

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	10 MARCH 2021		
TITLE:	ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE REPORT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JOHN ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	Venera Hutcheson / Bryony Hall	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	Homelessness Partnerships Manager / Housing Needs Manager	E-MAIL:	Venera.hutcheson@reading.gov.uk / Bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide a summary of responses and outcomes since 'Everyone In' with regards to supporting those rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan for Reading (submitted to and published by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in November 2020.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee note the actions taken during the Covid-19 pandemic for those found sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping in the borough and the current plans to sustain the reduction in rough sleeping moving forward.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 19th March 2020, Dame Casey announced the government's 'Everyone In' approach for anyone rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. Luke Hall MP stated in his letter to all local authorities on 26th March 2020¹ that: 'wherever possible, it is now imperative that rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless are supported into appropriate accommodation by the end of the week.'
- 3.2 As instructed by both Dame Casey and Luke Hall MP, Council officers responded by making offers of emergency accommodation to anyone known to be rough sleeping

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876466/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf

and anyone considered to be at risk of rough sleeping in Reading. Immediately all shared accommodation spaces closed, including Reading's winter shelter and the Salvation Army's temporary emergency beds, and self-contained accommodation was sought for each person affected.

- 3.3 Between March and August 2020, the 'Everyone In' effort saw the Council's Housing Needs service respond in a significantly different way to the needs of those sleeping rough. This effort was unprecedented in being able to offer accommodation to anyone bedding down. The successful approach of the service in taking an early intervention approach towards preventing homelessness for families meant that there had been little reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation in recent years and as such they were able to utilise this accommodation for those found sleeping rough. In addition, contracts with a few local hotels were swiftly negotiated.
- 3.5 The 'Everyone In' response ended in Reading in August 2020. Between September and mid-December Reading's street outreach teams continued to work with those bedded down, referring them into the Homelessness Prevention Teams for health and homelessness assessment and into commissioned supported accommodation services.
- 3.6 In line with National lockdown, on 8th January 2021 the Government provided renewed advice and guidance for local authorities in respect of Covid 19 and people found rough sleeping. Whilst this guidance was not a second 'Everyone In' response, it required local authorities to ensure that everyone found rough sleeping is made an offer of safe and appropriate accommodation and that steps are taken to ensure that their health needs are assessed and that they are registered with a GP.
- 3.7 The Council's priority was, and still is, to make sure anyone rough sleeping is kept safe, that their health and wellbeing needs are being met and to ensure this group can socially distance effectively and self-isolate if they need to. This has been a holistic homelessness sector response during a health crisis. Although not always accepted, officers and commissioned services have continued to make frequent and continued offers to those bedding down and refusing an offer.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Under 'Everyone In' the response, commitment and flexibility from officers, commissioned services, the community sector and partners were extraordinary in meeting the needs of this vulnerable group. The effort ensured each person had an accommodation offer where officers liaised and negotiated with local hotel and B&B providers at a time when businesses were shutting their doors and options were starting to become limited.
- 4.2 The Council's response was more than accommodation - officers ensured that those placed received hot meals 7 days a week (supported by our Repairs and Maintenance team for delivery); that everyone had a mobile phone available to communicate and receive support (supported by phone and SIM donations from Tesco mobile); that toiletries usually used for Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) and the night shelter were re-purposed for this group and that scripts, prescriptions, clothing and laundry facilities were available for those in need. At that time, tenancy sustainment officers across several agencies were re-purposed to focus support upon people in emergency accommodation. Support was wrapped around each individual to make sure their housing, health and support needs were met during the uncertainty of the first pandemic lockdown.

