



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Flow of Rough Sleeping Final Report

Case study report



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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives of the case study research

This report provides the findings from a programme of research which aimed to provide evidence about the drivers of the flow of rough sleeping and the strategies employed to prevent it, in five case study areas: Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Camden, Southwark and Westminster.

The flow of rough sleeping refers to instances where people are new to sleeping rough in a specific area. This can include people who have slept rough in other areas previously, as well as people who have not slept rough anywhere before. It does not include people who have been recorded as sleeping rough in a specific area longer than one year ago, or people who have slept rough in a specific area in the past and subsequently returned to sleeping rough. For the purposes of this research, we spoke to people who were new to rough sleeping (either in a specific case study area or new to rough sleeping altogether) within the last five months at the point the fieldwork began. This evidence will support the Government in its ambition to end rough sleeping.

In 2019 and 2020, the Rough Sleeping Questionnaire (RSQ) provided detailed quantitative evidence of the experiences of people sleeping rough in the UK¹. This research was one of the largest survey data collections on people who sleep rough ever conducted in the UK and provided detailed evidence on the drivers of rough sleeping. In addition, the Department and other actors in the homelessness sector have commissioned a range of qualitative studies to inform the evidence base on the experience of people sleeping rough once they become homeless. However, less is known about the key points in individuals' lives which can result in a first episode of rough sleeping, and which may represent missed opportunities for preventative interventions. This research is intended to enhance the existing evidence base, and in so doing inform future preventative approaches nationally.

With these priorities in mind, the objectives of this research are to:

- Gain a more detailed understanding of **individuals' journeys before sleeping rough for the first time**, the key underpinning drivers, and whether any opportunities for prevention may have been missed.
- Gain a better understanding of the **strategies and approaches employed to prevent the flow of rough sleeping** at a local level.

Evidence from the research is presented in two separate reports. The first report brings together thematic findings from across all the case studies. The second, this report, presents in-depth findings on each case study area in turn, demonstrating how services in the five case study areas have sought to prevent the flow of rough sleeping, illustrated with evidence from those with recent experience of sleeping rough for the first time.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-questionnaire-initial-findings>

1.2 Background and context

1.2.1 Current numbers of people sleeping rough

This report draws on two data sources to present the number of people sleeping rough in the five case study areas:

Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: this is an annual snapshot of the number of people estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in autumn (1 October to 30 November). Local authorities use either a count-based estimate of visible rough sleeping, an evidence-based estimate based on meetings with local partner, or a combination of the two approaches. The snapshot methodology has been in place since 2010 and remains the most official and **most robust measure of rough sleeping on a single night**. The evidence used here is taken from Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2022.²

Rough Sleeping Management Information in England: this includes management information submitted to DLUHC by local authorities on a monthly basis (the monthly figures are published quarterly). The data is a **more frequent but less robust estimate of people sleeping rough** than the official annual snapshot statistics. The evidence used here is taken from Rough Sleeping Management Information: March 2023.³

According to the official annual rough sleeping snapshot statistics, 3,069 people were estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in England, an increase of 626 people or 26% from 2021. Four of the case study areas saw an increase in the number of people sleeping rough on a single night between 2021 and 2022, while Camden was the only area to see a slight decrease, from 97 to 90 people.

The following tables present the number of people sleeping rough in the five case study areas, and their demographic information.

Table 1.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in England for the case study areas

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Birmingham	31	39	8	26
Brighton & Hove	37	41	4	11
Camden	97	90	-7	-7
Southwark	10	14	4	40
Westminster	187	250	63	34

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2022>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

Table 1.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in the case study areas

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	Over 26 years
Birmingham	36	3	30	2	2	1	33
Brighton & Hove	37	4	35	4	2	0	37
Camden	68	22	37	38	3	5	63
Southwark	14	0	4	10	0	0	37
Westminster	185	56	76	113	20	17	197

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Tables 2a-c)

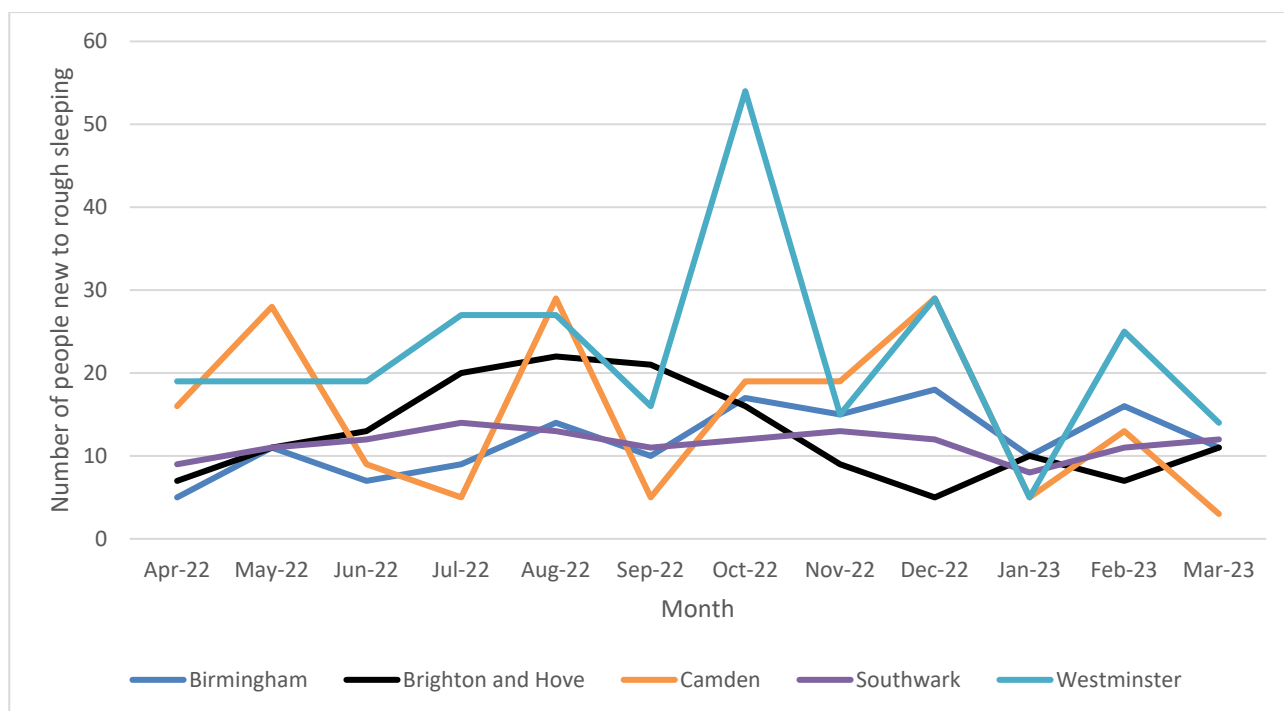
In the five case study areas, **the number of people who were new to rough sleeping⁴ on a single night** also fluctuated in the period between April 2022 and March 2023 (see Chart 1.1).

