

Bath & North East Somerset

Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2019

1. Definition

Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and has seen a significant increase nationally and at a local level over the last few years. This action plan sets out how the issue will be tackled within B&NES. Since 2010, the figures used for national statistics have used this definition of rough sleeping:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).

The definition doesn't include; people in hostels or shelters, 'sofa surfers', people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or Travellers.

2. Numbers and profile of rough sleepers

In accordance with government requirements and using the definition above, B&NES Council conducts an annual survey of how many people are sleeping rough on a particular night. The figures for recent years were:

2014	27
2015	22
2016	25
2017	33
2018	20

In all but the rarest cases, all rough sleepers are known by name. In the last two Counts, only 1 person had not previously been offered services to end or alleviate their rough sleeping. All people sleeping rough included in the Counts have action plans in place to address their needs.

The highlights of the demographic information from the 2017 and 2018 Counts are:

Characteristic	2017		2018	
Gender	Male - 29	Female - 5	Male - 13	Female - 7
Under 25's	1		2	
No Local Connection	15		12	
Offered services previously	33		19	
Known at the previous year's Count	4		2	
Non-EU resident	7		0	
Ex-services	1		0	
Has accommodation but not using it	1		0	

Using this data and other, anecdotal intelligence we have identified the following trends:

- Bath and North East Somerset's rough sleeping levels have risen in common with most local authority areas. Bath city centre continues to see the largest concentration in terms of numbers,

but Midsomer Norton and suburban Bath have also seen a numerically small and intermittent but significant presence recently. Outreach has widened its service to take this into account.

- Whilst the majority of rough sleepers are men, over recent months, there are a growing number of women, most of whom have more complex needs than their male counterparts. There is very little women-only accommodation specifically for rough sleepers. The 4 female-allocated pods at Manvers Street are always fully used but their location and access to facilities is inadequate as they are shared with the male residents. Attempts have been made to create a women only house, however 5 beds is too high and most women were unable to sustain their accommodation due to male visitors and complex needs.
- Couples are increasingly complex, entrenched and challenging to house longer term. Control and coercion and domestic abuse can be factors in some relationships, made more difficult to tackle by rough sleeping.
- The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and new approaches to prevention have strengthened partnership working with key providers. Improved outcomes are being achieved for people already or at risk of sleeping rough through co-location of outreach and Housing Services at the One Stop shop in Lewis House.
- The number of under-25's sleeping rough remains low, but more work is need to understand the pathway into and out of rough sleeping for younger people in Bath & North East Somerset. Parental evictions and County Lines activities need to be factored into plans for improvement.
- Services make contact with and support almost all rough sleepers. The very few people found in the annual Count two years running suggests a good rate of engagement. We are broadly satisfied that all services are appropriate and effective, if pressured at times in terms of delivery.
- Safesleep has been effective in reducing rough sleeping. Opportunities to capitalise on this by drawing individuals away from street based lives will be taken wherever possible. Action plans for each individual will ensure that accommodation and support options are found for anyone accessing Safesleep. Exit strategies for the service's seasonal end are put in place.
- An agreed approach is needed for those few rough sleepers who, because of their complex needs, cannot be accommodated even at times when the SWEP is in operation. Whilst very few in number (less than 5 is typical), the impact for individuals and the wider community can be significant.
- Case-working by outreach workers on local waterways is identifying people known to have slept rough now occupying sometime unsuitable and/or dangerous vessels. More work is needed on their pathway to homelessness and solutions that address their needs.
- Bedding and personal possessions left behind are an ongoing issue that has become more prominent with the increase in numbers. Discussions with the Council's Street Cleansing teams, Bath BID, Housing Services and Julian House have previously resulted in an agreed approach, but this needs to be included in our responses to rough sleeping. Options for storage and access to belongings need to be looked at again.

3. Current Provision – services

The strategic approach to reducing rough sleeping is threefold:

- Immediate, emergency pathways off the streets
- Longer term, sustainable accommodation options
- Support to sustain changes and rebuild lives

Bath & North East Somerset has a range of excellent services working with people sleeping rough, contracted either directly with providers using MHCLG grant, via subcontract with Virgincare as part of the Community Services contract or through other funding streams. In addition to a range of accommodation based longer term options (Appendix 1), the following specialist services are in place at April 2019:

Service	Description	Provider
Manvers Street Hostel and Corn Street	Individual 'pods' for single homeless people, including 4 reserved for women. On-site support provided in addition to CCG-contracted GP practice. The aim is to stabilise lifestyles and enable moves into longer term accommodation. Corn Street provides move-on for people who have been able to stabilise at Manvers Street. It includes 1 room for a couple.	Julian House
Outreach	Daily street based engagement and support, including a MH clinician.	Julian House, DHI and Avon & Wilts MH team
Rapid Assessment & Reconnection Worker	Works with neighbouring local authorities and services, aiming to secure and maintain accommodation and support links and reduce people with no local connection coming into B&NES to sleep rough.	Julian House
Homelessness Prevention Worker	Works with complex need rough sleepers who have tenancies or those who are at risk of rough sleeping leading a street based lifestyle. B&NES is subject to County Lines investigations and so the post also works closely with the police to assist vulnerable people to regain control of their tenancy following cases of cuckooing which are on the increase locally.	Julian House
Women's Outreach Worker	Work with women currently or at risk of rough sleeping.	Julian House
Safesleep	20 extra dormitory beds for rough sleepers including couples. Runs November – March only. This is a winter option aiming to reduce rough sleeping in the colder months and prevent deaths on the streets.	Julian House
Hospital Discharge Service	Based at the RUH and embedded within the ED ward, provides intervention at the point of discharge to avert rough sleeping, wherever possible.	DHI
Barnabas House	Supported housing for clients who have an entrenched history of homelessness and/or who have additional needs	Julian House

Bespoke Housing First	Boat with intensive support for a particularly entrenched rough sleeper. Boat is owned by Julian House, who also provide daily support.	Julian House
Housing First	A home for life with wrap-around support to prevent loss of tenancy. Aimed at most entrenched and difficult to accommodate rough sleepers.	Partnership project – Curo/Julian House/DHI
SWEP	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. In line with government requirements, provides emergency beds during severe weather. Aims to reduce winter deaths and take the opportunity to engage rough sleepers otherwise resistant to change.	Julian House
Flexible Support Pot	Enables a range of agencies to provide sessions at the point of access to Safesleep. The aim is to provide practical and potentially statutory interventions at the point of contact; mostly out of hours.	Housing services, CAB, DHI
Rent in Advance	Provides quick access to finances for rough sleepers offered social rented accommodation at short notice.	Housing Services

In addition to the services above, Bath & North East Somerset Council, in partnership with the joint Julian House and DHI Outreach team, operates a Reconnection Policy. The full document can be read at: https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/siteimages/reconnection_policy_2016_pdf.pdf, but the main principles align with the *No Second Night Out* approach and aim to ensure that valuable accommodation, support and personal networks are not lost when someone leaves the location they have connections to. A reconnection will only ever be made where it is safe for the person to return and where they have an established connection. In 2018/19, 46 people were assisted to return to locations where they had family, friends or other support and in many cases, suitable accommodation. Reconnection is not always accepted and in 2018/19, 13 people refused to take this offer. In this situation, a 'single service offer' of support and assistance is available, meaning that a plan is identified to assist in returning the person to their previous accommodation. No reconnections are forced and they are only ever arranged where available accommodation has been confirmed. This policy continues to provide a valuable access route for rough sleepers and service providers.

The Homeless Partnership is a group of senior leaders in statutory and voluntary organisations who ensure B&NES has a strategic approach to rough sleeping and can deliver one clear message to the public and clients alike. The local Task & Targeting Group feeds into the strategic group and is made up of key frontline services and service commissioners with ad hoc input from other agencies such as Police and Probation. The group meets regularly to unlock solutions for entrenched rough sleepers. Through problem-solving and under agreed confidentiality arrangements, options are identified for known individuals.

4. Future Plans and Resources

In broad terms and given the national increase in rough sleeping, the services currently in place are delivering what is needed. The challenge for the coming years is to make sure those services are able to stay in step with demand. Funding received from MHCLG enabled improvement and extension of services and the impact was seen immediately in 2018/19. Bath & North East Somerset Council action plan for 2019/20 is as follows:

What	By Whom	By When
Repeat delivery of the Safesleep service from November 2019-March 2020.	Julian House	November 2019
Extension of the Housing First provision (currently aiming for 5 by March 2019) to provide 8 further units in 2019/20.	Curo, Julian House and DHI	March 2020
Identify gaps in current provision for women and couples at risk of rough sleeping. Agree an approach to address gaps.	Housing Services	September 2019
Develop a 'lessons learned' good practice sharing approach for the MH aspects of outreach	Housing Services, AWP, Julian House, DHI	September 2019
Continue to provide the Rapid Assessment & Reconnection Service.	Julian House	April 2019
Embed the RUH Discharge service assessment and support processes within the clinical teams.	DHI	April 2019
Agree an approach to working with rough sleepers who are categorised as having No Recourse to Public Funds.	Homelessness Partnership Core Group – Task & Finish Group	October 2019
Agree an approach to high risk rough sleepers not accommodated under SWEP	Housing Services, Julian House and DHI	September 2019
Agree a process for dealing with personal possessions and abandoned bedding at rough sleeping sites.	Housing Services, Cleansing & Parks, B&NES Council, Julian House	February 2019
Work with local prisons to identify improvements to pathways that reduce rough sleeping	Housing Services, HMP Bristol, Eastwood Park and HMP Erlestoke	April 2019

5. Monitoring our progress

We need to understand what works, what is less effective and why. To this end, we will continue to submit monthly data and bi-monthly Rough Sleeper Counts to MHCLG and to liaise with Rough Sleeping Co-ordinators on progress. We have a calendar of meetings arranged with providers to analyse all relevant data for effectiveness, emerging trends and to agree any necessary modifications to service delivery.