

Westminster City Council

Rough Sleeping Strategy

2013-2016

October 2013

Westminster City Council

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City of Westminster

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Our overriding objective is to:

Reduce the number of reasons for rough sleepers to come to, or remain on, the streets of Westminster.

In order to deliver this we will:

- Work with statutory partners to deliver outcome focused, targeted and cost effective interventions for rough sleepers, particularly for the most entrenched
- Target resources innovatively to ensure response is based on need, not location
- Develop more opportunities for non-commissioned services to provide an effective role in tackling rough sleeping
- Develop effective enforcement against unacceptable behaviour associated with rough sleeping.

Foreword

In 2002, Westminster City Council (WCC) assumed responsibility from central Government for the delivery of rough sleeping services in Westminster. Since then, we have helped thousands of people transform their lives and we have done this against an increasingly difficult backdrop.

The most striking change has been the significant increase in migrants from the ten Eastern European countries since they joined the European Economic Area. Last year 34% of rough sleepers met on Westminster's streets were from Central and Eastern European states.

WCC's response has been based on effective and comprehensive services aimed at rapid intervention to help move rough sleepers away from street living and find sustained alternative options for them. Working in partnership with the Police, the Statutory sector and the Voluntary sector in Westminster we have sought to minimise hardship for rough sleepers while at the same time being mindful of the impact on local residents and businesses. While much has been achieved, we are facing an increasingly challenging environment and over recent years rough sleeping across London has risen by 50%. By adopting a pan London approach we have been able to ensure that 70% of those new to the street do not spend a second night out but we recognise that there remains a great deal still to do and we must constantly look for the most effective way of tackling this. Our work with commissioned day centres has also led to over 80% of new people presenting for services at commissioned day centres being prevented from rough sleeping on the streets of Westminster via reconnections work – effectively having no night out.

While the individual successes that emanate from our services are often hidden from public view as people re-build their lives, the ongoing blight of rough sleeping hotspots continues to be a visible reminder. We know that hotspots, such as the Cathedral Piazza and Marble Arch, can maintain people on the streets. These

hotspots can also have an unacceptable impact on the ordinary daily lives of local residents, local businesses and visitors trying to survive in a challenging economic climate.

This strategy is intended to safeguard and enhance the transformative opportunities our services offer, while also ensuring they are targeted at the visible and problematic aspects of rough sleeping. We are working in challenging times so we will deliver more for less by working in partnership with clients and providers.

We want to build on what has worked and acknowledge where our services have not worked as well as they could. Through the course of this strategy we will;

- Explore new ways of working and commissioning in order to meet the needs of all our stakeholders more effectively and make our funding stretch much further than it has in the past
- Design a new model to assess and manage rough sleepers within Westminster to ensure everyone has a route off the streets
- Continue to work with Ward Councillors, local representatives and other stakeholders to ensure their concerns are understood and responded to
- Work with the Mayor, Central Government and other Local Authorities to ensure our response is part of a meaningful pan London and national response.

Westminster can be proud of the services which it has already put in place to help those sleeping rough on our streets. However, I recognise fully that there is a great deal more to do both in terms of reducing the numbers of people rough sleeping on our streets and also tackling the unacceptable behaviour which can accompany rough sleeping and which impacts on our residents.

Councillor Rachael Robathan
Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Part 1:

Background and Supporting Information

Westminster City Council provides and commissions outreach teams, day centres and hostels to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our outreach teams work to identify who is on the streets as soon as they arrive there and our day centres work to assess need, ideally preventing people from going to the streets. Through our hostels, we look to deliver life changing opportunities to the most vulnerable in society. Our services are designed to impact on rough sleeping permanently and to reduce the impact of this activity on everyone concerned. We need to ensure that what we do really makes a difference for the benefit of residents, businesses, visitors and the rough sleepers themselves.

