three years to help voluntary organisations outside London to tackle and prevent rough sleeping. We announced details of over 250 voluntary sector projects which will benefit from this programme on 5 February.

We have also strengthened the safety net for families and vulnerable individuals who are homeless unintentionally. The revised Code of Guidance on Allocations and Homelessness which will be issued later this year will provide more advice to help local housing authorities develop effective strategies to assist single homeless people including young people.²⁵

In effect, 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*,²⁶ 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 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

²⁵ HC Deb 8 February 1999 c9-10W

²⁶ Cm 4008, July 1998

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.²⁷

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.²⁸ 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](#).²⁹

In September 2000 the Unit announced schemes specifically aimed at preventing young people from ending up on the streets.³⁰ Safe Stop for young people sleeping rough in London provided short-term accommodation for people aged between 16 and 24. Centrepoint 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.

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

²⁷ DETR Press Notice 1201, 15 December 1999

²⁸ Cabinet Office Press Release 258/00, 17 July 2000

²⁹ DETR, July 2000

³⁰ Cabinet Office Press Release 303/00, 18 September 2000

published research into the specific needs of care leavers in September 2000³¹ 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 2000³² a second progress report followed in August 2001.³³

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."³⁴ 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.³⁵

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."³⁶ 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.

³¹ Leaving Care: a Time for Change

³² [Coming in from the Cold: progress report](#), 2000

³³ Coming in from the Cold: progress report, August 2001

³⁴ RSU Press release, Government meets target on reducing rough sleeping, 3 December 2001

³⁵ DTLR, More Than a Roof, 2003

³⁶ ODPM Press Release 2004/0313, 13 December 2004

5. Extending the priority need categories - 2002

Local authorities have never had a duty to secure accommodation for *all* homeless people. To qualify for assistance as a homeless person, an applicant has to fall into one of the priority need categories currently 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.³⁷

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.'³⁸

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.³⁹

The Government's response to the Committee rejected further extensions to the priority need categories.⁴⁰

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will extend local authorities' duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all applicants from April 2018.

³⁷ HC Deb 10 June 2002 c1079W

³⁸ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee, HC 61-I, Third Report of Session 2004-05, Homelessness, para 45

³⁹ Ibid., para 46

⁴⁰ Cm 6490, para 9

6. 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. 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 which included the following measures.⁴¹

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 the 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

⁴¹ DCLG Press Release, *New Goal to end rough sleeping*, 18 November 2008

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
- 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." ⁴²

Organisations working with the street homeless drew attention to increased demand as a result of recessionary pressures in terms of growing redundancies and repossessions.⁴³ Calls were made for more help from the prison service and NHS to ensure patients and ex-offenders do not become homeless on discharge.⁴⁴ 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](#). A key issue identified by commentators was how success would be defined in terms of achieving the 2012 target.⁴⁵

⁴² DCLG Press Release, 27 November 2009

⁴³ *Inside Housing*, "Everyone indoors", 26 February 2009

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Inside Housing*, "Everyone indoors", 26 February 2009

London

In London, the area of the country with the highest number of rough sleepers, the London Delivery Board (LDB)⁴⁶ 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;
- 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.⁴⁷

In December 2010 the Mayor announced that funding of £750,000 had been secured for a homelessness outreach scheme to ensure no-one is 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 2012.⁴⁸ 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 the £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]."⁴⁹ 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."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ 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.

⁴⁷ [Progress report on ending London's rough sleeping](#). [accessed on 4 January 2016]

⁴⁸ [Local Government Executive Press Release](#), 20 December 2010

⁴⁹ *Inside Housing*, "Government shies away from 2012 rough sleeping pledge," 24 September 2010

⁵⁰ p12

7. The number of rough sleepers

Summary

- Local authorities currently produce an annual count or estimate of rough sleepers in their area.
- The 2017 estimate put the number of rough sleepers at **4,751** in 2017, up 15% from the year before.
- There were **1,137** rough sleepers in London in the 2017 estimate, 24% 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 **8,108** rough sleepers in 2016/17.

7.1 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.⁵¹ 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.⁵²

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.⁵³ 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 around one third in the number of people sleeping rough in central London since June 1998.⁵⁴ The June 2000 street count found 546

⁵¹ Homes for street homeless people, December 1999

⁵² HC Deb 10 December 2001 c574W

⁵³ HC Deb 15 December 1999 c193-4W

⁵⁴ HC Deb 9 May 2000 c630

rough sleepers in Greater London and 1,180 in England as a whole, indicating that the downward trend was continuing.⁵⁵ 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 2001.⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸

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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

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.”⁶¹ 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.⁶² The RSU and Lord Falconer (Minister for Housing at that time) denied these

⁵⁵ HC Deb 15 November 2000 c655W

⁵⁶ ‘Rough Sleepers Unit on schedule to achieve its goal’, *Housing Today*, 24 August 2000

⁵⁷ RSU Press Release, Government meets target on reducing rough sleeping, 3 December 2001