In the preceding year, April 2021 to March 2022, the five case study areas recorded higher numbers of people new to sleeping rough at different points in the year. In Westminster, this occurred in May and June 2021, while Camden and Brighton & Hove recorded higher numbers in September (although Camden saw high numbers in October to December). In Southwark, the number of people new to rough sleeping was typically higher in September to November 2021, but also recorded high numbers in June and July 2021 and February 2021. In Birmingham, the number of people new to rough sleeping fluctuated throughout the year, with higher numbers recorded in April and June 2021 and again in December 2021 and January 2022.⁵

⁴ This refers to people who were not recorded as sleeping rough in a specific area in the period between April 2021 and March 2023. It does not include people who have been recorded as sleeping rough longer than one year ago or people who have slept rough in a specific area in the past and subsequently returned to sleeping rough.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2022>

Chart 1.1: Total number of new people who are sleeping rough on a single night in the five case study areas on a single night (April 2022 to March 2023)



Source: Rough Sleeping Management Information in England (Table 2b, April 2022 to March 2023)

1.2.2 Rough Sleeping in London

According to the most recent quarterly CHAIN report (January-March 2023), there were 1,490 people recorded as sleeping rough for the first time in London – 48% of all people found to be sleeping rough in the capital. This was a decrease of 12% compared to the previous quarter (October-December 2022) and an increase of 15% of people new to rough sleeping compared to the same quarter in the previous year (January-March 2022). Of those recorded as sleeping rough for the first time, 1,138 (76%) only spent one night sleeping rough. A further 22% of people new to rough sleeping spent more than one night on the streets but did not go on to live on the streets and 2% were deemed to be living on the streets.⁶

This research focuses on three areas in London: Camden, Southwark and Westminster, because of the unique challenges observed in London. Camden and Westminster both saw increases in the numbers of people new to sleeping rough in the period January-March 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, while Southwark saw a slight decrease (but the number had increased in previous periods). In Camden and Westminster, there were also significant increases in the number of people new to rough sleeping who did not sleep out for a second night, compared to the same period in 2022. In Southwark, there was a slight increase in the number of people new to rough sleeping who did not spend a second night out.

⁶ <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

Table 1.3: Number of people new to rough sleeping and people who slept rough for one night only for the three case study areas in London (January to March 2023)

Case study area	Number of people new to sleeping rough	Change since January-March 2022	Number of people who slept rough for one night only	Change since January to March 2022
Camden	71	-3	60	+11
Southwark	60	+3	40	+3
Westminster	256	+27	194	+25

Source: CHAIN Quarterly Reports, January to March 2023

1.3 Research methodology

This research used a qualitative case study approach to understand the drivers of the flow of rough sleeping in each area and the preventative strategies employed in the five local authority areas. A description of how and why the case study areas were selected is presented in section 1.1 of the accompanying main report for this research study.

The first phase of this research was a review of existing evidence of the flow of rough sleeping and local authorities' strategies to prevent it. This evidence included monitoring information and annual snapshot data collected by local authorities for DLUHC, local authority strategy documents and interviews with individuals responsible for commissioning housing, homelessness and rough sleeping services. The evidence review was used to inform the mainstage qualitative research.

The qualitative case studies consisted of interviews with both service providers and people new to rough sleeping in each of the case study local authorities. Findings from the evidence review were used to select at least six interviewees from service providers in each area. These participants completed interviews about the drivers of flow of rough sleeping in their areas and the measures in place to prevent it. Participants working in frontline services such as outreach teams and accommodation settings then supported the research team to engage with people sleeping rough about taking part in the research. The research team conducted five interviews with people new to sleeping rough in each area to understand their journeys into rough sleeping (25 in total).

Analysis for the qualitative case studies was underpinned by a thematic framework for the study developed from the key research questions. All interviews with service providers were recorded and transcribed, and interviews with people new to sleeping rough were either recorded if consent was given at the time of interviewed or detailed fieldnotes were taken during the interview. Data analysis included the production and analysis of comprehensive interview summaries in Microsoft Excel, and through manual thematic analysis of transcripts and fieldnotes. This process was supported by team discussions, which were used to explore, review and analyse the dataset.

1.4 Presentation of evidence

The findings in this report present the range of experiences, views and responses from participating service providers and people sleeping rough. Case illustrations of people new to rough sleeping have been **anonymised** throughout to protect the identity of individuals, with quotations attributed using gender and age. Quotations from service providers are attributed to a relevant generic job title and by local authority.

Findings reflect the perceptions of those who participated in the research. In this report the evidence has not been triangulated with other sources to evaluate the factual content of statements, and rather aims to present a range of perspectives on the issues described.

Each case study chapter follows a broadly common structure, providing information on the background and context for each area before exploring the factors leading to the flows of people rough sleeping in their areas for the first time. Each chapter also summarises the homelessness services available in each area, and collaborative activities aiming to prevent rough sleeping within and, for the London case studies, between different authorities.

The final chapter provides a series of concluding comments, with the full study conclusions and recommendations appearing in the main report.

2 Westminster

2.1 Background and context

Data on the numbers of individuals sleeping rough in Westminster are provided below. Table W.1 compares the numbers identified as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 to the same exercise in 2021, using data from the annual snapshot survey, and shows a 34% increase over the preceding 12 months. Table W.2 provides a breakdown of those found to be sleeping rough in Autumn 2022, which showed them to be predominantly male, aged 26 and over, and from countries outside the UK. Please note totals may not equal due to missing data for some individuals.

Table 2.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in Westminster

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Westminster	187	250	63	34

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)

Table 2.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in Westminster, Autumn 2022

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	Over 26 years
Westminster	185	56	76	113	20	17	197

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 2a-c)

Alongside this, data from Rough Sleeping Management Information in England shows there were an average of 71 new people found sleeping rough each month in 2022 and an average of 58 new people per month from January to March 2023. In March 2023, there were 74 people recorded as new to rough sleeping in Westminster over the course of the month.⁷ This is a decrease of 14 people compared to the same point in 2022. This is the latest available data on people new to rough sleeping, at the time of this report.