- 4.3 In total, 264 unique individuals were placed into emergency accommodation under 'Everyone In' between March - August 2020². Those placed were either rough sleeping (verified bedded down) or were assessed by homelessness teams as being at risk of rough sleeping.
- 4.4 Since this mobilisation began, 130 of these individuals have been facilitated to move on through a planned route, either through supported accommodation, private rented accommodation or reconnected safely with friends and family.
- 4.5 The success of moving people on from emergency placements has been due to significant and relentless efforts from officers across Housing, most specifically those in Housing Needs. Efforts have been targeted at securing suitable placements, tenancies and landlords, or making space in supported provisions, as well as supporting people who, sometimes have had relatively unknown needs and challenging behaviours, in sustaining their tenancy once moved on.
- 4.6 Of those accommodated through 'Everyone In' 52 individuals remain in the accommodation, with a further 10 in RBC temporary accommodation. A subsequent 35 individuals have been accommodated through Winter Provision.
- 4.7 The success of this work is demonstrated by the fact that over this period only 14 individuals were ultimately evicted after all options were exhausted for them, and of those, only one person was subsequently verified to be rough sleeping - they are now replaced under winter provision.
- 4.8 Reading's annual rough sleeping estimate, determined that approximately 19 individuals were sleeping rough in Reading on a typical night in November 2020. This figure will be published alongside all other national figures.
- 4.9 Further to 'Everyone In' in response to Government advice in January 2021, with regards to Covid 19 and people found rough sleeping, the Council is making an offer of safe and appropriate accommodation to anyone found bedded down. In Reading we are calling this 'Winter Provision' which will be available until the end of March 2021. The Homelessness Prevention Teams continue to assess health and homelessness need, referring to commissioned supported accommodation and outreach support services.
- 4.10 Throughout January there have been between 2-6 people found sleeping rough in Reading on any night. Apart from a small number, who are offered accommodation, these are known individuals who, either have accommodation available but are temporarily not using it or are refusing to engage with any offer of accommodation. Our outreach services continue to work with everyone found sleeping rough to encourage them to accept or use the offer of accommodation.
- 4.12 Reading's voluntary and community sector have continued to provide Covid-safe food take-out solutions for this group, and food parcels are distributed to the most vulnerable and those needing to shield or self-isolate when symptomatic or Covid positive.
- 4.13 On 30th December each local authority received a letter from Kelly Tolhurst (then Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing) asking for all Council's to review their offer for people sleeping rough given the new Covid-19 variant, clinical vulnerability and with regards to cold weather. A review of how those being placed into emergency accommodation were having their health needs assessed showed that Reading is undertaking, and has been since March 2020, the advised Triage-Test-Cohort-Care model for those with identified clinical vulnerabilities and for symptomatic/active

² Revised figure of 260 following a review and revision of duplication

Covid cases. In March, self-contained Covid-Care options for provisions with communal facilities, where risk is highest, were introduced and have been sustained.

- 4.14 The NHS Housing Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) has been working with people found sleeping rough since the beginning of the pandemic to assess their clinical needs, arrange registration with a GP and Covid testing/interim health monitoring whilst awaiting test results/symptomatic. The HOLT nurses and St Mungo's, our commissioned outreach service, continue to prioritise this as an action for all individuals although it can be challenging due to the chaotic nature of some clients.
- 4.14 The Housing Needs Service has worked with Public Health to collate client numbers and frontline staff numbers working with this cohort and they have been factored into local area action plans in line with JCVI advice on Covid vaccination prioritisation. All Homelessness Support Services frontline staff have received priority letters to receive a vaccination.
- 4.16 The Council already funds Homelessness Support Services at £1.25m per annum to provide circa 185 council commissioned supported accommodation (including Housing First) bed spaces and rough sleeping outreach/tenancy sustainment teams delivered by partners Salvation Army, Launchpad and St Mungo's.
- 4.17 **Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) - £647k per annum (MHCLG)** - has, since 2018/19, enabled Reading to double its outreach capacity, extend and provide consistent funding for a winter shelter between January and March (during non-Covid times) and to introduce 10 'housing led' spaces to engage those with multiple needs who rough sleep. Reading has an innovative tenancy sustainment team to support out of hours. Reading has guaranteed RSI funds until June 2021 where a grant renewal application will be submitted to MHCLG to propose these interventions are continued.
- 4.18 During Covid, Reading has applied for and been awarded several shorter and longer-term grants as follows:

Grant name	Intervention	Period	Amount
Next Steps Accommodation (Short-term) Programme (NSAP) MHCLG	A range of interventions to keep people accommodated under 'Everyone In' within emergency accommodation until March 2021 and/or supported in their current or new (move-on) placements.	2020/21	£761k total
Next Steps Accommodation (Long term) Programme (RSAP) MHCLG	For the delivery of accommodation with support for complex individuals to move on from 'Everyone In'. Specifically, 40 modular units at Great Knollys Street. 10 bed provision for women with Support needs.	2020-23	£2.279 total
Cold Weather Fund & Protect Programme (Winter Provision) MHCLG	Fund for emergency accommodation during the winter targeted at people known to rough sleep repeatedly or who have not engaged with any accommodation offer since	2020/21	£180k total

	March 2020.		
Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant – Public Health led	To provide targeted substance misuse support to people sleeping rough, extending existing provision to assertively target people at risk of sleeping rough.	2021-23	£550k per annum