⁵⁸ ODPM Press Release 2005/190, 12 September 2005

⁵⁹ DCLG Press Release, New Goal to end rough sleeping, 18 November 2008

⁶⁰ DCLG Press Release, Rough sleeping hits an eleven year low, 15 July 2010

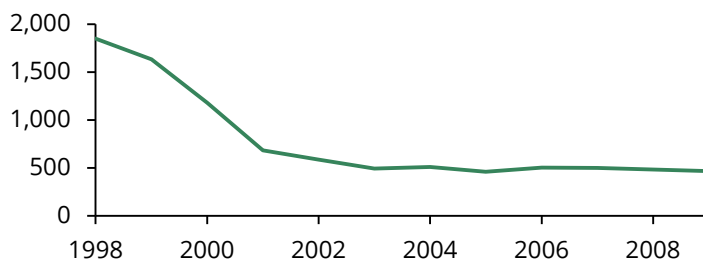
⁶¹ “Rough sleeping figures are ‘quick fix’ says charity chief”, *Inside Housing*, 8 September 2000

⁶² Simon Star, Issue 89, July 2002

allegations.⁶³ Questions on the methodology of the counts were asked in the House.⁶⁴

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.”⁶⁵ 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.”⁶⁶ [Revised guidance on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping](#) was published in March 2007.⁶⁷

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

⁶³ “Falconer defends rough sleeper count,” *Housing Today*, 24 January 2002

⁶⁴ HC Deb 5 March 2002 c186W

⁶⁵ *Inside Housing*, “Number of homeless could be four times official figure”, 12 January 2007

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹

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.”⁷⁰

Rough sleeper counts 2010 onwards

The first annual rough sleeping statistics produced under the new guidance were published in February 2011 ([Rough Sleeping Statistics England – Autumn 2010](#)). 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 2017, 17% of local authorities conducted a count.⁷¹

⁶⁸ DCLG, [No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping](#), 18 November 2008

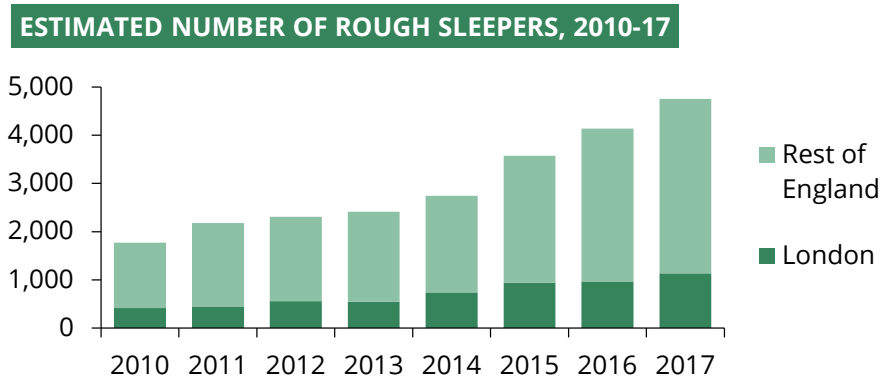
⁶⁹ CLG Press Release, *Rough sleeping hits an eleven year low*, 15 July 2010

⁷⁰ HC Deb 25 October 2010 c89W

⁷¹ MHCLG (2018) [Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2017](#)

The table and chart below show the estimated number of rough sleepers in England from 2010 up to the latest figures for 2017.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ROUGH SLEEPERS 2010-2017				
	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%



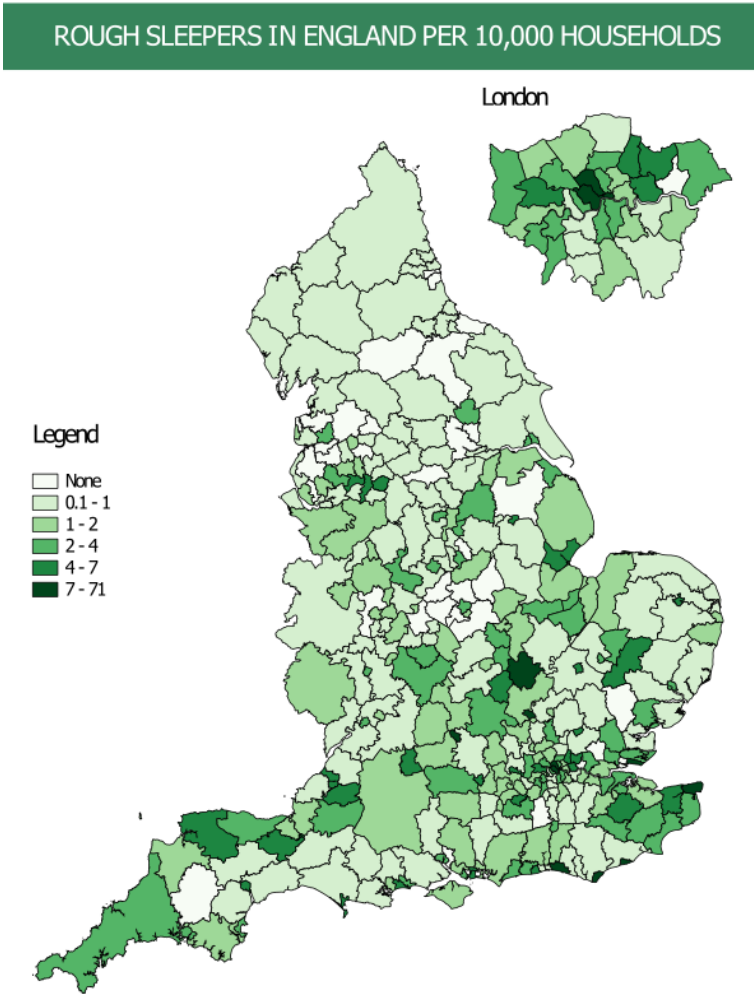
Source: MHCLG (2018). [Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2017](#), Table 1

The estimated number of rough sleepers in England has increased each year since 2010. Overall, the number has increased by 169% from 1,768 in 2010 to 4,751 in 2017. The estimate for 2017 is 15% higher than the estimate for the year before.

