



Housing, Communities  
and Local Government  
Committee

**Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**  
Secretary of State

**Rushanara Ali MP**  
Minister for Homelessness and Democracy

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**  
**2 Marsham Street**  
**London, SW1P 4DF**

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## **Rough Sleeping Inquiry: Findings and Recommendations**

Dear Angela and Rushanara,

I am writing to you to share our findings and recommendations from our inquiry into Rough Sleeping, which we have recently concluded. We thank Minister Ali for appearing before the Committee to provide oral evidence as part of the inquiry on Tuesday 21 January 2025.

Firstly, we would like to re-iterate the message we heard from those with lived experience, stakeholders, and the Minister herself, throughout the inquiry: that **eradicating the scourge of rough sleeping in our society is very much an achievable goal**. We strongly encourage the Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping to take on board our findings and recommendations as it continues its work in the coming year, so it can fulfil what Minister Ali described as the Government's "absolute commitment to get us back on track to ending homelessness."<sup>1</sup>

### About our inquiry

Our inquiry into rough sleeping opened on 6 November 2024. Given the focussed nature of the inquiry, we did not open a formal call for evidence, but did receive some written submissions from stakeholders in the sector. In addition to this, we held an oral evidence session on 12 November 2024, where we heard from a range of witnesses, including homelessness charities, experts and local government representatives. We also conducted a visit to William Collier House, the YMCA's supported housing unit in Brighton, on 10 December 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> [Q49](#)



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During this visit we had the opportunity to speak to those with lived experience of sleeping rough, as well as staff who work at the centre.

The inquiry considered rough sleeping as distinct from individuals who present as homeless to their local authorities and are considered “statutorily homeless” and owed a housing support duty from their council. However, **the Committee recognises that all forms of homelessness are potentially devastating for individuals and families, and their causes and potential solutions often overlap.**

### Key findings and recommendations

Our **conclusions are highlighted in bold** and *recommendations in bold italics*.

#### **1. The rough sleeping emergency**

Throughout the inquiry, we heard of how rough sleeping has been on the rise in recent years and how both its immediate impacts, but also its long-term, “upstream” causes, are in urgent need of addressing, in particular the high and increasing cost of sustaining a tenancy. Lord Bird described the current situation as “appalling”, due in part to the lack of funding and support for frontline outreach services:

I can honestly tell you that it is appalling. Today, we have all these organisations, but you cannot get through to them, because everybody in the homeless sector is suffering an inability, because of funds and support, to do things. [Q8]

We were told how the increasing cost of rents was being exacerbated by historical decisions to freeze the Local Housing Allowance<sup>2</sup>; the prevalence of Section 21 “no-fault” evictions<sup>3</sup> and the five-week wait for the first Universal Credit payment “which can further entrench poverty.”<sup>4</sup>

The National Housing Federation (NHF) told us in [written evidence](#) that there was a need for:

[...] a robust welfare system that covers the cost of rent...Groups already vulnerable to homelessness...may risk homelessness unless their income is secured through a robust welfare system.

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<sup>2</sup> Carin Tunåker [Q4](#); Alicia Walker [Q4](#)

<sup>3</sup> Emmaus (homelessness charity), [Written evidence](#)

<sup>4</sup> National Housing Federation, [Written evidence](#)



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In [written evidence](#), Crisis told us that migrant homelessness was increasing partly as a result of Right to Rent checks, which they said leads to landlords “refusing to rent to migrants with the right to live in the UK and British people of colour, based on their name and race.”

Despite the challenges, we also heard optimism over the possibility of ensuring that rough sleeping is prevented where possible, and that where it does occur, it should be rare, brief and non-recurring.

Alicia Walker, Assistant Director of Activism and Advocacy, Shelter, told us that this could best be achieved by ensuring that there is enough affordable housing stock:

We are in a housing emergency...We just do not have enough affordable social rent homes in this country...until we start building and really replacing the stock that needs to be there, there is always going to be this [rough sleeping] crisis. [\[Q4\]](#)

- **We are in a rough sleeping emergency right now, with people who previously weren't at risk of sleeping rough becoming vulnerable. It is a source of national shame that the number of people sleeping rough is not only high, but has increased in recent years. There are concrete steps that the Government could and should take which would help turn the tide on rough sleeping. These include:**
  - ***Taking measures to help people sustain tenancies in the face of rising rents and the broader cost of living crisis, including ending Section 21 evictions through the passage of the Renters' Rights Bill as soon as possible, and reviewing the Right to Rent policy in the private rented sector; and***
  - ***Reviewing the welfare assistance that those on low incomes are able to receive, including ensuring that Universal Credit (UC) payments actually meet the costs of essentials, and looking to end the 5-week waiting period for those in receipt of UC.***

## 2. Funding for prevention

Local authorities were clear that funding to tackle rough sleeping (and homelessness generally) would be more helpful if it was put on a longer-term footing, as opposed to the current system of a range of smaller, short-term pots with restrictions on how councils can spend the money. Current programmes include the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant; the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme; the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant; the Changing Futures Programme;



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other sector support grants; the Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots; and the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures (RSWP) funding.

Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of Westminster City Council, told us that the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding that had been allocated for 2024-25 was:

[...] helpful, but the key thing is having long-term consistency in rough sleeping support so that we can plan our services...longer-term funding...[will help] tackle some of those really deep-rooted issues. [\[Q26\]](#)

Ben Tomlin, Head of Strategic Housing and Partnerships at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, suggested that longer term funding would enable greater focus on prevention rather than intervention:

It [RSWP funding] will protect and save lives this winter [but] the preference would be to have that commitment over a longer term, so that we can better spend money on things that are more preventative, rather than on expensive intervention activities, for example, floating support for single people where we know there are characteristics in their lives that mean they are more likely to become rough sleepers. [\[Q27\]](#)

We welcome the recent boost to the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding announced by the Minister as well as the decision to streamline the former Rough Sleeping Initiative and various single homelessness grants into the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant. However, further funding reform is still needed:

- **Prevention must be prioritised when it comes to tackling rough sleeping, with stretched public services currently creating issues upstream. We agree with Lord Bird’s assertion that rough sleeping will continue to occur so long as its preconditions are not addressed and we remain stuck in a cycle of emergency and response.**
- **To address this, the Government must review the way it funds support to councils for tackling rough sleeping to ensure they have a funding stream which is sufficient and allows them to plan ahead. We believe it would be more cost-effective to have a smaller number of longer-term funding streams than continuing with the current situation of short-term top-ups during times of the most acute pressure, as with the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding. As part of this the Government should:**



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- ***Review current funding streams for tackling rough sleeping and reform these to ensure that they are long-term and streamlined rather than having multiple, short-term pots; and***
- ***Review the impact of the provisions of the Autumn budget more generally on the ability of councils and charities to effectively tackle rough sleeping, for instance any additional burdens faced by the increases in National Insurance Contributions.***

### 3. Housing supply

We heard from both charities and local authorities that they often struggle to house people presenting as homeless due to the simple fact that they do not have access to sufficient accommodation to house everyone. Councils described a situation where the stock of housing available to them has dwindled over the decades due to their inability to replace homes “lost” to the private rented sector as a result of the Right to Buy policy. Paul Dennett, Deputy Mayor of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), told us about what he described as a “chronic undersupply of council housing” contributing to the prevalence of rough sleeping:

40% of homes purchased under Right to Buy find their way into the private rented sector. Many of them have never been replaced and have certainly not been replaced at social rents or rents capped at the local housing allowance. [\[Q17\]](#)

To address this, witnesses told us of the need for the Government to take steps to increase the supply of affordable and social housing, with Crisis saying in [written evidence](#) that:

The Government must rapidly increase the supply of genuinely affordable settled housing available to people who are currently facing homelessness – this could include targeted funding for local authorities to bring long-term empty homes back into use to meet local housing need.

Further, we heard from both the NHF and Crisis that supported housing specifically is a crucial stepping stone for many who are vulnerable to rough sleeping, supporting individuals away from the streets and into permanent tenancies, but that funding for it has been significantly cut over the last 15 years through the cessation of ring-fenced funding provided through the [Supporting People](#) programme. In [written evidence](#) the NHF described supported housing as “essential” in preventing:



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[...] homelessness and rough sleeping, and is in high demand, but faces severe financial pressure. Decades of cuts to support funding have led to councils commissioning less supported housing, or decommissioning services.

- **The combination of an increase in demand for housing support and a decrease in available accommodation means that there is an increasing lack of places for people at risk of sleeping rough to go, be it temporary accommodation, supported housing, or some other arrangement. To address this the Government must drastically increase housing supply, including:**
  - ***Building more social and genuinely affordable housing as part of its ambition to build 1.5 million new homes, including potentially setting a specific sub-target for these types of tenures; and***
  - ***Setting out a plan specifically for the rejuvenation of supported housing, including restoring funding for supported housing services previously provided by the Supporting People programme.***

### 4. Access to support

Stakeholders and those with lived experience of sleeping rough described what they saw as “gatekeeping” practices by local authorities. Guidance for councils when it comes to fulfilling housing support duties for those presenting as homeless allows for support to be withheld if individuals are deemed to be “intentionally” homeless, or if, for example, they cannot prove a “local connection”. Individuals are also assessed as to whether they are in “priority need”, which we heard potentially excludes many people who need support from receiving it. Dr Carin Tunåker, Professor in Law at the University of Kent, questioned the fairness of this process:

It is determined whether you are priority need, whether you are intentionally homeless and so on. Who do we choose? Who is priority need? How do we decide who needs help more than someone else?...Local authorities are working really hard to try and place people, but they do not have anywhere to place them. [\[Q8\]](#)

We heard from those with lived experience of how these policies further exacerbate the risk of having to sleep on the streets. One individual at William Collier House described a situation where a local authority refused housing support due to him not being able to prove a local connection, despite his son living in the area.



