

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 JULY 2019	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	CONSULTATION FOR HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2019 - 2024 AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019 - 2024		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Reading's current Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 requires a refresh due to significant reductions in the utilisation of emergency accommodation for homeless households and significant legislative and operational changes introduced by the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* and subsequent changes to the *Homelessness Code of Guidance*. This report presents an initial review of the council's current Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 and seeks authorisation to commence a consultation exercise on three new proposed themes/priorities to underpin and develop a new Homelessness Strategy for 2019 - 2024.
- 1.2 This report presents the council's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 and seeks authority to consult with partners on the co-production of an action/delivery plan.
- 1.3 Appendices attached as follows:  
**Appendix 1** - Snapshot review of Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021  
**Appendix 2** - Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024  
**Appendix 3** - Consultation Questions for Reading's Homelessness Strategy  
**Appendix 4** - Consultation Planner for Reading's Homelessness Strategy  
**Appendix 5** - Equality Impact Assessment for Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024

## 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 *That the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to approve the commencement of a consultation exercise on proposed themes/priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024.*
- 2.2 *That the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing be authorised to approve the commencement of the consultation on and co-production of an action/delivery plan for Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024.*

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

### 3.1 Homelessness Strategy

- 3.1.1 In 2002 the Government amended homelessness legislation through the *Homelessness Act 2002* to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. In particular this legislation requires that every housing authority district reviews, formulates and publishes a homelessness strategy every five years or the local authority can choose to do this more frequently if circumstances in the district have changed.
- 3.1.2 The *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* was a significant piece of legislation that amended the *Homelessness Act 2002*. The local housing authority now has a duty to relieve and prevent homelessness where households are at risk of homelessness within 56 days. This legislation introduced a Duty to Refer upon certain public and statutory authorities who are now legally obligated to refer any household who is identified as being homeless or at risk of homelessness to the local authority.
- 3.1.3 The revised *Homelessness Code of Guidance* published in February 2018 states that in conducting a review of homelessness and in formulating a new strategy, housing authorities will need to take into account the additional duties introduced through the 2017 Act and that authorities are encouraged to take the opportunity to involve all relevant partners in developing a strategy that involves them in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness. The *Homelessness Code of Guidance* advises that the housing authority should incorporate the duty to refer into their homelessness strategy and establish effective partnerships and working arrangements with agencies to facilitate appropriate referrals.
- 3.1.4 Reading Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 set out three key themes: (1) Increase the use and accessibility of the private rented sector; (2) Prevent homelessness by supporting people to access housing and to sustain their accommodation and (3) Increase the range and accessibility of information and advice available to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing situation. Reading's current Homelessness Strategy is not due for review until 2021. However, this significant legislative change, coupled with significant reductions in the utilisation of emergency accommodation for homeless households where interventions in the previous homelessness strategy have been successfully delivered, has resulted in the need to review the borough's needs and refresh the council's strategic aims around homelessness.

### 3.2 Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 3.2.1 In 2018/19 the council was awarded £316,500 additional funding by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) under their Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to achieve the national policy commitment of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027. To comply with funding conditions to receive an amount of £335,000 in Year 2 (2019/20), the MHCLG stipulated that a Rough Sleeping Strategy be drafted and signed off by senior council officers by March 2019. Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 differs from the Homelessness Strategy in that it is not a legislative requirement; therefore it has been drafted and finalised to meet MHCLG funding requirements.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

##### *Current Position*

#### 4.1 Homelessness Strategy

- 4.1.1 Reading's current Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 requires a review due to significant reductions in the utilisation of emergency accommodation for homeless households and significant legislative and operational changes introduced by the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* and subsequent changes to the *Homelessness Code of Guidance*.

- 4.1.2 An initial review of Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 has been undertaken (Appendix 1). A full review of the borough's needs will be undertaken alongside consultation on themes/priorities to inform the development of Reading's new Homelessness Strategy.

- 4.1.3 Informal meetings have been held with internal and statutory partners including Housing Needs, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care (Brighter Futures for Children), Community Safety, Berkshire West CCG and Berkshire Health Foundation Trust to inform the initial review and proposed themes for Reading's new Homelessness Strategy.

#### 4.2 Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 4.2.1 To secure Year 2 funding for Reading's Rough Sleeping Initiative to the amount of £335,000 from the MHCLG, officers drafted and attained sign-off from senior management on a Rough Sleeping Strategy by March 2019 (Appendix 2).

##### *Options Proposed*

- 4.3 It is proposed that two separate strategies are published; one for homelessness and one for rough sleeping to ensure that each has robust aims and a focused action/delivery plan for customers that have differing needs. Separate strategies allow for a differentiation in action planning and action plan delivery, where different cohorts require different approaches from partners, sectors and services in meeting their needs.

#### 4.4 Homelessness Strategy

- 4.4.1 Further to informal meetings held in April 2019 with internal and statutory partners, the following themes/priorities have been identified for consultation:
- **Priority One** - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading
  - **Priority Two** - Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation
  - **Priority Three** - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

4.4.2 It is proposed that consultation on these themes/priorities take place over an eight week period, with a range of stakeholders, including residents across Reading Borough, customers of Housing Needs and homelessness services, internal partners in Adult Social Care, Brighter Futures, and Community Safety; the public and other external partner organisations e.g. Police, community and voluntary sector services, local businesses, Clinical Commissioning Groups, and commissioned homelessness services. The consultation would take place throughout August and September 2019. Appendix 3 provides detail on the *Consultation Questions for Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024* and Appendix 4 provides the *Consultation Planner for Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024*.

#### 4.5 Rough Sleeping Strategy

4.5.1 It is proposed that consultation takes place on the co-production of the Rough Sleeping Strategy's action/delivery plan with cross-sector partners and experts by experience.

#### *Other Options Considered*

#### 4.6 Homelessness Strategy

4.6.1 To develop and consult on a fully developed Homelessness Strategy rather than just themes at this stage; however, the council wish to provide opportunity for consultation at the initial stages of strategy development.

#### 4.7 Rough Sleeping Strategy

4.7.1 Not to consult on the development of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 action/delivery plan prior to drafting and publication; however, to secure Year 2 funding for Reading's Rough Sleeping Initiative the strategy was drafted without wider consultation with a view that cross-sector partners be consulted with fully in developing the strategy's action/delivery plan.

### 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 This proposal will contribute to the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs
- To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children

5.2 The proposed decision on this report will contribute to the council's strategic aim to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

5.3 Both the Homelessness Strategy and the Rough Sleeping Strategy contribute to the Community Safety and Health agenda.

### 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1. Initial conversations have been held with some internal and statutory stakeholders regarding the development of themes for consultation on the Homelessness Strategy.

- 6.2. This report seeks authority to consult on themes for the Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024 using the questions set out in Appendix 3. During the period that this consultation is open, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Consultation Planner (Appendix 4).
- 6.3 This report seeks authority to consult with cross-sector partners and experts by experience on the development and delivery of any resulting action plan from the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 (Appendix 2).

## 7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is relevant to the Homelessness Strategy and resulting action/delivery plan. However, where this report is seeking authority to consult on proposed priorities/themes for the Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024 the consultation exercise will inform the Equality Impact Assessment which will be published alongside the final draft documents.
- 7.3 An EIA is relevant to Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 and resulting action/delivery plan and is attached as Appendix 5. In summary, the EIA for Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy has concluded that the decision within this report will not have a differential impact on racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age or people due to their religious belief.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Under Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, it is a legal requirement for the Council to review, formulate, consult on and publish a homelessness strategy every five years or the local authority can choose to do this more frequently if circumstances in the district have changed. Section 1(5) requires the local housing authority to take their homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
- 8.2 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's *Homelessness Code of Guidance* states that an effective action plan should be developed to ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved.
- 8.3 The amended *Homelessness Code of Guidance* published in February 2018 under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 states that additional duties introduced through the 2017 Act should be incorporated into a local authority's homelessness strategy including the involvement of all relevant partners for earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness and establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements with agencies to facilitate appropriate duty to refer referrals.

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Consultation with stakeholders will be carried out mostly online and within partnership meetings, however a small number of printed materials will be required which will be funded from within the services current budget.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 None

# Appendix 1

## Snapshot review of Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021

### PRIORITY ONE

#### Increase the use and accessibility of the private rented sector

##### Our aim was to:

- Reduce the number of households in B&B and other types of emergency and temporary accommodation
- Reduce the number of households becoming homeless from private rented accommodation

##### What we achieved:

The number of households:

- In emergency accommodation (B&B) reduced from a peak of 178 in July 2016 down to 10 in March 2019
- In emergency accommodation (B&B) have been **sustained at 10 or fewer since November 2018** and no families are being placed in emergency accommodation with shared kitchen or bathroom facilities
- In temporary accommodation reduced from **315 in March 2018 down to 188 in March 2019**
- Substantial increases in the number of cases of homelessness prevented from **321 in 2017/18 to 421 in 2018/19**

##### How did we achieve this?

- ✓ **Launch of the Rent Guarantee Scheme in autumn 2015**  
Alongside the Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS), provides guaranteed rent to landlords to incentivise renting to homeless households
  - Resulted in an increase of property sign-ups and properties procured for use by families at risk of homelessness
- ✓ **Private Rented Sector Offer implemented and rolled out in Reading in 2016**
  - **Over 100 homelessness duties discharged into the private rented sector** utilising the PRSO and prevention fund payments to assist with deposits and rent in advance
- ✓ **Creative utilisation of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to prevent homelessness**  
DHP budget moved from jurisdiction of Revenues and Benefits and into the Income Recovery team in Housing
  - **110 households prevented from homelessness** using £293,819 of the budget in 2018/19
  - **129 households prevented from homelessness** using £275,237 of the budget in 2017/18
- ✓ **Improving standards of property in the private rented sector**
  - **Standardised inspections of all properties secured with homelessness prevention funds** to ensure they meet with required standards
  - **Private rented sector charter developed in 2017** to outline the council's main actions in supporting tenants, landlords, managing and letting agents to deliver a safe, healthy and thriving private rented sector
  - **Additional specialist procurement officer employed** to meet the specific needs of homeless households

### What do we need/want to carry forward to our next strategy?

- Continued and sustained reduction in homeless households placed in emergency and temporary accommodation
- Continued and sustained reduction in the number of households becoming homeless from private rented sector accommodation
- Increase supply of private sector landlords through the Rent Guarantee Scheme for families and single people to prevent use of emergency and temporary accommodation
- Continued use of DHP and the Homelessness Prevention Fund for homelessness prevention
- Continued improvement in private rented sector standards and enhance the Council's offer for landlords in Reading

### PRIORITY TWO - Prevent homelessness by supporting people to access housing and to sustain their accommodation

#### Our aim was to:

- Reduce the number of people who are newly identified sleeping rough
- Reduce the number of formerly homeless people returning to rough sleeping
- Reduce the number of households living in emergency and temporary accommodation - especially bed and breakfast
- Increase the stability of accommodation for households with additional needs
- Reduce the number of families found to be intentionally homeless

#### What we achieved:

- ✓ As per Priority One regarding households living in emergency and temporary accommodation
- ✓ Overall rough sleeping numbers found on our annual snap-shot rough sleeper count reduced from 31 in 2017 down to 25 in 2018
- ✓ Significant reduction in families found to be intentionally homeless where under new legislation prevention is successful before a formal homelessness decision is having to be reached

#### How did we achieve this?

- ✓ Introduction of newly commissioned Homelessness Support Services in September 2018 following a local and national best practice review
  - Including the provision of emergency bed spaces for a No Second Night Out response; supported accommodation for single people/couples/dog owners and tenancy sustainment support for households at risk of homelessness
- ✓ Additional funds secured from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to the amount of £316,500 for 2018/19 and £335,000 for 2019/20
  - Targeted interventions to reduce rough sleeping numbers, sustain former rough sleepers within independent accommodation and to sustain households in the private rented sector
- ✓ Improved support pathways for victims of domestic abuse
  - Sanctuary Scheme support now available through homelessness prevention funds