In addition, data from the CHAIN database, which covers all London Boroughs, showed that 256 individuals were found to be sleeping rough for the first time in Westminster between January and March 2023 – an increase of 27 individuals⁸.

⁷ Rough Sleeping Management Information in England, March 2023 (Table 2j): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

⁸ CHAIN is a comprehensive database of information collected by outreach teams in Greater London boroughs, which records the number of people sleeping rough for the first time in each area and the number of times they were seen over the course of a year, as well as information on individuals' history prior to sleeping rough and accommodation and reconnection outcomes.

2.1.1 Research methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative case study comprised six interviews with service providers (including two paired interviews) and five interviews with people new to sleeping rough. Interviews with service providers were conducted between December 2022 and April 2023, and interviews with people sleeping rough in April 2023. Fieldwork in Westminster focused on those who were either living in Off the Street accommodation or were currently sleeping rough⁹¹⁰. These were individuals who had not been seen sleeping rough in Westminster before, either because they were new to rough sleeping altogether or new to the area (and may have previously slept rough elsewhere). Participants new to rough sleeping were recruited to the research via local service delivery partners: three by the St Mungo's outreach team and two by The Passage.

All were male and ranged in age from people in their 20s to people in their 60s. They comprised UK and non-UK nationals. The majority of people who are new to sleeping rough in Westminster do not have a local connection.¹¹ In 2020-21, 16% of people new to rough sleeping had a last settled base in Westminster compared to 59% who had a last settled base elsewhere in London.¹²

2.1.2 Reasons for leaving last settled accommodation

Reasons for leaving their last settled base varied across the participants, including:

- Disputes with a landlord
- Difficulties sustaining a tenancy
- Relocation of UK nationals from abroad

Understanding the reasons for individuals leaving their last settled accommodation provides insight into the type of support services that may support people away from a crisis situation and becoming homeless. The examples cited in the Westminster interviews reflect the main drivers of rough sleeping reported elsewhere in the study. Consequently we have focused on the experiences and perceptions of people sleeping rough for the first time, and of the local authority and others involved in homelessness services, in terms of the key steps in addressing rough sleeping where it is identified and working to prevent instances of rough sleeping in the first case.

2.1.2 Local service provision

Within Westminster Council a number of teams are involved in working with those at risk, and experience of, sleeping rough. These include Housing Solutions, Children's Services, Environmental Health, and Employment. A number of third sector organisations also provide services in Westminster, via the Westminster Homelessness Partnership. This comprises a number of organisations working together to end rough sleeping in the borough: Westminster City Council; St Mungo's; The Connection at St Martin-in-the-fields; Groundswell; The Passage; Look Ahead; Housing Justice; the NHS; WLM; and Single Homeless Project.

⁹Off the Street accommodation options include emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters.

¹⁰Can include people who were new and supported off the street within the last five months, but then returned to rough sleeping.

¹¹ <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/housing-policy-and-strategy/rough-sleeping-strategy>

¹² MHCLG Phase 1 key findings PowerPoint (unpublished)

2.2 Factors leading to flow of rough sleeping in Westminster

2.2.1 Location

As service providers and commissioners consistently noted, a high proportion of those sleeping rough for the first time came to Westminster from other areas (including a high share with non-UK backgrounds) with no local connection to the area. Westminster's central London location and transport hubs, such as national rail terminals and Victoria coach station, were noted as key contributing factors for people coming to the area¹³. Service providers and commissioners, and those interviewed who were new to sleeping rough, felt that central London areas offered better employment opportunities than other areas. However, individuals who do not find work and do not have social connections can find themselves at risk of homelessness.

"There's so many transport links within Westminster that we are the first place that people arrive at... people arrive here because they think, okay, I'll get help in London or there'll be opportunities there." **Service commissioner, Westminster**

People sleeping rough for the first time who had arrived into the UK from abroad with no housing options reported that they did not know where to sleep. They often slept in train or bus stations for shelter because they were public places open 24 hours a day.



"[I got deported from [a country outside of the UK] and then I was sleeping in Paddington for about three weeks... I used to sleep on the benches inside the station... But at least it's dry in there. I didn't know anywhere else to sleep anyway." **Male sleeping rough, aged 50-60, Westminster ("Patrick")**

Patrick served a non-UK prison sentence and was deported back to the UK after his release. Patrick did not have any family or friends to turn to when he returned or any housing options. As a result, Patrick resorted to sleeping rough in the train station his train from the airport arrived in to. This journey from arriving in the UK, specifically London, was a factor in why Patrick ended up sleeping rough in Westminster compared to another London borough, or elsewhere in the UK.

Work opportunities were also cited by service providers as an attractor to the area, particularly for those arriving from outside the UK, who can have perceptions of better economic opportunities in London compared to their own countries that may be experiencing economic crises. For example, one person sleeping rough reported they arrived from Europe in the hope of finding a job, but instead they found limited work opportunities and ended up sleeping rough.

¹³ Including Charing Cross, London Marylebone, London Paddington and London Victoria.

"I came here to earn money, I still have maybe 10 years to make some money... and living here, I don't want to go back to [my country]." **Male sleeping rough, aged 50-60, Westminster**

2.2.2 Word of mouth

The perception of safety in Westminster as a result of the high proportion of tourists and the 24-hour activity was reported by both service providers and people sleeping rough as a reason why individuals chose to sleep rough in the borough. In addition, these factors also presented opportunities for people sleeping rough to make money through begging.

"I think there's also something very reassuring for people, coming to Westminster and being in the iconic parts of London, being in areas where it's always busy, there's some reassurance in safety there." **Outreach service provider, Westminster**



"[I feel] a bit safer. It's only because it's more touristy. When I was fully out on the street, I slept during the day, [and] I was awake during the night. [It's] a bit better round here." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Westminster ("Luke")**

Luke had been sleeping rough in Lambeth before he ended up walking towards central London and started to sleep on the streets in Westminster. He was not connected to any outreach services in Lambeth and "drifted" to Westminster, where he was engaged with an outreach team. Luke reported that he felt unsafe on the streets within Lambeth as it was rough and felt more reassured in Westminster because there were more people about, particularly during the day. While Luke still took precautions for his safety, his story highlighted how individuals can be drawn to busier areas in London for perceived better safety.

Service providers suggested that the high-quality services available to support people sleeping rough in Westminster were a draw for those at risk of sleeping rough for the first time. It was widely felt that these services were understood to be easy to access and be well resourced, in comparison to services in other parts of the UK. Service providers noted that there was an established community of people sleeping rough in the area, which may promote an enhanced sense of personal safety and contribute to word-of-mouth around service availability, and with the potential to 'attract' people from other local authorities. One service provider interviewed suggested that some of those at risk of sleeping rough would be aware of this:

"[A client] said that he knew that in Westminster there was a GP surgery that would prescribe methadone without much assessment, so that's what made him come to Westminster to rough sleep. So, this is just an example, but I guess that The Passage is quite famous." **Service provider, Westminster**

However, the people sleeping rough that were interviewed reported having no knowledge of the types of services that were available in Westminster. None of those interviewed reported knowing of any homelessness prevention or rough sleeping services in the area before arriving, and were only made aware of services once outreach teams had connected with them.

"I was here [Westminster] for about a month before I knew anything about The Passage and St Mungo's. I didn't know anything." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Westminster**

2.2.3 People with restricted eligibility for support

Non-UK nationals represent a high proportion of people sleeping rough in Westminster and can be faced with challenges both in terms of finding settled accommodation and accessing support services available to them. Service providers felt that they are limited in what support they could offer to people with restricted eligibility for support. Lengthy delays in decision-making on immigration status were described as frustrating to service providers, who were prevented from providing necessary support until this was finalised.

Service providers and commissioners highlighted the challenge in preventing particular populations from travelling to London to earn money on the streets. For example, one service provider noted how there is a perception amongst some people from outside of the UK that they can make money by living on the streets in London.

"It's difficult because people are leaving a situation which isn't great and actually, here on the streets, they have access to free food, all of those things that may not look great to us, but I think for a lot of people, it's better than what they have back home where they have nothing." **Service provider, Westminster**

2.2.4 Providing documentation

Service providers also described frustration with the requirement for someone sleeping rough to be verified before accessing services. They highlighted that those at risk of, or already, sleeping rough would not be able to access services merely because they hadn't been verified by the right organisation. However, they recognised the benefits of a verification system, for example in helping to manage numbers for initiatives such as the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

"A lot of the rough sleeping services we work with or refer into, you need to have a CHAIN number which means you need to be a verified rough sleeper...people walking into the day centres saying, 'I haven't got anywhere to go,'... they cannot access certain things because they're not a rough sleeper...you need to be found on the street before we can access accommodation which does not in any way feel like prevention." **Service provider, Westminster**

Service providers and commissioners also mentioned there was limited support available for individuals released recently from prison or discharged from a hospital or other long-term care settings. These individuals may not have the identification and other documents required to access housing support, and/or may find that limited help is available for them secure temporary housing. This meant those individuals were vulnerable to sleeping rough on the streets.

"We have people that are released, you meet people and they're literally just told, 'Well, here's an appointment slip, you just need to present at Housing Options,' but Housing Options will not help you. That's just a reality. As a worker, it's impossible to get TA [temporary accommodation] on the same day." **Service provider, Westminster**

2.3 Collaborating on prevention with other local authorities

Service providers and commissioners both noted some positive working relationships between Westminster services and those of other London boroughs. For example, Westminster and Camden work closely together, particularly on housing options, because they have a similar profile and demand of people new to rough sleeping. However, the small geographical area of the city meant that those sleeping rough could move between boroughs with ease. Instances of boroughs wanting to send individuals back to Westminster were highlighted, even though there was no local connection, because an individual had been identified and verified in the borough. This was seen to put additional pressure on local services given the strength of Westminster's outreach.

"What is Westminster in the sense of it's just a boundary, it's just a line on the floor." **Service provider, Westminster**

One service commissioner called for a pan-London approach to tackling rough sleeping in the city to avoid these issues and provide services more effectively. This would include establishing effective case management and data sharing arrangements between each of the London boroughs, taking steps to ensure multi-disciplinary responses can be mobilised (including between boroughs for specialist services and tracking individuals new to rough sleeping), and sharing learning and good practice on preventative approaches. They noted how such an approach is a collective responsibility for London boroughs, and one which in Westminster could help mitigate the challenge of severely limited housing stock in Westminster compared to other London boroughs.

"I think rough sleeping, homelessness is a pan-London issue as opposed to individual boroughs responsibility. I would always be keen on a more pan-London approach to rough sleeping rather than it being as sovereign as it is now between different local authorities because of the challenges with that." **Service commissioner, Westminster**

Service providers and commissioners felt that an emphasis on local rather than national support has led to a "postcode lottery" in terms of addressing prevention of homelessness across the country, particularly when coupled with the recent impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals as a strong driver of homelessness. Service commissioners and providers highlighted how prevention work can be challenging in Westminster for those that do not have a local connection. Any interventions to prevent rough sleeping in Westminster needs to be national and for other local authorities to have stronger prevention services and ensure that an individual is offered the same support elsewhere as they are in Westminster.

"When someone doesn't necessarily have a connection to you and they're new to the street, your prevention is quite hard to prevent in that space." **Service commissioner, Westminster**

"[Prevention has] got to be national. The taps are on, and we're just clearing up the water that's overflowing from the bath... So if I can have one thing, it would be that the clients that arrive in Westminster have had the same offers wherever they're from that they are going to get here." **Service commissioner, Westminster**

2.4 Collaboration on prevention within Westminster

One of the major challenges Westminster faces to preventing the flow of rough sleeping was a result of the high proportion of individuals who do not have a local connection. This has meant the local authority or service providers were unable to intervene before individuals first slept rough. Instead, they relied on other local authorities to identify at-risk individuals and provide support before such individuals were drawn to or drifted towards Westminster.

"I don't really know what the solution would be in terms of prevention... because it's preventing people who are new to Westminster coming to Westminster this work would need to be going on in other areas." **Service provider, Westminster**

There was recognition among service providers of some evidence of good collaboration on prevention in Westminster. For example, Shelter run an early intervention programme which focuses on people who start to demonstrate early indicators of homelessness, and try to put interventions in place to prevent the loss of accommodation. While prevention systems that are in place are currently working, service providers recognised the need for more investment of projects and services to meet the demand and need for prevention work.

It was highlighted that public services are under resource pressures and so must focus more on 'crisis-driven interventions' rather than prevention. Service providers and commissioners felt that despite agencies working well together, the system itself can be unclear for all individuals, particularly for those who are unverified. This was felt to limit staff, for example at day centres, on what support they can offer or signpost to.

"There's been a move back into more crisis-driven interventions and less of the universal prevention-driven activity over the years really, and that's due to, I would say, pressures and demand and people's ability of having to respond to the crises, as opposed to embedding that preventive work" **Service commissioner, Westminster**

"It doesn't always join up for everyone because the services are commissioned to work with verified rough sleepers. But homelessness is much wider than that and there is that cohort of people that struggle because of that." **Service provider, Westminster**

With respect to prison leavers, service commissioners and providers highlighted issues with this group accessing support in Westminster. The support available to prison leavers was often seen as not sufficient to prevent rough sleeping, or to limit its duration. For example, one service provider noted that homeless applications should be submitted 5-6 days before a prison leaver is released so accommodation can be in place, but this was not happening in practice. Others suggested that single male prison leavers were not seen as a priority for emergency housing and that leavers were expected to make their own way to housing solutions, without the proactive support they needed.

Moreover, those from particular ethnic backgrounds were also felt to have higher levels of mistrust of statutory services than others. For example, members of the Roma population were noted as being particularly difficult to engage. Service providers noted specific initiatives to engage this population, which they felt were vulnerable but also wary of services and suspicious of support.

"We rarely see [Roma clients] in the assessment centre. We also rarely see them in our resource centre. We've been trying to do some work to get some inroads." **Service provider, Westminster**

3 Camden

3.1 Background and context

Data on the numbers of individuals sleeping rough in Camden are provided below. Table C.1 compares the numbers identified as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 to the same exercise in 2021, using data from the annual snapshot survey, which shows a 7% reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough over the preceding 12 months. Table C.2 provides a breakdown of those found to be sleeping rough in Autumn 2022, which showed them to be predominantly male, broadly evenly distributed between UK and non-UK nationals, with the majority being aged 26 and above. Please note totals may not equal due to missing data for some individuals.

Table 3.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in Camden

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Camden	97	90	-7	-7

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)

Table 3.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in Camden, Autumn 2022

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	Over 26 years
Camden	68	22	37	38	3	5	63

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 2a-c)

Alongside this, data from Rough Sleeping Management Information in England shows there were an average of 23 new people found sleeping rough each month in 2022 and an average of 21 new people per month from January to March 2023. In March 2023, there were 20 people recorded as new to rough sleeping in Camden over the course of the month.¹⁴ This is a decrease of 10 people compared to the same point in 2022 and is the latest available data on people new to rough sleeping, at the time of this report.

In addition, data from the CHAIN database¹⁵, which covers all London Boroughs, showed that 71 individuals were found to be sleeping rough for the first time in Camden between January and March 2023 – a decrease of three individuals.

¹⁴ Rough Sleeping Management Information in England, March 2023 (Table 2j): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

¹⁵ CHAIN is a comprehensive database of information collected by outreach teams in Greater London boroughs, which records the number of people sleeping rough for the first time in each area and the number of times they were seen over the course of a year, as well as information on individuals' history prior to sleeping rough and accommodation and reconnection outcomes.

3.1.1 Research methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative case study report was conducted in two stages. This comprised of seven interviews with service providers and commissioners within Camden, undertaken between December 2022 and January 2023. Following these interviews, case workers supported the research team to engage and recruit people who were new to sleeping rough to take part in an interview, and five were completed. These interviews were conducted in person and onsite at temporary accommodation shelters in Camden between March and April 2023.

Fieldwork in Camden focused on those who were either living in Off the Street¹⁶ accommodation or were currently sleeping rough.¹⁷ These were individuals who had not been seen sleeping rough in Camden before, either because they were new to rough sleeping altogether or new to the area (and may have previously slept rough elsewhere).

The sample of five individuals new to rough sleeping included five men ranging in age from their twenties to their forties. Two were UK nationals, and three non-UK nationals. Prior to rough sleeping, the individuals had been living in supported accommodation, hostel accommodation, social housing, UK prison and living outside of the UK. Their health-related support needs included mental health and alcohol misuse.

3.1.2 Reasons for leaving last settled accommodation

Reasons for leaving their last settled accommodation varied across the participants, included:

- Eviction from accommodation
- Released from prison within the UK
- Moving for better employment opportunities in the UK

Service providers and commissioners, and people new to sleeping rough, mentioned relationship breakdowns, substance abuse, loss of employment and or privately rented accommodation, and domestic or gang-related violence as leading causes for why people leave their last settled base prior to sleeping rough in Camden. These reasons align with findings from existing research within the CHAIN annual report for Camden on the known drivers of flow of rough sleeping in Camden.¹⁸ However, people new to sleeping rough mentioned connections to London or Camden specifically as reasons for leaving their previous home area. Instead, they said that they felt London would generally offer better opportunities, such as for employment and housing, compared with elsewhere in the country or abroad.

“Those who end up rough sleeping are those who have no safety net in terms of friends, family or relations that they can rely on ... We find that those who end up rough sleeping for the first time, don't have [...] networks. [They are], potentially, people with insecure family life, or have been through care.” **Service commissioner, Camden**

¹⁶ Off the Street accommodation options include emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters.

¹⁷ Can include people who were new and supported off the street within the last five months, but then returned to rough sleeping.

¹⁸ CHAIN Annual Report, Camden. April 2022 – March 2023. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

"I came here [UK] because my mum is here [UK]. Back home I have two new babies but there is nothing there in order to raise my children [...] I came here to work. There is nobody but my mum [here]." **Person sleeping rough, Male, Camden**

Understanding the reasons for individuals leaving their last settled accommodation provides insight into the type of support that may help people away from a crisis situation and becoming homeless. The examples cited in the Camden interviews reflect the main drivers of rough sleeping reported elsewhere in the study. Consequently we have focused on the experiences and perceptions of individuals sleeping rough for the first time, and of the local authority and others involved in homelessness services, in terms of the key steps in addressing rough sleeping where it is identified and working to prevent instances of rough sleeping in the first case.