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We also heard of specific barriers for certain groups, including young people, who Balbir Chatrik of Centrepont told us often find it very difficult to receive in-person assessments from councils, and asylum seekers, who only have a very short period of time to find new accommodation once the “move-on” order from temporary Home Office accommodation has been issued. Paul Dennett described the situation where some individuals are owed housing support duties but not others as “bizarre”, adding:

We owe a duty to some people, but we do not seemingly owe a duty to others. The legislation is forcing us to decide between those who are seemingly deserving and undeserving of temporary accommodation. [Q21]

- **Many people who present as homeless face unacceptable barriers to accessing housing support to which they should be entitled to prevent them from sleeping rough. The Government must act to remove these barriers by:**
  - *Reviewing the appropriateness of the guidance which councils have regard to when fulfilling their statutory housing support duties, particularly the impacts of the “intentional” homelessness concept introduced under the Housing Act (1996); the use of local connection tests and priority need assessments; and*
  - *Asking the Home Office to evaluate the impact of the decision to temporarily extend the move-on period for asylum seekers from 28 days to 56 days, with a view to making this change permanent if this measure is effective at reducing homelessness.*

In addition to difficulties accessing housing support, those with lived experience described issues in getting help for physical and mental health and addiction issues, which were felt to exacerbate the existing challenges with sustaining a tenancy. In particular, we were told how support services often made receiving support conditional on being “clean” of substances, and this was felt to be an insurmountable barrier for those desperately in need of help and who were in the middle of fighting an addiction. A participant with lived experience of rough sleeping who spoke to us during our visit to William Collier House told us that such gatekeeping:

[...] feeds into the feeling of being rejected by the people who are meant to help you.

Others felt that the drug addiction support that was available was not as effective as it could be, and that their health and addiction issues were deeply interconnected with the situation where they had ended up sleeping rough in the first place. They told us



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about how getting alcohol or drug free could be incredibly difficult even without these additional barriers to support, with one staff member at William Collier House who had previous experience sleeping rough telling us that:

It is incredibly difficult to get sober. If you have five, six, seven things [in your life] wrong, it's never going to work. The percentage of people getting clean [from rehabilitation] is around 5%.

- **There is a clear connection between those who are struggling with health and addiction issues and difficulties in holding down tenancies. Individuals who are struggling with severe health and addiction issues should not be “punished” by withholding housing and other support on the basis that they are not clean of substances at the time of seeking support. The Government must:**
  - ***Review guidance that local health and housing support services have regarding the support they must offer to those with substance abuse issues, and ensure support is available to all who need it, rather than conditional on abstinence.***

### 5. Housing First

As discussed with the Minister during our oral evidence session on 21 January 2025, the [Government's evaluation](#) of the Housing First pilot schemes in Greater Manchester, the Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands, was largely positive. The evaluation cited the large proportion of participants who had retained tenancies after a year; the positive impacts on the personal lives of those involved including around health issues, and that the schemes represented good value for money. We heard evidence from stakeholders that Housing First has proven to be an effective intervention in particular for those with a high level of support needs who are at risk of rough sleeping. Sophie Boobis of Homeless Link told us that to be as effective as possible, any future rollout of Housing First requires:

[...] access to appropriate housing. You need a lot of one-bedroom properties for Housing First...[it is] very cost-effective but has high upstart costs in terms of delivering. [\[Q23\]](#)

Further, homelessness charity Emmaus UK told us in [written evidence](#) that Housing First is most effective for those with higher support needs:





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Housing First is a brilliant way of getting real, long-term results, but it seems mainly to be geared to those with higher support needs, or long periods of entrenched rough sleeping. The idea needs to expand to an offer for those with medium support needs.