- Reviewed, remodelled and recommissioned refuge and Domestic Abuse outreach services
- ✓ **Duty to Refer introduced under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**
  - All statutory partners now have a duty to refer anyone at risk of homelessness within 56 days to the local housing authority since October 2018
  - Introduction and roll out of the ALERT referral system and relevant Service Level Agreements to all statutory partners, including the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies and prison for referral of households identified as at risk of homelessness
- ✓ **Develop the co-ordination and availability of services for people at risk of homelessness due to financial difficulties**
  - Landlord Liaison Officer role in post for 18 months between 2016 - 2018
  - Specialist money advisor within RGS team from 2018
  - In-house debt advice team with administration of Discretionary Housing Payments placed under this team's remit alongside payment of rent in advance/deposits and use of the Council's Prevention Fund
  - Specialist personal budgeting support for Universal Credit claimants provided by team in housing
  - Creation of the Social Inclusion Team for outreach advice and tenancy sustainment
  - Prevention team identifying charities that can provide financial assistance in crisis
  - Upskilled homelessness prevention officers in debt advice knowledge
- ✓ **Supporting Troubled Families to sustain suitable accommodation**
  - Provision of data, from housing, regarding those at risk of homelessness; in unsuitable accommodation and temporary accommodation to the Troubled Families team to enable early identification and intervention and to assist in mitigating the effects of welfare reform
- ✓ **Avoidance of use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16/17 year olds and improved support pathways for young people**
  - Joint protocol between Children's Social Care and housing reviewed and it now ensures that the council is Southwark judgement compliant
  - All emergency 16/17 year old placements are made by Children's Social Care to ensure placements are appropriate and to understand and monitor demand and need
  - Commissioning and use of YMCA crash pad to assist with ensuring that no young person aged 16-17 is placed into B&B
  - Initial needs analysis of young person provision across Housing and Children's Social Care undertaken
- ✓ **Increase in the number of additional units of temporary accommodation**
  - 28 units developed at Lowfield Road site
  - Approximately 40 properties re-purposed at Dee Park whilst properties were awaiting demolition and the area being regenerated
- ✓ **Supporting geographical mobility**
  - Support for households to move to another area via Homefinder UK, Homehunt and financial support (e.g. funding travel for viewing outside of the area)

**What do we need/want to carry forward to our next strategy?**

- Needs analysis and review of accommodation and housing support services and pathways available for young people aged 16 - 24 including those leaving care or custody
- Establish a multi-agency partnership/social inclusion partnership to genuinely co-produce and deliver on the action plan for the next homelessness strategy and rough sleeping strategy
- Explore joint working relationships with Registered Providers regarding those at risk of homelessness
- Continued improvement in support pathways for victims of domestic abuse including joint working and partnership relationships
- Continued support of the Troubled Families programme to ensure households sustain suitable accommodation and to ensure that this practice is embedded into day-to-day practice once the programme has ended

## **PRIORITY THREE - Increase the range and accessibility of information and advice available to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing situation**

### **Our aim was to:**

- Reduce the number of approaches to the Council's Housing Advice Service at the point of a housing crisis
- Fewer households living in emergency and temporary accommodation

### **What we achieved:**

- ✓ New Government data recording methods and system (HCLIC) from April 2018 has resulted in the inability to compare previous year's data; however, despite increases in approaches since April last year, those approaching/referred in crisis has remained largely the same
- ✓ As per Priority One regarding households living in emergency and temporary accommodation

### **How did we achieve this?**

- ✓ **Redesign and additional staffing resource within the Homelessness Prevention Teams**
  - Separate single and families homelessness prevention teams created to provide specialist advice and support to different households
  - Pilot of early intervention specialist team (Resolution and Enablement Team) in preparation for the Homelessness Reduction Act and embedding early upstream prevention ethos
  - Introduction of triage system and specialist frontline Housing Advice Support Team for households presenting in crisis to the council
- ✓ **Introduction of a personalised and enhanced online response for applicants to Homechoice Reading (social housing register)**
  - Introduction of online application form in September 2017 and functions to host targeted campaigns and advice on the online Homechoice website and links to out of area options and other solutions
  - Introduction of daily advertising making the system and service more accessible
- ✓ **Development and dissemination of information for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**
  - Suite of leaflets developed to inform and publicise available support and advice for households affected by or at risk of homelessness
  - Universal and rolling training programme developed and delivered for internal and external partners on the Homelessness Reduction Act, Duty to Refer, new Homelessness Support Services and eligibility training
  - Housing Needs Outreach Officer single point of contact function
  - Tailored community/voluntary sector training for trustees and volunteers
  - Targeted work and training with Brighter Futures for Children for intentionally homeless households accommodated in emergency accommodation regarding sourcing accommodation

- ✓ **Proactively contact those that we know might be at risk of homelessness (early identification and interventions)**
  - System/software procured to allow identification of households who may be affected by changes to their finances and therefore may become at risk of homelessness due to low income and/or welfare reform changes
- ✓ **Development of information for people being discharged from Prospect Park and Royal Berkshire Hospitals**
  - Discharge flowcharts and a protocol developed for staff prior to Homelessness Reduction Act and Duty to Refer being implemented
  - Duty to Refer mechanism introduced, promoted and training provided
  - Homelessness Partnership Officer based within Prospect Park Hospital teams once a week to provide support and guidance around homelessness/risk of homelessness
  - Communications piece with A&E at Royal Berkshire Hospital in reporting people at risk of homelessness or who are identified as rough sleeping
- ✓ **Work in partnership with Adult Social Care and other services to provide targeted advice for older people living in poor quality accommodation**
  - Sheltered accommodation review and new structure and services implemented in 2017/2018
- ✓ **Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 legislation**
  - Placed extra duties upon and provided extra funding to the council to prevent and relieve homelessness within 56 days including the introduction of Personalised Housing Plans to avoid housing crisis and focus upon prevention

#### **What do we need/want to carry forward to our next strategy?**

- Continue to provide training for internal and external partners on changes in legislation and support available from housing services and ensure that this training is reciprocated for mutual service understanding
- Continued development and dissemination of information for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including using existing and new online systems as mechanisms to target households with information and advice around homelessness and risks of homelessness
- Targeted advice for older people living in poor quality accommodation
- Implementation of procured system/software to enable identification and interventions for households at early risk of homelessness
- Continued work with households under-occupying social rented accommodation to enable moves
- Continued work with Prospect Park and Royal Berkshire Hospital regarding the Duty to Refer to reach beyond A&E and for homeless households to be identified as homeless at the point of admission, including the co-ordination of discharges

# Reading Borough Council

## Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024

## Appendix 2

### Cabinet Member Foreword

- Cllr John Ennis - Lead Member for Housing
- Cllr Graeme Hoskins - Lead Member for Health, Wellbeing and Sport
- Cllr Tony Jones - Lead Member for Adult Social Care
- Cllr Sophia James - Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities

[PICTURES OF MEMBERS]

## Appendix 2

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### Executive Summary

Rough sleeping is harmful and those experiencing it will likely be facing multiple disadvantage that they require support with before moving from the streets into long-term independent living. People sleep rough in Reading for various economic, local and individual reasons. This strategy explores these reasons and acknowledges that no single factor is responsible; that they are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive, neither are individuals exonerated from their own action or inaction. Many rough sleepers will experience different combinations of issues at times in their lives which result in them sleeping rough. Conversely, where there is no single reason for its cause, there is no single resolution.

Rough sleeping numbers increased year-on-year, both nationally and in Reading, between 2010 and 2017. In 2018, there was a decrease. In Reading this was by 19% from 31 down to 25; nationally this was by 2% from 4751 down to 4677. A reduction in numbers is positive, but Reading will continue to utilise Council funded outreach and accommodation services and monies successfully obtained through bids to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) *Rough Sleeping Initiative* and *Rapid Rehousing Pathway* funds.

The following principles will underpin the strategy's delivery:

- Knowing there is a long-term, sustainable option for anyone sleeping rough
- Innovation: Creative responses and making the most of existing resources
- Strategic local leadership: Accountability and cross-borough working
- Partnership working: Everyone having an important role

The strategy's key objective is 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 Council's strategic priorities around rough sleeping are:

- **Priority 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
- **Priority 2 - Recovery and community integration**  
To ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention
- **Priority 3 - Rapid intervention**  
To intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective and homelessness is unavoidable
- **Priority 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
- **Priority 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

### Reading's current rough sleeping context

#### *Why do we need a Rough Sleeping Strategy in Reading?*

We have no qualms in saying that rough sleeping is significantly harmful to people that are experiencing or have experienced it. It comes with considerable human and financial costs; the ultimate cost being loss of life. Loss of life can happen whilst living on the streets or a short or significant amount of time after someone has been accommodated having slept rough. Although there are many other contributing factors, the short and long term effects of rough sleeping on someone's life expectancy are evident.

People who are rough sleeping will likely be facing multiple disadvantages and experiencing a combination of problems alongside homelessness, including substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health; not to mention stigma, discrimination, isolation and loneliness. They often fall through the gaps in services and our universally accepted processes. This makes it harder for them to address their issues, to recover and go on to lead fulfilling lives. People who sleep rough will consistently or intermittently come in to contact with many services across housing, healthcare, criminal justice, social care, addiction, the voluntary sector and the community. The cost to public services alone is disproportionately high. This is often because services, by their very design and nature, can be inaccessible for our most disadvantaged rough sleepers; consequently they will often access services in an unplanned way and in crisis. It has been estimated that a long-term rough sleeper can cost public services as much as £16,000 a year compared to £4,600 for the average adult<sup>1</sup>. It is vital that we work across sectors to create services that can be person-centred and that are accessible and flexible in meeting the needs of our rough sleeping population. In Reading we must aim to improve outcomes for individuals but also, at a time where all partners are experiencing financial pressures, to reduce costs.

#### *What does our strategy seek to do?*

We have clear and genuine aspirations to halve rough sleeping numbers in Reading by 2022 and to eliminate it by 2027 in line with national targets. The Council cannot do this alone. It must work with its partners and those with lived experience of rough sleeping to drive forward change and align agendas and resources across our statutory, voluntary and community sectors. We will provide strategic leadership to undertake this cross-sector approach so that our partnership is committed to the principles identified in this collaborative strategy. This is also, as reflected in the national targets, a long-term endeavour that requires sustained commitment if we are to achieve our ambition of eliminating rough sleeping on our streets.

Reading's current Homelessness Strategy (2016 - 2021)<sup>2</sup> identifies the overarching strategic principles and objectives that the Council is working towards to address homelessness in a wider context. Our Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 sets out the strategic vision that Reading Borough Council and its partners will adopt to meet the needs of people who are currently rough sleeping; who are at risk of rough sleeping; and who have previously slept rough in Reading. The two strategies are inextricably linked, however, our Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan focus specifically on:

- rough sleepers finding a way off the streets into sustainable accommodation
- helping current and former rough sleepers to rebuild their lives

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417230/150325\\_Addressing\\_Complex\\_Needs\\_-\\_final\\_publication\\_amended.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417230/150325_Addressing_Complex_Needs_-_final_publication_amended.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1235/Homelessness-Strategy-2016-2021/pdf/Appendix\\_1-HOMELESSNESS\\_STRATEGY\\_2016-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1235/Homelessness-Strategy-2016-2021/pdf/Appendix_1-HOMELESSNESS_STRATEGY_2016-2021_FINAL.pdf)

## Appendix 2

- preventing people from returning to rough sleeping and sustaining change and preventing people from sleeping rough in the first place, where possible

Our Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan, which will be the backbone of delivering this strategy, will be developed collaboratively with partners.

### *What our strategy is not...*

Rough sleeping is not a crime nor, by its nature alone, is it anti-social. Within our strategy we do not assume that anyone rough sleeping is connected with anti-social behaviours or criminality such as street drinking or begging. In Reading we know that some people seen begging or engaging in anti-social behaviours and crime are not rough sleepers. We also know that a number of the people seen begging on the streets of Reading have access to accommodation. We recognise that a different, yet interlinked, strategic response is required to tackle these issues effectively. Our Rough Sleeping Strategy does not detail a strategic approach to tackling street based anti-social or criminal behaviours, including begging. However, our priorities include protecting our communities from the negative impacts of rough sleeping whilst remaining focused upon supporting rough sleepers away from the streets. Our strategy is not a Housing Strategy and again, although clearly interlinked, it does not seek to resolve the shortage of affordable housing in Reading - this is addressed through our current Homelessness Strategy and a new Housing Strategy for Reading is currently in development.

### *What legislation and national commitments are in place to support rough sleepers?*

In April 2018 our main housing legislation, the Housing Act 1996, was considerably reshaped by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017<sup>3</sup>. This has redefined how we and all local authorities should respond to people who are immediately homeless or who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. We now have increased responsibilities to prevent and relieve people's homelessness. There is also a legal duty for public bodies, such as hospitals and prisons, to refer people to the local authority's Homelessness Prevention Service when they are at risk of homelessness.

The Care Act 2014<sup>4</sup> introduced an emphasis on the need for services to work collaboratively to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The MHCLG published its own national Rough Sleeping Strategy<sup>5</sup> commitments in August 2018. This strategy has committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending rough sleeping entirely by 2027. The MHCLG have provided additional funding to local authorities under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to help realise their pledge. As a local authority and as part of a wider partnership committed to addressing rough sleeping in Reading, we are committed to working with the MHCLG in striving to achieve this.

### *What do we mean in Reading by the term "rough sleeping"?*

Within our strategy the term "rough sleeping" is used to refer to people who are sleeping or bedding down in the open air. Places where people rough sleep vary widely but can include doorways, streets, benches, parks, sheds, car parks, tents or other make-shift shelters. We acknowledge that rough sleeping is not the only form of homelessness but it is often the most obvious and distressing manifestation of homelessness that people see.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf)

## Appendix 2

The term “hidden homelessness” is often used to describe people who find themselves homeless but where they have managed to find temporary options with family, friends or acquaintances. These options can be short-lived and precarious and can be an early indication that people are rough sleeping intermittently or that they may rough sleep in the future.