5. FUTURE PROVISION & PLANS

- 5.1 Future plans focus on the delivery of accommodation and interventions provided for by the successful applications to the MHCLG Next Steps funding. Most significantly the delivery of two exciting accommodation projects for those who have been sleeping rough.
- Female only provision - the development of 10 bed unit to provide accommodation and support to women with multiple or complex needs, the first occupants are moving into the property over the course of January.
 - Self-contained move on accommodation - the development of a unique project of 40 modular constructed homes at the Cattle Market to provide accommodation and support for those who have been sleeping rough. The construction of these units is due to be complete in the Spring.
- 5.2 Both accommodation projects will have 24-hour intensive support provision to help the residents to rebuild their lives, the Housing service has commissioned St Mungos to work in partnership to deliver the projects and to provide the support.
- 5.3 Reading Public Health teams have successfully bid for Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment grant funds to the amount of £550k per annum from 2021 - 2023 to provide targeted substance misuse support. This will create a dedicated team within Reading's drug and alcohol support service (CGL) to assertively target those sleeping rough/at risk of sleeping rough with substance dependence.
- 5.6 The five priorities laid out in Readings Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 remain relevant in light of the Covid pandemic and subsequent associated activity.
- (1) **Early intervention and prevention** - to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.
 - (2) **Recovery and community integration** - to ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention
 - (3) **Rapid intervention** - to intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective, and homelessness is unavoidable
 - (4) **United support and enforcement action in Reading** - to approach rough sleeping in a way that supports individuals, but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any associated anti-social behaviours
 - (5) **Provision of information and alternative ways to give** - to provide steer to our local communities in how they respond to people who are sleeping rough by providing sufficient and accessible information, support and guidance around how we collectively and individually support vulnerable people

5.7 The Council is keen not to lose the momentum, excellent partnerships and flexibility that have typified the response to rough sleeping throughout the pandemic. In November 2020 the Council submitted its Rough Sleeping Delivery plan for publication to the MHCLG, which provides an update on the overall plan to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027. Appendix 1.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The Council's response to rough sleeping during the pandemic aligns with:

- Corporate Plan priorities to protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children and to ensure access to decent housing to meet local needs
- the Council's strategic aims to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all and contributing to the community safety and health agenda

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report/response to rough sleeping and the decision making involved does not have an impact upon the Council's ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieve a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 The views and experience of Ward Councillors have been sought in the development of the Women specific provision and the Modular units. This information has been used by the Council and St Mungos to develop service practice that ensures least impact on the wider community.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this report/response to rough sleeping.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no legal implications relating directly to this information report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The budget pressure for the 20-21 financial year, after taking into account grants, is projected to be £0.760m due to increased demand on bed and breakfast, including hotel beds, as a result of the need to accommodate homeless individuals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10.2 The total Covid 19 pressure for 20-21 would have been £1.997m but for the funding received of £0.687m and Housing Benefit received for clients of £0.55m.

10.3 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner, on 8/2/21.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

APPENDIX 1 - Published Local Authority Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan

Local authority:	Reading Borough Council
------------------	-------------------------

What is your local area target for reducing rough sleeping during this year, and subsequent years?

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 stated its objective to reduce rough sleeping by half, to 15 individuals or fewer, by 2022 and to eliminate it entirely by 2027 in line with central government targets.

The pandemic has created significant uncertainty including the impact upon the socio-economic circumstances of many households that will inevitably have wider and longer-term effects upon levels of homelessness and rough sleeping. Reading has received short-term and long-term funds from Government to alleviate rough sleeping in the borough and with these funds, our strategic aim to halve numbers by 2022 and eliminate by 2027 remains.

Do you have a published Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy? If so, please provide a link

Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024
https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/11/Rough_Sleeping_Strategy_2019_-_2024_FINAL.pdf

Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s13837/APPENDIX%20B%20Homelessness%20Strategy%202020-2025.pdf>

Total NSAP Funding Allocated (short-term immediate move on)	£761,241
Total RSI Funding Allocated	£647,099
Total Cold Weather Funding Allocated	£90,000
Total RSAP Funding Allocated (long-term capital and/or revenue for homes)	£2,297,010
Total Rough Sleeping Funding Allocated 2020/21	£3,795,350

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Key Objectives

End rough sleeping

What is the overall plan for ending rough sleeping in your local authority?