3.1.2 Local service provision

A range of organisations in Camden are involved in commissioning and providing services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming so, and so at risk of rough sleeping. This includes Camden Council, Connect Forward, Homeless Prevention Service (HPS), Routes off The Street (RTS), Camden Floating Support Service, Camden Respite Rooms, and Camden's Adult Pathway. It also includes an ex-offender and complex needs coordinator employed by the Borough specifically to support prison leavers find accommodation.

These services partner with other third sector organisations such as St Mungo's, Change Grow Live, Single Homeless Project, StreetLink, The Passage, The 165 Hub, St Giles Trust and No Second Night Out to deliver integrated specialist services to support people sleeping rough. In terms of preventative services, the HPS is commissioned to provide housing options and support tenancy sustainment, with Routes off the Streets being a commissioned service with both preventative and restorative functions. Other partners support these efforts by providing emergency accommodation (including to those not eligible for the Camden Adult Pathway as lacking a local connection), providing specialist services for specific target groups (e.g. prison leavers, women with complex needs and members of the Roma community) and providing services to help individuals reconnect to an area where they have a local connection.

3.2 Factors leading to flow of rough sleeping in Camden

3.2.1 Location

The central location of Camden was described by service providers and commissioners as the most common pull factors for those with no local connection to the area. Three of London's major commuter stations (Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras International) are in Camden, making it a hub for general street activity for people sleeping rough and those at-risk of sleeping rough arriving from parts of the UK and other countries, particularly from Eastern Europe. Service providers indicated that people sleeping rough were drawn to Camden's transport hubs in particular because they considered them to be busy areas with opportunities to make money through begging.

"I think the biggest draw is probably around the fact that it's highly populated, there's a lot of tourism, a lot of people who are rough sleeping, they have little or no income in place so they're

reliant on begging or they're reliant on donations. They're the biggest draws.” Service provider, Camden

3.2.2 Word of mouth

Service providers also mentioned that Camden is commonly perceived by people sleeping rough as having a range of support provisions such as mental health, drug and alcohol treatment services which are not as readily available in other neighbouring boroughs. This information can be spread through existing communities of people sleeping rough in Camden and attract people who have slept rough in other areas but are new to rough sleeping in Camden.

“They don’t want to go back to where they have the local connection because now they want to be in Camden because they think Camden offers better services.” Service provider, Camden

There were also reports that Camden has particular areas which are perceived to be safer to sleep rough. For example, one service provider noted how near a specific road there is an area with tents, and people congregate in this area because there’s a feeling of safety in numbers. People sleeping rough in this study did not report these perceptions specifically, although one participant, who had moved to London after rough sleeping in Manchester, reported that they were satisfied with the support they received in Camden (from the 165 Hub) and did not plan to move to another area.

3.2.3 People with restricted eligibility to support

Service providers noted how there is a known pendular migration between London and Romania where individuals from the Roma community may have experienced extreme poverty and want to come to London to seek employment and to make money, as well as better housing options. It was also highlighted how people from the Roma community do not always want to settle in Camden, for example, but rather view it as a short-term arrangement to make money to send back home. However, these individuals often have restricted eligibility to support in the UK and so cannot access traditional housing options, and are forced to sleep rough.

“I think, very simply, it is because they are unable to meet their needs in Romania and rough sleeping in London is often better than the situation back home, gives them the ability to try to make some money, with a view to making money, with a view to seeking employment... And then going home and taking that money home in some situations. So sometimes with the intention of not settling, but to come and make some money and then go home in order to support their families back home.” Service provider, Camden



Nicolae, who was from Romania and sleeping rough in Camden, explained how he moved from Romania to earn money and support his children as there were limited job opportunities in Romania. His mother was already in Camden and sleeping rough herself. Nicolae felt like he had no other choice but to travel to London, however he was faced with limited job prospects and had to sleep on the streets because he had no other accommodation options. Nicolae's journey has highlighted how people experiencing economic instability elsewhere can drive communities of individuals to seek earning money in London.

3.2.4 Providing documentation

The length and complexity of applying for housing support (including referrals and reconnections) was mentioned by service providers as a factor to why people end up sleeping rough. One service provider in particular noted how making a homeless application can be complicated for individuals, particularly if they have a local connection in a different local authority. They felt that improvements needed to be made to the housing application process to help streamline the procedure. In addition, challenges for people sleeping rough to prove they have a local connection to the area can be hard and contribute to the flow of people ending up sleeping rough.

"It's often hard for rough sleepers to prove that they have a local connection to the area, even if they genuinely do. This can prolong the homeless application process." **Service provider, Camden**



“[From losing employment and long-term accommodation] it was a couple of weeks before I started sleeping rough. When I had money, I was getting hotels and hostels and stuff like that and food but it's expensive in London [...] It was by chance that I was found by Routes off The Streets as I was rough sleeping up by Euston, but I didn't really know what the process was.” **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Camden (“Darren”)**

Darren ended up sleeping rough in Camden after he was evicted from a relative's social housing property who had passed away. Darren's name was not on the tenancy and was served an eviction notice. He was told he was not priority for eligibility for a new property, despite being at-risk of homelessness. Darren did not know who to seek additional support from about his housing situation and ended up becoming homeless and sleeping rough. Despite having a local connection to the area, this highlighted the challenge faced by individuals to access timely support and housing options.

3.3 Collaborating on prevention with other local authorities

Camden as a local authority works together with other local authority areas in London to deliver solutions to rough sleeping. Various pan-London initiatives such as the CHAIN database as well as

co-located temporary accommodation in Camden and Westminster (delivered in partnership with St Mungo's and St Giles Trust) are examples of joint working. However, the co-delivery of homelessness and rough sleeping support services with authorities outside of Greater London aren't considered to be as well established, which impacts on cross-authority communication and coordination.

Service providers expressed their difficulties with engaging **other local authorities to accept their duty of care**, especially with reconnections. One person sleeping rough spoke about their difficulties in being reconnected to an area outside of Camden. They claimed that their attempts at getting in contact with the local authority were largely ineffective, but the support of their caseworker helped to drive their determination to get the issue resolved. Further, service commissioners mentioned that the differences in how the local authorities operate can widely contrast, which often delays as well as adds to the complexities surrounding the application processes as time is often lost trying to understand how the systems vary.

