

## **Local Authority Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan**

Local Authority:	Wokingham Borough Council
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Total NSAP Funding Allocated (short-term immediate move on)	£204,503
Total RSI Funding Allocated	£91,350
Total Cold Weather Funding Allocated	Preparing to make bid
Total NSAP Funding Allocated (long-term capital and/or revenue for homes)	£835,500
<b>Total Rough Sleeping Funding Allocated 2020/21</b>	£926,350

## **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

What is your local area target for reducing rough sleeping during this year, and subsequent years?
Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) believes it can target a significant decrease in its annual rough sleeper return figures as a result of continued government funding. Our 2018 count was 7 and our 2019 count was 10. We expect that with continued RSI funding this figure will be reduced to no more than 5 this year, with the aim of tapering the numbers down to zero by 2027 in line with the governments aims. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we still think we can achieve this target.
Do you have a published Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy? If so, please provide a link
See link below: <a href="https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s38224/Enc.%201%20for%20Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Strategy.pdf">https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s38224/Enc.%201%20for%20Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Strategy.pdf</a>

## **Key Objectives**

### **End rough sleeping**

What is the overall plan for ending rough sleeping in your local authority?
<i>This may include, but is not limited to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Plans for continued delivery of other rough sleeping programmes (e.g. RSI, Housing First etc.),</i></li><li>• <i>Specific measures to target key vulnerable groups (care leavers, young people, those with substance misuse problems).</i></li><li>• <i>Efforts to combat flow to the streets</i></li></ul>

- *The issue of wider rough sleeping in your area*

WBC is committed to ending rough sleeping in the borough. Since incorporating the 'everyone in' policy, the council has housed a significant number of the entrenched rough sleeper population in temporary and emergency accommodation. The majority of these have not returned to the street; as of 14<sup>th</sup> November, only 8% of those housed in response to the pandemic had unplanned moves out of emergency accommodation. As a result of this, WBC has already seen a significant drop in numbers from the rough sleeper counts, from an estimated 10 rough sleepers in October 2019 to 4 in September 2020. We anticipate a further fall in numbers from this year's formal count in November as Wokingham remains committed to housing 'everyone in' from the streets.

A key factor in WBC's ability to continue to house this higher volume of rough sleepers has been NSAP short term accommodation funding including £167,098 towards nightly rate accommodation costs for those placed under everyone in.

The next steps are twofold: first, to continue working with the placed priority cohort, ensuring they do not return to the street; second, is source them permanent accommodation whilst helping them sustain their tenancies.

In order to achieve the first aim, the council will look to retain and further grow the outreach service after RSI funding ends in March 2021 by applying for RSI YR4 + funding. The proposal will be to retain the two existing outreach officer roles and recruit additional officers who can provide intensive housing support through the Housing First model and other less intensive supported lettings offerings. This will ensure those in emergency accommodation remain supported and that those who have high multiple complex needs are supported into their own housing offer.

Affordable accommodation via the private rented sector remains in short supply in Wokingham, which presents a challenge to achieving the second goal. Capital funding secured through the NSAP programme, has provided WBC with the opportunity to purchase 5 self-contained units by March 2021, which will be used to accommodate the most vulnerable of the target priority group via the Housing First model. WBC is also interested in securing additional units through CME process. Additionally, Wokingham is exploring other options to increase the amount of council owned self-contained temporary accommodation units.

As well as reducing the numbers currently on the street and in emergency accommodation, the homelessness service resolves to tackle homelessness issue upstream - to prevent problems rather than respond to them. Early intervention and prevention forms one of the four strategic priorities within Wokingham's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Examples of plans to successfully prevent homelessness include our intention to set up a Landlord Forum to establish a relationship with local PRS landlords in order to increase housing options to our homeless clients, including those rough sleeping or at imminent risk of sleeping rough. We will also develop and implement clear housing pathways for key vulnerable groups.

We also plan to rejuvenate our 'duty to refer' processes by establishing joint working protocols with appropriate agencies (e.g. social services, probation) to increase upstream prevention and reduce single applicants approaching the relief stage. This will feed into the early intervention/prevention work and presents an opportunity to maximise partnership

working in the borough. We want to deliver more than the statutory 56 days duty and expand this prevention duty to assist people at the first sign of possible homelessness.

By expanding our outreach/in-reach offer, providing next step accommodation and prioritising early intervention and prevention, we would anticipate a significant decrease in our rough sleeper numbers.

### **Entrenched Rough Sleeping Cohort (Target Priority Group/Target Thousand Group)**

How do you plan to move your long-term and repeat rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation with support?

Programmes operated by other authorities have shown that those with very high and multiple complex needs are more likely to sustain tenancies using the Housing First approach. Individuals deemed to be part of the entrenched rough sleeping cohort are currently given discretionary additional priority on our housing waiting list; however, the volume of available properties is still significantly lower than required and wait times are high. WBC aims to use NSAP funding to fully develop a Housing First scheme and ensure properties are ring-fenced for this cohort. Wokingham is also currently in the process of setting up a Housing First Forum which includes plans to work with Registered Providers.

We recognise that many of our entrenched and repeat rough sleepers require intensive housing support alongside any accommodation offer made. Funding awarded this financial year has enabled us to implement support strategies which we hope to see deliver returns in the near to medium future. The RSI funding has enabled us to commission a specialist outreach provider (Two Saints) to offer in-reach support as well as outreach work, which helps rough sleepers to become as 'tenancy ready' as possible. NSAP funding for personalised budgets will be used for a variety of purposes depending on individual circumstances, such as first weeks rent, furniture, transport, food, clothes, passports and mobile phones.

WBC has also allocated funding for a Rough Sleeper Coordinator for the next 18 months. The post holder has begun work to implement tailored housing pathways and support for individuals, manage the Two Saints Outreach/In reach contract and will establish the Housing First scheme.

The Rough Sleeper Coordinator has recently established a Target Priority Group Housing Pathway Panel. The Panel involves officers from both the operational housing needs team and the outreach service discussing the housing pathways for this cohort in depth. This is intended to ensure referrals are made to the relevant support agencies to assist in sustaining their placements and help move them into settled accommodation. This group is to be expanded to include professionals from multi agencies to offer the proper multi-disciplinary approach needed. This will lead to a multi-agency assessment panels to work with street homeless people and those housed in first stage accommodation from the streets. This panel will be focused only on those individuals with multiple or complex needs, many of whom have a long history of being excluded from services provided by various agencies in the past.

## **Shorter-term/Interim Accommodation & Immediate Support Plan**

How do you plan to move people currently in Emergency Accommodation into longer term provision to prevent a return to rough sleeping?

The temporary accommodation funding of £167,098 will contribute towards costs of placing people in temporary accommodation until the end of March 2021. Although this cohort are housed under discretionary powers, they are all under relief duty and have personal housing plans in place, led by a caseworker. The main aim during this time is to house as many of this cohort as possible within the private rented sector, where suitable.

Part of the NSAP funding included the Private Rented Access Fund which will allow us to facilitate moves into the private rented accommodation for a proportion of our cohort whom have been assessed as capable of sustaining private rented accommodation. For those with support needs, referrals to either Two Saints or another of our commissioned floating support providers, Transform Housing, can be made to help with tenancy sustainment. Two Saints is currently directed to support those housed under everybody in until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. We plan to bid for funding under RSI YR4 + to continue these posts to enable establishment of longer term relationships with the cohort. We are also looking to work further on our private rented sector offer via the aforementioned Landlord Forum.

Mediation services are under consideration for those evicted by friends or family in response to the pandemic, particularly younger people. Mediation may prove a more realistic proposition once social distancing measures are less stringent.

As outlined above, additional strategies are being considered for entrenched rough sleepers.

## **Longer-term Move-on Accommodation Plan**

How do you plan to deliver and design longer term accommodation and support options to tackle rough sleeping?

As outlined above, a key longer term initiative which has been approved is the purchase of 5 one bedroom self-contained units which will be ring-fenced for Housing First provision for the entrenched rough sleeper cohort. These will be acquired by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

In order to deliver Housing First and other supported housing offers, support is required. RSI YR3 funding has enabled Two Saints to provide this intensive support up until March 2021 and includes additional personalised budgets. From April 2021, NSAP funding will pay for 1 x FTE Housing First worker for the next three years. We also plan to develop this offer even further through future funding opportunities.

In addition to our plans to source own accommodation for housing first/supported lettings offer, we have also begun discussions with Registered Providers in the local area. We are working towards setting up a Housing First Forum to match rough sleepers with available homes and support under this model. We have received initial expressions of interest from several of our Registered Provider partners to become part of WBC's Housing First Forum and we will be developing this over the coming months. We are also exploring the possibility of piloting one or two housing first offers using our current support provision provided by Two Saints up to end of March 2021. Potential candidates for this intense housing offer have been highlighted as part of the target priority group housing panel.

For those who do not require intensive supported housing and who are unlikely to be granted priority, housing caseworkers will continue to develop personal housing plans which will include discharging into the private rented sector.

## Winter Planning

What are the current winter plans for your local authority?

*This may include*

- *How you will bring forward Covid secure accommodation this winter and what is the possible role of night shelters in your plans?*
- *How do you plan to utilise your Cold Weather Fund Allocation (if applicable)?*

In light of the risks posed by COVID-19 this winter, the night shelter (using the Seven Churches model) which ran over the winter months last year will not be in operation. Instead, Wokingham will be using the NSAP funding to enhance our current Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to a SWEP Plus scheme. Between 1st November 2020 and 31st March 2021, we will placing those who are rough sleeping over the winter into self-contained accommodation as locally as possible. We are in discussion with local night rate providers to source accommodation within Wokingham Borough rather than out of borough, which has been our offer in the past.

We will also continue with regular bi-monthly rough sleeper counts to identify any cases which have slipped under our radar. We hope to improve intelligence on this as time passes and Two Saints acquire more knowledge about the area.

The new outreach service has resulted in WBC identifying higher numbers of hidden homeless from the streets, therefore the numbers we have placed in emergency accommodation under everyone in has surpassed our expectations. This too has resulted in more SWEP placements. In light of this, we will be reviewing our numbers to see what additional resources we may require before making an application for the cold weather fund 2020/2021. We are facing an unprecedented demand on our night rate providers which has unfortunately resulted in us placing some persons out of the borough and further afield than we have before. We may therefore look for help with transport costs and additional support costs in these instances.

## **Protecting and improving the health of people sleeping rough**

The health-led response for people experiencing rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen unprecedented levels of new and multi-disciplinary working between health care, local government (public health, social care and housing), and homelessness service providers, including the voluntary and community sector. We want to ensure that this continues and that the health and care needs of your population are central in your plans for additional provision.

As part of your delivery plans you will want to consider the need for alternatives to hospital care for people with health and care needs who are rough sleeping, especially those who are considered clinically vulnerable.

Please describe how will you use this funding to ensure the health and care needs of people experiencing rough sleeping (including physical and mental ill-health, drug and alcohol needs) and are understood and met?

*This may include*

- *Proactive clinical and/or social care assessments to understand vulnerability to serious illness from Covid-19, and to inform housing, care and support decisions*
- *(Alongside accommodation) health, care and support*
  - o *To enable people to protect themselves from Covid-19 (including those who are clinically vulnerable/clinically extremely vulnerable), wherever they are currently living eg, in emergency accommodation*
  - o *For individuals who are symptomatic/test positive for Covid-19 and/or are recovering from Covid-19 (Covid-Care)*
  - o *To enable individuals to be safely discharged from hospital, provide continuity of care and safeguard (eg, specialist discharge co-ordination, 'step-down'/'intermediate care', 'patient in-reach housing support/social work' or 'out-reach' health care professionals etc)*
  - o *To prevent inappropriate attendance/admission to hospital ('step up'/'intermediate care' or other community based model eg, social care/primary care in emergency or other temporary accommodation)*
  - o *To otherwise improve outcomes for individuals whilst reducing pressures on NHS services during winter/the pandemic*

The support element of the RSI YR3 funding has paid for the in-reach service provided by Two Saints until the end of March 2021. The support they provide includes working with the cohort and relevant agencies to ensuring their health needs are met. To date, this has included helping to register applicants with GP surgeries and making referrals to local drug and alcohol services.

The temporary accommodation funding will enable the borough to continue to source self-contained accommodation for those who would previously have only been offered shared accommodation or who would not qualify for interim accommodation. This will enable the homelessness team to continue to closely follow the Covid-19 triage process as advised by government.

The NSAP long term funding is intended to be used to implement the Housing First model for rough sleeps and this support will include assistance with health provision.

In normal operating times, conversations are held between homelessness caseworks and the hospital discharge team to identify where housing services can help free up beds in hospitals. These discussions have continued since the onset of the pandemic.

In direct response to the first national lockdown, a Covid-19 Rough Sleeper Coordination Cell was established between teams across different agencies and professions to discuss the needs of this vulnerable group through the pandemic. This has enabled the council to enhance the work of our Housing Needs Team when supporting this cohort, to ensure continued joint working with colleagues and partner agencies providing mental health support, drug and alcohol support, health services etc.

Through the cell, we have also worked with our public health colleagues to secure flu vaccine priority for rough sleepers, which has been shown to reduce the risks should they contract Covid-19. Funding has been sourced through our colleagues in social care to provide these vaccines and public health are currently leading this project.

An additional initiative of the Covid-19 coordination cell was the rollout of support calls. These are calls made to all homeless applicants placed in emergency accommodation on a regular basis to make sure they are being supported throughout these difficult times. It also enables the team to monitor whether anyone is displaying Covid-19 symptoms.

Please delete as appropriate: FINAL VERSION

- *Please indicate whether this is a draft of your published LA Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan or the final version.*

FINAL VERSION