Reading has a Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 which is underpinned by five priorities:

- (1) Early intervention and prevention** - to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.
- (2) Recovery and community integration** - to ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention
- (3) Rapid intervention** - to intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective, and homelessness is unavoidable
- (4) United support and enforcement action in Reading** - to approach rough sleeping in a way that supports individuals, but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any associated anti-social behaviours
- (5) Provision of information and alternative ways to give** - to provide steer to our local communities in how they respond to people who are sleeping rough by providing sufficient and accessible information, support and guidance around how we collectively and individually support vulnerable people

Ongoing commissioned services

Since 2018, Reading has spent and will continue to spend, £1.25m per annum on homelessness support services including:

- A rough sleeping outreach service
- 24/7 high need (hostel/hub) accommodation, including 18 emergency and assessment beds
- 100+ houses of multiple occupancy with support
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) for up to 20 individuals
- Floating support for cross-sector tenancy sustainment
- Housing First
- Street Support Reading information platform (<https://streetsupport.net/reading/>)

Rough Sleeping Initiative

MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding has, since 2018/19, enabled Reading to double its outreach capacity, extend and provide consistent funding for a winter shelter between January and March and to introduce 10 'housing led' spaces to engage those with multiple needs who rough sleep. Reading has two innovative tenancy sustainment teams to support out of hours and within the private rented sector. With ongoing RSI funds, Reading will continue with these provisions.

NSAP Short-term Programme

Reading's 2019 – 2024 strategic commitment has been given a welcome kick-start by the 'Everyone In' emergency response to the pandemic between March – August 2020. 261 unique individuals who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping were placed. NSAP short-term programme funds have enabled Reading to keep people accommodated within emergency accommodation until March 2021 and/or supported in their current or new (move-on) placements.

The NSAP short-term funds have provided an opportunity to work with people rough sleeping who do not have recourse to public funds to obtain EU Settled Status, reconnect internationally where desired and obtain immigration and legal advice.

RSAP Longer-term Programme

This revenue stream funding aims to break the cycle of homelessness for those long-term and repeatedly rough sleeping in Reading. These funds will provide support to 50 new units for people with multiple needs, including substance misuse, mental health and offending histories.

New to the streets

Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 outlines the borough's commitment to early intervention. New Homelessness Reduction Act legislation provides

opportunity and resource to focus upon the prevention of homelessness for single people and Reading has a team dedicated to this. Partnership working, the Duty to Refer, support and in-reach to prisons and hospitals all reduce the risk of someone becoming new to the streets. Since 'Everyone In' Reading has good intelligence on who is bedded down and some of the reasons people have been a risk of rough sleeping historically and intends to use this to inform early upstream interventions wherever possible. Reading strives towards a No Second Night Out response to rough sleeping when someone is found bedded down, supported by a strong rough sleeping outreach team and emergency bed spaces at Reading's 24/7 hub (when shared spaces can be made safely available again).

Wider rough sleeping issues in Reading

Reading's wider rough sleeping issues include:

- Migration from other local authority areas - where Reading is an attractive 'hub' in Berkshire. It offers significant community and charitable responses to meeting basic needs for those rough sleeping/vulnerably housed
- Entrenched complex and multiple needs – people may need several opportunities for change and some people do not or have never engaged with an offer of accommodation to support them off the streets
- Sustaining systemic change and flexible responses for meeting the needs of those rough sleeping across sectors and services

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?

Reading intends to capitalise upon the 'Everyone In' effort and move-on successes. Existing RSI and local authority funded services and new NSAP short-term and winter provision funding will be targeted at keeping people off the streets and sustaining their existing accommodation.

For those with high needs still occupying emergency and temporary accommodation offered during 'Everyone In', Reading's health and homelessness outreach support teams will continue to provide a wrap-around service whilst the local authority moves swiftly to implement RSAP long-term programme plans for an additional 50 units for those with multiple and high needs.

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?

Reading is using NSAP short-term programme funds to move people on from emergency and temporary accommodation by:

- Enabling access to private rented sector units with tenancies/licences negotiated for as long as possible – this includes funds for rent in advance and deposits
- Providing tenancy sustainment support whilst in emergency/temporary accommodation and through into private rented sector and settled accommodation to ensure transition and resettlement support
- Maximising options for those without recourse to exercise their Treaty rights via access to employment and to obtain EUSS to remain in the UK and obtain access to income/housing benefits and longer-term accommodation options

Longer-term Move-on Accommodation Plan

How do you plan to deliver and design longer term accommodation and support options to

tackle rough sleeping?

Reading recognises that individuals, couples and individuals/couples who own dogs who have multiple and complex needs, including substance misuse (significantly Class A drug use), mental ill-health and offending histories, are a significant need that can be met through RSAP longer-term programme revenue funds until 2024.