Our strategy uses several other technical terms that have been defined within a glossary on page 29.

### *Why do people sleep rough and why Reading?*

People sleep rough for a variety of reasons including affordability of housing and changes to Local Housing Allowance, welfare reform and income benefit sanctions<sup>6</sup>. We note that a number of local authority areas with the highest numbers of rough sleepers nationally are in the South East<sup>7</sup>. St Mungo’s cite lack of affordable housing as a key factor for high rough sleeping numbers. Cuts to local authorities and to services covering mental health, drug and alcohol abuse can also have an impact<sup>8</sup>. Many of those sleeping rough have mental or physical health problems, or have issues with drug or alcohol use. Sometimes people face a complex mix of these factors, on top of more difficult family backgrounds than most. These issues can contribute to someone becoming homeless or it can be exacerbated or caused by it. Many people who become homeless had traumatic experiences during childhood. For some people, these experiences put them at risk from an early age. Some people say that their early experiences led them to become dependent on drugs or alcohol while still in their teens. No one factor is responsible; nor are they exhaustive or mutually exclusive, nor are we saying that individuals are not responsible for some of their own actions or inactions and the consequences that ensue. However, we are able to say that many rough sleepers will experience different combinations of these issues at times in their lives which culminate in them sleeping rough.

### *Reading as the ‘heart’ of Berkshire*

We know that Reading is a place which attracts people who are sleeping rough in the South East. Reading is a wealthy and vibrant town with one of the busiest transport hubs outside of London and many people pass through. Reading is seen as the ‘place to go to sleep rough’ in Berkshire. Rough sleepers are drawn to Reading by the prospect of obtaining illegal substances or undertaking criminal activity. This includes begging which can be lucrative in the area and which is perpetuated by the abundance and generosity of Reading residents, people travelling in to the town for leisure or work and by a strong night time economy.

### *Availability of services*

Reading, in comparison to most neighbouring Berkshire areas, provides more local authority funding towards support services to prevent and relieve homelessness for single people and couples. In addition to outreach, accommodation and support services commissioned by the Council, Reading has substantial faith and voluntary sector provision and support for rough sleepers including a day centre, regular food hand outs and handouts of other provisions. This substantial provision appeals to rough sleepers in and around Berkshire as well as further afield. It can attract and then sustain rough sleepers from other boroughs where they know they can be supported and have a hot meal. This

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/webinar-catchup/budget2015>

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/775089/Rough\\_Sleeping\\_Statistics\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775089/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6428/All-papers/pdf/161205allpapers.pdf>

## Appendix 2

means that some people sleeping rough in Reading do not have any local links here and this does limit what the Council can realistically do to prevent everyone from sleeping rough from the outset. It also makes reconnections, particularly to surrounding Berkshire boroughs, more difficult.

### *People can be unable or unwilling to secure accommodation*

There are some people rough sleeping in Reading who do not have complex support needs, but do not access accommodation for other reasons. People often find themselves in this situation because their immigration status means that they have No Recourse to Public Funds so they cannot claim Housing Benefit. Whilst they may work in informal or low paid jobs, they might choose to send the money they earn to relatives in another country rather than use it to pay for accommodation whilst in the UK. This can pose exposure to unintended risks, for example getting drawn into drug or alcohol misuse and entering a longer term cycle of exploitation, misuse and rough sleeping.

### *How many people rough sleep in Reading and how does this compare to the national picture?*

To help us identify those who are rough sleeping and enable us to respond to their needs, we commission a Rough Sleeper Outreach Service that assertively responds to referrals; undertakes flexible and varied on-the-street shifts; and who are able to visit 'hotspot' areas in Reading. The St Mungo's outreach service utilises a database that is bespoke to Reading called OPAL and they keep ongoing lists of people who have been found rough sleeping, who are known to intermittently rough sleep or who have been reported by the public or partners as rough sleeping.

Each year we are required by central government to undertake an annual count of the number of people that sleep rough in Reading on 'a typical night'. This figure is provided to the MHCLG who then compile and publish a national snapshot of this data. Since 2016 Reading have chosen to complete a physical count rather than an estimate to be able to include cross-sector partners and be as transparent as possible in our methodology and outcomes. We also monitor the effectiveness of the homelessness services we commission throughout the year.

According to latest national figures, collected in the autumn of 2018 and published in January 2019, the number of people estimated or counted as sleeping rough on a single night was 4,677. This was down by 74 people (or 2%) from the 2017 total of 4,751 and was up 2,909 people (or 165%) from the 2010 total of 1,768 when national monitoring began. Since 2017, the number of people sleeping rough increased by 146 (or 13%) in London and decreased by 220 (or 6%) in the rest of England. London accounted for 27% of the total number of people sleeping rough in England. This is up from 24% of the England total in 2017. Further analysis of 2018's figures can be accessed through the MHCLG's report *Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2018, England*<sup>9</sup>.

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/775089/Rough\\_Sleeping\\_Statistics\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775089/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018.pdf)

## Appendix 2

Figure 1: Annual national rough sleeper numbers and year-on-year % change since 2010

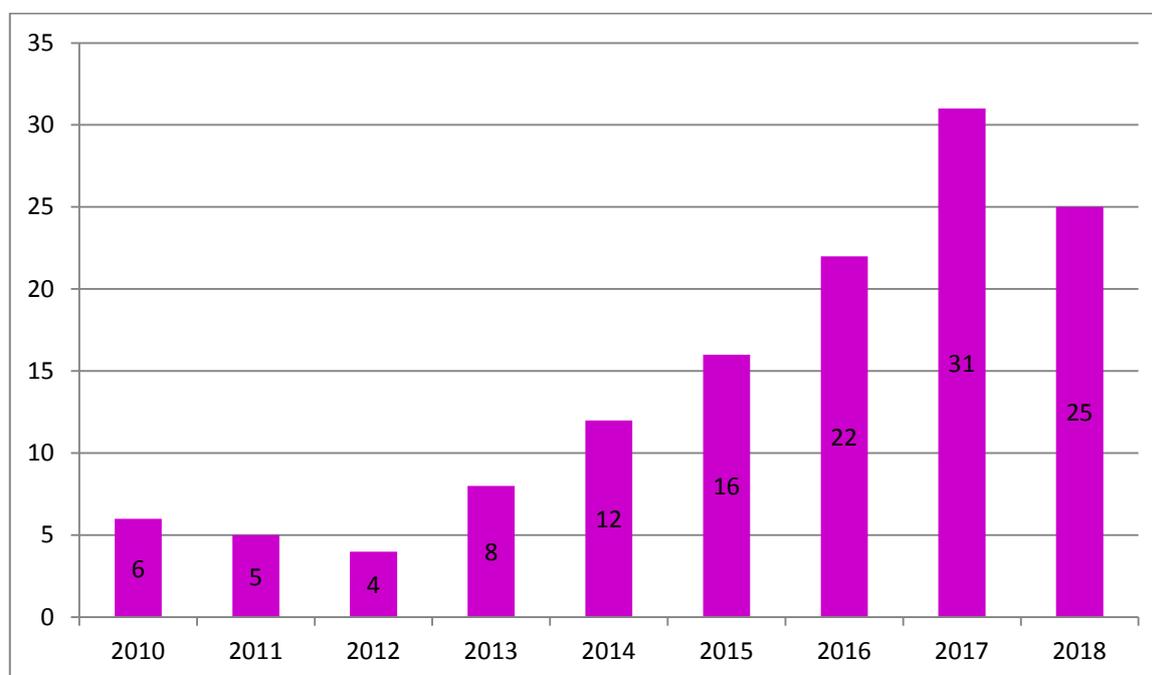
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Nationally</b>	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,139	4,751	4677
<b>Percentage change from previous year</b>	-	+23%	+6%	+5%	+14%	+30%	+16%	+15%	-2%

In alignment with the national picture, here in Reading we have seen year-on-year increases in numbers between 2010 and 2017. Our 'typical night' figure for 2018 showed a reduction from 31 down to 25 (-19%). We know that whilst a reduction in numbers is positive our overall aim, in line with the national aim, is to reduce rough sleeping to zero in Reading by 2027.

Figure 2: Reading's annual rough sleeper numbers and year-on-year % change since 2010

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Reading</b>	6	5	4	8	12	16	22	31	25
<b>Percentage change from previous year</b>	-	-17%	-20%	100%	50%	33%	38%	41%	-19%

Figure 3: Graph to show annual rough sleeper numbers for 'a typical night' in Reading since 2010



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### *How do our numbers compare with our Berkshire neighbours?*

Reading is one of three Berkshire authority areas to receive money from the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) fund. The RSI was launched in March 2018 and has been targeted at 83 local authorities with high numbers of people sleeping rough, based on 2017's rough sleeping figures. An evaluation of the RSI will be published in late 2019 to help understand the impact of the range of activities in these areas on the number of people sleeping rough. It was mandatory for all RSI funded authorities to undertake a physical, MHCLG verified count, rather than an estimate and for 2018, we compare to our neighbouring authorities as follows:

Berkshire authority	2017 submission	2018 submission	Actual number	Increase/decrease
Reading*	31	25	- 6	- 19%
West Berkshire*	20	18	- 2	- 10%
Slough*	27	29	+ 2	+ 7%
Wokingham	10	7	- 3	- 30%
Windsor and Maidenhead	11	11	No change	No change
Bracknell	6	19	+ 13	+ 217%

\* Denotes Berkshire authorities in receipt of first wave of RSI monies

### Key

Street count	
Estimate	

### *What do we know about the demography and needs of rough sleepers in Reading?*

#### *Rough sleeper count data*

By looking at trends since 2016, we can say that we have seen a slight increase in the number of women sleeping rough, from five in 2017, up to six in 2018 and that our rough sleeping population are getting older where approximately half of those found were aged 36 or over. Proportionally, those found rough sleeping without a local connection to Reading remained the same at around 3 in 10; with those without recourse to public funds at around 1 in 8 people found.

Rough sleeping has tended to move away from the town centre area and towards outer lying areas of Reading. This could be attributed to agencies in Reading beginning to address begging behaviours and abandoned belongings via a joint support and disruption approach in the immediate town centre. A small number of people were found bedded down on both the 2017 and 2018 count nights. Most of those found on both years had a cyclical experience of rough sleeping where they had held accommodation in the 12 months between counts, but had returned to rough sleeping when that accommodation had broken down.

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### *Homeless Health Needs Audit*

Rough sleepers often feel marginalised and experience mental and physical ill health. In 2017, with our statutory and community sector partners, we undertook a Homeless Health Needs Audit<sup>10</sup> with people who were single or part of a couple without dependent children, who were homeless in Reading. This included people who were rough sleeping, sofa surfing, living within supported accommodation, refuges or in emergency accommodation such as bed and breakfast.

Key findings from this snapshot showed that 80% of homeless people in Reading self-reported having a mental health problem with many stating that their homelessness was a contributing factor; that they had difficulty accessing mental health services (due to waiting times, inconsistency, and concurrent substance misuse issues); that they would rather have face-to-face support; and that specialist trauma services would be beneficial. The snapshot showed that people's top three longer-term physical health needs were (1) joint aches or problems with bones/muscles; (2) heart problems or chronic breathing problems; and (3) dental/teeth problems. 73% of respondents advised that they were misusing drugs, alcohol or both. Over half of those who told us they were misusing substances said that they were doing so as a means to cope with their mental health or past trauma in their lives.

Many of our rough sleepers in Reading have a dual diagnosis - this means that they suffer from mental health problems as well as being drug or alcohol dependent. This in turn can affect their ability and motivation to access mental health services whilst they misuse substances. Substance misuse is often linked to criminality and difficulties budgeting or maintaining an income. Most of the referrals we receive into our supported accommodation services are from prison or probation services in a planned way.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/homeless-health-needs-audit>

### What we want to achieve in Reading

Our clear overriding aim is to end rough sleeping in Reading and this must be an approach that *prevents* rough sleeping in the first place, *intervenes* rapidly for those who are new to the streets and provides creative and flexible responses that enable *recovery* and housing stability and *sustainment*.

The health and lifestyle factors of rough sleepers detailed in this strategy have a huge bearing on the services we provide - particularly for those rough sleepers who get stuck in a 'revolving door' of rough sleeping that makes recovery extremely difficult. Some people will abandon accommodation services that are available to them because it's perhaps not the right service or the right time for them to make changes in their life. We recognise that it is unacceptable for someone to keep accommodation where they are putting others at a significant risk of harm through their behaviours, but also that dealing with the issue through eviction will most likely mean a vulnerable former rough sleeper, moving to another supported accommodation unit or back to the streets. We want to stop the cycle of rough sleeping that people get stuck in where it is disheartening, creates and embeds feelings of failure within individuals and supporting staff/volunteers and is an ineffective use of our resources.

Reading has a diverse and committed community that cares deeply about homelessness and rough sleeping. This is demonstrated by the range of peer-led and volunteer-led initiatives that are already operating in the area - such as food handouts, food banks, emergency bed spaces. We hear loud and clear that individuals and groups within our community want to be involved in finding and providing solutions that end rough sleeping and homelessness. Without these groups, many more people would experience and suffer from the harm caused by rough sleeping.

As a Council, we are aware of and want to celebrate the fact that community-led groups are able to offer different types of services and more flexible approaches to supporting rough sleepers than perhaps the rules, regulations, specifications and monitoring arrangements of Council commissioned services are able to offer. Each has its place in preventing, responding to and assisting in the recovery of people who are rough sleeping. Our aim is to build upon existing partnerships and embrace the strengths and capacity of our communities and individual community members in co-producing solutions to prevent and relieve rough sleeping. We intend to work with 'experts by experience' who are people that have slept rough and experienced homelessness and accessed services in Reading. This will enable us, as a cross-sector partnership, to better understand individual customer journeys and experiences and use this learning to inform and improve our approaches and services.

Our actions across services should be a longer-term investment in individuals, not necessarily financially (although important), but in terms of creative, flexible and individual responses that consider that person's childhood and adulthood experiences and their own personal historical context that inevitably affects their current behaviours. We need to understand an individual so that services across sectors can consider and respond to those needs, whether this is unravelling traumatic experiences, addressing feelings of isolation or building resilience to avoid negative relationships and friendships. Services and their funding tend to be short-term, interventional, 'task and finish' and with an 'end-date' in mind from the outset. With the most disadvantaged people that end up rough sleeping, we need to think differently in our approach and develop a more open-ended and 'individually paced' approach to recovery. This approach should work and move with a person's 'present' situation with support available for as long as is required, without

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causing dependency; particularly when it comes to supporting with deep-seated trauma and mental health issues.

We know from experience that investment in the right services and person-centred, bespoke and innovative actions, at the right time, mean that rough sleeping does not have to be inevitable or become an entrenched behaviour. We know that the interconnected health and well-being factors that drive rough sleeping are entrenched and enduring. We know that addressing these interconnected health and well-being factors requires commitment to a genuine cross-sector approach.

We know that fully breaking down these barriers and creating fully formed and effective responses and full resolution before the end of this strategy in 2024 is highly unlikely. However, we will use this strategy to plan and explain what we *can* do to stop people rough sleeping in Reading.

### How are we going to deliver?

To be able to deliver our Rough Sleeping Strategy it is important that we establish and underpin it with some core principles. These principles are intended to provide us, the public, partners and stakeholders, with clarity on how we intend to go about delivering our five priorities.



**Knowing there is a long-term, sustainable option for anyone sleeping rough**



**Innovation: Creative responses and making the most of existing resources**



**Strategic local leadership: Accountability and cross-borough working**



**Partnership working: Everyone having an important role**

#### Knowing that there is long-term, sustainable option for anyone sleeping rough

We recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting people away from the streets is inadequate. We intend to be person-centred, in how we develop ideas and how we deliver them. We know that we have the support of our partner agencies in the belief that anyone who finds themselves sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, can make a change and create a long-term, sustainable, safer life within a home and within the community.

We are under no illusions that this will always be easily achieved and we know that it can only happen when an individual is ready to engage with the support available. However, we do know that with a bespoke combination of the right intentions, actions, support and timing people can and will get off and stay off the streets; thus benefitting that individual and the town of Reading as a whole. We need to be tenacious and not give up on people.

#### Innovation: Creative responses and making the most of existing resources

We are committed to investing in and continuing to invest in services that support people who rough sleep and who are at risk of rough sleeping. We aim to provide support and accommodation services that focus on responding to situations at the earliest opportunity and then as quickly as possible if earlier intervention is not possible.

It is important that we clarify our current financial position as a Council. We are under significant funding pressures and these will continue over the lifetime of this strategy. Therefore, strategically, we must ensure that our resources stretch further than ever before and looking towards the future, that we use our resources as innovatively as possible to support as many people as possible in rebuilding their lives away from the streets.

Our services to support rough sleepers and households at risk of homelessness were reviewed and redesigned in line with best practice. In September 2018 we launched new Homelessness Support Services including our rough sleeper outreach service, supported accommodation services and support services to enable people to sustain their tenancies. We've already seen successes in how they are being delivered and we've seen successful outcomes for people engaging with them and we want to build on these. Our services have been designed to offer support when needed, but to enable people to be less reliant on services and to live independently.

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### Strategic local leadership: Accountability and cross-borough working

The Council will take a strategic leadership role based on developing and sustaining relationships, influencing, enabling and holding to account where required, necessary and appropriate. We have a clear strategic vision and the actions set out within this strategy are what we consider to be necessary to realise our ambitions in Reading. These actions are far-reaching and will not always be within the gift or necessarily be the responsibility of the Council; however, we have committed to working with partners in identifying where each of their organisations can contribute to the aims and principles within this strategy.

Our response to rough sleeping must be across neighbouring boroughs and with local authorities further afield. Those rough sleeping are not interested in hearing about the boundaries that local authority areas set. In tackling rough sleeping, we must work with our neighbouring councils in ensuring that we are working towards realistic and appealing reconnection offers, to ensure that our supported accommodation resources are targeted at those with a local connection to Reading. There is already some effective joint working across Berkshire boroughs; however, we need to improve this and create a wider partnership that co-ordinates a joined up, communicative response to rough sleeping. This should include identifying and maximising cross-boundary funding bids and opportunities.

### Partnership working: Everyone having an important role

There is a clear imperative for working together - in working with partners across all sectors, we can identify those who are vulnerable more easily; we can provide a joined up response and avoid duplication; crucially we can ensure that people get the right help and achieve better outcomes. The Council are not and cannot be the 'all seeing eye' and gone are the days of the Council being the majority funder of services. However, we can work and *want* to work alongside partner agencies in the private, public, voluntary, community and faith sectors and with the general public in delivering new provisions and helping ensure the most effective use of existing resources. We want to have shared objectives that offer holistic and tailored support for people headed towards, or in the midst of, a homelessness crisis.

Members of the public and businesses are obviously concerned about rough sleeping and are keen to help Reading's rough sleepers. We are ready and willing to advise businesses, the public and charities on how to make a real difference to the lives of rough sleepers should they wish to do so. This will include providing information to help our partners make informed decisions about how they can help - for example through volunteering opportunities and where donations can be best utilised.

There are many groups and businesses in Reading responding to rough sleeping by distributing food, drink, clothing, tents and sleeping bags. We have no doubt that this is done with good intentions, however we do know that these kind and well-meaning gestures can have some unintended consequences. Wherever possible, we want to work with our community in exploring other and new ways to provide supportive, consistent, tailored and co-ordinated responses. We hope that this will include co-producing and meeting gaps in services that the Council do not have the resourcing, or the capacity, to fill.

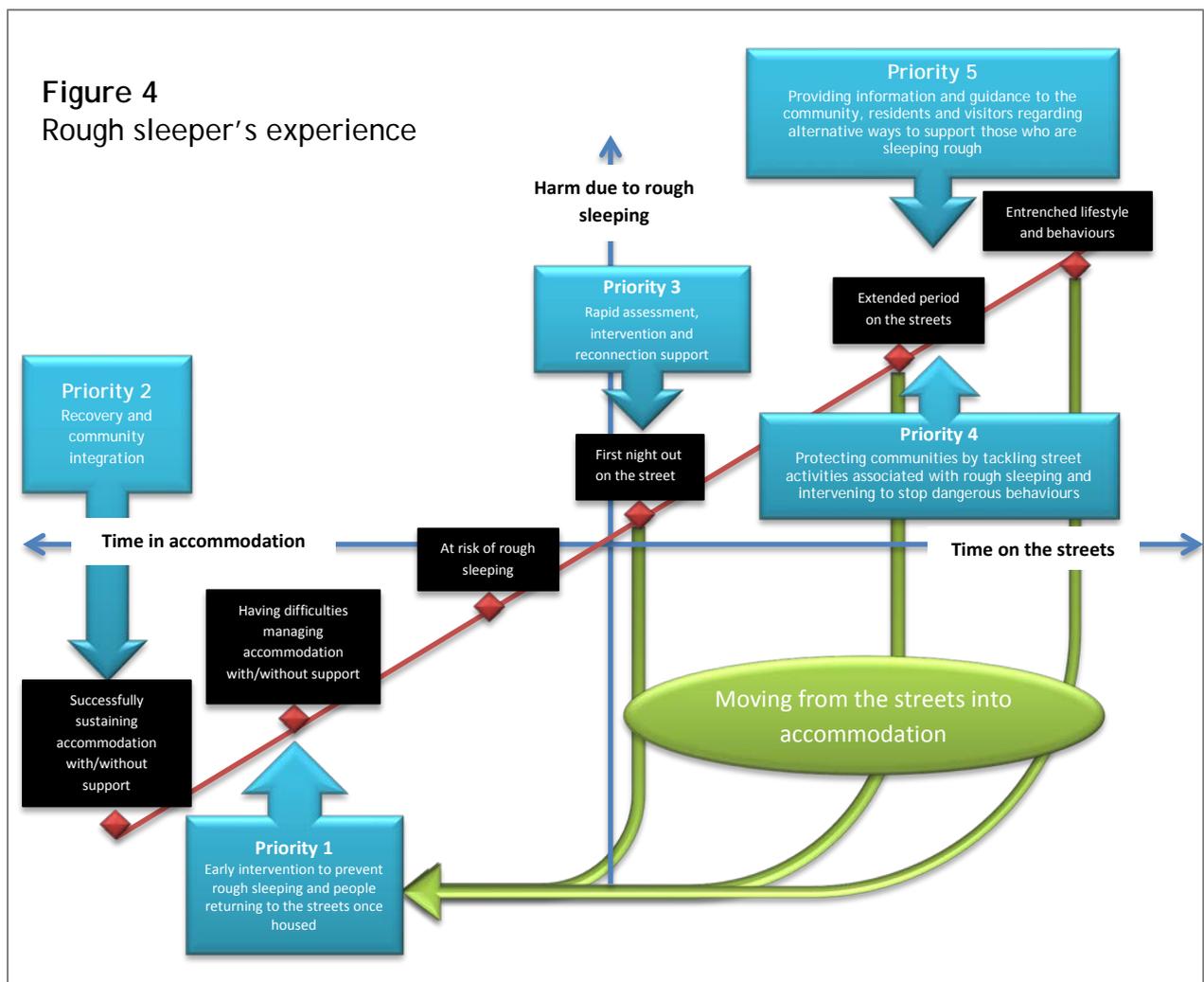
To maintain oversight, we will work with partners to introduce a dedicated cross-partner strategic group with the aim of including experts by experience, members of the public and working alongside businesses to look at additional funding opportunities around organisational social value.

## Our priorities

For anyone who sleeps rough, whether this is short or longer term, it is harmful, dangerous and can lead to more entrenched behaviours and lifestyles. The longer someone remains sleeping on the streets, the more difficult it can be for them to engage with support services; the more likely it is that substance misuse, begging and linked anti-social behaviours will impact on the community. As their needs increase, the more difficult it can be to find suitable housing and support for recovery that can sustain them within accommodation and prevent them from returning to the streets.

Figure 4 illustrates what we understand to be the journey towards entrenched rough sleeping and associated behaviours. It shows the sometimes cyclical journey of rough sleeping we have referred to previously. It pictorially shows that the longer someone has been sleeping on the streets, the higher the likelihood of harm; that the longer someone travels towards an entrenched lifestyle, the further they travel away from recovery and having the skills and desire to sustain accommodation independently and that once accommodated, former rough sleepers still need support to stop them being at risk of rough sleeping again.

We believe that our ambition to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping can be tackled through a strategy based upon five key priorities. Our intention is for our priorities and responses to have an impact at different key points in a rough sleeper's journey.



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Within the context of Figure 4, our main focus is to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles (Priorities 1 and 2). We aim to intervene as early as possible using tenancy support, recovery and a sense of belonging within a/the community whilst people are within accommodation. This priority is about stopping harmful behavioural patterns from developing/re-emerging and preventing people from being at risk of and returning to rough sleeping.

Should prevention be ineffective and homelessness unavoidable, then we will intervene rapidly at this point with wrap-around services to find an emergency housing solution (Priority 3).

Rough sleeping should be approached in a way that supports the individual but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any anti-social behaviours associated with rough sleeping (Priority 4).

Finally, we need to be strategic in the steer we give our community when it responds to people who are sleeping rough in Reading by providing sufficient and accessible information, support and guidance around how we can collectively support vulnerable people (Priority 5). This includes everyone from those supporting rough sleepers as a community-led group to singular members of the public.

### Priority 1 - Early intervention and prevention

Where possible, intervene early to prevent rough sleeping in the first place and prevent people from returning to the streets once housed

#### Overview

We recognise that the best way to tackle rough sleeping is to intervene early. We know that we cannot prevent all rough sleeping in Reading, but we can commit to supporting groups of people who can be identified as being at risk of rough sleeping (or returning to rough sleeping) and intervene earlier.