Rough sleepers in London made up 24% of the England total in 2017. In London, rough sleeping has increased by 174%, from 415 rough sleepers in 2010 to 1,137 rough sleepers in 2017.

The map overleaf shows the rate of rough sleepers per 10,000 households in each local authority in England. The highest rates in 2017 were in the City of London (71 rough sleepers per 10,000 households), Westminster (18), and Brighton and Hove (14).

The Library's [Local Authority Homelessness Statistics](#) tool provides detailed local-authority level data on rough sleeping.



Source: MHCLG (2018). [Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2017](#), Table 1

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 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2017

The table below shows the number of rough sleepers in each region, as well as the rate per 1,000 households. London had the most rough sleepers per 1,000 households (0.31), followed by the South East (0.30) and the South West and East (both 0.24).

ROUGH SLEEPER ESTIMATES BY REGION, 2017		
Region	Rough sleepers	Rate per 10,000 households
North East	1,168	0.44
North West	3,133	1.39
Yorkshire & the Humber	2,316	0.89
East Midlands	2,002	1.56
West Midlands	2,409	1.22
East of England	2,591	2.37
London	1,137	3.11
South East	3,791	2.95
South West	2,402	2.41

Source: MHCLG (2018). [Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2017](#), Table 1

Demographics of rough sleepers

Demographic information about rough sleepers was published for the first time in 2016, and again in 2017. The table below summarises the available data. The majority of rough sleepers (83%) were recorded as male, while 14% were female. 81% were aged over 25, while 8% were aged 25 or under.

Nationality was also recorded: 71% were UK nationals, 16% were EU nationals and 4% were nationals of non-UK, non-EU countries. In London, nationality was not recorded for one-fifth of rough sleepers. Rough sleepers were more likely to be from overseas: 29% were EU nationals and 11% were from non-EU, non-UK countries.

ROUGH SLEEPER DEMOGRAPHICS, 2017				
	England		London	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Gender				
Female	653	14%	133	12%
Male	3,965	83%	930	82%
Not known	133	3%	74	7%
Nationality				
UK	3,396	71%	456	40%
EU (non-UK)	760	16%	326	29%
Non-EU (non-UK)	193	4%	127	11%
Not known	402	8%	228	20%
Age				
Under 18	3	0%	1	0%
18-25	366	8%	66	6%
Over 25	3,846	81%	813	72%
Not known	536	11%	257	23%

Source: MHCLG (2018). [Rough sleeping in England: autumn 2017](#), Tables 2a, 2b and 2c.

London CHAIN database findings

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.

The latest financial year report shows that a total of 8,108 rough sleepers were contacted by outreach workers or building-based teams in London during 2016/17, a similar number to the year before (8,096).

The number of rough sleepers recorded has risen by 104% since 2010/11.⁷²

ROUGH SLEEPERS IN LONDON		
At any point in financial year		
	Number	% growth 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%

Source: [CHAIN Greater London full report, 2016-17](#)

5,094 of these rough sleepers (63%) were seen for the first time in 2016/17. 24% had also been seen in 2015/16, while 13% had been seen before 2015/16, but not during that year. 2,127 (26%) of rough sleepers seen were helped into accommodation or to return to their home area in 2016/17.

702 people seen rough sleeping for the first time ever in 2016/17 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 almost 14% of all new rough sleepers in the year. Of these, 644 (92%) had approached Housing Options teams in London boroughs.

CHAIN also provides a detailed breakdown by nationality. The table below shows the change in the number of rough sleepers in each broad nationality category between 2015/16 and 2016/17. The number of rough sleepers identified as UK nationals increased by 12%, while the number from Central or Eastern European (CEE) countries fell by 20%. Overall, UK nationals made up 45% of all rough sleepers, while rough sleepers from CEE countries made up 29%. 5% of rough sleepers did not have their nationality identified.

Around 14% of rough sleepers seen in 2016/17 in London had contacted a local authority for assistance **before sleeping rough.**

⁷² Mayor of London (2017). [CHAIN Greater London full report, 2016-17](#)

NATIONALITY OF LONDON ROUGH SLEEPERS			
Across 2016/17 financial year			
	2015/16	2016/17	% change
UK	3,271	3,653	12%
CEE	2,924	2,337	-20%
Other Europe	828	788	-5%
Rest of world	923	927	0%
Not known	150	403	
Total	8,096	8,108	

Source: [CHAIN Greater London full report, 2016-17](#)

The table below shows the ten most commonly-reported nationalities for rough sleepers. Five out of the ten most common nationalities were Central and Eastern European.

10 MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES

London rough sleepers, 2016/17

1	UK	3,653
2	Romania	1,130
3	Poland	639
4	Lithuania	181
5	Ireland	150
6	India	148
7	Portugal	146
8	Italy	134
9	Bulgaria	122
10	Hungary	100

Source: [CHAIN Greater London full report, 2016-17](#)

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 2016/17 are on the [Greater London Authority's website](#).

Report by the UK Statistics Authority 2015

In December 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published an assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics in relation to DCLG's homelessness and rough sleeping statistics. The Department's Homelessness Prevention and Relief and Rough Sleeping statistics were deemed not to meet the standard to be regarded as 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 UK Statistics Authority declared the rough sleeping data to not meet the standard required of National Statistics.

the key first step in this will be for the statisticians to demonstrate greater control over decision making around these statistics.⁷³

Organisations working with the homeless welcomed this assessment:

As part of a joint letter from homelessness charities Crisis, Centrepoint and Shelter, Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, wrote: "If we are to end homelessness in this country, we must fully understand it. That is why today's announcement by the UK Statistics Authority is so important: It is now clear that the way that statistics on homeless people are collected and used can mask the full extent of need."⁷⁴

On 2 March 2016 Marcus Jones confirmed that "Departmental statisticians are currently using the report to help plan future developments in homelessness statistics."⁷⁵

DCLG was renamed the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in January 2018. The MHCLG is working with local authorities on a new method of gathering homelessness data to "allow us to better understand the causes and effects of homelessness."⁷⁶

⁷³ UK Statistics Authority, [Statistics on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in England \(Department for Communities and Local Government\)](#), December 2015

⁷⁴ Crisis, ['Urgent action' needed on homeless statistics](#), 10 December 2015

⁷⁵ [Homelessness: Written Question-27313, 2 March 2016](#)

⁷⁶ [Homelessness Case Level Information Collection](#), January 2018

8. The Government's approach (2010 onwards)

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.”⁷⁷

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.⁷⁸

As noted in section 6 of this paper, 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 2012.⁷⁹ 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 2015.⁸⁰

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

⁷⁷ DCLG Press Release, Rough sleeping hit eleven year low, 15 July 2010

⁷⁸ The [minutes of the Group's meetings](#) can be accessed online.

⁷⁹ [Local Government Executive Press Release](#), 20 December 2010

⁸⁰ [An evaluation report and case studies of the Homeless Transition Fund](#) can be found on the Homeless Link website.

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.⁸¹

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.”⁸² 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.⁸³

The Minister, Marcus Jones, was tasked with leading on homelessness for the Coalition and also the 2015 and 2017 Governments. This role has now been taken over by Heather Wheeler who was appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Housing and Homelessness) on 9 January 2018. 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 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

⁸¹ Broadway, York University & Crunch Consulting, [No second night out: an evaluation of the first six months of the project](#), December 2011

⁸² Homeless Link, [No Second Night Out Across England](#), 2014

⁸³ Ibid.

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.⁸⁴

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.⁸⁵

He 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.

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

⁸⁴ [DCLG Press Release](#), 8 December 2015

⁸⁵ [Ibid.](#)

£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.⁸⁶

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.⁸⁷

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:

- maintaining and protecting homelessness prevention funding for local authorities, through the provisional local government finance settlement totalling £315 million by 2019 to 2020
- increasing central government funding for homelessness programmes to £139 million over the [Spending Review](#) period
- a commitment to work with homelessness organisations and across departments to consider options, including legislation, to prevent more people from becoming homeless
- £40 million from the Department of Health to refurbish hostels and provide low cost shared accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness
- £30 million extra to councils to give them more control and flexibility over homelessness budgets by devolving the funding for managing temporary accommodation from 2017 to 2018
- a £5 million fund to the 25 local authorities facing the greatest pressures in moving people out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home⁸⁸

Again, not all of these initiatives are relevant to rough sleepers. More information on the Department of Health 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

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Crisis, [Preventing and tackling single homelessness](#), September 2015

⁸⁸ [DCLG Press Release](#), 17 December 2015

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.

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](#).⁸⁹

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.⁹⁰ The 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.⁹¹ An evaluation of the scheme's operation was published in January 2015.⁹²

[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

⁸⁹ [DOH Press Release](#), 22 December 2015

⁹⁰ [Improving hospital admission and discharge for people who are homeless](#), March 2012

⁹¹ [DOH Press Release](#), 6 September 2013

⁹² Homeless Link, [An evaluation of the Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund](#), January 2015

- 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.

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 possible impact of further welfare cuts - in particular, the extension of LHA rates to the social sector.⁹³

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.⁹⁴

Note that the Government is not applying LHA caps to social housing tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit/UC as previously planned.

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.⁹⁵

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

⁹³ CIH Member Briefing on the Budget 2016 (accessed on 6 April 2016)

⁹⁴ [Autumn Statement 2016](#), para 5.12

⁹⁵ [HC 308](#), 13 September 2017

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.⁹⁶

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 strategy. It will be supported by a panel of experts, who met for the first time this morning.⁹⁷

Membership of the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel which is tasked with developing a national strategy was published on 30 November 2017.⁹⁸

London

London accounts for the vast majority of rough sleepers. Sadiq Khan's 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.⁹⁹

In October 2016 the new 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 necessary¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ [Autumn Budget 2017](#), 23 November 2017, paras 5.33-35

⁹⁷ [HL Deb 1 February 2018 c1707](#)

⁹⁸ [Government to lead national effort to end rough sleeping](#), 30 November 2017

⁹⁹ [Homes for Londoners](#), 2016

¹⁰⁰ [Mayor launches taskforce to tackle 'shameful' levels of rough sleeping](#), 6 October 2016

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.¹⁰¹

The Mayor's [London Housing Strategy](#), which was published in draft for consultation in September 2017, contains the following on helping rough sleepers get off the streets:

It is unacceptable that anyone sleeps on London's streets. The Mayor's aim is to ensure there is a way off the streets for every single rough sleeper in London. He will provide leadership and coordination through his 'No Nights Sleeping Rough' taskforce. He will work with councils, charities, Government, and others to boost services beyond the £8.5 million a year he has committed toward support for rough sleepers. He will invest in improving and expanding London's network of hostels and refuges.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ [Sadiq sets out plans for £50 million fund to help homeless people](#), 20 December 2016

¹⁰² [London Housing Strategy](#) (draft), September 2017

9. Comment

Despite considerable efforts, the official rough sleeper counts have risen in each year since autumn 2010. Existing programmes have recorded successes in helping individuals to exit rough sleeping, but the flow on to the streets continues. Homeless Link published a [Manifesto to end homelessness](#) in January 2015 which acknowledged the work of previous Governments but identified a need for more to be done:

Successive governments have invested in support to help people who face homelessness. Local authorities, charities and other agencies across England have worked hard to make sure the right support is there for people when they need it.

Yet there are still thousands of people who don't have the right accommodation and support to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Demand for affordable places to live is rising; more people are seeking help with their housing; and the number of people sleeping on our streets is the highest it's been for the past four years.¹⁰³

The Manifesto called on the next Government to:

1. Commit to ending rough sleeping.
2. Ensure better support for people to find and keep a job, and an effective welfare safety net.
3. Ensure more homes and stronger rights for tenants.
4. Secure a better deal for people with the most complex problems.
5. Put in place a long-term homelessness strategy and the investment to deliver it.¹⁰⁴

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched an [inquiry](#) into homelessness in December 2015. In its [final report](#) the Committee expressed some interest in the adoption of a duty to prevent homelessness along the lines of that introduced in Wales. This approach is now being taken forward in Bob Blackman's *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*.¹⁰⁵ Bodies working with the homeless have welcomed the Act's provisions although local authorities have expressed concerns over whether the £72.7 million in new burdens funding will be sufficient for them to adequately perform the duties imposed by the Act. For example, London Councils said:

£73m over three years nationally will not be enough to deliver the broader homelessness prevention and relief services set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act. In London alone we estimate the Act will cost £77m per year to implement. However we welcome the clear indication that the actual cost incurred will be reviewed in order to enable future funding to be considered...¹⁰⁶

Rough sleeping has continued to rise since 2010 despite Government efforts.

¹⁰³ Homeless Link, [Manifesto to end homelessness](#), January 2015

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ See: Library Briefing Paper 7736, [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#).

¹⁰⁶ [London Councils response to Written Ministerial Statement on Homelessness](#), 17 October 2017

The Government is placing a good deal of emphasis on the role of new prevention and relief duties in the Act in reducing rough sleeping but similar duties in Wales have not, to date, stemmed the increase in rough sleeping.¹⁰⁷

On publication of the results of the 2017 rough sleeper counts/estimates, the Local Government Association said:

If we want to end homelessness then councils need to be given the powers and funding to adapt welfare reforms and begin building affordable homes again.

The Government needs to use the upcoming final Local Government Finance Settlement to accept the calls of both the LGA and the cross-party Treasury Select Committee, and completely scrap the cap on the amount councils can borrow to invest in new and existing homes.¹⁰⁸

Welfare reform

In terms of breaking the cycle of rough sleeping, organisations working with the homeless have highlighted tensions between the Government's welfare reforms and disinvestment in local homelessness services as part of the austerity agenda, and efforts to help rough sleepers.

Shelter and Crisis were highly critical of cuts to Housing Benefit entitlement announced in the June 2010 Budget and October 2010 Spending Review.¹⁰⁹ Responses to these changes, which were phased in from 1 April 2011, predicted increased levels of homelessness as a result of private landlords potentially withdrawing from the market and/or refusing to let to Housing Benefit claimants.¹¹⁰ The Coalition Government rejected these claims but introduced some transitional measures for existing Housing Benefit claimants as at 1 April 2011 (these transitional measures ended in January 2012).¹¹¹ Some additional exemptions were also added to the application of the Shared Accommodation Rate (extended to cover single people up the age of 35 from January 2012):

To help prevent increases in rough sleeping, we have also put in place exemptions for some homeless people and a small number of high risk ex-offenders to the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR). This restricts the maximum Housing Benefit that under 35-year-olds can receive to the published SAR, reflecting rents in non-self-contained accommodation in the area.¹¹²

December 2011 saw Crisis warn of an "impending catastrophe" in terms of homelessness, ahead of Housing Benefit cuts implemented in

Organisations argue that there is a disconnection between efforts to reduce homelessness and the Government's welfare reform agenda.

¹⁰⁷ Welsh Government, [National Rough Sleeper Count 2017](#), 1 February 2018

¹⁰⁸ [LGA responds to new rough sleeping statistics](#), 25 January 2018

¹⁰⁹ These reforms reduced the rates of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) payable to tenants in the private rented sector and introduced national LHA caps. The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) was extended to cover single claimants under the age of 35 (previously 25).