Every time a rough sleeper is met on the streets or uses any of our commissioned day centres or hostels, the activity is recorded on a central database called CHAIN. This data can give us an excellent understanding of what interventions have been tried with an individual and it offers WCC a very full and unique data set that gives us a comprehensive picture of rough sleeping and the response.

sleep rough in Westminster who had not been seen for a year or more and 801 people were met sleeping rough who had also been met at least once in the previous year. A total of 2,440 people were recorded bedded down in 2012/13, this is a slight decrease from the 2,554 individuals in 11/12 but still an increase on the 1,905 individuals seen in 2010/11 but the bulk of this increase is new rough sleepers.

Drawing on the CHAIN data we know that 1,319 new rough sleepers arrived in Westminster in the financial year 2012/13. A further 320 returned to

The chart below shows the number of individuals met in Westminster month by month for the past five years.

Rough Sleepers Met Bedded Down 2008 to 2013

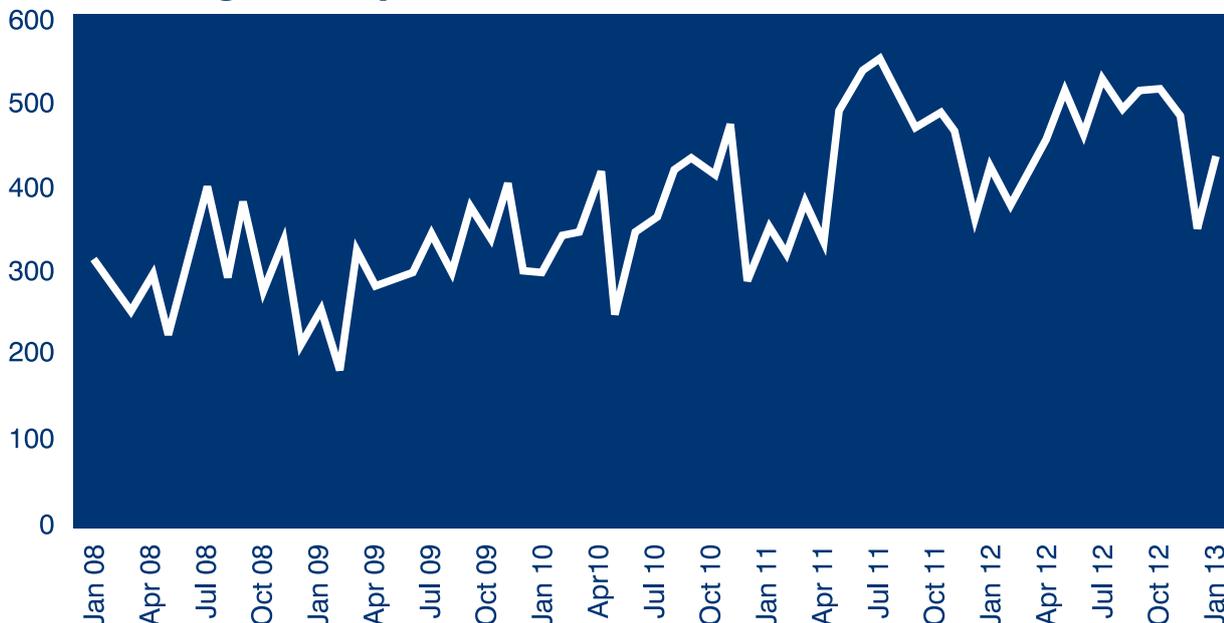


Figure 1

Nearly half of all rough sleepers met are only seen bedded down once in the course of a year and of the new rough sleepers met 77% of those seen in January and February 2013 (our last reporting period) did not spend a second night on the street.

The support needs of those met are broadly consistent. We know that 38% of those met had alcohol support needs, 25% had drug support needs and 45% had mental health needs. This is consistent with previous years and continues to indicate a high level of support requirements within this group.

Of those met, 32% had previously been in prison and 11% had previously been in care, which is also consistent with prior periods. Of UK nationals 2% had prior history of being in the armed forces and 4% of non-UK nationals had

been in the armed forces – many having undergone National Service prior to coming to the UK.