- **Housing First is working well at addressing both people’s immediate need for housing and supporting the resolution of long-standing health and addiction issues for those with high support needs.**
  - *The Government should investigate the impacts of expanding Housing First beyond its initial pilot schemes;*
  - *It must ensure that councils implementing Housing First projects in future take forward learnings from the pilot schemes, for example through the distribution of evidence-based guidance on the effective running of Housing First; and*
  - *Ensure that there is a sufficient supply of available housing to enable these projects to succeed by implementing the recommendations on increasing the supply of housing outlined above.*
- **However, it is also important to remember that there is no “one size fits all” approach when it comes to resolving and mitigating the impacts of rough sleeping, and funding for Housing First should not be at the expense of other forms of support for those with lower support needs.**
  - *The Government should ensure that grant funding for rough sleeping support can continue to be spent on other forms of support for medium and low needs individuals.*

### 6. Joined-up working

We heard evidence about the inter-connectedness of health and other personal issues and the risk of sleeping rough. Stakeholders were positive about the potential of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness to bring together work across Government to ensure that solutions are integrated and working together rather than in contradiction. We also heard that devolution may further enable those closer to the problem working locally to better tackle rough sleeping but that existing tensions between Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and councils would need to be resolved as a first step. Paul Dennett of the GMCA spoke to these challenges, telling us that:



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[Greater Manchester] had health devolution previously, then along came these...integrated care systems. That literally disconnected...that integration agenda that we had been on for many years prior. [Q33]

We also heard of “gaps” between the NHS and other public institutions and housing support, for example people at risk of rough sleeping being discharged from hospitals or prisons without the offer of any follow-up support. Adam Hug of Westminster City Council told us that:

The mental health hospital that used to provide support to my rough sleeping community in and around Victoria and the West End was closed during the pandemic and has never reopened...Previously, our outreach teams were able to physically walk people in mental health crisis to hospital. That is now no longer there. [Q26]

In [written evidence](#), Crisis highlighted a number of approaches to tackle this gap in follow-up support, including:

- Critical Time Intervention: providing support to people who are vulnerable to homelessness during periods of transition such as leaving prison, hospital or asylum accommodation, including access to housing along “intensive, time-limited support to help people settle into their home and access mainstream support services.”; and
- The “Pathway” model to avoiding hospital discharges into the street, connecting individuals with local services, including GPs, providing short-term (medical) care and connecting them to accommodation.
- **We welcome the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness and look forward to engaging with it in its efforts to end rough sleeping. It is crucial that the Group fosters better cross-Departmental working and also encourages more joined-up working at the local level, particularly between councils and local health services. With this in mind, the Government should:**
  - ***Make minutes from the meetings of the Group public or at least update the Committee on its objectives or terms of reference, discussions and plans;***
  - ***As part of its plans for devolution, work with councils and the Department of Health and Social Care to resolve tensions created by the introduction of Integrated Care Boards in delivering***



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*integrated, effective and targeted health and care support for those at risk of homelessness and currently sleeping rough; and*

- *Work with outreach charities to review how it can better support the provision of follow-up support for those leaving hospitals and prisons who are at risk of sleeping rough and provide funding for these "time-critical" interventions.*

### 7. Data

We heard evidence that the current data which is published by the Government (its annual [rough sleeping "snapshot"](#) and the [data framework](#)) does not capture the full number of people sleeping rough, meaning that it is harder for councils and charities to design and plan services, given demand can be unpredictable. Sophie Boobis of Homeless Link warned that ineffective data collection creates gaps in the evidence base for designing services aimed at preventing rough sleeping and to mitigate its impacts:

We know that we are not capturing everybody who is experiencing street homelessness, and therefore we are not designing services with them in mind...it requires resourcing, funding and investment to deliver the outreach needed. [\[Q32\]](#)

Further, there may be more the Government can do to ensure and facilitate better data-sharing between different Departments on relevant data. Speaking to this, Paul Dennett told us that the Government should be:

[...] looking at things like Home Office data on accelerated asylum and at the Government's affordable homes programme in terms of how many social rented properties and local housing allowance properties we are delivering...How does that marry up with the pressures in terms of homelessness numbers? [\[Q33\]](#)

- **The Government will be in a better position to develop effective solutions to the rough sleeping emergency when it has robust data and evidence to use as a base for developing policy options. More effective data collection and monitoring on rough sleeping is badly needed as a starting point. The Government should therefore:**
  - *Review the way the rough sleeping annual snapshot is conducted and devise a plan for improving the estimate, including capturing incidences of "hidden" rough sleeping, and capturing more demographic and situational information (i.e. proportions of recent hospital and/or prison leavers);*



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- ***Conduct an assessment with councils to understand how useful they currently find the current snapshot and data framework and seek recommendations from them on how to improve this; and***
- ***Foster greater data-sharing between different Departments whose work impacts rough sleeping, including the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office.***

We would like to put on record our thanks to all those who contributed evidence to our inquiry, including the staff and attendees at William Collier House, our oral evidence witnesses and organisations that submitted written evidence.

**We would appreciate a response to our findings and recommendations prior to the House rising for Easter recess on 8 April 2025.**

Best wishes,

**Florence Eshalomi**  
**Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee**