



BRIEFING PAPER

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Rough sleepers: access to services and support (England)

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Summary

Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, many with high levels of complex and interrelated needs. This paper provides an overview of the support and services - including accommodation, health, welfare, training, employment and voter registration - that are available for rough sleepers, and the challenges rough sleepers can face in accessing them.

The number of rough sleepers in England has increased significantly in recent years. According to Government statistics, the total number of rough sleepers in England in autumn 2018 was 4,677, an increase of 165% compared with 2010 and fractionally lower than the 2017 estimate of 4,751. Many rough sleepers have high levels of complex needs; mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependencies, and institutional experiences are common factors. The longer someone sleeps rough the greater the risk that physical and mental health problems will worsen. Rough sleeping is costly to society as a whole; rough sleepers are likely to have more frequent and sustained contact with public services compared to other citizens.

The current Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to **halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it entirely by 2027**. It established a Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Taskforce, supported by a Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel, to design and implement a cross-government strategy to achieve this.

The Government published its **Rough Sleeping Strategy** in August 2018, based on a range of 'prevention', 'intervention' and 'recovery' measures and backed by £100 million in funding. It intends to report regularly on progress with implementing the strategy.

Access to accommodation

The *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*, which came into force on 3 April 2018, placed new duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness, irrespective of whether or not an applicant has 'priority need' or may be 'intentionally homeless'. The new duties include providing free information and advice on preventing and relieving homelessness to all residents. The Government launched a call for evidence into the impact of the Act in July 2019 - a final report is expected in March 2020.

A number of initiatives to support rough sleepers to move off the streets and into accommodation have been rolled out nationally, including: No Second Night Out (NSNO), Streetlink and Reconnection. The Government has targeted additional funding at local authorities with high levels of rough sleeping, through its Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), and constituted a Rough Sleeping Team of experts to work with these areas. It has also provided £28 million to pilot the Housing First approach for long-term rough sleepers in three areas.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy commits further funding to tackle rough sleeping, including: up to £45 million additional funding for the RSI, up to £17 million to fund 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' pilots, and a £50 million Move On Fund to increase the availability of affordable move-on accommodation.

The voluntary sector and the Church play a key role in providing emergency and temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, although there is significant local variation in provision and access criteria. In 2017 there were around 1,123 accommodation projects

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in England for single homeless people. Temporary accommodation providers report that the lack of affordable accommodation is a key barrier for clients moving on.

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. The Greater London Authority has strategic responsibility for the pan-London commissioning and coordination of homelessness services. In June 2018, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Kahn, published London's first Rough Sleeping Action Plan.

Access to health services

Rough sleepers face particular health issues associated with homelessness and challenges in accessing health and dental services. It has been estimated that homeless people consume around four times more acute hospital services than the general population.

Health services and local authorities have a number of tailored services that are intended to meet the specific needs of rough sleepers, although provision varies across England. As part of its Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Government is carrying out a rapid audit of health services in the 83 Rough Sleeping Initiative areas to understand levels of health provision for rough sleepers.

Concerns have been raised about the lack of suitable, specialist mental health support for rough sleepers. The NHS Long Term Plan (January 2019) set out that the NHS will invest up to £30 million extra over the next 5 years on meeting the needs of rough sleepers, to ensure better access to specialist homelessness NHS mental health support.

Access to welfare benefits

Rough sleepers may, depending on their circumstances, be able to claim mainstream social security benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). More rough sleepers will come under the Universal Credit (UC) system as roll-out continues.

There are "easements" that acknowledge that homeless claimants may face difficulties meeting the usual conditionality requirements for benefits – such as jobseeking. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised about the high rate of benefit sanctions amongst homeless service users, and the impact of sanctions. There are also concerns that rough sleepers may face particular challenges navigating the UC system. Claimants are normally expected to claim UC, and manage their ongoing claim, online; and receive a single, monthly payment in arrears, paid into a bank account.

Local welfare assistance schemes may also provide assistance to rough sleepers, although schemes vary considerably in their scope and eligibility criteria. A National Audit Office report in January 2016 highlighted uncertainties over the future of local welfare provision due to funding pressures. A 2016 report by the Work and Pensions Committee concluded that central and local government should co-ordinate better to fill gaps in the welfare safety net.

Food Assistance

A wide range of Church and other voluntary organisations provide food assistance to those in need. Assistance may range from a hot meal provided by a 'soup kitchen' to a food package provided following referral to a 'food bank'. There are currently estimated to be over 2000 foodbanks in the UK.

Training and employment

Rough sleepers, particularly those with high support needs, face huge challenges in gaining employment. Nevertheless, St Mungo's homeless charity has reported that 80% of their clients said that work was one of their goals.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy outlines the employment support currently available for homeless people and commits to provide additional support. By August 2019, all Jobcentre Customer Services Managers should have undergone new training on homelessness.

Claimants sleeping rough may be able to get help to address specific barriers to moving closer to or into work through the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund (FSF). Many homelessness organisations, day centres, and hostels also provide employment advice, training and opportunities for homeless people.

Registering to vote

A rough sleeper with no fixed address who is eligible to vote can register to vote through a declaration of local connection. The Labour Party has urged the Government to do more to enable and encourage homeless people to vote.

The Government has commissioned research to better understand the barriers to registration and intends to create and test targeted solutions with electoral administrators to improve registration processes.

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Rough sleeping \(England\)](#) (02007) provides background information on the problem of rough sleeping and examines Government policy on this issue. A separate briefing paper covers [Statutory homelessness in England](#) (01164). For local-level statistics on rough sleeping, see [Local Authority Homelessness Statistics \(England\)](#). There are now significant variations in approaches to homelessness across the UK – these variations are outlined in [Comparison of homelessness duties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#) (07201).

1. Background

1.1 Number of rough sleepers

It is difficult to get an absolute figure for the number of people sleeping rough. Numbers can vary from night to night and throughout the year.

This section summarises the available data on rough sleeping. For more detailed figures, see section 3 of the House of Commons Library briefing paper [Rough sleeping \(England\) \(SN02007\)](#).

MHCLG statistics on rough sleeping

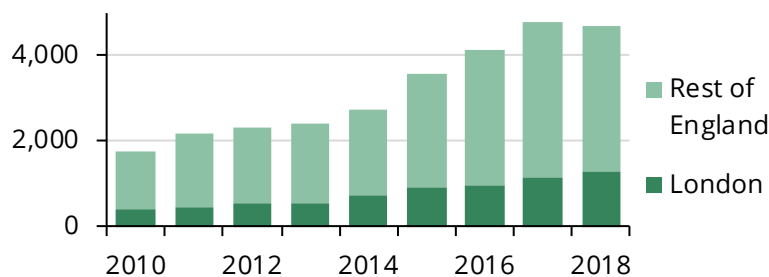
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) publishes annual [statistics on rough sleeping in England](#) which estimates the number of rough sleepers in a local authority area on a given night in autumn. Local authorities may carry out a formal count of rough sleepers, or an estimate based on discussion with local agencies.

The chart below shows trends in rough sleeping since 2010 according to this measure. The total number of rough sleepers in England in autumn 2018 was 4,677, an increase of 165% compared with 2010 and fractionally lower than the 2017 estimate of 4,751.

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. Rough sleepers in London made up just over a quarter (27%) of the England total in 2018. The number of rough sleepers grew from 415 in 2010 to 1,283 in 2018, an overall increase of 209%. There was a 13% increase between 2017 and 2018.¹

The estimated number of rough sleepers in England has increased from 1,768 in 2010 to 4,677 in 2018; an increase of 165%.

Estimated number of rough sleepers in England, 2010-2018



Source: MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2018](#), 26 February 2019

The Government recognises that further improvement to rough sleeping data is needed, including the collation of more information about the circumstances and characteristics of people sleeping rough.² It has developed a cross-Government Homelessness Data and Analysis Working Group to take forward work to improve homelessness data more broadly. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) press release

¹ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2018](#), 26 February 2019

² HM Government, [Government response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Reports: Homelessness and Homelessness Reduction Bill](#), CM 9443, March 2017, para 9

[Improving homelessness and rough sleeping statistics across the UK](#) (September 2019) summarises progress to date.

London CHAIN database

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database contains information about rough sleepers in London who have been in contact with outreach teams or have accessed accommodation for rough sleepers in London. CHAIN data differs from the MHCLG national street count statistics in that it provides an ongoing year-round record of rough sleepers in London.

The [CHAIN report for 2018/19](#) recorded 8,855 people seen rough sleeping in London over the course of the year, an 18% increase on the 7,484 people seen sleeping rough in 2017/18.³

62% of the rough sleepers recorded in 2018/19 had not been seen rough sleeping in London before, while 23% had also been seen rough sleeping the year before. The remaining 14% had been seen rough sleeping prior to 2017/18 and then returned in 2018/19.

60% of people recorded as rough sleeping in 2018/19 were seen sleeping rough only once in the year.⁴

8,855 rough sleepers were contacted by support workers in London during 2018/19.

1.2 Characteristics of rough sleepers

According to MHCLG's figures for autumn 2018, of the 4,677 recorded rough sleepers:

- 3,937 (84%) were men, 642 (14%) were women, and 98 (2%) did not have their gender recorded.
- 3,013 (54%) were UK nationals, 1,048 (22%) were EU nationals from outside the UK, 153 (3%) were from outside the EU and 463 (10%) did not have their nationality recorded.
- 296 (6%) were under 26 years old, 3,744 (80%) were aged 26 or over, and 637 (14%) did not have their age recorded.⁵

The [2018/19 CHAIN report](#) also includes some demographic information about people seen sleeping rough in London over the course of the year. 84% of the 8,855 rough sleepers recorded were male, while 16% were female. Nine recorded rough sleepers had a non-binary gender identity.⁶

CHAIN recorded that 8% of rough sleepers were aged under 26 (five rough sleepers aged under 18 were recorded). 80% were aged between 26 and 55, while 12% were aged 56 or over.⁷

In autumn 2018, 84% of rough sleepers in England were male and 54% were recorded as being from the UK. 80% were aged 26 or over.

³ Greater London Authority, [CHAIN annual report: Greater London April 2018 – March 2019](#), June 2019

⁴ Ibid., p4

⁵ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2018](#), 26 February 2019, Tables 2a, 2b and 2c

⁶ Greater London Authority, [CHAIN annual report: Greater London April 2018 – March 2019](#), June 2019, p28

⁷ Greater London Authority, [CHAIN annual report: Greater London April 2018 – March 2019](#), June 2019, p29

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Rough sleepers in London have diverse nationalities. 8,154 of the 8,855 rough sleepers in London had their nationality identified. 49% of these were from the UK, while 31% were from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (with Romanians and Poles constituting the largest nationality groups). The remaining 20% of people were from non-CEE European countries and the rest of the world. Italy, Ireland and Portugal were some of the common nationalities in this group.⁸

Around a third of rough sleepers in the CHAIN database did not have a support needs assessment recorded. Of those who did have an assessment, 42% had alcohol support needs, 41% drug support needs and 50% mental health support needs. Combinations of these three support needs were common.⁹

There is no comparable data set for the support needs of rough sleepers outside of London. However, a number of research projects looking at homelessness across the UK have also identified a high level of support needs amongst those experiencing the most extreme forms of homelessness.¹⁰

1.3 Causes of rough sleeping

Homelessness is a complex issue. Research into the causes of homelessness has identified a number of factors, some of which relate to the housing market and the wider economy, and others which are personal to the individual or family. Furthermore, individual characteristics and circumstances may be a symptom of homelessness as well as an underlying cause. Drug and alcohol addiction, and crime and offending behaviour, are examples of where causal and symptomatic effects can be difficult to separate.¹¹

St Mungo's 2013 report [No More: Homelessness through the eyes of recent rough sleepers](#)¹² looked at the experiences and issues that had led to people sleeping rough. The research found that there are often underlying factors such as a traumatic childhood, problematic drug or alcohol use, and mental ill health. These factors can mean people are less resilient and able to cope when things go wrong. The research also found that the most common 'trigger' events to immediately precede rough sleeping were relationship breakdown, eviction, leaving prison and bereavement.

Following a recommendation by the Public Accounts Committee, MHCLG commissioned joint research with the Department for Work and Pensions on the wider causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. The three research reports, completed by Alma Economics, were

⁸ Ibid., p23

⁹ Ibid., p31

¹⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Tackling homelessness and exclusion: Understanding complex lives](#), September 2011, p1

¹¹ DCLG, [Evidence review of the costs of homelessness](#), August 2012

¹² St Mungo's, [No More: Homelessness through the eyes of recent rough sleepers](#), 2013

published in March 2019,¹³ and will assist the Government to develop a predictive model of homelessness and rough sleeping in the long-term.¹⁴

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Statutory Homelessness in England](#) (CBP01164) provides further analysis of the causes of homelessness.

1.4 Impacts of rough sleeping

Evidence suggests that the longer someone sleeps rough, the greater the risk that they will become a victim of crime,¹⁵ develop drug or alcohol problems, or experience problems with their physical or mental health. Being homeless can also cause or intensify social isolation, and create barriers to education, training and paid work.

An apparently growing number of 'street deaths' have been a source of particular concern over the past couple of years. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has attempted to calculate the number of deaths of homeless people in England and Wales. The deaths identified in their analysis are 'mainly people sleeping rough, or using emergency accommodation such as homelessness shelters and direct access hostels'. The figures are classed as Experimental Statistics, meaning that they are still in development, but initial findings include:

- An estimated 597 homeless people died in England and Wales in 2017, an increase of 24% on 2013.
- 84% of the homeless people who died in 2017 were men.
- The average age of death for homeless people in 2017 was 44 years.
- Accidents (including drug poisoning) accounted for 40% of deaths in 2017. Suicides accounted for 13% and liver disease accounted for 9%.
- 190 homeless people died of drug poisoning in 2018, 52% more than in 2013.¹⁶
- The number of deaths of homeless people was highest in major urban areas such as London, Manchester and Birmingham.¹⁷

The longer someone sleeps rough the greater the risk that they will become a victim of crime, develop drug or alcohol problems, or experience problems with their physical or mental health.

¹³ MHCLG and DWP, [Causes of homelessness and rough sleeping feasibility study](#), 25 March 2019

¹⁴ [Written Question 212132](#), 5 February 2019

¹⁵ ['Crisis reveals scale of violence and abuse against rough sleepers as charity opens its doors for Christmas'](#), *Crisis press release*, 23 December 2016

¹⁶ ONS, [Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales: 2013 to 2017](#), 20 December 2018

¹⁷ ONS, [Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales – local authority estimates: 2013 to 2017](#), 25 February 2019

In addition to the impacts on individuals and families, rough sleeping is negative for society. There are negative impacts on communities from visible rough sleeping and associated activities such as begging and street drinking. Rough sleeping also leads to additional public expenditure; most of the additional financial costs of homelessness to health and support services and the police and justice system are attributable to the most vulnerable and hardest to help, including rough sleepers and those living in hostels.¹⁸ This is because rough sleepers are likely to have more frequent and sustained contact with these services compared to other citizens.

The exact additional costs are difficult to accurately determine as individual needs and service use will vary. Cost estimates range from £16,000 a year for the average entrenched rough sleeper, to £21,180 a year for the average client facing substance misuse, offending and homelessness problems. This is compared to average UK public expenditure of £4,600 per adult.¹⁹ Research commissioned by Crisis estimated that in the case of a man in his 30s who becomes a rough sleeper, the cost of resolving homelessness quickly is £1,426, which rises to £20,128 if homelessness persists for 12 months.²⁰

Rough sleeping is costly to society as a whole. Rough sleepers are likely to have more frequent and sustained contact with public services, in particular health, homelessness, police and justice services, compared to other citizens.

1.5 Government initiatives since 2010 to reduce rough sleeping

In 2010, the Coalition Government established a cross-government [Ministerial Working Group](#) with a remit to prevent and reduce homelessness. The report [Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#) (2015) summarised the Group's achievements and set out next steps.²¹

On 17 December 2015 [the Conservative Government announced](#) a package of measures to tackle homelessness. Measures included a commitment to protect homelessness prevention funding for local authorities, and to increase central government funding for homelessness programmes to £139 million over the following four years.²²

The Government's Budget 2016 provided further details of the measures intended to prevent and reduce rough sleeping. The Budget:

- **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

¹⁸ DCLG, [Evidence review of the costs of homelessness](#), August 2012

¹⁹ DCLG, [Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#), March 2015, para 36

²⁰ Crisis, [At what cost? An estimation of the financial costs of single homelessness in the UK](#), Nicholas Pleace, Centre for Housing Policy; University of York, July 2015, Executive Summary

²¹ DCLG, [Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#), March 2015

²² DCLG, [Radical package of measures announced to tackle homelessness](#), 17 December 2015

vulnerable households and individuals, freeing up hostels and refuges for those in most acute need

- **invests £10 million over two years to support and scale up innovative ways to prevent and reduce rough sleeping**, particularly in London, building on the success of the No Second Night Out initiative
- **doubles the funding for the Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond announced at the Autumn Statement 2015 from £5 million to £10 million**, to drive innovative ways of tackling entrenched rough sleeping, including 'Housing First' approaches
- **takes action to increase the number of rough sleeping EU migrants returning to their home countries.** Building on the success of the Operation Adoze pilot, the government will roll out a new approach in which immigration officials work with Local Authorities and outreach workers to connect rough sleepers to services that can return them home²³

In December 2015 the Government announced a package of measures, including additional funding, to tackle homelessness. The Budget 2016 provided further details of the measures to prevent and reduce rough sleeping.

In the [Autumn Statement 2016](#) the Government announced that the Rough Sleeping Fund would be doubled from £10 million to £20 million. The fund was intended to support and scale up innovative approaches to preventing and reducing rough sleeping, particularly in London.²⁴

A Public Accounts Committee inquiry into homeless households in 2017 was critical of the Government's approach to tackling homelessness:

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (the Department) 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.²⁵

The Committee made a number of recommendations, including that "The Department should, by the end of June 2018, publish a cross-government strategy for reducing homelessness that sets out clear targets and specific actions for all stakeholders to reduce all measures of homelessness".²⁶ The Government's response, published in March 2018, confirmed its intention to produce a cross-government rough sleeping strategy by July 2018.²⁷

The Government has committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it by 2027.

The current Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to **halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it entirely by 2027**. It established a Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Taskforce to design and implement a cross-government strategy to achieve this. The

²³ HM Treasury, [Budget 2016](#), HC 901, March 2016, para 1.129

²⁴ HM Treasury, [Autumn Statement 2016](#), Cm 9362, November 2016, para 5.12; and DCLG, [Sajid Javid: a housing market that works for everyone](#), 24 November 2016

²⁵ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [Homeless households: Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19](#), HC 462, 20 December 2017, Summary

²⁶ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [Homeless households: Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19](#), HC 462, 20 December 2017, p5, para 1

²⁷ HM Treasury, [Government response to the Committee of Public Accounts on the Fourth to the Eleventh reports from Session 2017–19](#), CM 9575, March 2018, p29

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Government also brought together a panel of external experts through a [Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel](#), with a remit to work with the Taskforce in developing the strategy.²⁸

The Government supported the ***Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*** which placed new duties on local authorities in England to prevent and relieve homeless for all eligible applicants from 3 April 2018. To coincide with the Act coming into force, the Government announced a new package of measures to reduce rough sleeping:

- a **Rough Sleeping Team** made up of rough sleeping and homelessness experts, drawn from, and funded by government departments and agencies with specialist knowledge across a wide-range of areas from housing to mental health and addiction.
- a £30 million **Rough Sleeping Initiative** fund for 2018/19 targeted at local authorities with high levels of rough sleeping.
- £100,000 funding to **support frontline workers** assisting rough sleepers across the country.²⁹

In August 2018 the Government published a [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), backed by £100 million of funding. The strategy sets out the steps towards achieving the Government's aim of ending rough sleeping by 2027. It is based on a three-pillared approach:

- **Prevention** – understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk.
- **Intervention** – helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances.
- **Recovery** – supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.³⁰

Key initiatives include:

- **Up to £45 million in 2019/20 to continue the work of the Rough Sleeping Initiative.**
- **Up to £17 million to fund 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' pilots** to rapidly assess the needs of people at risk of rough sleeping and support them to get the right help.
- **Funding for rough sleeping navigators**, who will help people who sleep rough to access appropriate local services.
- **£5 million funding for local areas to work with non-UK nationals who sleep rough** and an additional Rough Sleeping Support team to support and resolve the immigration status of non-UK nationals who are sleeping rough.
- **A £50 million Move On Fund** to deliver a new supply of homes outside of London for people who are sleeping rough, as well as

The Government has published a Rough Sleeping Strategy, founded on three core pillars: Prevention, Intervention and Recovery, and will report regularly on progress with delivering the strategy.

²⁸ [PQ 127001 \[Sleeping Rough\] 12 February 2018](#)

²⁹ MHCLG, [New government initiative to reduce rough sleeping](#), 30 March 2018

³⁰ MHCLG, [Rough sleeping strategy: prevention, intervention, recovery](#), 13 August 2018

those who are ready to move on from hostels or refuges and need additional support.

- **A requirement for local authorities to publish updated homelessness and rough sleeping strategies by winter 2019.**³¹

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy: delivery plan](#) (December 2018) provided an update on progress in implementing the 61 commitments in the strategy and information on next steps.

In September 2019 the Government published a Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) Impact Report, which assessed the impact of the initiative from its launch in March 2018 until Autumn 2019. The analysis reported a 32% reduction in numbers of rough sleepers in areas funded by the RSI, compared to what the level would have been had the initiative not been in place.³²

In the Spending Round 2019, the Government announced £422 million funding for homelessness in 2020/21, an increase of £54 million.³³

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Rough Sleeping \(England\)](#) (SN02007) provides further information on the problem of rough sleeping and examines Government policy on this issue.

³¹ MHLCG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018

³² MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018: impact evaluation](#), 12 September 2019

³³ HM Treasury, [Spending Round 2019](#), CP170, 4 September 2019, para 2.26

2. Access to accommodation

2.1 Local authorities' homelessness duties

Local authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category under Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996* (as amended). **There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people.**

The *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*, which came into force on 3 April 2018, placed new duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness, irrespective of whether an applicant has 'priority need' or may be 'intentionally homeless'. The new duties include:

- a. providing free information and advice on preventing and relieving homelessness and the rights of homeless people, to all residents, to include information tailored to the needs of particularly vulnerable groups;
- b. an enhanced prevention duty extends the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that local authorities will intervene to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and,
- c. a new duty for those who are already homeless will mean that local authorities will work with them for 56 days to help secure accommodation to relieve their homeless.³⁴

Local authorities have a duty to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This should identify what has caused the homelessness or threat of homelessness, the housing needs of the applicant and any support they need in order to be able to secure and retain accommodation. Following this assessment, the housing authority must work with the person to develop a personalised housing plan which will include actions (or 'reasonable steps') to be taken by the authority and the applicant to try and prevent or relieve homelessness.

Local authorities are obliged to have regard to the statutory [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#) when carrying out their homelessness duties.³⁵

CHAIN data collected in London over 2018/19 recorded that 583 people seen rough sleeping for the first time had approached their Local Authority Housing Options service for help in the 12 months prior to first being seen rough sleeping. This was 11% of all new rough sleepers in the year.³⁶

The [2017 Act](#) also introduced a duty on certain public authorities to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with

³⁴ MHCLG, [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: Government response to the consultation](#), 22 February 2018, p4

³⁵ MHCLG, [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), 22 February 2018

³⁶ Mayor of London, [CHAIN Annual Report Greater London: April 2018 - March 2019](#), June 2019, p13

homelessness to a housing authority. The service user must give their consent.³⁷

Research had previously highlighted concerns with the variability and standard of assistance provided by local authorities to people deemed not to be in priority need.³⁸ Evidence is currently being gathered on how local authorities are meeting their new duties under the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*. The House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Select Committee opened an inquiry into the [Homelessness Reduction Act – One Year on](#) on 5 April 2019. A [one-off evidence session](#) was held on 23 April 2019. The Government launched [a call for evidence](#) into the impact of the Act in July 2019 - a final report is expected in March 2020.

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Statutory Homelessness in England](#) (SN01164) explains local authorities' duties to assist homeless households and Government policy in this area. It also examines evidence on how local authorities are meeting their new duties under the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*.

2.2 No Second Night Out (NSNO)

The Government has encouraged a national roll-out of the approach initiated under the Coalition and which was launched in London in 2011: [No Second Night Out](#).

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

A £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund, provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and administered by Homeless Link from 2011 to 2014, provided grants to non-profit organisations to tackle rough sleeping. 175 projects were funded across England, providing support to over 60,000 people.³⁹

The Government's 2016 Budget provided £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".⁴⁰ This funding was doubled to £20 million in the Autumn Statement 2016.⁴¹

No Second Night Out (NSNO) aims to ensure that no-one new to the streets sleeps out for a second night. Local authorities with significant numbers of rough sleepers have NSNO services in place.

³⁷ MHCLG, [Guidance on Homelessness: duty to refer](#), 21 September 2018

³⁸ For example: *Crisis, Turned Away: the treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England*, 2014

³⁹ Homeless Link, [Three Years of Transition - Homelessness Transition Fund 2011 to 2014 - Evaluation summary](#), 2015

⁴⁰ HM Treasury, [Budget 2016](#), HC 901, March 2016, para 1.129

⁴¹ HM Treasury, [Autumn Statement 2016](#), Cm 9362, November 2016, para 5.12

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By 2015 all local authorities with significant numbers of rough sleepers had NSNO services in place.⁴² An evaluation in 2014 of 20 areas with higher levels of rough sleeping found that 67% of rough sleepers did not spend a second night on the streets, and the majority of these (78% of this group) did not return to the streets once helped.⁴³ 84% of people who slept rough and accessed a NSNO service in 2016/17 did not sleep rough again in the following year.⁴⁴ Tackling rough sleeping quickly has been found to yield benefits in terms of preventing the development of a long-term problem.

However, the [Homelessness Transition Fund evaluation report](#) (2015) identified a range of challenges to be addressed if projects and partnerships are to be successful long-term:

- A lack of emergency and move-on accommodation
- A lack of specialist support services and accommodation for people with multiple and complex needs
- Challenges engaging partners, including a lack of buy-in or support from some other agencies or local authorities
- Increasing numbers of people sleeping rough placing high demand on services
- Supporting migrants and people with no recourse to public funds
- Securing funding to continue needed work after the end of the Homelessness Transition Fund programme.⁴⁵

Streetlink

[Streetlink](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) (www.streetlink.org.uk) is a service that enables the public, the emergency services and homeless people themselves to alert local authorities in England about rough sleepers in their area via the website or a 24-hour helpline (0300 500 0914).

The service passes the information about the person sleeping rough on to the local authority who can take steps to ensure the individual is contacted by an outreach worker and connected to local services and support as quickly as possible. StreetLink was launched in December 2012 and by 2018 had received 218,422 alerts from the general public about people sleeping rough. As a result over 26,000 individuals were found by outreach teams and over 22,000 individuals were supported into accommodation or services.⁴⁶

Streetlink is a non-profit organisation funded principally by grants from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Greater London Authority and the Welsh Government and is run in partnership between Homeless Link and St Mungo's.

84% of people who slept rough and accessed a NSNO service in 2016/17 did not sleep rough again in the following year.

The public can alert local authorities to people sleeping rough in their local area through the Streetlink website or helpline.

⁴² DCLG, [Addressing complex needs – improving services for vulnerable homeless people](#), March 2015, para 8

⁴³ Homeless Link, [No Second Night Out across England](#), February 2014, p4

⁴⁴ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, para 120

⁴⁵ Homeless Link, [Three Years of Transition - Homelessness Transition Fund 2011 to 2014 - Evaluation summary](#), 2015, p9

⁴⁶ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, para 156

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy includes a commitment to launch a new online platform to help individuals, community groups and businesses support people who sleep rough off the streets for good. This will include Streetlink.⁴⁷

Reconnection

No Second Night Out aims to link rough sleepers back into services where their local connection means they are most likely to sustain a life away from the streets:

Reconnection is the process by which people sleeping rough who have a connection to another area where they can access accommodation and/or social, family and support networks, are supported to return to this area in a planned way.⁴⁸

Homeless Link provides an [Assessment and reconnections toolkit](#) to support voluntary and statutory agencies to develop a reconnection offer for people who are homeless and have a connection with another area. The guide outlines the following key principles to underpin reconnection strategies and practice:

- Rapid identification and reconnection of new rough sleepers is an important harm reduction measure, ending homelessness before a person's situation deteriorates further. For more on adopting this 'no second night out' approach see: www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/adopting-no-second-night-out-standard
- Reconnection must not be used in isolation and should never just be a ticket home. Exploring why someone has become homeless and what support can prevent future homelessness should form the basis of the reconnection offer.
- Reconnection involves challenging individuals about the risks of remaining on the streets in an area where they cannot access sufficient support/services, as well as challenging services in their area of local connection to take responsibility for ensuring support/services are offered.
- Reconnection includes a wide range of potential interventions. People can be reconnected to family, friends, the private rented sector, supported accommodation projects, LA temporary accommodation, tied work with accommodation, therapeutic communities, detox or rehab programmes and more. Reconnection can be to national or international destinations.
- Reconnection involves building an offer for each individual that is credible and realistic, based on assessment and including the support required to prevent a return to rough sleeping in their current location or elsewhere. The offer should be personalised and solutions can be creative.
- Where a person refuses the reconnection offer, multi-agency work should take place to repeat the offer when they come into contact with services and to challenge them about the risks of continuing to sleep rough when there is

Reconnection policies aim to support rough sleepers to return to areas where their local connection means they can access accommodation and/or social, family and support networks.

⁴⁷ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, para 157

⁴⁸ Homeless Link, [Effective action to end homelessness: Reconnecting Rough Sleepers](#), 2011

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an alternative. The offer may need to be revised if circumstances change.

- If an individual cannot return to an area due to a real threat, which is evidenced through contact with the police or other agencies in that area, then the person's current area should provide support and accommodation.⁴⁹

[Research by Crisis](#), published in April 2015, concluded that reconnection interventions had the potential to generate positive outcomes. However, resource and time pressures frequently meant that assessments of rough sleepers' connections and support needs were often extremely limited, and in many cases reconnection support was minimal.⁵⁰

Key findings from the study included:

- national guidance outlining agreed good practice exists, but implementation often deviates from this quite substantially.
- outcomes are only recorded in a small minority of cases. The limited data available suggest that reconnection experiences and outcomes vary dramatically.
- practitioners generally agree that reconnection is wholly appropriate and potentially beneficial in some circumstances.
- recognised ethical dilemmas arise when rough sleepers who refuses to comply are denied access to homelessness services in the new area.
- tightening of 'local connection' criteria leave rough sleepers with no evidence of connection to a locality.⁵¹

An evaluation of the reconnection of rough sleepers highlighted a disconnect between national policy and the way reconnection is implemented locally.

2.3 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' pilots

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy announced that it will pilot a new 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' service in 15 locations around the country which have high numbers of rough sleepers.⁵²

Building on the learning from the No Second Night Out programme the pilots will support those new to rough sleeping, but will also support people who have been identified as being at risk of sleeping rough. Assessment centres will offer bespoke advice and support, which could include advice on issues such as personal finances or immigration status.

The pilots will receive up to £17 million in new funding. It is anticipated they will support up to 6,000 people by 2020.

⁴⁹ Homeless Link, [Assessment & Reconnection toolkit: Good practice guidance for homelessness services](#), December 2014, p4

⁵⁰ Crisis, [The reconnection of rough sleepers within the UK: An evaluation](#), Sarah Johnsen and Anwen Jones, March 2015

⁵¹ ['Is reconnection working for Britain's rough sleepers?'](#), University of York CHP, 10 April 2015

⁵² MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, paras 119-122

2.4 Emergency and temporary accommodation

The voluntary sector and the Church play a key role in providing emergency and temporary accommodation for single homeless people who are not eligible for help from the local authority. There were 1,123 accommodation projects for single homeless people in 2017; a reduction from 1,185 in 2016. These homelessness accommodation projects provided 34,497 bed spaces.⁵³

In 2018/19 the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative funded an additional 1,750 bed spaces and 500 new dedicated homelessness workers. Funding for 2019/20 is expected to provide an estimated 2,600 bed spaces and 750 staff.⁵⁴ (Nb. bed spaces include extra emergency accommodation and housing-led options to help people stay off the streets).

Accommodation provision varies between geographical areas and access may be restricted through different eligibility criteria or aimed at specific groups (e.g. young people, or those with mental health or alcohol problems). Projects may provide 'first stage' accommodation, which is primarily focused on providing basic support, or 'second stage' accommodation, which provides specialist support services and focuses on rehabilitation and resettlement. People with multiple and complex support needs may find it particularly difficult to access accommodation.

Emergency accommodation

Emergency accommodation for single homeless people is usually basic and direct access. Examples include: cold weather or winter shelters, night shelters, emergency hostels, women's refuges (for women fleeing domestic violence) and nightstop schemes (for young homeless people aged 16 to 25). Accommodation may be free, or there may be a small charge for accommodation and food.

The [Shelter website](http://www.shelter.org.uk) (www.shelter.org.uk) provides information on the different types of emergency accommodation and how to find a place.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

In periods of severe cold weather local authorities, working with the voluntary sector, may provide emergency shelter. Usual practice is that severe weather emergency provision is triggered when the night time temperature is forecast to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights.⁵⁵ Although, some authorities operate more flexible criteria for SWEP activation. In London, for example, the Mayor of London has asked London boroughs to trigger the SWEP in winter if the

In 2017 there were around 1,123 accommodation projects in England for single homeless people.

Basic emergency accommodation for rough sleepers is usually run by charities and churches. Provision varies between local areas.

⁵³ Homeless Link, [Single homelessness support in England: annual review 2017](#), March 2018, p.15

⁵⁴ [Written PO 277668, 22 July 2019](#)

⁵⁵ [Parliamentary Question 81197 \[Rough Sleepers: Weather\] 21 Nov 2011 C62W](#)

temperature is forecast to drop below 0°C on any night anywhere in the capital.⁵⁶

In 2018 the Government launched a **Cold Weather Fund** which made £5 million available to all local authorities in England to support as many rough sleepers as possible off the streets during the winter period. A further £10 million is available for winter 2019/20.⁵⁷

The charity Homeless Link has published a good practice guide on [Severe weather emergency protocol and extended cold weather provision](#).⁵⁸ The guide is intended to support local authorities and the voluntary sector to provide appropriate responses for people sleeping rough throughout the winter months and especially during severe weather. The guidance is accompanied by a [SWEP survey report 2018-19](#) highlighting key findings from a survey of winter provision for people sleeping rough in 2018-19.⁵⁹

Nightstop UK

[Nightstop UK](#) is a network of 30 accredited Nightstop services throughout the UK - each providing safe emergency accommodation for homeless young people aged from 16 to 25. Nightstop services place young people in the homes of trained and vetted volunteers on a night-by-night basis. The services are run by communities and charities around the UK, and the network is coordinated by the homelessness charity Depaul UK. In 2018, 603 volunteer homes helped provide 9,885 safe bed-nights to 1,224 young people.⁶⁰

Hostel accommodation

Hostels provide temporary accommodation for single homeless people who are not eligible for help from the local authority. Some hostels offer direct access, others require a referral from an agency, such as a day centre or an outreach team. The maximum length of stay varies from hostel to hostel. Most hostels charge rent to stay; housing benefit can cover most of the cost of the rent, but there may be additional costs such as food and using the laundry and heating.

In August 2018 the Government confirmed that it would keep Housing Benefit in place for housing costs in supported housing, which includes hostels. It will also work with the sector on developing a “sound and robust oversight regime, ensuring all vulnerable people are entering into a hostel or refuge that is of good quality and able to meet their needs”.⁶¹ A further review of housing related support will also be

Homeless Link has published guidance to support local authorities and the voluntary sector to deliver emergency provision for rough sleepers during severe winter weather.

Hostels provide temporary accommodation for single homeless people. Most charge rent and have referral criteria which determine who can use their services.

⁵⁶ Mayor of London, [Mayor doubles street outreach team to help rough sleepers](#), 28 November 2018

⁵⁷ [Written PQ 292827, 7 October 2019](#)

⁵⁸ Homeless Link, [Guidance on Severe Weather Emergency Protocol \(SWEP\) and extended weather provision](#), last updated September 2019

⁵⁹ Homeless Link, [Severe Weather Responses 2016-17: Survey of winter provision for people sleeping rough](#), October 2017

⁶⁰ Depaul, [Impact Report 2018/19](#), 2019, p8

⁶¹ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, para 123

carried out. The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Paying for supported housing](#) (SN06080) provides further information.

Hostels tend to offer a range of support, with some focusing on people with high or complex needs and others offering a lower level of support. Hostels will usually offer assistance with finding move-on accommodation. Some hostels have specialist on-site benefit advisors, nurses and drug or alcohol workers, others may arrange visits by staff from external agencies to provide additional support.

The [Shelter website](#) (www.shelter.org.uk) provides information on hostels and how to find one.

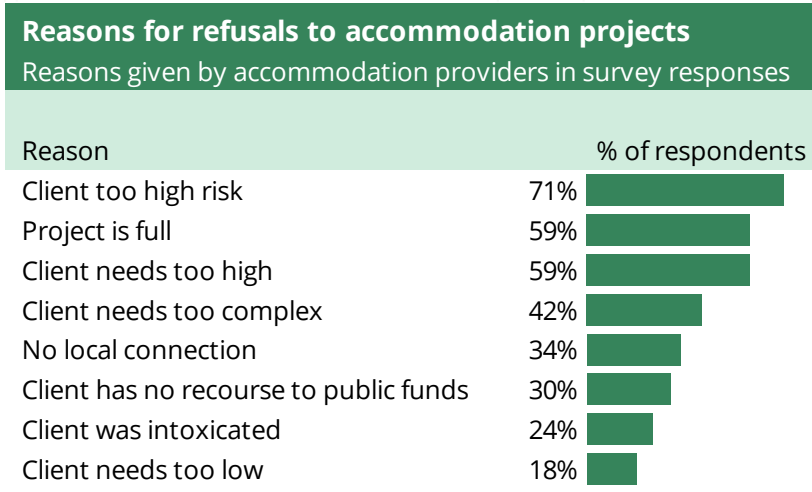
Access to hostel accommodation

Rough sleepers may find it difficult to access hostel accommodation for a number of reasons. Hostels may require a referral from an agency, proof of identity, and eligibility for Housing Benefit. They may also operate rules that some rough sleepers may find difficult to abide by, for example no drinking alcohol or no pets allowed. In some cases hostels may refuse access to their services as applicants do not meet their access criteria:

Most accommodation projects have referral criteria that determine who can be accepted into their services. These criteria are sometimes set by the commissioner(s), such as only accepting people who have a proven local connection to the area, or by the project itself, which might have criteria related to the level of people's support needs or perceived level of risk (for example related to offending behaviour or history of arson), so that this can be managed safely in the accommodation. These criteria, along with a range of other reasons, can mean that people are sometimes declined access to accommodation projects.⁶²

Homeless Link asked accommodation providers about their reasons for refusing people access to their services as part of a survey. The table below shows the proportion of respondents who cited each reason as a contributory factor for refusing access over the course of a year. The most commonly-cited reasons were the client being too high-risk, the project being full, and the client having too high a level of need.

⁶² Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2016](#), 2016, p21



Source: Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual review 2017](#), p31

Furthermore, there is little spare capacity in homelessness accommodation projects and some hostels may operate a waiting list policy. In 2017 59% of accommodation projects had to decline access as the project was full (see table above).

Moving on from hostel accommodation

According to the [Homeless Link Annual Review 2017](#), single people accessing accommodation services face significant structural barriers to moving on. The principal barrier to moving on was a lack of affordable accommodation; 40% of projects stated that this was the main barrier and 73% reported that it was one of the barriers for people moving on in their area.⁶³

The Government is keen to see improved and more rapid move on from hostels. The Rough Sleeping Strategy commits the Government to work with local authorities, providers, hostel residents and other stakeholders to launch a review of hostels focused on capacity, quality and outcomes. The full review was scheduled to commence in spring 2019.⁶⁴

The Government's [Move On Fund](#) aims to free up hostel and refuge spaces by increasing the availability of affordable move-on, or second stage, housing for those in hostels and refuges who are ready to leave this type of provision but might otherwise not be in a position to access the next stage of housing. £44 million grant funding and £6 million revenue funding for on-going tenancy support costs is being made available for this purpose from 2018/19 to 2020/21. Priority in this fund will be given to proposals that will most effectively and most quickly free up space with hostels and/or refuges. The fund in England (outside London) will be managed and delivered by Homes England. A further £50 million has been made available for schemes in London through the

The majority of homelessness accommodation projects for single people report that the lack of affordable accommodation is a barrier for clients moving on.

The Government is conducting a review of hostel accommodation focussing on capacity, quality and outcomes.

⁶³ Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2017](#), 2018, p37

⁶⁴ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018, para 124

Greater London Authority (GLA), including both capital grant funding and revenue funding for on-going tenancy support costs.⁶⁵

2.5 Day centres

Day centres (sometimes referred as 'drop-in centres'), often run by local voluntary organisations and the Church, can be found in many cities and large towns. Their funding streams are generally more diverse than homelessness accommodation projects; fundraising is the most common primary source of funding.⁶⁶

Day Centres provide somewhere for rough sleepers to go in the day and receive help with basic needs such as food, clothing and washing. Some centres provide other practical assistance; for example, access to computers, somewhere to store belongings, and a place to receive post. They may also provide medical care (including drug and alcohol support services) and access to doctors and dentists.

In addition to providing short-term relief, some day centres try to help rough sleepers find long-term solutions to their homelessness. They may provide housing and welfare benefits advice, and activities to help build social and employment skills.

There were 196 day centres across England in 2017, down from 214 in 2016.⁶⁷ A report by Homeless Link, [Making the difference: How day centres are helping to tackle rough sleeping](#) (2014), suggests that by providing a flexible, open access service, day centres are uniquely placed to engage with and support some of the hardest-to-reach homeless people:

Day centres develop flexible, innovative ways of working, including outreach and specialist services, and a large proportion of their clients have very high support needs.

[...]

Most people who sleep rough will at some point be supported by day centres. Many of them will work with day centres even while they are not engaging with other local services.⁶⁸

Day centres help rough sleepers with essential basic needs, such as food, clothing and washing. Some provide practical assistance, e.g. access to computers, and other support services.

2.6 Housing First pilots

Housing First is an approach to tackling long-term rough sleeping that supports individuals with multiple complex needs to access stable, affordable accommodation, while providing them with intensive support to rebuild their lives.

The Government has provided £28 million to pilot the Housing First approach for long-term rough sleepers in the West Midlands Combined

⁶⁵ Homes England, [Move on Fund prospectus](#), August 2018

⁶⁶ Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2016](#), 2016, p28

⁶⁷ Homeless Link, [Single homelessness support in England: annual review 2017](#), March 2018, p3

⁶⁸ Homeless Link, [Making the difference: How day centres are helping to tackle rough sleeping](#), 2014, p3

Authority, Greater Manchester, and the Liverpool City Region.⁶⁹ An evaluation of the pilots will inform decisions on wider roll-out.

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Housing First: tackling homelessness for those with complex needs](#) (CBP08368) provides further information.

2.7 Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond

[Social impact bonds](#) (SIBs) are intended to improve the social outcomes of publicly funded services by making funding conditional on achieving results. Investors pay for the project at the start, and then receive payments based on the results achieved by the project. Rather than focusing on inputs (e.g. number of doctors) or outputs (e.g. number of operations), SIBs are based on achieving social ‘outcomes’ (e.g. improved health).

The London Homelessness Social Impact Bond (‘the SIB’) was launched in November 2012. This innovative four-year programme was designed “to bring new finance and new ways of working to improve the outcomes for a cohort of rough sleepers whose needs were not being met by existing services, and who were not being targeted by other interventions”.⁷⁰

The SIB was focused on improving outcomes for a cohort of 830 entrenched rough sleepers. St Mungo’s and Thames Reach were contracted to deliver the SIB, adopting a model in which key workers provided a personalised and client-centred approach which aimed to be flexible and responsive. Performance was assessed against five key outcomes: reduced rough sleeping; sustained stable accommodation; sustained reconnection to home country; progress towards employment; and improved health.⁷¹

The Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) carried out an evaluation of the impacts of the SIB intervention on rough sleeping, reconnections and entry into long-term accommodation. The final evaluation report, published in November 2017, concluded that:

- When compared to a well-matched comparison group, the intervention significantly reduced rough sleeping over a two year period.
- On average the intervention group (the SIB group) had significantly fewer episodes of rough sleeping compared to the comparison groups.

⁶⁹ MHCLG, [Housing Secretary James Brokenshire awards funding to reduce rough sleeping](#), 9 May 2018

⁷⁰ DCLG, [Qualitative Evaluation of the London Homelessness Social Impact Bond: First Interim Report](#), September 2014, Executive Summary

⁷¹ DCLG, [Qualitative Evaluation of the London Homelessness Social Impact Bond: First Interim Report](#), September 2014, Executive Summary

- The intervention group was significantly more likely than the comparison group to completely desist from sleeping rough in the two years following the start of the programme.
- The intervention had a significant positive impact on the number of people arriving into long-term accommodation one and two years after the start of the programme.⁷²

DCLG also commissioned a qualitative process evaluation of the London Homelessness SIB, which was undertaken by ICF. The evaluation concluded that performance against the targets was mixed, but that providers were proud of their achievements and investors were happy with the return on their investment.⁷³

In October 2016 the Government announced that, building on the London Homelessness SIB, it was launching a national £10 million Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond fund (from 2017 to 2021) to help rough sleepers with the most complex needs move off the streets. The funding will be paid out on outcomes achieved, including around:

- accommodation
- employment and education
- mental health
- substance misuse.⁷⁴

Eight areas were expected to benefit from the funding.⁷⁵

The Government's [Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan](#) (Dec 2018) reported that at the end of Year 1 of the Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond, over 700 people had been assisted off the streets into accommodation, over 600 had had a personal needs assessment, over 100 commenced mental health treatment, and over 100 began treatment for substance misuse.⁷⁶

In 2016 the Government launched a national £10 million Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond fund to help rough sleepers with the most complex needs move off the streets.

2.8 Rough sleeping services in London

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. Rough sleepers in London made up just over a quarter (27%) of the England total in 2018.⁷⁷

A wide range of homelessness services are provided across London. The London Housing Foundation (LHF) has launched an [interactive website of London's Homelessness Services](#) which enables users to view data at a pan-London, borough or multi-borough level.⁷⁸ According to LHF

⁷² DCLG, [The impact evaluation of the London Homelessness Social Impact Bond](#), pp 5-7

⁷³ DCLG, [Qualitative Evaluation of the London Homelessness Social Impact Bond](#), 14 November 2017

⁷⁴ DCLG, [£40 million homelessness prevention programme announced](#), 17 October 2016

⁷⁵ Prime Minister's Office, [PM announces areas to benefit from £50m fund to tackle homelessness](#), 21 December 2016

⁷⁶ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy: delivery plan](#), 10 December 2018, p36

⁷⁷ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2018](#), 26 February 2019

⁷⁸ <https://lhf.org.uk/atlas/> [Accessed 6 October 2019]

data, 122 organisations provided single homelessness services in London in 2018.⁷⁹

Most central government funding to tackle rough sleeping is provided to London boroughs directly and they commission relevant services at a borough level. However, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has strategic responsibility for pan-London commissioning and coordination of homelessness services.

In June 2018 the Mayor of London, Sadiq Kahn, published London's first [Rough Sleeping Plan of Action](#) to "to ensure a sustainable route off the streets for every single rough sleeper". The Plan outlines:

- what the Mayor will do now, within his current powers and resources;
- what could be done with more Government investment; and
- what other changes to structures, legislation or other practices are needed.⁸⁰

The Mayor of London spends around £8.5 million annually on core rough sleeping services, which are intended to complement those provided by London's boroughs. With his [No Nights Sleeping Rough taskforce](#), the Mayor also secured additional funding from Government to develop new services and expand existing ones - £4.2 million in December 2016 and a further £3.3m in June 2018. In 2017, City Hall launched three major new services - Safe Connections, the Social Impact Bond for Entrenched Rough Sleepers and Night Transport Outreach. The initiatives being funded with the additional £3.3m include:

- doubling the number of London Street Rescue outreach workers.
- boosting local cold weather shelters.
- expanding the No Second Night Out service, including two new staging posts and new 'Floating Hubs'.
- improving access to mental health services with a specialist team to assess rough sleepers.⁸¹

Details of the Mayor's core programme of rough sleeping services are provided on the [GLA website](#) and in the [Mayor's rough sleeping services briefing](#).⁸²

The priorities underpinning all rough sleeping services, projects and initiatives funded by the Mayor are set out in the Pan-London [Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework](#).⁸³

Rough sleeping is at its most severe in London. The Greater London Authority has strategic responsibility for the pan-London commissioning and coordination of homelessness services.

In June 2018 the Mayor of London, Sadiq Kahn, published London's first Rough Sleeping Action Plan to tackle rough sleeping.

⁷⁹ London Housing Foundation, [Atlas mapping homelessness in London: 2018/19 Insights](#) [Accessed 6 October 2019]

⁸⁰ Mayor of London, [Rough Sleeping Plan of Action](#), June 2018

⁸¹ Mayor of London webpage on [Rough sleeping services](#) [Accessed 6 October 2019]

⁸² Mayor of London, [Briefing on the Mayor's rough sleeping services](#), December 2018

⁸³ Mayor of London, [Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework](#), January 2018

3. Access to health services

Rough sleepers face particular health issues associated with homelessness, and can face inequalities in accessing health services. There are often multiple underlying mental and physical health issues that contribute to someone sleeping rough. In evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee in 2016, the then Public Health Minister Jane Ellison noted that poor health is both a cause and effect of homelessness.⁸⁴ Lack of access to services can mean problems can remain untreated until they reach crisis point, with a “revolving-door” of A&E admissions failing to deal with underlying health issues.

Mental and physical health problems can be both a cause and a symptom of homelessness.

According to a PQ response in June 2016, the Department of Health and Social Care estimated that the cost to the NHS of providing medical care to homeless people was at least £85 million a year, with homeless people consuming around four times more acute hospital services than the general population. These extra costs are thought to arise from the severity of their health conditions and because they are more likely to be admitted as emergency admissions.⁸⁵

3.1 Access to GP surgeries

Concerns have been raised that one barrier that people who are sleeping rough face in accessing health services is that GP surgeries may request proof of address for registration. However, there is no requirement for patients to provide any proof of address in order to register.

Proof of address is not mandatory to register with a GP surgery.

NHS England published guidance in December 2017 on [How to register with a GP for people who are homeless](#), which states that:

NHS Guidelines say ‘If a patient cannot produce any supportive documentation but states that they reside within the practice boundary then practices should accept the registration’.

Please be aware that a homeless patient cannot be refused registration on the basis of where they reside because they are not in settled accommodation. For safety reasons they may need to change the places where they sleep rough on a daily basis. There is no regulatory requirement to prove identity, address, immigration status or an NHS number in order to register as a patient and no contractual requirement for GPs to request this.⁸⁶

In guidance from 2015, [Patient Registration: Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care \(General Practice\)](#), NHS England notes that practices should try to ensure they have a way of contacting patients if they need to (for example with test results) but there may be legitimate reasons some people are unable to provide documentation or proof of residence, including people in unstable accommodation or

⁸⁴ [Written evidence to CLG Committee, submitted by Jane Ellison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Department of Health \(June 2016\)](#)

⁸⁵ [PQ 40058, 13 June 2016](#)

⁸⁶ NHS England, [People who are homeless: How to register with a doctor \(GP\)](#), December 2017

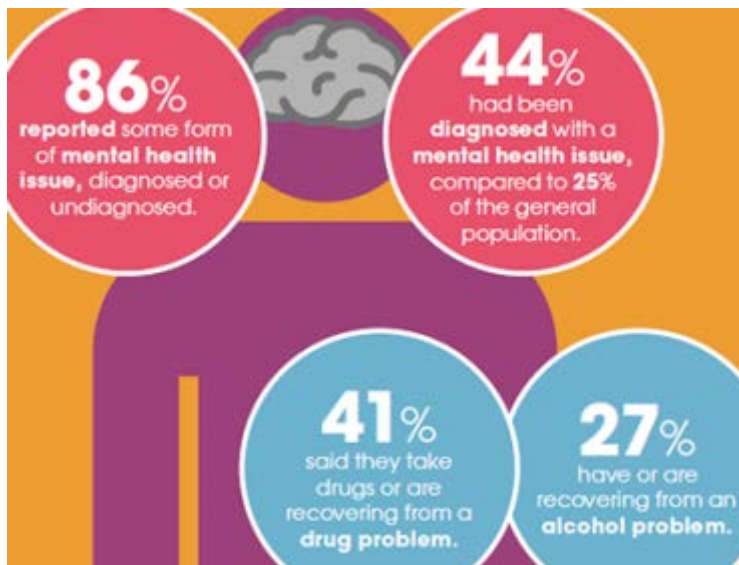
street homeless. Reasonable exceptions therefore need to be considered with sensitivity to the individual's situation.

The 2017 guidance also gives information for homeless patients on how to apply for a help with health costs certificates through the [NHS Low Income Scheme](#), which can offer full or partial help with costs of:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment
- NHS sight tests
- Cost of glasses or contact lenses
- Cost of travelling to receive NHS treatment
- Wigs and fabric supports

3.2 Access to specialist health services

Mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse are often a major factor in rough sleeping – the following image is available from the Homeless Health Needs Audit, and combines data for rough sleepers and those living in hostels:⁸⁷



Health services and local authorities have a number of tailored services that are intended to meet the specific needs of this vulnerable group. A number of primary medical services contracts around the country focus on the needs of rough sleepers, these usually cover urban areas with high numbers of homeless people. Local areas are encouraged to develop multi-agency approaches, for example the £10 million

In some urban areas primary medical services contracts include specific provisions for rough sleepers.

⁸⁷ The health needs audit tool (<http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/homeless-health-needs-audit>) was originally commissioned by DH in 2010 and updated in 2015 with support from Public Health England.

Homeless Hospital Discharge Fund aimed to improve hospital discharge arrangements for homeless people to try and prevent re-admissions.⁸⁸

In June 2016 the Department of Health outlined a number of initiatives at the local and national level to address health and homelessness issues, as part of the wider government effort in this area.⁸⁹

The spread of tuberculosis (TB) among rough sleepers has been a particular issue in London and since April 2011 the NHS has funded a mobile X-ray unit to screen for TB in hard to reach groups. There is also a "Find and Treat" service to help ensure people identified with suspected active TB by the mobile X-ray unit are supported in accessing appropriate services and to complete TB treatment. Find and Treat also finds TB patients who have been lost to TB services and supports them in re-engagement with services.⁹⁰

As part of a range of commitments in the [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), which was published in August 2018, the Department of Health and Social Care is running a rapid audit of health services in the 83 Rough Sleeping Initiative areas to understand levels of health provision for people who sleep rough. It also committed up to £2 million in 2018/19 to test models of access to health services for people with co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse needs to understand if local services can be delivered more effectively. The Strategy also noted that the Government will request that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produce guidance to support targeted homelessness prevention, integrated care and recovery.⁹¹

On 19 September 2019 the Government published its response to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (AMCD) report Drug related harms in homeless populations and how they can be reduced (published in June 2019).⁹²

Mental Health Services

St Mungo's published the findings of its [research into mental health and rough sleeping](#) in February 2016. The research found that rough sleeping makes it harder to access mental health services:

Rough sleeping makes it harder to access mental health services for several reasons. These include stigma, a lack of services that will work with people facing multiple problems including drug and alcohol use, difficulties getting an assessment or referral to secondary care without being registered with a GP and trouble making and keeping appointments while sleeping on the street.⁹³

The incidence of TB amongst rough sleepers in London has been increasing. The NHS has funded a mobile X-ray unit to screen for TB, and a 'Find and Treat' service to support those with suspected active TB.

⁸⁸ Department of Health, [£10 million funding for hospital aftercare for the homeless](#), 13 May 2013

⁸⁹ [Written evidence to CLG Committee, submitted by Jane Ellison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Department of Health \(June 2016\)](#)

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ MHCLG, [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), August 2018

⁹² MHCLG, [Government Response to ACMD Report Drug-related harms in homeless populations and how they can be reduced](#), 19 September 2019

⁹³ St Mungo's, [Stop the Scandal: an investigation into mental health and rough sleeping](#), February 2016, p4

The research report concluded that there is a lack of suitable, specialist mental health support for rough sleepers:

Only 26 per cent of homelessness professionals surveyed think that people sleeping rough are able to access the mental health services that they need. This is partly because specialist homelessness mental health teams have been subject to major funding cuts or have disappeared entirely.⁹⁴

The report called on the Government to invest in specialist homelessness mental health support and ensure that people do not sleep rough after being discharged from mental health hospitals.⁹⁵

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee's 2016 [report on homelessness](#) raised concerns about homeless people's access to mental health services. It called on the Government to review the funding of these services and develop an action plan to maximise their effectiveness:

We therefore call on the Government to produce a detailed action plan on how it intends to address the mental health needs of homeless people, including the delivery of outreach support to rough sleepers and assessing the vulnerability of applicants for homeless support. We see this as a priority for the cross-Departmental Ministerial Working Group and will be seeking an update in twelve months' time.⁹⁶

The Government's response agreed with the Committee on the need for homeless people to receive services that meet their mental health needs, and highlighted funding it had provided through Social Impact Bonds for rough sleepers, including personalised mental health support.⁹⁷

The NHS Long Term Plan (January 2019) set out that the NHS will invest up to £30 million extra over the next 5 years on meeting the needs of rough sleepers, to ensure better access to specialist homelessness NHS mental health support.⁹⁸

Dental Services

In October 2017, the homelessness charity Groundswell published a report on the [oral health of people experiencing homelessness](#) in London, which found that 15% of survey participants had pulled their own teeth. It also found that there was a lack of information about entitlements to dental treatment, and on how dental services worked, with 31% of those surveyed reporting an unsuccessful attempt to register with a dentist.

Research by St Mungo's, a homelessness charity, in 2015 concluded that there is a lack of suitable, specialist mental health support for rough sleepers.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p6

⁹⁶ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, [Homelessness - Third Report of Session 2016-17](#), HC40, 18 August 2016, para 76

⁹⁷ HM Government, [Government response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Reports: Homelessness and Homelessness Reduction Bill](#), Cm 9443, March 2017, para 51

⁹⁸ [NHS Long Term Plan](#), 7 January 2019, para 2.32

Groundswell pointed to the provision of dental services in day centres and through mobile dental services as an important way to improve access to treatment for homeless people.⁹⁹

The British Dental Association gave the following response to the Groundswell report:

This research is stark reminder of how current dental policy is failing vulnerable patients.

A civilized society does not leave homeless people handicapped by oral disease or resorting to pulling out their own teeth. There is no easy solution, but any progress is impossible without adequately resourced mainstream and dedicated services.

The failure to invest in community dentistry is hurting patients who can't always be cared for in traditional settings. It's hitting the homeless, the housebound, and patients with dementia, learning disabilities and phobias who are all entitled to effective care.

This research should force government and health commissioners to reassess their priorities.¹⁰⁰

Research by the homelessness charity Groundswell found that homelessness creates barriers to accessing dental treatment and has a significant impact on an individual's oral health.

⁹⁹ Groundswell, [Healthy Mouths: A peer-led audit on the oral health of people experiencing homelessness](#), October 2017

¹⁰⁰ ['Urgent action' needed to stop poor oral health in homeless population](#), *Dentistry*, 8 May 2017

4. Access to welfare benefits

There are no welfare benefits specifically for those sleeping rough, but rough sleepers may, depending on their circumstances, be able to claim mainstream social security benefits including Universal Credit. Rough sleepers from abroad may however be prevented from accessing benefits because of their nationality and/or immigration status.

People from countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA)¹⁰¹ with limited or no leave to remain are classed as “Persons Subject to Immigration Control” (PSIC) and, as such, are not entitled to most welfare benefits, except in very limited circumstances.¹⁰²

EEA migrants are not PSICs but may have no or only limited access to benefits, especially those who have never worked in the UK, or are unable to work because of sickness or disability. Starting from 2014, the UK Government introduced a series of measures further limiting access to benefits for non-working migrants.¹⁰³ Universal Credit – which is replacing means-tested out-of-work benefits, Housing Benefit and tax credits for people of working age – cannot be claimed by EEA migrants who have come to the UK and are looking for work.¹⁰⁴

The St Mungo’s CHAIN quarterly report found that, of rough sleepers in London seen by outreach services between April and June 2019 whose nationality was recorded, 48% were of UK origin, 31% were from Central and Eastern European countries, and 3% were from other European states.¹⁰⁵

EEA nationals who have lived in the UK for at least five years are now able to apply for “settled status” under the Government’s EU Settlement Scheme. Those who have not yet been in the UK for five years can apply for “pre-settled status”.¹⁰⁶ People granted settled status are able to claim benefits on the same basis as UK nationals.

Rough sleepers may experience particular challenges applying under the EU Settlement Scheme, given the online application process and the need to provide proof of their identity and nationality. They may also have difficulty gathering documents to demonstrate their continued

Rough sleepers may, depending on their circumstances, be able to claim mainstream social security benefits. People from abroad may not be eligible because of their nationality and/or immigration status.

¹⁰¹ The European Economic Area comprises the EU Member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Switzerland is not part of the EEA but for benefits purposes Swiss nationals have broadly the same rights as EEA nationals.

¹⁰² For details see House of Commons Library briefing paper CBP06847: [What UK benefits can people from abroad claim?](#) Since 6 April 2016 local welfare assistance (see below) has also been designated “public funds” and as such PSICs are now prevented from receiving it.

¹⁰³ House of Commons Library briefing paper CBP06889: [Measures to limit migrants’ access to benefits](#)

¹⁰⁴ A third category of migrant not covered here – asylum seekers – are not entitled to mainstream benefits but may be eligible for accommodation and/or financial support from the Home Office – see House of Commons Library briefing paper CBP01909: [Asylum support: accommodation and financial support for asylum seekers](#).

¹⁰⁵ Greater London Authority, [CHAIN Quarterly Report: Greater London April – June 2019](#), July 2019

¹⁰⁶ See [Apply to the EU Settlement Scheme \(settled and pre-settled status\)](#) on GOV.UK

residence in the UK, if this cannot be evidenced by HMRC or DWP records.¹⁰⁷

4.1 DWP benefits

National statistics on receipt of benefits by rough sleepers are not available, but a survey of 1,013 single homelessness service users in 21 towns and cities in England and Scotland carried out by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University between January and September 2015 found that 92% were currently claiming benefits, and an additional 2% had claimed in the previous year.¹⁰⁸ Of those:

- 35% were currently claiming [Jobseeker's Allowance](#); and
- 56% were currently claiming [Employment and Support Allowance](#), comprising:
 - 22% who reported begin subject to "conditionality" (ie ESA claimants in the "Work-Related Activity Group"); and
 - 33% who reported not being subject to conditionality (ESA claimants in the initial "assessment phase", or in the "Support Group").

With the continued implementation of the 2010 government's programme of welfare reform, increasingly the main benefit likely to be relevant to rough sleepers is [Universal Credit](#). Universal Credit (UC) is replacing a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for working-age households. The aim of UC is to simplify and streamline the benefits system for claimants and administrators, improve work incentives, tackle poverty among low income families, and reduce the scope for fraud and error. When fully rolled out, around 7 million households will receive UC and payments will total more than £60 billion a year. Under the DWP's latest timetable, UC will have completely replaced existing "legacy" benefits and tax credits by December 2023.

Claimants are normally expected to make a claim for UC online and to manage their claim, including reporting changes in circumstances, via an online account. UC is paid monthly in arrears and, unless exceptional circumstances apply, as a single payment covering all the household's needs.

In addition to the benefits listed above, rough sleepers may be able to claim other DWP benefits, such as [Personal Independence Payment](#) (which helps with extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability). GOV.UK gives links to [benefits calculators](#) people can use to find out about possible entitlements. Citizens Advice Bureaux should also be able to arrange personal "benefit checks".

¹⁰⁷ Homeless Link, [Brexit and EU Settlement: Briefing for homelessness services](#), March 2019

¹⁰⁸ Elaine Batty et al, [Homeless people's experiences of welfare conditionality and benefit sanctions](#), Sheffield Hallam University and Crisis, December 2015. Screening questions were used at the beginning of the survey to exclude anyone not of working age, or ineligible for benefits because of their immigration status.

Benefit conditionality and sanctions

People claiming JSA, ESA or Universal Credit may be required to undertake various activities as a condition of receiving their benefit, and failure to do so may result in a benefit sanction.

Under **Universal Credit (UC)**, any “conditionality” requirements should reflect reasonable expectations about what the claimant is capable of doing, including the impact of homelessness or rough sleeping on their ability to meet work search/availability/preparation requirements. All UC claimants must at the outset of the claim accept a “claimant commitment” setting out the work-related requirements (if any) they are expected to meet. DWP guidance states that when drafting a claimant commitment, a Work Coach should consider:

- how the type of homelessness, for example rough sleeping, affects the steps that are reasonable for the claimant to take in any week to find work; and
- whether it is unreasonable for a claimant to comply with work search or work availability requirements when dealing with temporary circumstances.¹⁰⁹

Claimant commitments should be reviewed regularly to determine whether they are still appropriate. DWP guidance states that if at any point a person is struggling with the tasks in their claimant commitment, or if their situation changes, they should speak to their Work Coach.¹¹⁰

Where homelessness or the risk of homelessness is raised as a barrier to work or preparing for work, Work Coaches can temporarily lift or vary work-related requirements to help support the claimant to find accommodation.¹¹¹ Further information on the easements can be found in the DWP’s Universal Credit Full Service Guidance.¹¹²

Despite existing safeguards and easements, pressure groups and others continue to voice concerns about the impact of benefit sanctions on homeless people. A survey by Homeless Link in England carried out between October 2014 and January 2015 found that the most common benefits problem experienced by people using homelessness accommodation providers was sanctions: 90% of providers reported that their clients had been affected by sanctions, up from 69% in the previous year.¹¹³ The Sheffield Hallam University survey of 1,013 single homelessness service users in England and Scotland in January-September 2015 (see above) found that of the JSA/ESA recipients subject to conditionality, 39% had been sanctioned in the past year, and that those claiming JSA could be twice as likely to be sanctioned

Concerns have been raised about the impact of benefit sanctions on homeless people. Research by Sheffield Hallam University in 2015 found a high rate of benefit sanctions amongst homelessness service users.

¹⁰⁹ DWP Full Service Guidance Chapter on [Homelessness and at risk of Homelessness](#), Version 6.1, current March 2019

¹¹⁰ DWP, [Universal Credit and homeless people: guide for supporting organisations](#), updated 22 August 2019

¹¹¹ PQ 19172 [on Universal Credit: Homelessness], 15 December 2015

¹¹² DWP Full Service Guidance Chapter on [Homelessness and at risk of Homelessness](#), Version 6.1, current March 2019

¹¹³ Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2015](#)

compared with the JSA claimant population as a whole. It also found that vulnerable claimants – such as those with mental health conditions, substance dependence or poor literacy issues – were most likely to experience sanctions and report negative impacts. The study concluded that that it was “systemic and personal barriers to meeting conditionality requirements that explain the high sanction rate amongst homelessness service users rather than unwillingness to comply”.¹¹⁴

Hardship payments

Claimants subject to benefit sanctions may be able to get reduced rate “hardship payments”, although these are not awarded automatically. For Jobseeker’s Allowance, unless the claimant is in a “vulnerable group”, hardship payments cannot normally begin until two weeks into a sanction. Under UC, there is no automatic entitlement to hardship payments and claimants must justify their need for them on an ongoing basis. Payments will only be made to those who cannot meet their most basic and essential needs (e.g. accommodation, heating, food or hygiene). Furthermore, hardship payments will normally be recovered from the claimant at a later date, by deductions from their ongoing UC award.

On 16 November 2016 the Government announced that jobseekers who are homeless or suffer from a mental health condition would be able to access hardship payments immediately if they receive a benefit sanction. The change is expected to benefit around 10,000 people over four years from 2017-18 to 2020.¹¹⁵

Claims and payments

Being without accommodation should not in itself be a barrier to claiming benefits. A person does not need to have an address to claim any benefit.¹¹⁶ A claimant will require a safe correspondence address, which could be for example a drop-in centre; but if no suitable alternative is available they may use the local Jobcentre Plus office.¹¹⁷

UC may pose particular challenges for people sleeping rough.¹¹⁸ Claimants are normally expected to make a claim for UC, and to manage their ongoing claim, online. All jobcentres now have free Wi-Fi and computers available to support claimants who need help with making their claim digitally and applying for jobs online.¹¹⁹ While the main route to access UC is through digital channels and it is DWP policy to actively encourage people to do so, it acknowledges there are circumstances in which this may not be straightforward. If a person has problems using UC online service they can call the Universal Credit

Rough sleepers may face particular challenges navigating the Universal Credit system.

¹¹⁴ Elaine Batty et al, [Homeless people’s experiences of welfare conditionality and benefit sanctions](#), Sheffield Hallam University and Crisis, December 2015, Executive Summary, pv

¹¹⁵ [‘Homelessness and mental health conditions to be supported by hardship fund’](#), DWP press release, 16 November 2016

¹¹⁶ [DWP Freedom of Information response 92/2013](#), 7 February 2013

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ See [Written evidence from Homeless Link to the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry on the Welfare safety net](#), WSN0067, December 2018, para 18

¹¹⁹ PQ 278343 [on Universal Credit], 2 September 2019

service centre (on a [telephone helpline](#) which moved to a Freephone number from 29 November 2017) and book an appointment for them to complete the claim (although they will need to have access to a computer for the duration of the call so they can enter the data themselves, a process which may take around 40 minutes). If a person cannot use the online service at all, a Service Centre agent can complete the online form over the phone for them.¹²⁰ Service delivery teams within Jobcentres can also provide face to face assistance to complete the initial UC application process, “digital coaching” and help to maintain a UC claim.¹²¹

The Help to Claim service provided by Citizens Advice can also provide support in the early stages of a UC claim, from the application, through to the first payment. Advisers can help with steps such as how to gather evidence for the claim or how to prepare for the first Jobcentre appointment.¹²²

UC claimants are expected to check their online account regulations to see if their Work coach has set them actions to complete (via their “to do” list). DWP guidance states that homeless people without regular access to a computer “can go into their local jobcentre to check their Universal Credit account or use public access point computers in libraries” and that “Work coaches can help them do this”.¹²³

The DWP’s position is that UC should “ideally” be paid into a bank, building society, or credit union account that in the claimant’s or their partner’s own name. Work coaches can help people through the process of setting up a bank account “where appropriate”.¹²⁴ If they cannot open or access an account, there are however alternatives:

- Post Office Card accounts (but only in exceptional circumstances, and these are being phased out from 2020)
- payments into third party accounts
- the [Payment Exception Service](#) (formerly Simple Payments)

Guidance states that a person paid using one of the above methods “should then be offered access to money advice.”¹²⁵

UC is normally paid as a single, monthly payment, in arrears. The thinking behind this is that UC should mimic work and receipt of a salary. There is the possibility of “payment exceptions”, such as more frequent payments, but in England and Wales the main emphasis is on budgeting support and alternative payment arrangements will only be available in exceptional circumstances, if certain criteria are met.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ DWP, [Universal Credit and homeless people: guide for supporting organisations](#), updated 22 August 2019

¹²¹ [PQ 226486 \[on Universal Credit: Homelessness\], 4 March 2019](#)

¹²² See Citizens Advice, [Get help applying for Universal Credit](#)

¹²³ DWP, [Universal Credit and homeless people: guide for supporting organisations](#), updated 22 August 2019

¹²⁴ [PQ 226486 \[on Universal Credit: Homelessness\], 4 March 2019](#)

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Payment arrangements may differ in Scotland and in Northern Ireland – see DWP, [Universal Credit and homeless people: guide for supporting organisations](#), updated 22 August 2019

Further details are given in DWP guidance, [Alternative Payment Arrangements](#) (updated 25 June 2019).

In Autumn 2017, following emerging evidence of problems experienced by people moving onto UC, the Government slowed significantly the roll-out plans for January-March 2018 while it introduced measures intended to ease the transition to UC. These included abolishing the 7 day “waiting period”, increasing the amount of the advance payment people can get at the start of their claim and extending the repayment period for advances, and allowing people moving onto UC to continue to receive Housing Benefit for two weeks.

Further measures were announced in Budget 2018 including:

- an additional two-week payment of Income Support, income-based JSA and income-related ESA at the start of a UC claim, effective from July 2020;
- reducing the maximum rate for debt deductions from a UC award from 40% to 30% of the monthly standard allowance, from October 2019; and
- extending the period over which advance payments are recovered from 12 to 16 months, from October 2021.

Nevertheless, charities working with homeless people have argued that more needs to be done to ensure that Universal Credit does not exacerbate homelessness. For example, in evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee, Crisis recommended:

- further reform of the conditionality and sanctions regime;
- non-repayable advance payments for homeless people moving onto UC;
- levels of deductions from UC awards should be flexible to allow them to be set at affordable levels, so that people experiencing homelessness at risk of homelessness do not suffer prolonged financial hardship;
- as UC roll-out continues, additional resources to provide an adequate support package for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including investment in training for staff around housing and homelessness, and establishing a network of homelessness and housing specialists across all Jobcentres; and
- at the final “managed migration” stage of UC roll-out, ensuring that benefits are not terminated for people who have not claimed UC within the deadline, a five-week benefit run-on for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and provision of adequate transitional protection

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¹²⁷ [Written evidence from Crisis to the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry on the Welfare safety net](#), WSN0099, December 2018

4.2 Local welfare assistance schemes

Social Fund Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans – which were administered by DWP – were abolished in April 2013 and funding was made available to local authorities in England and to the devolved administrations in Scotland and in Wales to provide such assistance in their areas as they saw fit.¹²⁸ The transfer of funding was not accompanied by the transfer of any new powers or the introduction of any new responsibilities. Nor was the money ring-fenced in any way.

The criteria by which an application is assessed, decision-making processes and review arrangements, and what form of assistance to provide, are matters for the local authority. Local welfare provision in England – where it still exists – varies considerably in scope and eligibility criteria, but schemes are mainly focused on helping people who are in urgent need following an emergency or unforeseen event, or those needing help to remain or resettle in the community. Assistance is usually in the form of goods in kind or vouchers, rather than cash.

DWP provided (non-ring-fenced) grant funding totalling £347 million to local authorities in England for local welfare provision in 2013-14 and 2014-15 (plus additional funding for the devolved administrations in Scotland and in Wales – around £28 million and £12 million a year, respectively). The Coalition Government initially proposed to discontinue additional funding after 2014-15, but in February 2015 the Department for Communities and Local Government announced that it would provide a further £74 million to upper-tier authorities in England in 2015-16, in recognition of their requests for additional support, “including to help them respond to local welfare needs and to improve social care provision”.¹²⁹ In 2016-17, DCLG merely identified a notional figure of £129.6 million within the general Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for councils in England to spend on local welfare provision. However, this was not ring-fenced and there was no proposal to repeat the additional £74 million funding awarded in 2015-16.¹³⁰

In a report in January 2016, the [National Audit Office](#) commented that the future of local welfare provision appeared uncertain. With reducing resources and competing pressures, many councils had said they could not afford to continue to provide welfare assistance without specific Government funding. NAO found that some councils had already closed their schemes, or reduced provision, placing increased demand on charities.¹³¹

In addition to funding issues, homelessness organisations have voiced concerns about other aspects of local welfare provision. These include:

Local welfare assistance schemes in England vary considerably in scope and eligibility criteria. Assistance – if still available – is usually in the form of goods in kind or vouchers.

A National Audit Office report on local welfare provision, published in January 2016, found that some councils had closed their schemes, or reduced provision, placing increased demand on charities.

¹²⁸ The discretionary Social Fund in Northern Ireland was replaced by a new scheme – [Discretionary Support](#) – from November 2016

¹²⁹ HCWS246 [on Local Government Finance], 3 February 2015

¹³⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government, Core spending power: final local government finance settlement 2016 to 2017, 8 February 2016

¹³¹ NAO, [Local welfare provision](#), 12 January 2016

- Eligibility criteria frequently exclude certain categories of applicant, such as those who have received a benefits sanction, or people making a second application within a year;
- Many schemes appear to apply strict “local connection” criteria;
- Reductions over time in the value of awards and maximum award limits; and

Issues around access, such as online applications causing problems for “digitally excluded” applicants, poorly publicised schemes, complex and bureaucratic application processes, and overly cautious decision-making by local authorities.¹³² In its January 2016 report on [The local welfare safety net](#), the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee highlighted the potential for local connection and residency rules to unfairly exclude vulnerable people in acute need, and recommended that DCLG (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and the Local Government Association issue joint guidance on acceptable use of local connection and residency criteria in local welfare assistance schemes. It also recommended that they issue guidance on the use of cash payments in certain circumstances. These recommendations were rejected by the Government, highlighting a 2014 review by the Department for Work and Pensions which, it said, found that local authorities were “delivering support more effectively than the previous provision under the Social Fund”. The Government’s response to the Committee added:

The new system allows local authorities to take a more targeted approach and seek to understand and address the underlying problems behind an application for help. As the devolution of funding conferred full powers to decide on how to provide support, the Government did not issue detailed guidance on how this should be done, and as the evidence suggests that support is being targeted effectively, does not propose to do so now.¹³³

In March 2019, the Children’s Society published a report – [Nowhere To Turn](#) – which found that 23 of 152 ‘upper tier’ local authorities had closed their welfare assistance schemes, with one fifth of councils having cut spending these schemes, and that as a consequence 75% fewer people have access to crisis support from welfare assistance schemes than under the Social Fund schemes.¹³⁴ In October 2018, a report from Church Action on Poverty found that “at least” 28 local authorities in England had closed their welfare assistance schemes completely.¹³⁵

A 2016 report by the Work and Pensions Select Committee concluded that central and local government should co-ordinate better to fill gaps in the welfare safety net and prevent severe hardship and destitution.

¹³² Suzanne Fitzpatrick et al, [The homelessness monitor: England 2016](#), Crisis, January 2016, pp42-43

¹³³ [Government Response to the Work and Pensions Committee’s Fifth Report of Session 2015–16: The local welfare safety net](#), HC 924 2015-16, 30 March 2016, para 36

¹³⁴ Children’s Society, [Nowhere to Turn: Strengthening the safety net for children and families facing crisis](#), March 2019

¹³⁵ Church Action on Poverty, [Compassion in Crisis: how to people in poverty stay afloat in times of emergency?](#), October 2018

5. Food assistance

A wide range of Church and other voluntary organisations provide food assistance to those in need. Food assistance may range from a hot meal provided by a 'soup kitchen' or a 'soup run' to a food package provided by a 'food bank'. An All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in 2014 identified enormous variety in the provision of food assistance across the country:

No two providers the Inquiry met were the same – each had adapted its provision depending on its own local circumstances, demand and resources. This flexibility was particularly evident in the sources and types of food offered to individuals; the way this food was prepared, served and distributed; the criteria individuals needed to fulfil in order to receive this food; and how providers went about trying to address individuals' immediate and long-term needs.¹³⁶

Data on the scale of emergency food assistance is limited. A report in 2013 by Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty estimated that over 500,000 people were reliant on emergency food assistance.¹³⁷

Food banks

In recent years the UK has seen a significant increase in the provision of emergency food assistance through food banks.¹³⁸ There are currently estimated to be at least 2,058 food banks in the UK, of which 1,249 are run by [The Trussell Trust](#) and 809 are independent.¹³⁹

Trussell Trust food banks are run by a range of volunteer-based organisations, redistributing food donated by consumers, retailers and the food industry. They generally work on a referral system whereby professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers and Citizens Advice identify people in crisis and issue them with a food bank voucher. This entitles them to receive a parcel of three days' food.

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, the Trussell Trust's food bank network distributed nearly 1.6 million three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis, an increase of 19% on the previous year.¹⁴⁰ The main reasons for referrals to Trussell Trust food banks in 2017/18 were: income not covering essential costs (33%), benefit delays (20%) and benefit changes (17%). The Government is currently carrying out a literature review of research into the factors driving the use of food banks.¹⁴¹

In recent years the UK has seen a significant increase in the provision of emergency food assistance through food banks.

¹³⁶ All Party Group on Food Poverty, [All evidence review for the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the UK](#), December 2014, p69

¹³⁷ Cooper, N. and Dumbleton, S., [Walking the breadline: the scandal of food poverty in 21st century Britain](#), Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty, May 2013, p3

¹³⁸ All Party Group on Food Poverty, [All evidence review for the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the UK](#), December 2014, p8

¹³⁹ Independent Food Aid Network, [Mapping the UK's Independent Food Banks](#) [Accessed 8 October 2019]

¹⁴⁰ The Trussell Trust, [End of Year Stats](#) [Accessed 8 October 2019]

¹⁴¹ [Written PQ 291234, 1 October 2019](#)

A survey of Trussell Trust food bank users in 2016 found that about 3% of respondents were sleeping rough, and 20% had slept rough in the previous 12 months.¹⁴²

The Trussell Trust food bank locations can be found on their [website](https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank) (<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank>).

The House of Commons Library briefing paper [Food Banks in the UK](#) (CBP08585) provides further data on food banks.

Non-food support

Food assistance is primarily designed to provide short-term, emergency assistance. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that providers are increasingly seeking to contribute to more sustainable responses to hunger and food poverty; for example, by signposting people to other charities and agencies who can help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis.¹⁴³ Some providers also hand out non-food essentials such as blankets and toiletries.

¹⁴² The Trussell Trust, University of Oxford, ESRC, and Kings College London, [Financial insecurity, food insecurity, and disability: The profile of people receiving emergency food assistance from The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network in Britain](#), June 2017, Executive Summary

¹⁴³ All Party Group on Food Poverty, [All evidence review for the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the UK](#), December 2014, p82; Food Ethics Council and Warwick University, [Household Food Security in the UK: A Review of Food Aid](#), February 2014, p11

6. Training and employment

Rough sleepers, particularly those with high support needs, face huge challenges in gaining employment. In many cases employment, or moves towards employment, may only be achieved when a level of stability has been achieved.

In 2010 St Mungo's homelessness charity reported that: over half of their clients could not read and write to a functional level; 50% said their lack of self-confidence was holding them back; and three quarters had some form of mental health condition. Nevertheless, 80% of their clients said that work was one of their goals.¹⁴⁴

Employment provides one of the most sustainable routes out of homelessness. However, rough sleepers, particularly those with high support needs, face huge challenges in gaining employment.

6.1 The Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Government's [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) (2018) recognised the importance of employment for rough sleepers:

This government is clear that work provides the best opportunity to move out of poverty, and we are determined to do all we can to support those recovering from rough sleeping to stabilise their lives so they can move closer to or into work. Crucial to this is an individualised, tailored approach which takes into account personal circumstances, needs and capabilities.¹⁴⁵

The Strategy outlined the employment support that is currently available for homeless people and committed to provide additional support:

The Department for Work and Pensions already provides a substantial package of support to people who may have experienced homelessness and claim benefits (including people who have slept rough). Support is tailored to take into account an individual's readiness for work and includes: access to work experience opportunities, sector-based work academies and the New Enterprise Allowance for those interested in starting their own business. Those individuals who need extra, tailored and more long term support to find work have immediate access to traineeships and the Work and Health Programme. Work coaches tailor work search requirements to take account of individual circumstances, including putting jobseeking requirements on hold to give people time and space needed to resolve their accommodation issues.