13% of rough sleepers met, year on year, are female and less than 1% of all those met are under the age of 18. 45% of rough sleepers met in Westminster are British. While the three most prevalent nationalities represented on the streets are British (45%), Polish (8%), and Romanian (12%) the overall picture is of reducing numbers of British nationals and increasing numbers of foreign nationals.

In the financial year 2012/13, 38% of those seen rough sleeping across the whole of London were seen in Westminster.

The illustration below shows the numbers of new and existing rough sleepers in each borough in 2012/13.

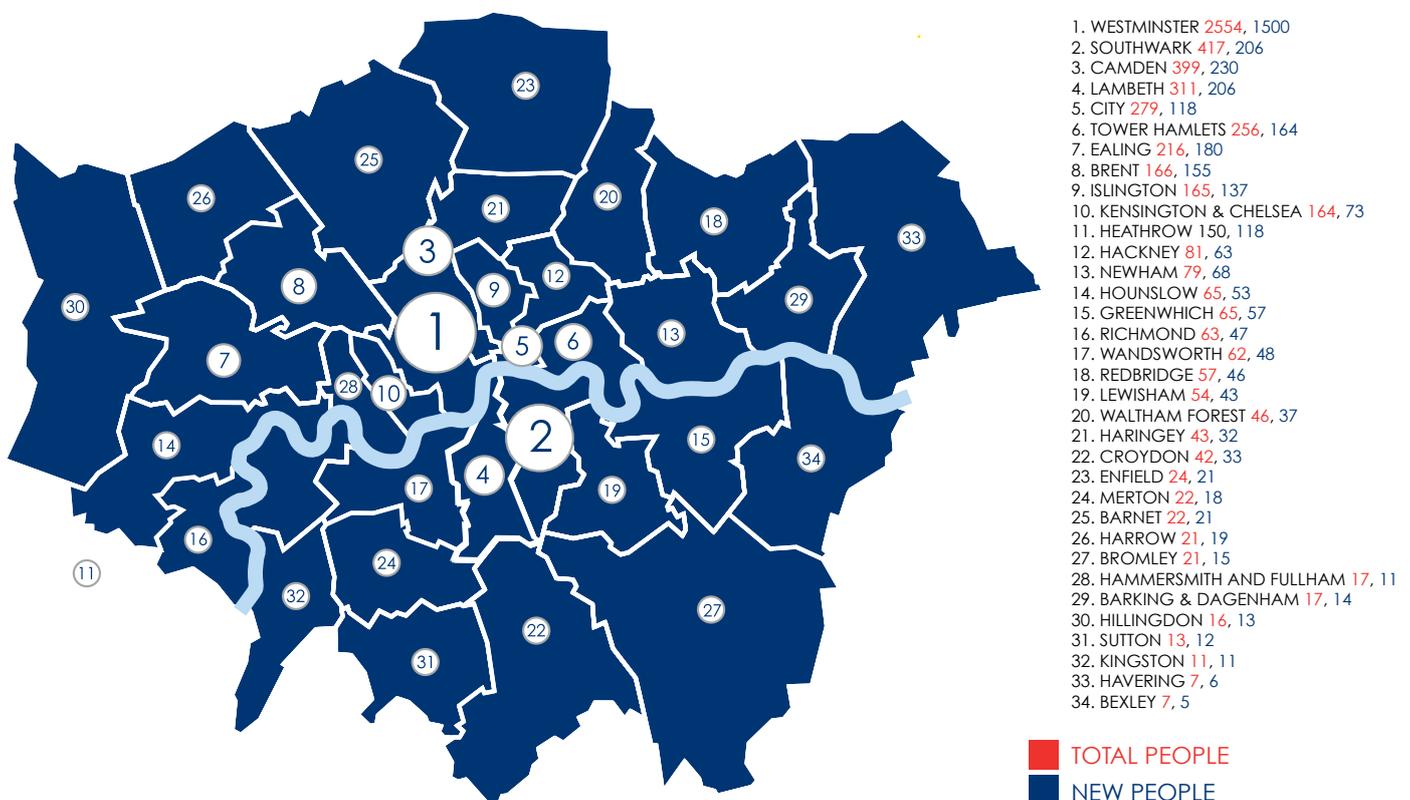


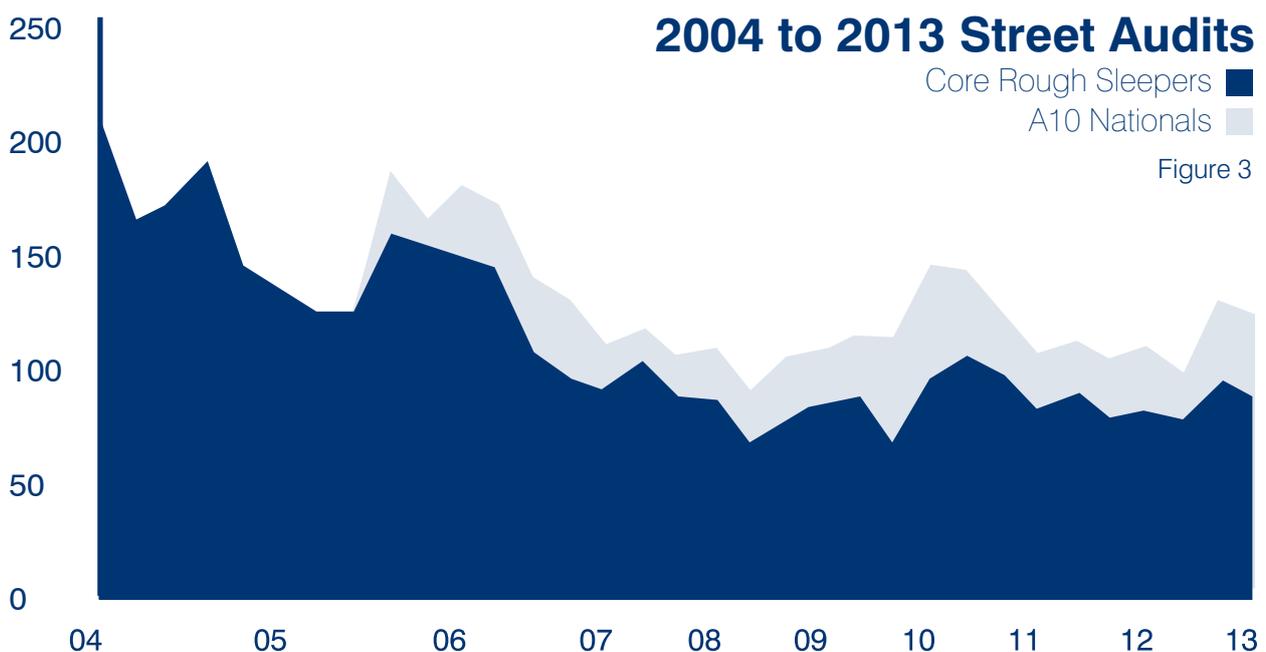
Figure 2

Street Audits

Three times a year teams of outreach workers and volunteers count all the rough sleepers in the borough. The audit total is split into core rough sleepers and those from Central Europe; as we know that the reasons why many economic migrants end up on the streets can be very different to those core UK rough sleepers and, therefore, the response needs to be different.

Street audits are one of the major means of monitoring rough sleeping and are a valuable

performance indicator reported to central Government. The benefits and limitations of assessing the numbers of people sleeping rough through audits on a single night have been examined in detail in the evaluation of the Government's Rough Sleeping Unit (Randall and Brown, 1999). This evaluation concluded that street audits are a valid means of measuring the relative scale of problems between areas and of changes over time, within an acceptable margin of error.



Looking at the latest street audit (March 2013) the number of rough sleepers in Westminster reduced slightly but was still at a relatively high level. There were also rises in rough sleeping numbers reported across London.

While there have been some successes, the priorities in this strategy set out further initiatives to help these groups off the streets.

PART 2:

Our Five Priorities

Our overriding objective is to:

- Reduce the number of reasons for rough sleepers to come to, or remain on, the streets of Westminster.
- In order to deliver this we will:
- Work with statutory partners to deliver outcome focused, targeted and cost effective interventions for rough sleepers, particularly for the most entrenched
- Target resources innovatively to ensure response is based on need, not location
- Develop more opportunities for non-commissioned services to provide an effective role in tackling rough sleeping
- Develop effective enforcement against unacceptable behaviour associated with rough sleeping.



Reduce the number of reasons for rough sleepers to come to, or remain on, the streets of Westminster

Our existing rough sleeping services deal with hundreds of people in the course of a year who come to London for a range of reasons. We know that whatever the problem that led to that person coming to Westminster, the solution will not be found rough sleeping on our streets.

Our rough sleeping services will be configured to ensure that every person who is met on the streets is engaged with and assessed as quickly as possible. We will seek to identify why people come to Westminster in the first place and collate those reasons into a useable form. Our specialist services will identify a rapid and relevant route away from the streets for every individual but we will also do what we can to deal with whatever incentive drew that person to Westminster initially. The plan for each individual will be shared with a range of services, both commissioned and non commissioned, and will be part of a very clear message – rough sleeping on the streets of Westminster.

We are fully committed to the Mayor of London's aim that no-one should live on the streets, no-one who has exited rough sleeping should return to the streets and no-one who arrives new to the streets should sleep rough for a second night. We know, though, that just dealing with the symptoms of an individual's situation or a sociological phenomenon does not deal with the root cause. We will, therefore, seek to identify consistent root causes for the high levels of rough sleeping in Westminster and through the course of this strategy we will explore alternative models for structuring our services to address these.

In order to have the best chance of success we need our street facing teams to be able to carry a clear message. In our current models of outreach most rough sleeping cohorts are served by generic teams. We will develop new

approaches to assess and manage rough sleepers in Westminster and we will look to ensure that our services are configured to ensure the correct response to different levels of need. Where our workers are engaging with the most vulnerable and entrenched rough sleepers, every endeavour will be made to persuade and encourage those individuals off the street and into a life changing action including providing a personalised approach. Where our workers are dealing with individuals new to the streets, the message will be quite different and will be one of reconnection to their home community. Our service response will be designed to realise rapid and meaningful opportunities and once an offer has been made there will be no ongoing service for those individuals.

To tackle the reasons that people come to central London we need a local as well as a regional approach. Locally, we will commission services which do not sustain people on the streets or become a reason why people come to Westminster in the first place. On a regional level we will work with the Mayor's Rough Sleeping Group (MRSRG) to develop and support London wide approaches to reduce those new to streets and to provide a consistent response. We will enhance the Mayor's NSNO service by exploring the possibility of commissioning our services to complement the response by opening it out to more than just the very newest rough sleepers.

We know that for many of the most entrenched rough sleepers we need to tailor responses to their needs and this often requires a more long term approach to develop effective rapport and provide personalised solutions. During the course of the previous strategy we had great success with the longest term rough sleepers and we will continue to develop this personalised approach.

By the end of this strategy we will:

- Develop a sophisticated needs assessment process to establish greater knowledge of why the person has ended up rough sleeping on the streets of Westminster
- We will introduce an innovation fund with the aim of fostering the development of a marketplace for innovation within the sector, looking to nurture social enterprise from existing providers and other groups to impact positively on rough sleeping in the borough
- Ensure that all commissioned services have an overarching priority to control hotspots.
- Work with the MRSG, Central Government and neighbouring boroughs to develop London wide approaches to reduce the number of those new to the streets.
- Ensure that our commissioned services are able to act quickly, with a joined up message, to stop hotspots developing or enduring.



Work with statutory partners to deliver outcome focused, targeted and cost effective interventions for rough sleepers, particularly for the most entrenched.

We know that, compared to the general population, homeless people have complex health needs, use A&E to access basic healthcare, are more frequently admitted to hospital, have high rates of re-admission and higher support needs.

We will build on our current model of offering specialist health provision within assessment focused services to ensure the most vulnerable get assistance at the earliest stage possible. We know that often, rough sleepers do not access health support until a critical stage, going straight to A&E rather than addressing issues earlier. In order to assess gaps more readily we will introduce a mutually agreed comprehensive health assessment tool (CHAT form) within all our commissioned hostel services. This will enable us to work with health partners to ensure we have the right set of targeted health interventions within commissioned provision to provide early intervention and prevention.

Poorly planned discharges from hospitals can result in rough sleepers arriving back on the street which often leads to swift re-admission. We will work closely with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to explore plans for intermediate care for rough sleepers in order to improve the health and wellbeing of service users and ensure that there are accommodation pathways in place as part of discharge plans.

We know that the support needs of rough sleepers are relatively high. Looking at the latest data only

26% had no alcohol, drugs or mental health support needs. We will continue to work in partnership with Substance Misuse & Offender Care (SMOC) and mental health services to ensure that targeted interventions are provided throughout commissioned provision and also that every opportunity is taken to assist rough sleepers into recovery.

WCC, West London Clinical Commissioning Group (WLCCG) and Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CLCCG) jointly commission the Joint Homelessness Team (JHT) to carry out street mental health and social care needs assessments and to offer intensive case management to those assessed that have severe and enduring mental health needs. The JHT offers a personalised recovery focused care pathway from the street to stable accommodation. We will continue to commission and work with this team to ensure that those who rough sleep in Westminster and are unwilling or unable to access mainstream mental health services, have fair access to statutory health and social care. However, we know that there are also a high number of rough sleepers and hostel residents who do not meet the threshold for a statutory intervention and for these we will continue to look at innovative projects and training opportunities to enable staff to provide appropriate interventions.

Over 40% of those contacted by outreach teams in Westminster in the financial year 2011/12 had previously been in prison and many were working with probation services. In some cases, opportunities to engage clients at the point of release and to prevent rough sleeping are not always utilised. We will develop minimum standards with local prisons and probation teams to improve pathways.

We will work collaboratively with neighbouring boroughs to ensure we are able to achieve lasting resolution to the rough sleeping lifestyles of some of the most entrenched. To ensure we

impact most effectively we will need to ensure a consistent approach across borough boundaries.

There are many changes happening within the wider commissioning structures of key partner organisations, such as the development of CCGs and changing commissioning arrangements in the police. We believe that this presents us with further opportunities for the commissioning of integrated services to prevent rough sleeping and achieve better outcomes for people with complex needs.

By the end of this strategy we will:

- Introduce the CHAT form to all commissioned hostel services
- Encourage GP registration
- Join up the delivery of intermediate care with outreach, housing and third sector services, including developing an accommodation pathway for service users leaving hospital and intermediate care
- Work with Tri-borough Homeless Health group to develop a 2013-16 action plan
- Revise and reissue our accommodation directory for rough sleepers with substance misuse and mental health needs
- Work with health colleagues to reduce inappropriate use of A&E resources by rough sleepers
- Develop minimum standards protocol with the probation service
- Revise and circulate Westminster residency criteria and operational pathway with all local prisons.

Target resources innovatively to ensure response is based on need, not location.

We know that there are hundreds of different reasons people end up spending the night on the streets. There is also a very wide variance in the amount of time that people spend on the streets and the severity of their problems. In most cases, however, there is a clear divide between those new to the streets with limited support needs and those longer term rough sleepers who require a fuller and more substantial intervention.

We want to move away from commissioning services which are based solely on geography and move towards commissioning specialist provision. We will, therefore, commission our services and street facing teams to be aligned with this approach. Referral routes into accommodation will be similarly divided. We will seek to develop and fund distinct areas of work for commissioned services and outreach teams, looking to ensure there is a needs led response by all our commissioned services. This response will be appropriately divided between; the different issues presented by new arrivals and the needs of the long term entrenched.

Our street facing teams will be similarly commissioned to work with defined cohorts and will be commissioned to respond to need.

Our future contracts will be focused on outcomes rather than service provision, targeting the identified cohorts and focusing on sustainable exits for individuals. New contracts will also have an element of payment by results introduced, to ensure that our services really do make a difference.

By introducing a common outcome focused contract monitoring process across all providers we will develop benchmarks for performance. These performance indicators will be used to develop a future commissioning framework. This framework will be brought to bear to enable a clear point of reference for other commissioning bodies, or partnerships, to ensure best value in what will continue to be a challenging financial climate.

We will therefore seek to ensure that our commissioned services:

- Work with new rough sleepers and those not entrenched providing rapid assessments to ensure that a route off the streets is identified as soon as possible. Ensure that assessments are undertaken as quickly as possible when a person arrives and a route away from the streets is clearly identified and available for each individual
- Work with the long term entrenched and those in accommodation to deliver further and sustained reductions in long term rough sleeping
- Provide support and opportunities that enable rough sleepers and those in accommodation to both enter employment and/or to live independently. Work as ambitiously as possible to realise Education, Training and Employment (ETE) opportunities as well as focussing on Financial Inclusion and Life Skills to prepare people for independent living.

Where we have sought and achieved commissioning and delivery innovations there has been an attendant increase in outcomes. We will therefore create a commissioning environment that ensures innovation by setting aside a significant proportion of the overall budgetary allocation to enable the delivery of specific service innovations.

We will utilise effective forums to harness residents' views and priorities, we will also highlight specific individuals and areas of concern. Where rough sleeping is an area of concern in a particular ward we will provide monthly reports to ward councillors and relevant

ward forums. Where we need an urgent and effective response we will tender for commissioned partners and non-commissioned providers to bid to deliver against these defined areas of work.

Through the course of this strategy we will align all our hostel contracts so we can undertake a comprehensive review of our accommodation pathway during the last year of our strategy. We are determined to ensure that our hostel pathways offer genuine transformative opportunities to individuals, leaving those individuals equipped to move away from rough sleeping permanently.

By the end of this strategy we will have:

- Redesigned and commissioned our street-facing provision in the city and their configuration in our range of commissioned services
- Undertaken a comprehensive accommodation provision review within the borough to ensure this is targeted and encourage collaboration between commissioned providers
- Implemented new ways of commissioning, including the introduction of payment by results to new contracts
- Introduced an innovation fund to allow greater innovation in the sector and to nurture social enterprise.

Develop more opportunities for non-commissioned services to provide an effective role in tackling rough sleeping.

We believe that there is a need for volunteers and non-commissioned services to play a role in reducing rough sleeping. Volunteers are critical to the functioning of a healthy society; this is played out in schools and hospitals, indeed at every level of society. The same is true of housing and supporting people who need help. Our aim is to work with all voluntary groups to try and identify the most effective way in which they can help those sleeping rough.

In particular, it is important to work with non-commissioned providers to ensure that, rather than duplicating provision, they are able to meet gaps in provision and work in the most relevant way. We will promote the key role that non-commissioned services can play in reducing rough sleeping in central London.

Following intensive and positive dialogue in the Victoria area of Westminster, the number of soup runs operating in this locality has declined considerably through voluntary agreement. Some of those soup runs now operate out of a local hostel and we want to continue working with those soup runs to ensure the work they are doing maintains its relevance while not impacting on local residents.

The work we do with rough sleepers is often seen to be the first step away from the streets but we are equally, if not more, focused on maintaining people away from the streets. Most rough sleepers we help away from the streets are placed into private sector housing in other parts of London. Consequently, they may need

a degree of support maintaining tenancies and re-establishing themselves. We would like to work with volunteers and non-commissioned providers to identify ways in which they can play a part in responding to this genuine need.

Within Westminster there are a range of rough sleeping services which need volunteer support and we would like to encourage more integration between our commissioned services, volunteers and soup run providers.

Our street facing teams will be expected to deliver volunteering opportunities to enable the most committed volunteers to support a sustainable pathway away from the streets for rough sleepers. We also want our street facing teams to work more closely with existing non-commissioned providers such as All Souls Local Action Network (ASLAN) and Streetlytes to build on existing relationships to help rough sleepers away from the streets.

By the end of this strategy we will have:

- Worked with soup run providers and other partners to develop and roll out a model of best practice for implementation in other Local Authority areas
- Developed a model to support discreet pieces of work from volunteers to make meaningful changes in rough sleepers' lives
- Ensured that there are explicit and viable alternatives for soup runners and work with them to consider and take up these options.



Implement an effective response to unacceptable behaviour, associated with rough sleeping, in Westminster.

We acknowledge that when someone is in a position where they feel they have no choice in life but to rough sleep then it is likely something has gone wrong in their lives. Sometimes this causes individuals to lose their sense of values and carry out what, for the population at large, would seem like desperate acts. However the disruption and problems to local residents, is not reasonable and is unacceptable.

Where there is a build up of rough sleepers we know that there often follows a deterioration of acceptable behaviour in that location. Waste and detritus may start to be left on the street. If there are people drinking in a location other people may think it is acceptable to drink there also. Well meaning members of the public may also start supplying food in the area which exacerbates the problem. In addition, individuals who perhaps were not sure whether to return to other, possibly unstable, accommodation may be drawn to this location by the presence of others.

Our current multi-agency model of outreach and enforcement has had some notable successes, so we will build on this but make it more timely, responsive and transparent. We will focus our resources on areas that are a 'shop window' on acceptable behaviour in Westminster. We must reinforce the message that in Westminster we do not regard sleeping on the streets as an acceptable way of life, nor to drink or take drugs on the street.

Through the activities identified in this strategy we will align our services to ensure there is an effective and resolute response to rough sleeping hot spot locations in Westminster. We will continue to commission services to ensure that everyone has a route off the streets. People who are rough sleeping will, quite simply, not have a good reason to be there. Our challenge will be to ensure that all our partners, commissioned, non-commissioned, statutory and voluntary accept this message and help us deliver it.

We will be similarly intolerant of behaviour by individuals that impinges significantly on the quality of lives of others. We will reinvigorate a public debate around passive begging. We do not believe the current legislative response to begging enables us to tackle effectively people who beg as a way of sustaining addictive behaviours. There is also a significant return around foreign nationals that target the streets of Westminster as a preferred location to generate income by begging. The unprecedented scale of this relatively new phenomenon reflects an uneasy aspect of an expanded EEA. WCC will work with key partners to develop and implement a separate strategic and tactical response to this issue; the resolution to the problems presented by this group is not to be found in rough sleeping services.

Enforcement plays a crucial role in our partnership response to rough sleeping. With anticipated changes in the policing model in Westminster, it is essential that we ensure we have the most effective model. Therefore, during the course of this strategy we will develop a new approach to enforcement in the borough. We need an approach that can not only be used to address anti-social behaviour associated with street activity, but also to create incentives for people to take up the help on offer. There is a growing evidence base locally and nationally that, linked to supportive interventions, enforcement options can play a key role in ending an individual's rough sleeping.

We have no interest in merely moving rough sleepers around Westminster or forcing them into other parts of London, the UK or other parts of the world. We will be monitoring closely where people go and reviewing the offers people receive to ensure that our response continues to be humane and relevant.

We will continue to use acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) to ensure residents within hostels are not engaged in any Anti Social Behaviour whilst they are in accommodation. We believe that neighbours of hostels or day centres should have the right to expect the same standard of behaviour from their neighbours as with any others.

At a local level we will develop a community protection strategy under the Antisocial Behaviour Bill to develop an appropriate response to unacceptable behaviour. The creation of the Mayor's Office of Policing & Crime (MOPAC) presents us with an opportunity to work with the Mayor's Rough Sleeping Group to develop a London wide policy framework to deal with anti-social behaviour, begging and other Anti Social Behaviour associated with rough sleeping.

By the end of this strategy we will have:

- Developed and commissioned a new enforcement model for rough sleeping in Westminster
- Ensured all commissioned rough sleeping services have good neighbour policies in place
- Revised and published hot spot protocol
- Worked with key partners to develop a separate response to European Nationals begging in Westminster.

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