



Delivering a partnership response to rough sleeping in Reading

Showcasing co-ordinated outreach, support and supported housing

Janine Breakspear – Launchpad Reading (Ops Manager)

Matt Farrow – Reading Borough Council (Housing)

Pete Philp – Reading Borough Council (Adult Social Care)

Nathan Birch – The Salvation Army

Tega Okena – St Mungo's (Housing First)

Verena Hutcheson – Reading Borough Council (Housing)

Wendy Dodds – St Mungo's (Outreach)

Purpose of the presentation: Why this matters

To show:

- How partners work together to support people to come off the streets and stay off the streets
- A snapshot of key services and joint working
- Real examples of impact

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 31



Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

 “Even getting a whiff that somebody is homeless... professionals need to be getting in earlier than early.”

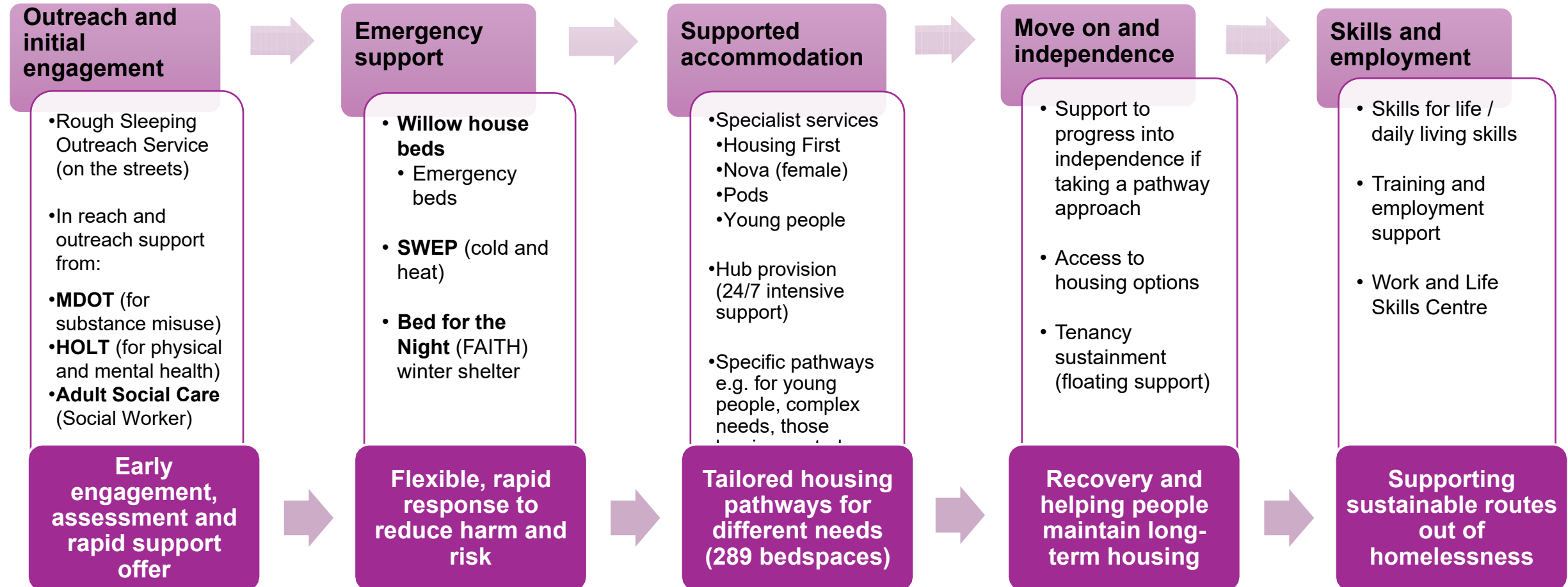
Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping

 “You can give someone a wonderful home... but that’s not enough. They need wraparound support.”

Priority 3: Make sure everyone can access safe, settled and affordable housing

 “Having a home is a basic need - even when choices are few and far between, it needs to be a place where a tenant feels respected.”

Overview: Support to those rough sleeping / at risk of it



How we work: Our shared aims

- Person centred, outcomes focused
- Shared accountability across sectors
- Focused on long-term change
- Open, daily partnership working



Coordinated partnerships in practice

Seasonal responses: SWEP and B4N

Matt Farrow

**Rough Sleeping Interventions
Coordinator at RBC**

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

What it is and why it matters:

- Immediate humanitarian response for people sleeping rough during extreme weather
- Rapid multi-agency mobilisation
- Flexible, person-centred response



Rapid, co-ordinated response

Brings together housing, outreach, accommodation and health partners to quickly identify, engage, and offer safe shelter to anyone at risk of sleeping rough during severe weather.



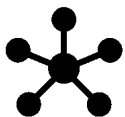
Clear access and consistent support

Defined referral routes and strong communication ensure people can access emergency accommodation quickly, including out of hours, with support in place throughout their stay.



Opportunity to engage and move forward

Creates a key opportunity to engage people who may not usually access services, supporting assessment, reconnection, and pathways into longer-term accommodation and support.



Shared responsibility across partners

Delivered through coordinated partnership working, with clear roles and information-sharing to manage risk, safeguard individuals, and respond flexibly as needs change.



SWEP: Who does what...

Homelessness Prevention Team (RBC)

- ♦ Assesses and makes SWEP placements for those at risk of rough sleeping
- ♦ Leads on statutory homelessness assessments, statutory duties and PHPs
- ♦ Works to identify alternative options before SWEP where possible

Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team (RBC)

- ♦ Year-round monitoring of Met Office forecasts and weather alerts
- ♦ Commissions and funds emergency accommodation (B&B/hotels and SWEP spaces)
- ♦ Coordinates overall SWEP response and decision-making (activation/stand-down)
- ♦ Manages placements, provider relationships, and monitoring data
- ♦ Alert statutory partners to prevent ending of accommodation during SWEP periods

The Salvation Army (Willow House)

- ♦ Provides emergency bed spaces during SWEP
- ♦ Delivers 24/7 staffed, safe indoor provision
- ♦ Supports flexible access (including late arrivals, complex needs, those with dogs)
- ♦ Works with partners to manage risk, incidents, and wellbeing of guests

SWEP: Who does what...

St Mungo's (Rough Sleeping Outreach)

- ◆ Refers people in who are rough sleeping and leads outreach engagement
 - ◆ Identifies and refers individuals into SWEP accommodation
 - ◆ Provides ongoing support during and after placements to prevent return to the streets
 - ◆ Leads reconnection and longer-term move-on planning where needed
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Launchpad Reading

- ◆ Provides personal care packs and low-facility food supplies
 - ◆ Supports access to longer-term accommodation pathways
 - ◆ Contributes to floating support and tenancy sustainment
 - ◆ Coordinates donations and practical resources
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NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT)

- ◆ Provides health advice and support for people with physical and mental health needs
 - ◆ Supports engagement with individuals less likely to access services
 - ◆ Advises on safeguarding and health risks (e.g. extreme weather, COVID)
 - ◆ Links individuals into wider health services
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SWEP: Who does what...

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

- ◆ Provides out-of-hours access to SWEP placements
 - ◆ Makes immediate emergency accommodation decisions overnight or weekends
 - ◆ Hands over cases to daytime services for follow-up support
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Substance misuse services (CGL MDOT)

- ◆ Supports individuals with substance use needs during SWEP
 - ◆ Helps manage withdrawal, prescribing, and harm reduction
 - ◆ Works alongside outreach and HOLT to stabilise individuals in placements
-

Thames Valley Police

- ◆ Supports safety, welfare checks, and incident response
 - ◆ Assists with managing risk and anti-social behaviour
 - ◆ Works in partnership on safeguarding and enforcement where necessary
-

SWEP: Who does what...

Voluntary, Faith and Community Sector

- ♦ Provide additional warming / cooling spaces (10am – 3pm) and community support
- ♦ Deliver winter night shelter during the coldest months
- ♦ Offer practical support (food, clothing, safe spaces)

Accommodation providers (Hotels and B&Bs)

- ♦ Provide self-contained emergency accommodation when needed
- ♦ Work with RBC on flexible, short-notice bookings
- ♦ Support safe placements across multiple locations
- ♦ Enable placements of couples, vulnerable females and those with complex needs

Adult Social Care / Safeguarding

- ♦ Responds to safeguarding concerns raised during SWEP
- ♦ Supports individuals with care and support needs
- ♦ Works jointly with outreach and health teams to reduce risk

An ode to heatwave SWEP...



Hot SWEP is declared – the sun's on attack,
Reading's pavements are frying like a Greggs vegan snack.
St Mungo's rolls out with a mission so grand,
"Find every rough sleeper – sunscreen in hand!"

They march like a squad with a factor-fifty plan,
Shouting, "Hydrate or evaporate – that's the rule, my man!"
They hand out cold water, they hand out cool hats,
They'd hand out a fridge if they could carry that.

So cheers to the team keeping folks safe from the burn,
While Reading pretends it's Ibiza in turn.
Hot SWEP may be chaos, but one thing is clear,
St Mungo's are legends this time of the year.

Anon – St Mungo's Client

Bed for the Night (B4N)

- Delivered by FAITH Christian Group and local churches
- Provides 20 volunteer-supported bed spaces (Jan – Mar)
- Offers a warm, safe and welcoming environment
- Seasonal winter provision focused on targeted move-on, reflecting an evolved model that reduces system pressures and risks associated with year-round shelter provision (e.g. concentration of need, client dependency, community/localised impacts, and volunteer fatigue)

Impact...

- Creates a dignified and relational environment
- Brings people indoors who may not otherwise engage and builds trust
- Supports engagement with wider services and pathways
- Reflects strong local community commitment to tackling rough sleeping

Bed for the Night (B4N)

A partnership that has developed over time with collaboration between the Council, FAITH and commissioned services strengthening over more than 10 years.

Partnership in action...

- Led by the faith sector, supported by the Council
- Works alongside outreach and commissioned services
- Volunteer based model enabling flexible, person-centred support



Partnerships delivering long-term change

Housing First

Tega Okena

Housing First Co-Ordinator at St
Mungo's

Housing First: Who does what...

Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team (RBC)	Commissions services, oversees referrals and decisions Ensures partnerships are sustained and work well together for tenancy success
Tenant Services (RBC)	Tenancy management Flexible, person-centred with a Housing Officer aligned to 'Housing First' principles
St Mungo's	Intensive support Low case loads, trauma-informed, personalised, flexible/creative, assertive, persistent
Change. Grow. Live	Outreach and engagement Substance misuse support, harm reduction, flexible/creative, assertive, persistent
Health Outreach Liaison Team	Health access and coordination - GP access, mental/physical health Improving health outcomes and reducing reliance on emergency services
Senior Social Worker	Safeguarding and care coordination Care Act duties, risk oversight, and coordinating and upskilling partner agencies
Community Safety Team (RBC)	Risk management and monitoring - minimising ASB and safeguarding risks Works with partners to ensure safe, suitable property locations

All partners share responsibility for sustaining tenancies through ongoing multi-agency meetings and agreed actions

Housing First: Helen's story

"It was tough sleeping in doorways, having people pushed on you, screaming abuse at you. It makes you depressed, suicidal – you don't have friends when you're homeless."

"It was hard to keep yourself clean – stuff got stolen. Every day was uncertain – if you were going to get sleep or feel unsafe. It makes you feel like you're nothing, when you're already in the gutter."

"Since working with Housing First – my flat's got everything, St Mungo's helped me with my housing, my debt – everything. They're great."

When asked what she is most proud of since joining Housing First, Helen said:

"Being clean off the gear, having my puppy, sorting out my debt and my mental health, I finally can deal with my mental health."



Social care and cross-sector partnerships to improve outcomes

Pete Philp

**Senior Social Worker for
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping at
RBC**

Senior Social Worker for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Coordinating complex systems

Brings together housing, health and social care to ensure accommodation decisions reflect the person's full needs

Advocacy and informed challenge

Leads professional challenge and use of legal frameworks (e.g. suitability under housing legislation, Care Act) to prevent inappropriate placements and influence outcomes

Integrated safeguarding and care

Coordinates safeguarding and care across services, encouraging positive risk taking and innovation, supporting partners and maintaining a trauma-informed approach

System leadership and partner development

Builds capacity across services by upskilling others, guiding practice, sharing expertise and strengthening coordinated responses.

Sam's story: Coordinating social care and homelessness support

Client background

- History of mental health issues, substance misuse and rough sleeping, with complex, overlapping needs
- Brain injury following assault significantly impacted cognition, mobility and independence
- Initial discharge planning focused on standard supported accommodation, not fully reflecting increased needs
- Multiple partners raised concerns, highlighting risks and the need for a more coordinated, tailored approach

Partnership intervention

- Senior Social Worker provided oversight, legal insight and cross-system coordination
- Collective advocacy ensured risks were recognised and decisions challenged
- Shift to person-centred, trauma-informed thinking, with focus on suitability over availability
- Maintained engagement despite communication barriers and disengagement risks

Outcome

- Avoided unsuitable accommodation and limited risk of homelessness / rough sleeping
- Secured appropriate, accessible bedsit with minimal support, enabling recovery

Key learning

- Joined-up, cross-sector working + shared advocacy = better, safer outcomes
- Dedicated Senior Social Worker role demonstrates the value of jointly designed roles (housing-funded and embedded within Adult Social Care) in bridging systems and improving outcomes
- Keeping the individual central, as a “fresh pair of eyes”, prevents people being lost in complex systems



John's story: Partnership working in practice

Wendy Dodds
Outreach Manager at St Mungo's

John's story: Partnership working in practice

- John was found rough sleeping by **St Mungo's** after self-referring via **StreetLink**
- Assessment identified mental health crisis, overdose attempt, and loss of private rented housing
- Fast, coordinated response across partners:
 - **NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team** and **GP** (mental health, medication)
 - **Reading Borough Council Homelessness Prevention Team** and **Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team** (housing pathway)
 - **Change Grow Live** (substance misuse support)
- Housed within 4 days by the **Salvation Army**, then progressing to **Launchpad Reading** supported accommodation within two months
- Engaged in recovery through **Launchpad Work & Life Skills Centre**, **St Mungo's Employment Service**, and volunteering,
- Now contributing via **St Mungo's Client Advisory Board**, **Shared Voice Reading** Lived Experience Forum (co-chaired by **Launchpad** and the **Council's Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team**, and towards peer involvement, while preparing for independent housing

In conclusion...

- **Partnership is essential** – no single service can do this alone
- Approach supports people **from the street to independence**
- **Focus on long-term outcomes**, not short-term fixes
- **Continued collaboration is key** – including sustained efforts in partnership development with our statutory and VCFS partners

How to find out more from partners and about their work...

- **Launchpad Reading**

Janine Breakspear janine.breakspear@launchpadreading.org.uk

- **St Mungo's**

Wendy Dodds wendy.dodds@mungos.org

Tega Okena tega.okena@mungos.org

- **The Salvation Army**

Nathan Birch nathan.birch@salvationarmy.org.uk

**Welcoming any comments or questions
to partners**