We want to do more to ensure homeless people receive the support they need to access and navigate the benefit system and find work. We will:

- establish a work coach homelessness expert to act as a single point of contact in every Jobcentre;
- task Jobcentre Plus Partnership Managers with building effective working partnerships with housing services, homeless charities and organisations;
- provide a dedicated, comprehensive package of guidance for work coaches and external stakeholders that clearly sets

¹⁴⁴ St Mungo's, [Just the Job](#), July 2010, p2

¹⁴⁵ MHCLG, [The rough sleeping strategy](#), 13 August 2018, para 187

out the Department for Work and Pensions support offer for people who sleep rough; and

- share as best practice the innovative partnership work between Newcastle Jobcentre Plus and Newcastle Local Authority, an early adopter of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Programme across the whole Jobcentre Plus network.¹⁴⁶

6.2 Jobcentre Plus services and signposting

Jobcentre Plus guidance acknowledges that people sleeping rough and those in insecure accommodation face “severe barriers to employment” and that the need to spend much of their time concentrating on survival means that job search can be a problem. Claimants identified as having such barriers “should be referred to available, appropriate provision”.¹⁴⁷ A “Person Without Accommodation” (PWA) marker can be set on DWP computer systems so that homeless claimants can be identified and supported.

DWP guidance emphasises the importance of close relations and collaboration with statutory and voluntary agencies at the local level. Homeless Link has developed a “[Working Together Toolkit](#)” designed to support homelessness organisations to develop local partnerships and effective joint working with DWP and Jobcentre Plus.

From 1 October 2018, the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* placed a duty on Jobcentres in England to offer to refer a person who presents as homeless or at risk of homelessness to the local authority of the claimant’s choice. The referral is voluntary for the claimant and their Universal Credit award is not affected if they do not consent to it.¹⁴⁸

By August 2019, all Jobcentre Customer Services Managers should have undergone new training on homelessness, developed by the DWP in conjunction with external organisations including Crisis, Homeless Link and Shelter. The Government hopes that the new coaching – which follows a pledge in its Rough Sleeping Strategy – will ensure that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access the support they need. The newly-trained managers “...will be instrumental in sharing best practice and building crucial links to local organisations and to ensure a joined-up package of support for our claimants.”¹⁴⁹

Claimants sleeping rough may be able to get help to address specific barriers to moving closer to or into work through the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund (FSF). Working within local guidelines and priorities, Jobcentre Plus advisers have discretion to decide how to help individuals. The FSF also includes a grant funding mechanism, enabling Jobcentre Plus District Managers to award funding to local partnerships

By August 2019, all Jobcentre Customer Services Managers should have undergone new training on homelessness.

Rough sleeping claimants may be able to get help to address specific barriers to moving into work through the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund (FSF).

¹⁴⁶ MHCLG, [The rough sleeping strategy](#), 13 August 2018, paras 188-189

¹⁴⁷ [Homelessness – support in the labour market](#), DWP Fol response 2288, 3 June 2014, paras 20-21

¹⁴⁸ DWP, [Universal Credit and homeless people: guide for supporting organisations](#), updated 22 August 2019

¹⁴⁹ People experiencing homelessness set to benefit from new jobcentre support, DWP press release, 22 July 2019

to address barriers to work. There is no exhaustive list of the needs that may be met by the FSF, but examples could include travel expenses, training courses or clothing for interviews.¹⁵⁰

6.3 Voluntary sector initiatives

Many homelessness organisations, day centres, and hostels provide employment advice, training and opportunities for homeless people. [St Mungo's](#), for example, provides a large skills and employment programme for homeless people:

We help people through their whole journey from learning basic skills, through to full employment. An example of how someone might progress through the services we offer could be:

- Accessing our Basic Skills training to help with literacy and numeracy
- Joining Train and Trade, offering courses on various trade skills, like bricklaying or decorating
- Through our Employment and Training team, becoming employed by one of our partner organisations
- Joining our Tackling Multiple Disadvantage employment scheme.
- Participating in RollOnMonday, a unique service working specifically with law firms to provide six months paid work experience
- Learning new skills in gardening and horticulture through our Putting Down Roots for Young People project

We offer a variety of options, and look to match each client's individual skills, interests and strengths so that they're more likely to succeed.¹⁵¹

Voluntary sector organisations provide a wide range of skills and employment activities to help homeless people move towards, or gain, employment.

Homeless Link's [Annual Review of Support for Single Homeless people in England 2017](#) reported that the majority of day centres surveyed provided individual employment and training support either in-house or through a formal referral.¹⁵²

6.4 Social enterprise

Social enterprise offers an opportunity to involve homeless people in work. Many businesses, trusts and foundations provide experience and resources to homelessness organisations. Perhaps the most prominent example of social enterprise is [The Big Issue](#), a magazine sold by homeless and long-term unemployed people throughout the UK. Vendors buy copies for £1.25 and sell for £2.50, thus earning an income. [The Big Issue Foundation](#), a registered charity, also aims to link vendors with vital support and services to enable them to rebuild their lives.

¹⁵⁰ For details see House of Commons Library briefing paper CBP06079: [Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund](#). See also Homeless Link, [Flexible Support Fund: Accessing Job Centre Plus Partnerships Money](#), July 2013

¹⁵¹ St Mungo's website, [Skills and Employment](#) [Accessed 8 October 2019]

¹⁵² Homeless Link, [Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2017](#), March 2018, p29, graph 18

7. Registering to vote

Homeless people can register to vote despite lacking a fixed address. This is by a declaration of local connection.

For rough sleepers, the local connection can be a shelter or any place the person sleeps or spends a large part of the day.

A declaration of local connection cannot be made online so homeless people cannot use the 'register to vote' service on the gov.uk website. A paper registration form, which includes the declaration must, be sent to the local electoral registration officer.

Rough sleepers are able to register to vote even though they have no fixed address. A paper registration form must be sent to the local electoral registration officer.

7.1 Requirement for a residential address

Most people registering to vote require a residential address. The entitlement to register, set out in the *Representation of the People Act 1983*, is satisfied if a voter:

- is resident in the constituency or that part of it;
- is not subject to any legal incapacity to vote;
- is either a qualifying Commonwealth citizen (including British) or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; and
- is of voting age (or will attain voting age shortly).

Various categories of voters who cannot satisfy the residency requirement, such as overseas voters, are known as special category electors.

People who are in temporary accommodation may, depending on their circumstances, be able to register as an ordinary elector. This may be, for example, because they are in temporary accommodation for an extended period.

7.2 The declaration of local connection

People who have no fixed address can register as a special category elector by way of a declaration of local connection. This was introduced by the *Representation of the People Act 2000* following a report by the Howarth Working Party. It was chaired by a Government minister, George Howarth, and included representatives from the three major political parties represented at Westminster at the time, representatives of the local authority associations, responsible central government departments, returning officers and electoral administrators.

This declaration is for all voters with no fixed or permanent address so can also be used by other groups. These include those remanded in custody but not convicted of any offence, patients in a mental health hospital or members of the travelling community without a settled address.

For rough sleepers, the local connection can be the address of, or somewhere nearest to, a place in the UK where the person commonly spends a substantial part of their time (whether during day or night).

This address may be, for example, a park bench, a bus shelter or the doorway to a high street store.

People with no fixed address cannot be registered as ordinary electors. However, they can vote in the normal ways, both in person at their designated polling station or by a postal or proxy vote.

To receive correspondence relating to the registration, including a poll card or postal ballot papers for forthcoming elections, a person can choose to collect this from their local council offices or provide another address. This might be a day centre, hostel or friend that may be willing to receive post.

Declarations of local connection can be made at any time throughout the year and must be accompanied by an application to register; these should be combined into a single application form. This cannot currently be done online via the 'register to vote' website on gov.uk and must be in hard copy.

The application also asks for other information, such as the person's name, age, nationality and National Insurance number. If they cannot provide a NI number they may be asked to provide other proof of identity.

There are different forms for each part of the UK and these are available on the [Government's website](#).¹⁵³ There is more information on registering to vote with no fixed address on the [Electoral Commission website](#).

A declaration of local connection is valid for 12 months and the elector may cancel their declaration at any time.

If a person is registered by a declaration of local connection, this does not preclude that elector from registering as an ordinary elector at a different qualifying address during the 12 months in which the declaration of local connection is effective. This may be the case if someone moves into temporary accommodation for an extended period. If this is the case, the entry on the register as a special category elector is removed and the person becomes registered as an ordinary elector.

7.3 Barriers to registration

Homeless charities, Shelter, Crisis, and St Mungo's were involved in round table discussions with the Cabinet Office as part of the Government's 'Every Voice Matters' programme.

They also highlighted that low levels of literacy among homeless people, particularly those who are street homeless, prevent them from participating in the democratic process. St Mungo's told the Government that 50% of its clients have literacy skills that are insufficient to complete an application to register to vote. Others,

Barriers that may prevent rough sleepers from registering to vote could include literacy levels and problems with accessing required documentation.

¹⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions>

because of their personal circumstances, do not have access to the required documentation.¹⁵⁴

On the electoral register of 1 December 2016, there were about 3,000 electors registered via a declaration of local connection.¹⁵⁵

The Labour Party has also urged the Government to do more. Labour's shadow minister for voter engagement, Cat Smith, wrote to the then Cabinet Office minister, Chris Skidmore, saying that the Government is "not doing enough to encourage homeless people to participate in our democracy".¹⁵⁶

Responding to a Parliamentary question from Cat Smith in January 2018, the Government said it was "considering improvements that could be made to the declaration of local connection process, including whether it can be moved online".¹⁵⁷

In 2019, the Government updated its [Democratic Engagement Plan](#). It has commissioned research to better understand the barriers to registration. In 2019 it intends to create and test targeted solutions with electoral administrators that will develop interventions for frequent movers and homeless electors to improve registration processes.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Cabinet Office, [Every Voice Matters: Building A Democracy That Works For Everyone](#), December 2017, p73

¹⁵⁵ Electoral Commission, [Electoral register data](#)

¹⁵⁶ 'Labour urges action to improve voting among UK homeless', *The Guardian*, 10 December 2017

¹⁵⁷ [PQ 124593, 1 February 2018](#)

¹⁵⁸ Cabinet Office, [Democratic Engagement: Respecting, Protecting and Promoting Our Democracy](#), January 2019

8. Sources of advice and support for rough sleepers

Local Authority Housing Teams

As discussed in Section 2 of this paper, local authorities have a duty under the homelessness legislation to provide advice and information about homelessness, and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge to anyone in their district.

Homeless UK

The [Homeless UK](http://www.homeless.org.uk) (www.homeless.org.uk) website provides information on over 9,000 services - hostels, day centres and other advice and support services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

The Pavement Magazine

[The Pavement](#) is a charity that publishes independent advice and information tailored to a homeless readership within the UK via regional magazines and a UK-wide website. It provides a directory of homeless services by region.

Shelter

[Shelter](http://www.shelter.org.uk) (www.shelter.org.uk) can provide advice and guidance on issues relating to housing and homelessness through the website, the housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444, or by visiting one of the [Shelter advice centres](#).

Citizens Advice

[Citizens Advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) (www.citizensadvice.org.uk) can provide confidential, impartial and independent advice on a range of issues including housing and applying for welfare benefits, through the website, the national advice helpline on 03444 111 444, or by visiting one of the [local Citizens Advice centres](#).

The National Domestic Violence Helpline

The [National Domestic Violence Helpline](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk) (www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk) - 0808 2000 247 - can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. The Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained female helpline support workers and volunteers.

No Recourse to Public Funds

The [No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#) (NRPF) – a network of local authorities and partner organisations – has produced [practice guidance](#) which gives an indication of the alternative sources of support which may be available where a person is unable to claim benefits or tax credits because of their immigration status. It is however aimed at local authority staff involved in assessing and supporting people who have no recourse to public funds, rather than individuals themselves. The

Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and BMENational run a [Housing Rights website](http://www.housing-rights.info) (www.housing-rights.info) which provides information and advice specifically for new migrants.

Routes Home

[Routes Home](http://www.routeshome.org.uk) (www.routeshome.org.uk), is a service to support non-UK nationals with support needs who are rough sleeping and not eligible to access services in the UK. The service is run by the charity St Mungo's and commissioned by the Greater London Authority.

Refugee Action

[Refugee Action](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk) (www.refugee-action.org.uk) can provide advice to migrants and asylum seekers through the website or by telephone on 0808 8000 630.

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