"Other local authorities [...] don't understand our role because the Reconnections team don't really exist in other boroughs [...] It just takes time for them to understand that and they can be a bit resistant to it sometimes. We've never had anyone turn down an application from us, it's just a bit of a conversation with them." **Service commissioner, Camden**

"I was initially told that I'm not their [reconnected area's] problem [...] I've created traction in making this [reconnection] happen. It's me that's driving this [...] me that's cc'ing everyone into emails." **Service provider, Camden**

There are neighbouring local authorities within **a tight geographical area** which means that there is **an overlap of provisions** such as temporary accommodation with Westminster. Shared services available in both areas are examples of local authorities working collaboratively with partners such as St Giles Trust (receives referrals from RTS in Camden and Westminster SOS) towards the same end-goal. Similarly, the St Mungo's Camden outreach have recently worked closely with the Kingston upon Thames to deliver a pilot scheme, "The Roma Rough Sleeping Service." The service is intended to create a bespoke service which would meet the needs of the Roma rough sleeping population for which there is currently no consistent approach. The service provider involved in the trialling of the scheme felt positive about the possible rollout and the potential to share learnings across agencies within different local authority areas to deliver a more cohesive service, while also continuing to acknowledge the differences between the Roma communities found in one area compared with another (e.g. a younger and more male dominated cohort is found in Camden compared with an older and more female dominated cohort is in Westminster).

"It's the idea [Roma Rough Sleeping Service] that we need to be mediating equal access to services for people from the Roma community." **Service provider, Camden**

Similarly to those in Westminster, service providers within Camden noted how a pan-London approach to types of homelessness and rough sleeping services offered would help to ensure that individuals sleeping rough or at-risk of sleeping rough have a universal offer in terms of support.

"I think sometimes we need something like Pan London where every borough can offer the same type of services. It stops the drive of certain clients to certain boroughs because they might think, 'Oh, I'm having this.'" **Service provider, Camden**

3.4 Collaboration on prevention within Camden

3.4.1 Tailored approaches

There are various contact points throughout the rough sleeping journey at which **strong relationships can be formed between a person at risk of or sleeping rough and the support services** they access. For example, the RTS outreach team in Camden are considered vital for establishing relationships with people sleeping rough in the local area. Some service providers felt that early interactions during the initial RTS assessments have a significant impact on an individual's continued engagement with support provisions. Similarly, people sleeping rough said that having a good relationship with their assigned caseworker enabled them to receive appropriate and targeted support.

"Everybody's journey to homelessness or rough sleeping is different. It's not one size fits all. You need to understand and go deep down to understand what's happening. It's like a tailored approach to each individual and how we can help." **Service provider, Camden**

Both service providers and people sleeping rough indicated a greater need for social and cultural awareness within support services when interacting with people already sleeping rough and those at risk. More specifically, service providers and people sleeping rough similarly felt that there was often limited understanding of individual needs through a lack of rapport (and by extension a lack of trust) with specific cohorts such as people leaving institutions, as well as within the Roma community.



"They thought I was lying to them, they [probation officer] said... we need to verify you as sofa surfing with your mum isn't homeless, we need to physically see you on the street." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Camden ("James")**

James was released from prison to his mother's home in Camden, despite telling his Probation Officer this was not a permanent housing option. He applied for housing support to an outer London local authority, where he lived for 12 years before going to prison. He felt his application for support was refused because the local authority believed his local connection to be Camden, despite living in the outer London borough before prison. He felt his Probation Officer had failed to support him with his application because they did not accept he was homeless and ultimately had to sleep rough. This highlighted how **a tailored approach to providing housing support after leaving an institution may have prevented James from having to sleep rough.**

3.4.2 Using data to support prevention

Though service providers felt that the CHAIN database benefits the local authority areas within London, some said that **CHAIN did not provide all the information that they needed**, particularly with tracking individuals who are sleeping rough and their access to services in a last settled base. Others thought it ought to be nationwide so that services can extract information from other homelessness services across the UK, to establish where they had been rough sleeping previously and their individual needs. Having access to this information would help inform intervention strategies before they reach crisis point and with processing applications more efficiently, especially for referrals and reconnections.

“London has CHAIN, the rest of the country does not. If someone rocks up in Camden and they've been sleeping rough in Lancaster for the last 20 years, we won't know unless they tell us. They are not going to tell us, realistically they're just not.” **Service commissioner, Camden**

4 Southwark

4.1 Background and context

Data on the numbers of individuals sleeping rough in Southwark are provided below. Table 4.1 compares the numbers identified as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 to the same exercise in 2021, using data from the annual snapshot survey, and shows a 40% increase over the preceding 12 months. Table 4.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of those found to be sleeping rough in Autumn 2022, which showed them to be all male, predominantly non-UK nationals and aged 26 and above. Please note totals may not equal due to missing data for some individuals.

Table 4.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in Southwark

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Southwark	10	14	4	40

Source: *Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)*

Table 4.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in Southwark, Autumn 2022

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	26 and above
Southwark	14	0	4	10	0	2	12

Source: *Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 2a-c)*

Alongside this, data from Rough Sleeping Management Information in England shows there were an average of 26 new people found sleeping rough each month in 2022 and an average of 23 new people per month from January to March 2023. In March 2023, there were 24 people recorded as new to rough sleeping in Southwark over the course of the month of the month.¹⁹ This was the same number of people at the same point in 2022. This is the latest available data on people new to rough sleeping, at the time of this report.

In addition, data from the CHAIN database²⁰, which covers all London Boroughs, showed that 60 individuals were found to be sleeping rough for the first time in Southwark between January and March 2023 – an increase of three individuals.

¹⁹ Rough Sleeping Management Information in England, March 2023 (Table 2j): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

²⁰ CHAIN is a comprehensive database of information collected by outreach teams in Greater London boroughs, which records the number of people sleeping rough for the first time in each area and the number of times they were seen over the course of a year, as well as information on individuals' history prior to sleeping rough and accommodation and reconnection outcomes.

4.1.1 Research methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative case study report was conducted in two stages. This involved conducting seven online interviews with service providers and commissioners between December 2022 and January 2023. Following these interviews, five interviews were conducted with people new to rough sleeping. These individuals were identified by service providers working in the rough sleeping sector, who supported the research team to engage with people sleeping rough about taking part in the research. Participants were selected on the basis of being new to sleeping rough in Southwark (within the last 1-5 months). Fieldwork in Southwark focused on those who were either living in Off the Street²¹ accommodation or were currently sleeping rough.²² These were individuals who had not been seen sleeping rough in Southwark before, either because they were new to rough sleeping altogether or new to the area (and may have previously slept rough elsewhere). These interviews were conducted in person at temporary accommodation shelters and day centres within Southwark between April and May 2023.