Reading will deliver 40 new modular units by March 2021 for those who are long-term and repeatedly rough sleeping with access to intensive 24/7 support and 10 new female specific units by December 2020. The local authority is investing approx. £2m borrowing to meet the capital costs of building the modular units. These are aimed to be longer-term supportive homes for this group.

There are several reasons that people with complex and high needs find it difficult to sustain accommodation including:

- Large, mixed gender hostel type environments which can be too chaotic for some, especially complex females and/or those with high risk/recent offending histories
- People who are vulnerable to exploitation and are unable to manage their own front door and vulnerable to county lines/cuckooing who can be targeted in some supportive or unsupported settings
- Negative associations/feelings towards prior support/client relationships which can cause a barrier in accessing existing supported accommodation provisions

By providing a female specific environment, Reading can begin to support and change lives for females who:

- Are significantly vulnerable to the cycle of trauma/abuse from childhood/adulthood – domestic abuse, sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual relationships
- Experience complexities that disproportionately affect female clients including: children taken into care; mental, physical, sexual health needs, substance misuse and sex working
- Struggle to manage their own front door where complex relationships can put independent accommodation in jeopardy
- Experience additional emotional/wellbeing complications regarding relationships with children and the stigma and shame of female homelessness e.g. feelings of failure as a mother/woman/contributor to society

In developing new provisions, there is the opportunity to change the way, and environment from which, support is delivered. Reading plans to design and deliver a place where people want to live and that they have a say in developing a community that they feel proud of.

Winter Planning

What are the current winter plans for your local authority?

All winter plans/provisions will link people to primary healthcare advice and services, utilising our Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT). Once someone has been made an offer over winter, Reading aims to prevent people returning to the streets.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

SWEP in Reading is an agreement between partners to ensure that anyone bedded down in the borough has an accommodation offer when temperatures drop to zero degrees or lower for three consecutive nights. This is a humanitarian response to save lives. Usually this would be a within a shared/communal space, but for 2020/21 this offer must be Covid secure and therefore will be offered within self-contained hotel/B&B accommodation to ensure that people can socially distance and self-isolate when required. This has been funded by the MHCLG NSAP short-term programme.

Cold Weather Fund allocation

Reading has been allocated £90,000 to provide an offer to people bedded down over the winter period. This will primarily be targeted at people who returned to the streets from their 'Everyone In' offer – some of whom will have multiple and complex needs. It will also target those new to the streets, those released from custody or hospital and those known to rough sleep repeatedly or who have not engaged with any accommodation offer since March 2020.

A substitution for the usual winter shelter will be put into place, in collaboration with FAITH Christian Group. Self-contained hotel/B&B accommodation will be provided between December 2020 – March 2021 for up to 15 individuals/couples. FAITH Christian Group will provide hot meals and targeted support for this group to ensure they maximise their opportunity to access longer-term accommodation over the three-month period.

To promote Covid safe environments and behaviours, Reading has no plans to implement a shared space winter shelter in 2020/21.

Additional need/demand over winter

With notable flow to the streets (new people found bedded down) and a number of no fixed address prison releases and hospital discharges in Reading, having a Covid-secure offer for each individual that may be found bedded down over winter will be a challenge. It is anticipated that existing and winter provisions can accommodate known individuals at this moment in time, but the uncertainty of new demand (outlined) creates a real risk of a gap in provision and not having an offer for all.

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) are understood and met?

Reading is privileged to have a dedicated Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) to work with those who are rough sleeping and vulnerably housed who do not engage with primary

healthcare services easily. During the early part of the pandemic, they were key to understanding, monitoring and meeting the needs of people vulnerable to serious illness from Covid-19. Their input and guidance will continue to inform housing, care and support decisions. They provide patient in-reach to hospital and emergency accommodation settings for both physical and mental health needs and support with testing and recovery for symptomatic and positive Covid cases.

Reading's Outbreak Plan is accompanied by a robust Homelessness Outbreak Planning Tool which provides both practical advice to officers and escalation routes where there is risk of outbreak for each homelessness setting/location - including hostels/supported accommodation, emergency accommodation (hotels and B&Bs) and HMOs where those previously rough sleeping/at risk of rough sleeping have moved on to. The planning tool includes Covid-Care routes for each setting including: an isolated annex at Reading's main hostel, a self-contained 24/7 accessible unit within Reading's temporary accommodation and provision with local emergency accommodation providers if required. Reading intends to work on a funded project for 2020/21 and 2021/22 with the Better Care Fund regarding early identification of those who do not have accommodation when admitted to hospital and to enable safe discharge from hospital for those who would otherwise be discharged to the streets.