¹¹⁰ See for example: [The Guardian](#), 20 April 2011

¹¹¹ For more information see Library Briefing Paper 05638, [Measures to reduce Housing Benefit expenditure - an overview](#)

¹¹² DCLG, [Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England](#), November 2011, para 10

January 2012.¹¹³ St Mungo's October 2011 report, [Battered, Broken, Bereft](#), referred to an increase in rough sleeping in England and a lack of emergency accommodation.¹¹⁴ Further work by ComRes for St Mungo's, [Out in the cold](#) (December 2012), found that one in five people living in private rented housing would have to sleep rough for the first night if evicted from their home, leading St Mungo's to call for additional investment in emergency hostel accommodation.

In February 2013 Homeless Link published [A place to call your home](#), in which it set out several measures aimed at preventing and tackling homelessness in the face of austerity measures and welfare reform.

May 2013 saw the publication of [Nowhere to Move](#), which focused on the ability of single people to secure a room in a shared home following the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to people aged under 35.¹¹⁵ Homeless Link concluded:

To prevent the impact of the Housing Benefit changes substantially increasing homelessness, Homeless Link that the Government takes steps to ensure SAR claimants can afford more private rented properties, particularly as the SAR is set such that 30% of properties should be affordable for claimants.¹¹⁶

Homeless Link published [A High Cost to Pay](#) in September 2013 which examined the impact of wider benefit sanctions on homeless people.

Following publication of the autumn 2013 count of rough sleepers, Rick Henderson, CEO of Homeless Link, reportedly attributed some of the increase in rough sleeping to welfare reforms:

There are many issues, such as welfare reform, that could lead to further rises in rough sleeping. This should serve as a clear warning sign that cutting funding for housing related supported now will have a serious impact in the future.¹¹⁷

He went on to praise efforts by homelessness services to contain increases in rough sleeping:

This has been possible because many local authorities have understood the essential nature of these services and attempted to protect funding, despite facing increasing financial pressure.¹¹⁸

A significant number of the new rough sleepers seen by agencies in London in 2016/17 and whose details were recorded as part of the CHAIN database, recorded their last settled accommodation as private rented housing (36.3%). This could reflect the difficulties those on a low income are facing in accessing and retaining private rented housing in the capital. Demand for this housing is such that landlords can refuse to

¹¹³ [Crisis warns of catastrophic wave of homelessness](#), December 2011

¹¹⁴ [Battered, broken, bereft, St Mungo's rough sleeping report October 2011](#)

¹¹⁵ 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](#).

¹¹⁶ Homeless Link, [Nowhere to Move](#), May 2013

¹¹⁷ [Government cuts blamed as rough sleeping rises for fourth year in a row](#), 25 February 2014

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

let to LHA claimants in the knowledge that they can secure higher rent levels from non-claimants.

The Work and Pension Select Committee's report, [Support for housing costs in the reformed welfare system](#) (April 2014), concluded:

Reforms to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), paid to Housing Benefit claimants in the private rented sector, have led to a growing discrepancy between the average area rents and the amount of LHA that households can claim. As a result, there is evidence that private sector landlords are becoming increasingly reluctant to rent to LHA recipients and evictions and non-renewal of tenancies are increasing, leading to an increased risk of homelessness among Housing Benefit recipients. Private sector properties which remain affordable to LHA recipients are increasingly of poor quality.¹¹⁹

London authorities were allocated an additional £10 million over 2011/12 to help households affected by the private sector Housing Benefit reforms. All local authorities have been allocated additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to assist in responding to cuts to Housing Benefit entitlement. Over 2016/17 a total of £150 million was distributed in Great Britain.

The [Homelessness Monitor England 2015](#)¹²⁰ identified welfare reforms as an ongoing issue contributing to rough sleeping flows:

The Shared Accommodation Rate continues to create problems in accommodating younger single people in private rented housing across most of the country. And for single and youth homelessness service providers throughout England, and indeed across the UK, the ratcheting up of the sanctions regime under Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance, and thereafter Universal Credit, is *the* major ongoing concern.¹²¹

The [Homelessness Monitor England 2016](#) identified regional differences in the impact of welfare changes:

Two thirds of local authorities in England reported that the 2010-2015 welfare reforms had increased homelessness in their area. Negative effects of welfare reform on homelessness levels were much more widely reported by local authorities in London (93%) than in the North of England (49%).

Northern local authorities most commonly cited the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate to 25-34 year olds (44%), and benefit sanctions (33%), as the primary welfare reform measures driving homelessness in their areas. In London, on the other hand, the maximum cap on Local Housing Allowance rates was by far the most frequently identified welfare change inflating homelessness (reported by 69% of London Borough Councils).¹²²

¹¹⁹ HC 720, Fourth Report of Session 2013-14, [Support for housing costs in the reformed welfare system](#), April 2014

¹²⁰ This report is the fourth of a project (2011-16) which is tracking the impact on homelessness of economic and social policy developments (the report covers impacts on statutory as well as non-statutory homelessness). The research is being conducted by Heriot-Watt University and the University of York on behalf of Crisis.

¹²¹ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2015](#), February 2015

¹²² Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2016](#), January 2016

Additional cuts to assistance with housing costs have been implemented. From April 2017 the housing costs element of Universal Credit was removed for certain 18 to 21-year-olds (with a number of exemptions) and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have been frozen for four years from 2016 (with some provision for rent increases in the most expensive areas).¹²³

Shelter, Crisis and Centrepoin have lobbied against the removal of what they describe as an “essential safety net” which can offer a lifeline to young people faced with homelessness. Shelter published [Slipping through the safety net](#) in April 2015 and the sector published a joint briefing paper, [Access to Housing Benefit for 18 to 21 year olds](#) in May 2015. More detailed information on the restriction of Housing Benefit for young people can be found in Library Briefing Paper 06473, [Housing Benefit: withdrawing entitlement from 18-21 year olds](#).

Alongside the announcement of further cuts to Housing Benefit entitlement as part of [Summer Budget 2015](#), the Chancellor said that £800 million would be made available for DHPs over the next five years.

Respondents to the [Homelessness Monitor England 2016](#) survey largely dismissed DHP funding as an “unsustainable fix”:

The new welfare reforms announced in the Summer 2015 Budget and Autumn Statement will have particularly marked consequences for families with more than two children, and for out-of-work young single people aged 18-21 who, subject to specific exemptions, may be entirely excluded from support with their housing costs or otherwise subject to the very low Shared Accommodation Rate of Housing Benefit in the social as well as the private rented sector. In the face of these and other major benefit cuts, local authority survey respondents largely viewed Discretionary Housing Payments budgets, while welcome and necessary, as an unsustainable ‘fix’ in the longer-term.¹²⁴

The [Homelessness Monitor England 2017](#) notes the number of rough sleepers in London who had previously lived in private rented accommodation and refers to a “London-based key informant” who commented:

...that the main factors driving (what he perceived to be) rising levels of rough sleeping, and single homelessness more generally, were “*tenancy breakdown*”, very often associated with benefit restrictions; growing “*mental health*” problems; and cutbacks in a range of support services.¹²⁵

Non-UK rough sleepers

On publication of the 2011 results of the rough sleeper count, Grant Shapps referred to the fact that more than half of rough sleepers in London were from overseas. He backed a campaign by London’s Passage Day Centre to raise awareness of the realities of moving to England to look for work:

Non UK residents now account for over half the rough sleepers in our capital, so anyone heading here with tales of Dick

¹²³ [Summer Budget 2015](#), para 2.111

¹²⁴ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2016](#), January 2016

¹²⁵ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2017](#), March 2017, pp53-4

Whittington in their head needs to realise that the streets of London and our other cities aren't paved with gold. Those arriving from beyond our shores to try and carve out a future in England should come with a thought-through plan to avoid the risk of sleeping on the streets.¹²⁶

The increase in rough sleepers from overseas continued in 2015/16; 59% of people seen rough sleeping in London were not from the UK according to the CHAIN dataset. The [Homelessness Monitor England 2015](#) noted that the rising trend of rough sleeping amongst non-UK nationals "substantially pre-dates the introduction of Coalition Government welfare reforms" and went on:

A major contributor here has been the growing representation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) nationals among London's rough sleepers. Since 2010/11 CEE London rough have risen 79%, as compared with the 56% increase in UK-origin counterparts. The 2011 easing of CEE migrant worker benefit restrictions therefore does not appear to have reduced levels of rough sleeping amongst this group.¹²⁷

The report also said that new Housing Benefit restrictions applying to EEA migrants from April 2014 "may further contribute to rough sleeping amongst CEE nationals."¹²⁸

However, 2016/17 saw an increase in the number and proportion of UK nationals seen rough sleeping compared to the previous year:

The number and proportion of UK nationals seen rough sleeping has risen compared to 2015/16, while the number and proportion of Central and Eastern European (CEE) nationals* has fallen:

- Just under half (47%) of those seen rough sleeping were of UK nationality (compared to 41% in 2015/16, 43% in 2014/15 and 46% in 2013/14).
- 30% of those seen rough sleeping in 2016/17 were from CEE countries, which is notably lower than the proportion of 37% in 2015/16.
- Romanians continued to be the single biggest non-UK nationality group, comprising 15% of all people seen rough sleeping in the year.¹²⁹

Local authority funding for homeless projects

An additional area of concern has been the impact that a reduction in funding for Supporting People grants (now referred to as housing-related support), together with the removal of the ring-fence for this funding, is having on the provision of services for rough sleepers. Homeless Link wrote to the Prime Minister setting out its concerns on 1 February 2011:

...I wanted to alert you to a real danger taking place at local level at the moment, which is putting at risk as much as 20% of the voluntary sector's provision for vulnerable homeless people. It is becoming clearer by the day that the previous

¹²⁶ DCLG Press Release, "Over half of London's rough sleepers are now non-UK nationals," 23 February 2012

¹²⁷ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2015](#), February 2015, p39

¹²⁸ Ibid., pvii (Executive Summary)

¹²⁹ [CHAIN Annual Bulletin 2016/17](#)

administration's decision to remove the ring fence from Supporting People funds, despite representations from the voluntary sector, was a very serious mistake, particularly when it was inevitable that local government budgets would be under pressure.

Supporting People has been the largest single source of public funding for the voluntary sector working in England. In particular, it has been a driver for extended and improved services for single homeless people, who often have severe and multiple disadvantages; but do not fall within the statutory duties of local government. The largest part of Supporting People funding has funded voluntary sector services through local authority commissioning.

[...]

However, the decisions many local councils are taking at the moment risk being devastating for these services. Homeless Link has a membership of almost 500 charities. Since the local government settlement we have been monitoring the expected impact for hundreds of services provided by our members for homeless people. Our monitoring currently shows an anticipated average loss of 30% of funds and 20% of beds from April. In some parts of the country this looks set to rise to 30% or 40% or more. Unlike most other service areas, this impact does not come after a period of growth, but follows commissioning pressures which have already pushed down income in cash terms over several years.

So much has been achieved in tackling homelessness, in particular in the "sharp end" homelessness of rough sleeping or people at risk of this. England is seen as being at the forefront on this issue internationally. We are desperately concerned at the risk that so much progress is in jeopardy within a few weeks.¹³⁰

Research published by Homeless Link in 2011 identified a reduction in available hostel spaces and other accommodation projects aimed at rough sleepers. Around 21% of councils were believed to have cut their Supporting People budgets disproportionately at that time.¹³¹

Grant Shapps responded by [calling on](#) authorities not to divert Supporting People funding away from housing related support services.¹³²

Further research by Homeless Link (October 2013) identified the loss of 4,000 hostel beds since 2010 alongside the closure of 133 homelessness projects. As part of its [Pay it Forward](#) campaign the umbrella body called on local authorities to support investment in homelessness projects.¹³³

On publication of the rough sleeping count figures for autumn 2013 in February 2014, Homeless Link identified an increase in rough sleeping in areas where authorities had reduced funding for homeless services:

Due to localism, the picture is variable, with around half of areas seeing a decrease and the other half seeing an increase.

¹³⁰ [Extract from Homeless Link letter to the Prime Minister](#), 1 February 2011

¹³¹ [Cuts are making it harder for homeless people to get help](#), July 2011

¹³² [Letter from Grant Shapps to the Local Government Association](#), January 2011

¹³³ *Inside Housing*, "[4,000 beds for homeless lost since 2010](#)," 15 October 2013

According to Homeless Link, decreases are largely down to charities working hard to find and house those who end up on the streets. In areas where increases have occurred, the pressures of welfare reform and funding cuts have been the main driver. In Derby for example, where last year the city council began a programme of 82% cuts, estimated rough sleeping numbers have risen by 96% in the same period.¹³⁴

Freedom of Information requests submitted by *Inside Housing* magazine (reported in July 2014) found that 77 local authorities cut a total of £34 million from their housing-related support budgets for homeless individuals between 2010/11 and 2013/14, representing a drop of 26%.¹³⁵

Homeless Link's [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2015](#) presented data on the availability and use of homelessness services, and also on resources and funding for homelessness services:

- There are currently 1,253 accommodation projects for people who are single homeless in England, a small decrease of 1% from last year. There has also been a reduction in the number of bed spaces available in accommodation projects – 1,994 fewer than last year, a decrease of 5%.
- The number of day centres in England has reduced by 4% since last year from 216 to 208.
- 51% of accommodation projects said the main primary funding source remains housing-related support (previously Supporting People).
- 41% of accommodation projects have experienced a decrease in their funding since the last financial year. 40% reported no change, and 8% had an increase in funding this year.
- Day centres' funding streams remain more diverse than accommodation projects. 23% of day centres receive health funding (compared to 4% of accommodation projects), Fundraising is the most common primary source of funding, with 57% of day centres reporting this.¹³⁶

Crisis included a specific question in its survey for [Homelessness Monitor England 2017](#) about changes in local provision of specialist support and/or accommodation for particular groups of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness since 2010:

...for most of the specified groups it was more common for local provision to have reduced than expanded. This was particularly marked for ex-prisoners, those with substance or alcohol misuse issues, and mental ill health sufferers – those groups most likely to be associated with 'complex needs'. These findings do not, of course, necessarily mean that the gross scale of local provision for each group is inappropriate.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ [Increase in rough sleeping shows the impact of funding cuts](#), 25 February 2014

¹³⁵ *Inside Housing*, "Revealed: the extent of single homeless cuts", 4 July 2014

¹³⁶ Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2015](#), pp4-5

¹³⁷ Crisis, [Homelessness Monitor England 2017](#), March 2017

A new funding regime for short-term emergency housing

A further concern is the Government's intention to introduce a new funding regime for short-term supported housing from April 2020. The Government is proposing to define this accommodation as:

Accommodation with support, accessed following a point of crisis or as part of a transition to living independently, and provided for a period of up to two years or until transition to suitable long-term stable accommodation is found, whichever occurs first.¹³⁸

This will take in hostels, refuges and safe houses.

The proposed funding model is for ring-fenced grant funding administered by local authorities. Funding from housing costs previously met through Housing Benefit will be allocated to local authorities "to fund services that meet the needs of their local areas."¹³⁹ The system will be underpinned by a new local planning and oversight regime.

Authorities will thus have an enhanced role in planning, funding and commissioning short-term supported housing in their areas. This type of accommodation will be removed from the welfare system – the expectation is that individuals in this accommodation will no longer pay rent but they will retain an entitlement to help with their housing costs depending on their personal circumstances.¹⁴⁰

Providers are questioning whether a local system will provide the necessary long-term funding security to sustain current provision and future supply. References have been made to the removal of the ring-fence from Supporting People funding – there is a lack of trust in commitments to retain ring-fenced funding for short-term supported housing in the long-term. Consultation on the Government's proposals closed on 23 January 2018.

¹³⁸ DCLG/DWP, [Funding Supported Housing: Policy Statement and Consultation](#), October 2017, para 53

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, para 57

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, para 57

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