#### Our objective

We aim to:

- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of Reading to 15 or fewer, by our rough sleeper count in the autumn of 2022
- Work in partnership to prevent those discharged from hospital, prison or other institutional settings ending up on the streets of Reading
- Ensure that access to and sustainment of income benefits are not barriers to obtaining accommodation for people who are rough sleeping or vulnerable to rough sleeping through joint working with statutory partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions and our voluntary sector advice providers
- Provide tools and knowledge to the public, professionals and to partners to enable them to identify specific triggers, risk factors and causes of rough sleeping at different points in a person's journey towards rough sleeping to ensure that the right services are targeting individuals at the right time
- Improve access to social care, mental and physical health and drug/alcohol services including:
  - In-reach support and targeted surgeries for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping at the hub and across other Homelessness Support Services
  - Where possible, having flexible and innovative responses to how rough sleepers obtain and access primary healthcare services, including dental health services
  - Breaking down barriers for people who feel that their substance misuse prevents them from receiving support with their mental health
  - Peer support groups for those experiencing substance misuse
  - Early identification, notification and referral to the local housing authority, prior to hospital discharge, for rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness

#### Our current approach

In response to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in April 2018 and increased responsibilities to prevent and relieve homelessness for all households, in April 2018 we restructured our frontline response to those approaching the local authority for advice and assistance. We introduced a frontline triage team and separate Homelessness Prevention Teams for families and single people so that officers could offer specialist advice to people with differing needs. Prior to this, we piloted a team to focus on early upstream intervention where people are threatened with homelessness prior to 56 days. This team has remained and the intention is for learnt best practice to be rolled out across the wider Homelessness Prevention Teams. We have a dedicated in-house tenancy sustainment team for people at risk of homelessness who are occupying Council stock and additionally commission floating support services.

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Additionally, from October 2018, a new, easier and compulsory system has been introduced to ensure that statutory services refer all people threatened with homelessness within 56 days to the local housing authority - this is named the 'Duty to Refer' and is via a universal piece of software called ALERT. We have promoted the system widely and so far, we have seen a steady increase in the number of people being referred to us who are at risk of homelessness. In response to these referrals, we have been able work with households at an earlier opportunity and develop creative personalised housing plans that have prevented several people from becoming homeless who may have otherwise lost their accommodation. We have also developed a new suite of leaflets and information to ensure that the public and partners are aware of the new duties and how we can help.

Following a period of public and partner consultation, we remodelled support and accommodation services for people who rough sleep and households that are at risk of rough sleeping and homelessness in Reading. Collectively we refer to these as *Homelessness Support Services* and these were recommissioned from September 2018. We have introduced several elements of early intervention and prevention within these contracts to ensure that people can be identified as at risk of homelessness as early as possible; to prevent a the 'revolving door' of rough sleeping; and to sustain as many households within existing accommodation as possible in Reading.

Under new contracts, to support our early intervention and prevention approach, we commission:

- A cross-tenure floating support service including a No First Night Out response
- Three weeks of resettlement support from the street outreach team for people moving from the streets into accommodation
- Eight weeks of resettlement support for those moving on from supported accommodation into independent accommodation
- Where accommodation has been earmarked as available, provision of emergency accommodation for up to seven nights for those being released from prison to prevent cycles of rough sleeping - as agreed by our Access Panel
- Services that will develop and introduce a peer support model within their volunteering teams over the contract period for encouraging initial engagement and then building resilience and longer term positive peer relationships. We know that this is key in maintaining a lifestyle away from rough sleeping and in sustaining independent accommodation within the community

Operationally we have introduced and will continue with:

- Weekly multi-agency Access Panels to ensure that those at risk of eviction are identified and a partnership troubleshooting approach to prevention is prioritised
- Monthly multi-agency Exceptions Panel to ensure that people who are not ready to move on within commissioned time frames are given additional time with services to enable their longer-term plan and to avoid returns to the streets
- Eight assessment bed spaces within supported accommodation for up to eight weeks. These are aimed at those who are being released from prison or discharged from hospital who have a history of rough sleeping, where it is uncertain what type of accommodation might ensure they have the best chance of moving away from a cyclical rough sleeping lifestyle
- Funding a part-time post to work with the most multiply disadvantaged individuals in Reading under the nationally recognised Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) initiative which aims to break down barriers and create sustainable solutions for those people who experience repeat rough sleeping and recurring mental health, drug/alcohol misuse, offending and homelessness issues

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### Our new commitments

#### We will:

- Recognise the contribution of voluntary and community sector homelessness services in complementing commissioned services; recognising that these services will attract, support and engage with individuals that are harder for us to reach and that in turn, these services will be able to encourage engagement with pre-emptive and early intervention services. This includes developing a suitable and sustainable offer of support and accommodation for people who have No Recourse to Public Funds and those affected by Modern Slavery and exploitation
- Create a robust communication strategy and plan to include information about services available and new developments in an accessible way. Introduce a website and App in Reading that provides relevant and current information to the public, businesses, professionals and partners thus keeping them informed about services available to those rough sleeping and at risk of rough sleeping and enabling them to confidently signpost into these services
- Co-develop and co-produce an early identification/trigger toolkit for partners to assist with identifying if someone might be at risk of homelessness so that they can be referred for support and assistance at the earliest possible and identifiable point
- Roll out, provide training on and promote the Duty to Refer (ALERT) mechanism to non-statutory partners, across all sectors that come into contact with people who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping so that there is a standard and simple way for professionals and community groups to refer into the local housing authority. We want to make prevention everyone's responsibility
- Introduce a rolling training offer for our volunteer and community sector partners to ensure that they feel confident and able to signpost into appropriate services in a timely way
- Work with our voluntary and community sector partners to identify gaps in early intervention and prevention services that they might be able to create provision for
- Embed No First Night Out principles internally, throughout commissioned services and into places where the wider community may have contact with people who are sleeping or may sleep rough
- Develop opportunities for people with lived experience of rough sleeping to become involved in how we develop our early intervention and prevention response
- Develop a response that works with our neighbouring boroughs and local authorities further afield so that joint working benefits individual rough sleepers, including identifying and maximising cross-boundary funding bids and opportunities
- Work with partners to create offers of support and accommodation that can engage with individuals with a history of not engaging with services and offers

## Priority 2 - Recovery and community integration

### Overview

For someone to succeed in sustaining their accommodation we must prevent reversion to former behaviours and detrimental relationships where we know that these can lead to putting accommodation at risk. We know that people have a far higher chance of sustaining their accommodation, for the longer-term, when they are 'underpinned' by recovery and community integration including:

- the right clinical and emotional support in addressing their physical and mental wellbeing at the right time
- a network of strong, meaningful and supportive professional and personal relationships

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- feelings of purpose, including relationships in which they feel able to support others, thus creating self-worth, developing self-esteem and appropriate social networks that are positive, fulfilling and promote emotional resilience
- varied and regular, perhaps even routine, ways to occupy their time, including opportunity for employment, education, training, volunteering and being able to follow passions, interests and ambitions
- feelings of belonging and contributing to their immediate community and wider societal aims

### Our objective

#### We aim to:

- Provide a holistic approach to recovery that does not solely focus upon clinical, structured and prescriptive interventions, but upon wellbeing and purposeful and meaningful occupation of time for those affected by drug/alcohol misuse; mental health issues; criminal behaviours and/or homelessness
- Work with partners across sectors to introduce peer-to-peer and mutually beneficial relationships including befriending and mentoring to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- Focus efforts on recovery at the earliest stage possible to sustain existing life and employment skills and avoid the development of entrenched behaviours

### Our current approach

In addition to the beds we are funding in our preventative and emergency responses to rough sleeping, we also commission supported accommodation as follows:

- 34 bed spaces at Willow House for up to 12 months for people who benefit from a 24/7 supported housing environment and who are usually experiencing homelessness and one or more of the following: mental health issues; an offending history and drug and/or alcohol misuse
- 20 bed spaces at Shepton House for up to 12 months, for people who benefit from access to intensive support, but away from a hostel type environment
- 100 bed spaces for people who are working towards independence but who need a level of support before moving into accommodation of their own
- Housing First accommodation and support for up to five individuals at any one time with a specialist support worker to ensure tenancy sustainment. This offer is aimed at those people who have consistently refused to engage with traditional offers of support and/or accommodation and where previous accommodation options have been unsuccessful resulting in repeat cycle of rough sleeping. The premise is that accommodation is offered first and unconditionally; support is offered and engaged with at that individuals own pace
- Launchpad Reading offer those that use their services, access to a programme of social and educational workshops and classes to encourage meaningful occupation of time

We know that the funding and provision of short-term supported accommodation units alone is not enough to ensure that people are able to move on into and sustain a longer-term home. Our supported accommodation provides people with the skills and motivation to recover, with wrap around support and a short period of tenancy sustainment/transitional support, but once this safety net has been withdrawn it is a sense of belonging and purpose that will ensure longer term tenancy sustainment. Often when people leave support services they feel out on a limb; that their security and support network has been removed and that they have no-one to turn to - they can feel lonely and unable to cope. Our services have an 'open door' policy for people in crisis, but there is a certain shame people feel in having to re-access services they have essentially

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'succeeded' from. Our new commitments seek to provide non-stigmatised access to support through a range of approaches.

As part of new Homelessness Support Services, we have created the concept of a 'Hub' within Willow House and this will provide easy access and a 'one-stop shop' approach for rough sleepers and those accessing supported accommodation for housing advice; drug and alcohol support; health; benefits and employment and social interaction and support.

### Our new commitments

We will:

- Enhance Reading's offer for recovery that focuses on wellbeing and occupation of time by introducing, in partnership with St Mungo's and other sector services, a Recovery College learning programme, based on the principle that learning can be a transformative experience. In a supportive educational environment people will have the opportunity to sample a wide range of subjects and wellbeing activities alongside a diverse group of peer learners. This will be based on two pioneering Recovery Colleges St Mungo's have set up in Bristol and Southwark
- Continue the development of the Hub offer at Willow House to include more statutory services and the 'one-stop shop' concept. This will include developing a robust response for people with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Integrate the Recovery College concept into the wider community to ensure that those on the periphery and at risk of homelessness are not immediately labelled where they are accessing a service 'known' to be frequented by vulnerable people. The aim is to avoid the stigma that can be attached to a homeless community day centre service. This concept has been embedded within Extra Care models of support, where the community and the service are integrated and the boundary between those who have homes and those who do not, is blurred under the one provision and service aims
- Work with drug and alcohol commissioners and West Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to provide flexible and bespoke responses to those rough sleeping and at risk of rough sleeping

## Priority 3 - Rapid intervention

**When people do end up sleeping rough, provide rapid intervention and reconnection support to ensure that they are offered an appropriate and sustainable housing solution**

### Overview

We know it is inevitable that no matter how much we try to prevent rough sleeping across services, people will still find themselves sleeping rough in the borough. When people do end up on the streets it is crucial that they are signposted and supported immediately.

Early identification and speedy intervention at this point is vital. The public and professionals need to have the knowledge and tools to signpost or notify relevant supporting agencies readily available. It is important that we and our partners have the mechanisms in place to provide the public and professionals with the confidence to refer rough sleepers to appropriate services in Reading. Assertive outreach services are essential in being able to verify and offer immediate support and an accommodation offer to prevent prolonged and sustained periods of time on the streets.

Support from an outreach team must be openly available and unconditionally on offer for those rough sleeping. An offer of housing or support with drug misuse, on one day might

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be rebuffed; the next day or the next week that same offer might be accepted by that person. A refusal at one point in a rough sleeper's journey should not jeopardise their chances of being offered support at another point. We do need to be clear that each person's offer of support will be different and that those without a local connection, or without recourse to public funds, may not always be on board with their offer of reconnecting to accommodation in their borough or country of origin.

People that do not respond to offers of support at the beginning of their rough sleeping journey may require time and support from several partners to overcome their multiple disadvantages and their fundamental and interlocking problems. Ideally this would be whilst accommodated, but this is not always possible due to supply or willingness of the individual to accept an offer. Therefore we must keep partnership working at the heart of any response so that any offer of accommodation encompasses specialist and tailored support over a long period of time to help rebuild individual lives, develop connectivity and their sense of belonging and contributing to the wider community.

### Our objective

We aim to:

- Identify and verify individuals quickly and assess their needs accurately and efficiently
- Offer a personalised and sustainable route away from the streets for every rough sleeper where that offer must be based on their individual circumstances and must be regardless of their local connection or immigration status

### Our current approach

Under new contracts, to support our rapid intervention approach, we commission:

- An assertive rough sleeper outreach team out on the streets of Reading to seek out new rough sleepers; respond to referrals from partners and the public; and provide opportunities for people rough sleeping to engage with an offer of support into accommodation or with reconnection
- A *No Second Night Out* rapid response to rough sleepers by providing up to 10 emergency 'foldaway beds' at Willow House for the rough sleeping team to refer into when they find someone sleeping rough for the first time - this includes a period of up to seven days for people without a local connection or recourse to public funds
- A hub model of support at Willow House which aims to provide a 'one-stop shop' service around housing advice, health and drug and alcohol misuse for those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping

Operationally we have introduced and will continue with:

- An Access Panel that brings managers of commissioned services together to discuss new referrals into services from the streets; priorities for vacancies and any customers that require a multi-agency intervention/problem solving approach to keep them in accommodation or to consider suitable alternatives that prevent them from rough sleeping
- Robust Key Performance Indicators/Quarterly Returns for all Homelessness Support Services to monitor and review services, with our partners, to ensure that they are overcoming barriers and are able to deliver the best services for vulnerable people
- Extra provision during the winter months including the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which is a humanitarian response that provides emergency bed spaces for anyone sleeping rough in the Reading borough when temperatures drop to zero degrees or lower for three or more consecutive nights. We are constantly reviewing the weather during the winter and are able to use our discretion around

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'feels like' temperatures and wind chill factor. We work with partners to make decisions regarding when we trigger our SWEP response

- Using Rough Sleeper Outreach Service resource to refer verified rough sleepers into Reading's faith sector run 'Bed for a Night' Winter Shelter between January and March each year
- New 'follow-me' referral and assessment paperwork, co-produced with referring agencies, to create a more strength-based focus - so that people can tell their story once
- Staff in commissioned services are trained to offer gender and trauma informed support tailored to individuals and what will make 'this time' a success for them in moving from the streets into longer term and sustainable accommodation. We understand that the experience of rough sleepers can be different for each person, but particularly that women, LGBTQ+, migrants, young people and BAME may need different responses and interventions to make their longer-term plan work

For 2018/19 and 2019/20 we were successful in bidding for funds under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to provide additional support and provision to people rough sleeping in Reading. These funds have enabled us to:

- Increase the staffing capacity of the Rough Sleeper Outreach Service to enable them to work with more individuals over a more varied shift pattern including increased capacity to reconnect rough sleepers to accommodation in their area or country of origin. The team are now located at the Willow House hub to provide better interagency working
- Extend winter shelter provision for an additional month so that it now operates from the beginning of January until the end of March and provide extra staffing resource overnight
- Provide *Housing Led* emergency bed spaces so that rough sleepers who have not responded to previous offers can be offered emergency accommodation immediately and for up to six months. A dedicated support worker will intensively support them to establish a suitable and agreeable accommodation or reconnection offer to prevent them from returning to the streets
- Employ additional staff to support with seeking suitable and sustainable move-on offers from supported accommodation so that increased throughput will create vacancies for people who are rough sleeping

For 2019/20 we have been successful in obtaining funds under the MHCLG's Rapid Rehousing Pathway (Early Adopters) scheme to trial:

- 'Navigator' roles who will work intensively with a small group of rough sleepers to navigate them through to independent living. This ensures that they will have consistent support from the same organisation and support worker
- 'Out of hours' tenancy sustainment officers to work with clients who find it difficult to maintain their tenancies due to personal/social relationships or being at risk of exploitation

### Our new commitments

We will:

- Under new Homelessness Support Services' contracts ensure that each rough sleeper has a Multi-Agency Service Officer (MASO) where clients and professionals have a clear understanding of someone's incremental journey, their end goal and long-term plan for sustainable accommodation and a life away from the streets
- Ensure that commissioned Homelessness Support Services are effective through individual quarterly and overall annual review of services

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- Trial a multi-agency 'Pop-Up Hub' in Reading with a focus on making the right offer of support and accommodation to rough sleepers at the right time. The Pop-Up Hub will offer a very brief, intensive, unconditional cross-sector service in one or more central 'hot-spot' location to try and engage with harder to reach groups
- Increased and continued promotion of the national StreetLink campaign throughout the Reading borough amongst the public, businesses and partners as a mechanism to report those who are rough sleeping
- Enabling Homelessness Support Services to focus on community integration including employment, accessing relevant specialist services and health care and increasing social recovery capital
- Explore all potential funding opportunities to expand existing services or to create innovative responses for rough sleepers in Reading; whether these are local authority opportunities or enabling conversations and submissions from charitable and community sector partners
- Maximise the utilisation of the Council's quota queue for people moving straight from the streets into accommodation. This means that in certain circumstances, it is appropriate and possible for those rough sleeping to move straight into social rented properties, with resettlement support
- Work with partners to explore, establish and enable support and accommodation options for rough sleepers who have No Recourse to Public Funds
- Work with partners to create diverse support and housing solutions for rough sleepers who historically have not engaged with services and support on offer in Reading

## Priority 4 - United support and enforcement action in Reading

Protecting communities by tackling street activities associated with rough sleeping and intervening to stop dangerous behaviours

### Overview

When someone ends up sleeping rough, it is often due to complex and intertwining reasons: childhood and adult life experiences or trauma and choices made by that individual will all contribute. Rough sleeping is highly likely to exacerbate and amplify any existing needs and behaviours, including anti-social activities.

Our experience is that disruptive enforcement action, alongside and linked to, offers of support and accommodation, can help individuals concerned and drastically reduce the negative effect their anti-social activities can have on the town as a whole.

Any approach that includes enforcement should be personalised and heavily informed by support agencies involved with an individual to ensure that the two are coupled effectively in supporting them off the streets. It should be joined-up, intelligence-led, taking into account a wide range of information when deciding whether to use enforcement or not and what action would be appropriate. The relationship between the Police and other partners is key in coordinating activity and delivering these priorities. Enforcement responses should not be punitive; however, we know that there will be times that we may need to make the difficult decision to take enforcement action against anti-social activities in the interests of individuals, businesses and residents. We have a duty to balance the needs of the individual with the wider needs of the community as a whole and to responsibly assess and manage risks in that context.

### Our objective

We aim to:

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- Identify individual offending behaviour and associated risk, to enable multi-agency intervention to protect the individual, public and business community
- Provide a jointly agreed coordinated and measured response to offending behaviour
- Ensure that all intervention includes elements of supporting individuals to access services and/or an assessment of the current support they are receiving

### Our current approach

In 2018 we reviewed our approach to tackling the impact of the Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal activity linked to *some* rough sleeping leading to:

- Early identification and removal of abandoned litter and items associated with begging and rough sleeping. This included communicating the approach with known individuals and a warning system to prevent personal items being removed
- A Begging Enforcement Group utilising intelligence on offending behaviour, service engagement and current accommodation/or pathway to access provision, to inform enforcement escalation from warning letter to Criminal Behaviour Order and taking a measured approach
- Ensuring all “enforcement” officers (Police Officers, PCSOs, Town Safe Officer and Business Inclusion District Warden) include signposting to support service at every engagement with individuals
- Identifying those most at risk of returning to street homelessness due to tenancy enforcement action linked to their offending behaviour

Operationally we have introduced and will continue with:

- Our MEAM and Housing First approaches to supporting those who experience multiple disadvantage and who are highly likely to be involved in anti-social activities as well as rough sleeping
- Our Places Solution Group - a multi-agency meeting which includes a problem solving focus on tented or rough sleeping encampments across the town. This group ensures early identification of new encampments with information shared between the ASB Team and St Mungo’s street outreach team; co-ordinated responses to the removal of an encampment jointly agreed with homelessness services prior to eviction or removal of tents or other makeshift shelter and the early removal of abandoned tents and shelters
- Our People Solutions Group - a multi-agency meeting which takes a problem solving case management approach. This group ensures a co-ordinated cross-sector responses to anti-social behaviours to reduce offending behaviour of individuals with chaotic or high dependence lifestyles and that links are made with exploitation groups and Operation Stronghold to protect those at risk

### Our new commitments

We will:

- As part of our wider communications and training plan, provide less obvious internal and external frontline partners who may interact with rough sleepers, such as parks and recreation, with information to share with rough sleepers on the support that is available to them and the consequences of not engaging with offers or behaving anti-socially
- Continue to encourage Homelessness Support Services and wider partners to work with Echo Tango our CCTV operators in the town centre and to adopt the use of TownSafe Radio to improve communications and safety
- Prioritise our Community Safety and Legal responses to encampments in outer-lying areas of Reading

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- Maintain our focus on hotspot areas in the borough and ensure enforcement action is implemented where required
- Link the current enforcement and planned activity into the Community Safety Partnership priority group focused on Class A drugs, exploitation and county lines activities
- Explore the option to provide rough sleepers with a safe place/storage facilities for their belongings where they are engaging with their MASO and are awaiting accommodation

### Priority 5 - Provision of information and alternative ways to give

Providing information and guidance to the community, residents and visitors regarding alternative ways to support those who are sleeping rough

#### Overview

Reading is affluent and has an attractive shopping and social centre - we know that residents and visitors give a lot of money to those who beg on Reading's streets. Whilst begging and rough sleeping are not mutually exclusive, we do know that some people begging are not sleeping rough or that they might sleep rough whilst accommodation is open to them because they will beg until the early hours of the morning during Reading's vibrant night time economy. Students and visitors will generously give money to people directly when they perceive them as vulnerable, living on the streets and when they are told by people on the streets that there are no other options or support available to them. We feel that one of the fundamental reasons for vulnerable people and rough sleepers being attracted to, and sustained, in Reading is due to the abundant begging opportunities Reading provides.

#### Our objective

We aim to:

- Keep the public, our community groups, professionals and businesses up to date and well-informed of the vast amount of support that already exists in Reading. We need to have a strong, consistently messaged and shared strategy of communication
- Educate the public and groups outside of the homelessness sector regarding how giving to people that are begging can fuel and exacerbate entrenched lifestyles, which may or may not include rough sleeping, by funding drug and alcohol misuse
- Channel our cross-sector energies and resources in the same direction to develop and implement a co-produced alternative means for people to direct their good will and donations that does not perpetuate rough sleeping, anti-social or begging behaviours in Reading

#### Our current approach

Across agencies we need to work together to effectively and widely promote and communicate the type and level of support that is offered as a collective in Reading to those who are rough sleeping. We know there are several groups offering a lot of support - each group, charity or organisation will promote itself very well through local press, their own websites and own social media platforms, however, there is a need for all of this information to be collated, updated, publicised and promoted in one place. We live in a society that wants easily accessible and understandable information. We have the services in Reading that support rough sleepers; we need to tell the public, businesses and all our relevant partners about them.

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In 2016/17 we created a cross-sector/partnership Homelessness Forum in Reading and as a result we shared resourcing and undertook our first Homeless Health Needs Audit in early 2017. However, this Forum lost its strategic and operational path which can be typical where there is no strategy to underpin its aims and direction. We need to develop a new partnership approach with the input, guidance and support of our homelessness sector partners.

### Our new commitments

- Create a truly multi-agency, cross-sector homelessness partnership/social inclusion forum to steer and take ownership of this Rough Sleeping Strategy and subsequently co-developed Action Plan
- Develop an all-encompassing information platform including a website and an App that can provide rough sleepers, those at risk of rough sleeping, the public, businesses, professionals, students and partners with easy access to information about what support is available to those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping - this will include a campaign that educates about the negative impact of giving money to those who are begging. This commitment must make better use of social media and more informal channels of communication
- Develop an Alternative Giving campaign to sit alongside the provision of information and guidance that would direct people towards opportunities to donate their time or money to charities and community-led projects operating in Reading with those who are homeless. Any proceeds from this campaign would be directed back into all other strategic priorities and invested in those individuals directly affected by rough sleeping

### GLOSSARY

**Access Panel:** a weekly multi-agency meeting chaired and administered by the Council to review new referrals made for supported accommodation and floating support services and to discuss preventative options for people at risk of homelessness.

**ALERT:** a tool provided to all local authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. It supports partnership working by providing a secure and easy to use platform for making referrals and notifications under the *Duty to Refer*.

**BAME:** a term used to refer to members of non-White communities in the UK which stands for black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

**Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG):** were created following the Health and Social Care Act in 2012 and replaced Primary Care Trusts on 1 April 2013. They are clinically-led statutory National Health Service bodies responsible for the planning and commissioning of health care services for their local area.

**Complex trauma:** may be diagnosed in adults and children who have repeatedly experienced traumatic events, such as violence, neglect or abuse.

**Dual diagnosis:** a term used to describe patients with both severe mental illness and problematic substance misuse.

**Duty to Refer:** a legal obligation on certain public/statutory bodies to notify the local housing authority under 213B of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 of anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**Early Upstream Intervention:** an approach addressing contributing risk factors and circumstances that indicate that an individual *may* end up at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping and initiating support and professional involvement as soon as possible. This may involve working with groups that are known to have these risk factors, who may not currently be at risk of rough sleeping presently, but where certain characteristics and/or lifestyle choices suggest that they could be, and carrying out prevention and education with them to prevent risk from developing.

**Emergency accommodation:** in the context of this strategy this means temporary 'fold-out' bed spaces and Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) bed spaces or placements. They are used as part of a *No Second Night Out* response in Reading, located within the Hub at Willow House, to accommodate rough sleepers. Reading's Rough Sleeper Outreach Service determines who can access them, where verification and local connection/reconnection engagement criteria apply.

**European Economic Area (EEA) National:** someone who is a citizen of one of the countries in the European Economic Area, which includes EU countries and also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

**Exceptions Panel:** a monthly panel in which managers that provide accommodation based services, commissioned by RBC, discuss barriers to individuals moving on from their services within their contracted timeframes. A solution focused approach is taken in enabling move on and includes developing and reviewing action plans for clients; considering how to overcome move-on barriers and how professionals can be flexible in meeting the needs of individuals to enable a sustainable move-on.

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**Experts by Experience:** people with first-hand experience of rough sleeping and/or homelessness who are able to shape and inform the change and development of services and strategy for rough sleepers and homeless people.

**Gender informed:** considering the experiences, issues and support needs of homeless people specific to their gender and embedding these considerations into practice and methods when delivering support to clients.

**Health and Wellbeing Board:** the forum administered by the Council bringing together key leaders from the health and care system work to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities.

**Homeless Health Needs Audit:** a review, using questionnaires and focus groups, undertaken by groups with an interest in homeless health, including those who have responsibility for improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

**Homelessness:** a broad term which includes people who live in unsuitable housing, don't have rights to stay where they are, or are rough sleeping.

**Hidden homelessness:** a term used to refer to people who would meet the legal definition of homeless if they were to make a formal application, but are not represented in the local authority homeless statistics.

**Homelessness Support Services:** the collective name for services commissioned by Housing Needs in Reading to support households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and that includes the following contracts: Rough Sleeper Outreach Service; Floating support service for early intervention, prevention and tenancy sustainment; Intensive and engaging support: Hub and accommodation service and Working towards Independence accommodation service.

**Hotspot area:** an area where rough sleeping is known to happen frequently and/or where lots of people are known to rough sleep in one specific location.

**Housing Benefit:** can help people pay their rent if they are unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits. This is being replaced by Universal Credit.

**Housing First:** an evidence-based approach to successfully supporting homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes. The overall philosophy is to provide a stable, independent home and intensive personalised support and case management to homeless people with multiple and complex needs. Housing is seen as a human right where there are no conditions around 'housing readiness' before providing someone with a home. Secure housing is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues can be addressed. Housing is provided 'first' as a matter of right, rather than 'last' or as a reward.

**LGBTQ+:** often used to refer to all of the communities of people who identify themselves by this term. Each letter represents the following: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning) - the + encompasses all other terms that people may wish to be identified as in terms of their sexuality.

**Lived experience:** a representation of the experiences and choices of a given person and the knowledge that they gain/have gained from these experiences and choices.

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**Local Housing Allowance (LHA):** are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates relate to the area in which you make your claim.

**Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM):** means a coalition of three national charities (Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind) which formed to influence policy and services for adults facing multiple needs and exclusions.

**Market rents:** the amount of rent that can be expected for the use of a property, in comparison with similar properties in the same area.

**Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG):** (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) is a central government department whose job it is to create great places to live and work and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.

**Multi-Agency Service Offer (MASO):** means a clear overall plan made, in conjunction with clients and the support of providers, which works towards an end accommodation goal. All partners and sectors are made aware of this plan and support the individual to achieve this. The plan may not be to access accommodation in Reading and rather might be to reconnect an individual to their borough or country of origin.

**Multiple disadvantage:** the experience of a combination of problems including homelessness, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health.

**No First Night Out:** a project working across some local authorities which seeks new approaches to prevent individuals from sleeping rough for the first time.

**No Recourse to Public Funds:** an immigration condition restricting access to public funds, including many mainstream benefits such as welfare and housing.

**No Second Night Out:** means a pledge made within a borough, across agencies, sectors and services, which states that no one who is new to the streets should spend a second night out; no one should make their home on the streets and no one should return to the streets once they have been helped off them.

**OPAL:** is a complete client relationship and service management system for housing and homelessness organisations to use for client contact monitoring and reporting. This includes production of an on-going list of open and on-going referrals for those individuals who have been found rough sleeping, who are known to intermittently rough sleep or who have been reported by the public or partners as rough sleeping.

**Personalised housing plans:** an outline of the steps to be taken to prevent or relieve a person's homelessness where they are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are eligible. The 'plan' should be drawn up by the local housing authority as part of its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It should be based on its assessment of her/his needs and include agreement on the steps to be taken by the individual, the local authority and any other parties involved in supporting that individual.

**Personality disorder:** a diagnosed condition in which an individual differs significantly from an average person, in terms of how they think, perceive, feel or relate to others.

**Pop-Up Hub:** provide rapid identification and multi-agency intervention to tackle rough sleeping by providing short bursts of intensive activity, targeting known hot spots and

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offering a rapid intervention for chaotic and excluded people who find it hard to access mainstream services. Usually a hub will link to a town's *No Second Night Out* response.

**Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE):** means an approach which is intended to help staff and services to be able to work more creatively and constructively with clients who are experiencing multiple disadvantage. Services that have developed a psychologically aware approach recognise that clients experiencing multiple disadvantage have certain support needs, often arising from earlier trauma and abuse. As part of this approach, they work within a broadly therapeutic framework, taking into account and responding to an individual's emotional and psychological wellbeing, enabling them to develop clear and suitably consistent responses.

**Quota Queue:** additional priority given to certain groups in housing need, from different social care groups, within the council's Allocations Scheme<sup>11</sup>. The number of individual quotas for each queue is calculated on an annual basis. Single homeless people, including rough sleepers where there are no specific support needs and people moving on from Homelessness Support Services are one of these different community and quota queue groups that can be afforded this priority. A panel determines which individuals are included in this quota.

**Reconnection:** the process by which people sleeping rough, who have links with 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.

**Rough sleeping:** a term which refers to people who are sleeping or bedding down in the open air, in places such as streets, doorways, parks, benches or bus shelters, or even in sheds, car parks or tents.

**Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP):** means the protocol which is implemented during times of severe weather, which at the least will be when the Met Office forecasts three nights or more with a minimum temperature of 0°C or below. The Protocol will also be considered in other periods of severe weather and factors such as snowfall and wind chill will be taken into account. During this period anyone who would otherwise have to sleep rough is offered an emergency bed in the communal areas of supported accommodation buildings. The Reading Protocol is agreed annually and with regard to Homeless Link's guidance at <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/guidance-on-severe-weather-emergency-protocol-swep-and-extended-weather-provision>.

**Sofa surfing:** an informal term that describes the practice of a homeless people staying temporarily with various friends and relatives while attempting to find permanent accommodation.

**Street counts:** one of the means of monitoring rough sleeping by counting all the rough sleepers in Reading on a 'typical' night.

**StreetLink:** a national referral service for the public to connect people sleeping rough with local services.

**Supported accommodation:** accommodation commissioned by the council that provides specialist support (to varying degrees) to former rough sleepers and other vulnerable people.

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4427/Allocations-Scheme/pdf/Final\\_ALLOCATION\\_SCHEME\\_January\\_2016\\_Draft.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4427/Allocations-Scheme/pdf/Final_ALLOCATION_SCHEME_January_2016_Draft.pdf)

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**Trauma informed:** is a strength based response to the impact of trauma within support delivery by emphasising the physical, psychological and emotional safety of those affected by trauma. This creates opportunities for those affected to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

**Trauma informed approach** means an approach which supports individuals who have experience of sustained exposure to traumatic events and the symptomology arising from such exposure, which is described as complex trauma and is identified as a particular recurring theme amongst homeless women.

**Appendix 3**  
**Consultation Questions**  
**Priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy**

## Summary

This consultation is seeking views on the following proposed priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy<sup>1</sup>:

- **Priority One** - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading
- **Priority Two** - Increasing access to decent suitable accommodation
- **Priority Three** - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

### Question 1

Please can you tell us if you agree or disagree that the proposed priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy are clear?

- Strongly Agree
- Slightly Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Slightly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### Question 2

Please can you tell us if you agree or disagree that the following proposed priorities should be included in Reading's Homelessness Strategy?

**Priority One** - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Priority Two** - Increasing access to decent suitable accommodation

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the order the priorities are listed does not reflect how important the Council considers each priority to be, it is to ensure each priority has a number and a reference.

**Priority Three - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness**

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Question 3**

If you disagree with any of the proposed priorities, please tell us which priorities you disagree with and why?

Priority number	Reason why you disagree that this should be a priority for Reading

**Question 4**

Are there any priorities you think have been missed?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us which priorities you think we should include and why:

**Question 5**

Do you believe there to be any groups who are not represented in the proposed priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us which groups you believe are not represented:

**Question 6**

Do you have any additional comments?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details in the box below:

## Question 7

Are you responding as:

- A service provider
- A public sector agency
- A housing association/registered provider
- A local business
- A voluntary community group/organisation
- A landlord/temporary accommodation provider
- A member of the public
- Other

If you have answered 'other' please give us details:

If you are an employee or volunteer, please let us know the name of the organisation, charity or community group you work for or support:

## About you

These questions are optional but will help us to see if there are differences between the views of different respondents and to check that we have heard from a representative sample. All the information you give will be kept completely confidential and secure.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Which age group do you belong to?

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 or over
- Prefer not to say

Do you consider that you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

- Yes    No
- Prefer not to say

**Which of these ethnic groups do you belong to?**

- White - British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White - Any other White background (Please specify below)
- Mixed - White and Black Caribbean Mixed - White & Black African Mixed - White & Asian
- Mixed - Any other Mixed background (Please specify below)
- Asian or Asian British - Indian Asian or Asian British - Pakistani Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi Asian or Asian British - Chinese
- Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background (Please specify below)
- Black or Black British - African
- Black or Black British - Caribbean
- Black or Black British - Any other black background (Please specify below)
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group (Please specify below)
- Prefer not to say
- Don't know

If you have answered 'other' please give us details:

**What is your religion or belief?**

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Other

If you have answered 'other' please give us details:

**Are you?**

- Heterosexual/straight
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other

If you have answered 'other' please give us details:

## Appendix 4 - Consultation Planner for Reading's Homelessness Strategy

CONSULTATION PROFORMA			
<b>Name of consultation</b>	Consultation on themes for Homelessness Strategy		
<b>Purpose of consultation</b> Include objectives and whether statutory requirement	To consult with partners organisations, commissioned services, members of the public and service users on themes for the review and update on the Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024		
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Reading Borough Council		
<b>Recurring/one-off</b>	One-off		
<b>Start date</b>	05/08/2019		
<b>End date</b>	29/09/2019		
<b>Lead officer</b>	Verena Hutcheson	<b>Tel. No</b>	0118 937 4136
		<b>E:mail</b>	Verena.hutcheson@reading.gov.uk
<b>Head of service</b>	Zelda Wolfle		
<b>Lead councillor: Cllr Ennis</b>	<b>Date of Cabinet approval: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019</b>		
<b>Other councillor involvement:</b> HNL Committee members			
<b>Cost of consultation</b>	Printing costs for paper copies of consultation questions (x 200 copies)- £50.00		
<b>Staff time involved</b>	15 working days of officer time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producing consultation planner</li> <li>• Developing consultation questions and adding to Citizen Space</li> <li>• Promoting consultation to stakeholders - meetings, distributing materials, presentations etc.</li> <li>• Consultation events</li> <li>• Collating responses and summarising (report writing)</li> <li>• Answering enquiries about the consultation</li> </ul>		
	<b>Details</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
<b>Who are you consulting?</b> give details of: •Geographical area groups •Interest groups •Equality target groups • Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents across Reading Borough</li> <li>• Customers of Housing Needs and homelessness services</li> <li>• All other internal partner organisations and key stakeholders - Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Community Safety, Public</li> </ul>	August/ September 2019	

**CONSULTATION PROFORMA**

<b>Name of consultation</b>	Consultation on themes for Homelessness Strategy	
	<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All other external partner organisations and key stakeholders e.g. Police, community and voluntary sector services, local businesses, Clinical Commissioning Groups, commissioned homelessness services</li> </ul>	
<b>How are you consulting?</b> Give details of:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey (Citizen Space)</li> <li>Printed copies available in community locations across borough e.g. civic reception, libraries, partner offices (Salvation Army, Launchpad), primary and secondary health locations (walk-in centre, A&amp;E, GP surgeries)</li> <li>Surveys completed in person with customers where required, for example, commissioned homelessness services (outreach workers, drop-in locations)</li> </ul>	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings</li> </ul>	Full meetings with partners regarding sector and agency priorities under each theme	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultative Forums</li> </ul>	Second Street Support Reading partnership meeting	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library (hard copies must be sent to libraries in advance of the consultation being launched)</li> </ul>	Hard copies	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RBC Web-site</li> </ul>	Online consultation available on RBC website	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>	Not applicable	

**CONSULTATION PROFORMA**

<b>Name of consultation</b>	Consultation on themes for Homelessness Strategy	
<b>How will the public be able to respond electronically?</b>	The public will be able to respond on the RBC website. The survey will also be advertised on Reading Borough Council social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) Digital access can be enabled in libraries and at Launchpad drop-in if support with this is required.	August/ September 2019
<b>Provide details of your communications plan:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>media</li> </ul>	Social media - Facebook and Twitter (RBC account) Email hyperlink to list of relevant internal and external partners Promote at the bottom of email signature to professionals, partners and the public	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>posters/leaflets</li> </ul>	Posters in local libraries, advertised on screen in Civic reception, posters in Launchpad and the Salvation Army offices in Reading primary and secondary health locations, church/faith locations, community and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. food handouts and day centres), schools, Children's Centres	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>internal communications</li> </ul>	Intranet post and included in Chief Executive's blog to obtain internal staff feedback; Inside Reading	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>website</li> </ul>	Banner on RBC website homepage to obtain public feedback	August/ September 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>events</li> </ul>	Consultation event for Street Support in August can advertise the consultation will be live	August/ September 2019
<b>Decisions To Be Taken</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting process</li> </ul>	After initial consent to consult on discussion of possible themes to be carried through the Homelessness Strategy, the consultation process will commence. When this has	November 2019

CONSULTATION PROFORMA		
<b>Name of consultation</b>	Consultation on themes for Homelessness Strategy	
	been completed; themes will be reviewed and revised where appropriate - the draft strategy will be presented to Committee to agree authority for publication.	
•Reporting results/outcomes	The results of consultation will be included in the report to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee in November 2019.	November 2019
•Agreeing response	Themes will be reviewed and revised where appropriate in readiness for November 2019 HNL and a draft strategy will be presented to Committee to agree authority for publication.	November 2019
<b>Feedback to the public</b>		
• Letter	No - unless specific and lengthy concerns are raised in writing and feedback is requested from officers	November 2019
• Newsletter	Inside Reading (internally)	November 2019
• RBC Web-site	Yes	November 2019
• Event	No	November 2019
• Other	None	

This proforma will be published on the web-site. Please use language and wording understandable and appropriate for the general public.

Please return completed form to Clare Muir in Chief Executives' Policy Unit

In addition you should complete the attached consultation checklist to ensure that you are following good practice when you undertake a consultation exercise. The full Consultation Guidelines are available on Outlook public folders under 'Consultation...'

## CONSULTATION PLANNING CHECKLIST

<b>OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS/ STARTING OUT</b>	
Why are you consulting?	To obtain a mixed and varied response on proposed themes for the Homelessness strategy from a variety of groups.
What do you want to find out?	We are aiming to discover which themes different groups believe should be our priority to inform the homelessness strategy.
Have you set expectations (yours, members & peoples)?	The consultation forms part of a review of the current homelessness strategy. We have explained to members and partners that this review and consultation will take place and that new themes will be identified.
Do you know which councillors need to be involved?	Lead Councillor for Housing, Adult Social and Health
Have you got/do you need Member approval?	Member approval to consult will be sought at HNL Committee in July.
<b>WHO TO CONSULT/ HOW TO PLAN THE CONSULTATION</b>	
Who has a stake in the consultation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Residents across Reading Borough</li> <li>* Customers of Housing Needs and homelessness services</li> <li>* All other internal partner organisations and key stakeholders - Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Community Safety, Public Health, Education</li> </ul> <p>All other external partner organisations and key stakeholders e.g. Police, community and voluntary sector services, local businesses, Clinical</p>

	Commissioning Groups, commissioned homelessness services, education
Who are your target groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Residents across Reading Borough</li> <li>* Customers of Housing Needs and homelessness services</li> <li>* All other internal partner organisations and key stakeholders - Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Community Safety, Public Health, Education</li> <li>* All other external partner organisations and key stakeholders e.g. Police, community and voluntary sector services, local businesses, Clinical Commissioning Groups, commissioned homelessness services</li> </ul>
Have you included non-users as well as users?	Yes
How will you ensure representation across groups protected under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Also people on low income?	An EqIA will be completed prior to strategy being taken to HNL in November 2019.
Will your consultation process be accessible and appropriate to all those who should be consulted?	Yes. Questionnaires will be produced in a number of formats and will be available in a number of locations (detailed above) to ensure all groups will be able to give feedback if they desire.
Have you asked the community you are consulting what type of consultation process they think should be used?	No - standard consultation process will be used.
Who already knows about the consultation & how much do they know?	Partners are aware that a review of the Homelessness strategy is taking place and that there will be a consultation on themes later

	in the summer. Informal conversations have been undertaken with key statutory partners to inform initial proposed themes. They are aware of the premise of the consultation but will be given more detail when the consultation goes live in August.
What's in it for the participants?	A partnership approach to our homelessness strategy and the implementation of actions will be key. Therefore, by completing the consultation, participants are assisting the development of the strategy and the resulting actions which will improve the provision for people at risk of homelessness in Reading. This will affect different participants in different ways.
Have you included staff and trade unions to input into the planning of the consultation?	Yes - staff No - trade unions as not relevant
Is a similar consultation already being done/will you be duplicating/can you combine with someone else?	No
<b>CHOICE OF CONSULTATION TECHNIQUE</b>	
Is the choice appropriate for the objectives?	Yes
Is it appropriate in terms of:	
* quantitative - qualitative	Yes - quantitative and qualitative methods to be employed.
* sample size	Yes - to obtain feedback from a wide variety of participants
* sample selection	Yes - varied
Can you do it yourself or will you need outside help and advice? If you cannot resource the consultation from within existing funds you may need to revise your plans.	Yes - will not need external help.
How can the consultation be E-enabled.	Questions will be available in

	electronic format.
<b>PROCESS</b>	
Have you got budget set?	Yes
•What is the cost of staff/time?	£3,000
•What is the cost of bought in goods and services?	£50 - print costs
•What other costs are there?	None
How much time have you got for the consultation?	8 weeks
Have you allowed sufficient time for responses?	Yes - consultation period spans August/September to allow for school holidays to give time to respond.
Is the information and explanation you are presenting easily accessible?	Yes
* Plain English?	Yes
* Translations?	Yes
Do all the consultation points have the documentation and information they need in time for the start of the consultation?	Yes
Are you making appropriate efforts to get to 'hard to reach' groups?	Yes - rough sleepers will be contacted by outreach workers; those in temporary/emergency accommodation; accessing day centres and other community services
What could go wrong?	Limited responses resulting in an unrepresentative consultation.
<b>MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>	
How will you evaluate the results/findings?	Responses to the consultation will be reviewed and themes confirmed or adjusted as required.
How will you feedback results to those consulted?	The report to HNL committee will be a public document, made available to all who fed back on the consultation.
How will you know if the consultation has been successful?	Key themes will be established and will influence and direct the Homelessness Strategy.



## Appendix 5

### Equality Impact Assessment - Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24

**Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed**

**Directorate:** Environment and Neighbourhood Services

**Service:** Housing

**Name and job title of person doing the assessment**

**Name:** Amelia Johnson on behalf of Verena Hutcheson

**Job Title:** National Management Trainee

**Date of assessment:** 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

**What is the aim of your policy or new service?**

The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 and resulting delivery/action plan aims to set out the borough's planned strategic actions to address and prevent rough sleeping in Reading. The council aims to enable the delivery of the Rough Sleeping Strategy using a cross-sector co-produced delivery/action plan under the following established priorities:

- **Priority One** - Early intervention and prevention
- **Priority Two** - Recovery and community integration
- **Priority Three** - Rapid Intervention
- **Priority Four** - United support and enforcement action in Reading
- **Priority Five** - Provision of information and alternative ways to give

Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy is clear that a cross-sector approach is essential in achieving the identified priorities. Co-development and co-delivery of the action plan will allow for pooling of resources, expertise and experience to address rough sleeping in Reading which affects all partners and will result in better outcomes for customers and the public.

**Overall context**

In 2018/19 the council was awarded £316,500 additional funding by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) under their Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to enable national government's policy commitment of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027. To comply with funding conditions to receive an amount of £335,000 in Year 2 (2019/20), the MHCLG stipulated that a Rough Sleeping Strategy be drafted and signed off by senior council officers by March 2019. Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy differs from the Homelessness Strategy in that it is not a legislative requirement; therefore it has been drafted and finalised to meet MHCLG funding requirements. The Rough Sleeping Strategy will, however, complement the Homelessness Strategy due to the intrinsic nature of the action plan and partner involvement in delivering both strategies.

**Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

Residents of the Reading Borough, in particular rough sleepers.

**What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?**

Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy aims 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
- Create and maintain a genuine statutory, voluntary and community sector partnership working to achieve this target

**Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

Main stakeholders would be: Rough sleepers; those at risk of rough sleeping and cross-sector partner agencies who are working with individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

**Equality**

Each year Reading Borough Council conduct a 'Rough Sleeper Count' to count the number of people sleeping out in the borough. This data is fed back to the MHCLG and national outcomes are published annually. As part of this count, the age, gender, ethnicity and nationality of all rough sleepers found is recorded to allow for analysis and ensure that services for rough sleepers are commissioned, designed and accessible for all clients with protected characteristics.

The data for November 2018 is as follows:

Age	No.	%	Gender	No.	%	Nationality	No.	%	Race/Ethnicity	No.	%
Under 18	0	0%	Female	6	24%	British	18	72%	White	24	96%
18-24	1	4%	Male	19	76%	Other EU	5	20%	Black	0	0%
25-35	4	16%	Third gender	0	0%	Non-EU	0	0%	Asian	0	0%
36-49	13	52%	Notknown	0	0%	Notknown	2	8%	Mixed Race	1	4%
50-59	4	16%	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	
60+	1	4%									
Unknown	2	8%									
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>										

This count data is used in conjunction with on-going and regular monitoring and data collation by St Mungo's, as the council's commissioned rough sleeper outreach service, regarding age, gender, ethnicity and nationality. This monitoring and count data has been considered when composing the Rough Sleeping Strategy and will ensure that the resulting action plan will be fit for all ages, genders, nationalities and ethnicities in order to serve Reading's rough sleeper population fairly and without discrimination.

The Housing Needs team and rough sleeper outreach workers are aware of and monitor pregnant rough sleepers (where applicable) and rough sleepers with disabilities. A rough sleeper's beliefs and religion are noted and collated when officers are informed. All protected characteristics are taken into account when considering the accessibility of services and information and this will continue throughout the development of the action plan with partners. No rough sleepers counted as bedded down during the 2018 had a disability. Rough sleepers engaging with St Mungo's, who consider themselves to have a disability, are encouraged to engage with a care and support assessment under the Care Act 2014 and to engage with an assessment with the local housing authority under the Housing Act 1996 regarding whether the local authority has a duty to provide accommodation.

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes  No

Within Reading's overall rough sleeping cohort, there is an over-representation of White British, males aged 36 - 49 years old; however, this over-representation of White British men over the age of 26 is typical across the country and is consistent with other local authority areas in England outside of London. Those aged 30 - 59 who are White British are over-represented in Reading overall according to most recent Census data<sup>1</sup>.

A report by St Mungo's named *Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The Final Report*<sup>2</sup> substantiates that women made up 26% of people who accessed homelessness services in 2013. This 4:1 ratio of men to women remains an accurate figure across the country. Evidence suggests that women may take more care in hiding themselves whilst rough sleeping; that they may have more opportunities to sofa surf, stay with friends and family; that they may remain in abusive relationships or living in squats or engaging in prostitution which prevents them from sleeping rough. In Reading, women and younger people are often prioritised for housing vacancies sooner due to their perceived vulnerabilities. These factors all contribute to this over-representation in the rough sleeping cohort.

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation and feedback.

Yes  No

There is national and local concern regarding increases in rough sleeping numbers since official monitoring by local authority area began in 2010; hence the national commitment to halve rough sleeping numbers by 2022 and to eliminate it entirely by 2027.

### Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts?

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Professionals working with or for those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping To include statutory and community/voluntary sector partners	Discussion with partners in a group forum as part of overarching sector conversations regarding a homelessness charter for Reading and overall commitment to end rough sleeping in the borough	By autumn/winter 2019

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/media/3780/2011-Census-Results/pdf/2011-Census-Results.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mungos.org/app/uploads/2017/07/Rebuilding-Shattered-Lives-the-final-report.pdf>

<p>'Experts by Experience' and those who are experiencing or have experienced rough sleeping</p>	<p>Via commissioned Homelessness Support Services; inviting customers and former customers who have experienced rough sleeping or have been at risk of rough sleeping into conversations so that they can influence how the strategy can and will be delivered.</p>	<p>By autumn/winter 2019</p>
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**Data collection and assessment**

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups**  
 There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact upon different racial groups and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)**  
 There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact due to different gender groups and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**  
 There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact upon rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping due to disability and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**  
 There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact upon different sexual orientation groups and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Age**  
 There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact upon any different age groups and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?**

There is no evidence that the publication and co-production and delivery of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy would have a negative impact upon any different religious beliefs and there is no concern about potentially discriminatory practices in this regard.

Is there a negative impact?      Yes       No       Not sure

Decision

1. **No negative impact identified**      Go to sign off
2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**        
You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
3. **Negative impact identified or uncertain**        
What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

**How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**

Any future review to the Rough Sleeping Strategy and/or how its action plan will be produced and delivered will include a further Equality Impact Assessment.

Signed (completing officer)

Date

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date