The sample of five individuals new to rough sleeping included four men and one woman, with three in their twenties and two in their sixties. Three participants were Black or Black British, one participant was Asian and one participant was White British. Three were non-UK, non-EEA nationals and two were UK nationals.

Prior to rough sleeping, participants had been living in a range of accommodation settings including asylum accommodation (out of area), emergency accommodation (out of area), the family home, abroad and in private rented sector accommodation. Their health-related support needs included mental health, disability and substance misuse.

4.1.2 Reasons for leaving last settled accommodation

Reasons for leaving their last settled accommodation varied across the participants, including:

- Relationship breakdown within the household
- Eviction
- Difficulties sustaining tenancy
- Relocation to the UK

In addition to the reasons provided by participants with experience of sleeping rough, the service providers highlighted several reasons why people leave their last settled accommodation in their experience. These factors most commonly included housing precarity due to the cost of accommodation in the area, financial instability resulting from job loss, mental health issues, substances misuse and relationship breakdowns within households.

“The biggest approaches to the council, for the people that are going to be made homeless, are about family breakdown.” **Service provider, Frontline, Southwark**

²¹ Off the Street accommodation options include emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters.

²² Can include people who were new and supported off the street within the last five months, but then returned to rough sleeping.

Understanding the reasons for individuals leaving their last settled accommodation provides insight into the type of support services that may support them away from a crisis situation and becoming homeless. The examples cited in the Southwark interviews reflect the main drivers of rough sleeping reported elsewhere in the study. Consequently we have focused on the experiences and perceptions of individuals sleeping rough for the first time, and of the local authority and others involved in homelessness services, in terms of the key steps in addressing rough sleeping where it is identified and working to prevent instances of rough sleeping in the first case.

4.1.3 Service provision

There are a range of organisations involved in the commissioning and provision of homelessness and associated services in Southwark. The commissioning of services within Southwark Council sits within the adult social care team, whilst the homelessness remit sits within the Southwark Council housing team. They also work together with statutory services such as the Police, Probation Service, health, mental health and social care services.

Additionally, third sector organisations focusing upon specialised service areas also provide preventative support, servicing housing needs or providing support in the recovery and mental health space. These organisations include St Mungo's, the Manna Centre, the Health Inclusion Team at Guy's and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust, START Outreach team, Beam, Shelter, Crisis and Thames Reach.

Targeted preventative provision includes services for those leaving hospital and prison, and advice and support for those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Southwark Council also receives funding from DLUHC through programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) which funds various elements of outreach, navigation and bed provision, often through some of the third sector service providers listed above.

4.2 Factors leading to flow of rough sleeping in Southwark

4.2.1 Location

Both service providers and people sleeping rough described the centrality of parts of Southwark within London as one of the borough's main appeals. The transport connections and volume of people around London Bridge station are important pull factors for those rough sleeping. Service providers indicated that people sleeping rough were drawn to London Bridge in particular because they considered it to be a busy area with opportunities to make money through begging. Participants new to rough sleeping detailed how they often ended up staying in and around London Bridge after arriving at the station.

"Just random people walking past putting £10 into their hands. So, there's lots of money to be made around London Bridge." **Service provider, Frontline, Southwark**

Service providers also highlighted the perception that Southwark is one of the largest inner-city boroughs with a large stock of social housing. Although the amount of available housing is limited, many come to the borough to make applications for housing support.

"I think also, they may be drawn to Southwark because people are aware of the potential to be put forward to Southwark to make a homelessness application. Southwark, as you may know, has a very large stock of social housing, or one of the largest in London, but it's obviously like everyone else, it's very over-exposed in terms of being able to place people into accommodation through the borough." **Service provider, Frontline, Southwark**

4.2.2 Awareness

Limited awareness was consistently raised as a barrier to people sleeping rough accessing services across Southwark. Service providers expressed frustration with this as it meant that those at risk of homelessness often do not approach services until they reach crisis point, making it considerably harder to support individuals away from rough sleeping.

"From the client's point of view, often they don't know what to do until it happens to them. They don't know their rights. There is a difficulty, people can just hope it will go away, whatever the problem is, and therefore when we get to see them, we are too far down the line, they are already out, and on the street." **Service provider, Frontline, Southwark**

Individuals with limited eligibility to support had very limited awareness of services or believed that services were not available to them due to their status. One rough sleeping participant detailed how he had been told by the local authority at his last settled accommodation that as an international student, his immigration status meant there was very limited support available to him. As a result, he had travelled to London to look for accommodation, but had not attempted to contact Southwark Council. He had been unable to find any non-referral emergency shelters in London, leading him to believe his only option was to sleep on the streets. Similarly, a rough sleeping participant who had been recently given a negative asylum decision was unaware of any accommodation that would be available to her now she has limited eligibility to support.

*"[Non-referral shelter in last settled accommodation] is the only service that I've seen to this day that does non-referral emergency shelters for the night. I've tried contacting the Salvation Army, I've tried contacting a few of them, but 'sorry, Council referrals only.'" **Male, aged 20-30, Southwark***



"The Home office made the decision and then I was evicted - I was left to fend for myself." **Female sleeping rough, aged 60-70, Southwark ("Althea")**

Since arriving in the UK two years ago, Althea had been living in asylum accommodation in Leeds. In March 2023 she had an interview with the Home Office and was told they could not offer her asylum, would no longer support her accommodation, and that she would be evicted. While she looked for help in Leeds she was left with limited options.

Althea then travelled to London because she felt there would be more options for housing support there. When she arrived, she found shelter in public places like fast food restaurants and a police station, as she was unaware of homelessness support available to her. According to Althea, she had contacted charities and the police in the area but was told she has to had to speak to Southwark Council before they could help her. She completed and submitted an application to the council three days before her interview and was awaiting a response.

4.3 Collaborating on prevention with other local authorities

Some service providers raised issues with joint working across local authorities and the impact this can have on relationship building with people sleeping rough. Building up rapport and developing trust with people sleeping rough is an important but slow process. Providers felt that transferring clients between services across authorities, requiring individuals to establish new relationships, disrupted their support and hindered their progress. Rather, service providers wanted to see investment in existing local services to support people at risk to stay in their local areas surrounded by people they are familiar with, to prevent them sleeping rough.

"We've created a system where people are coming from Southwark, getting seen in Southwark, sent to Lewisham, to be sent back to Southwark. Why not just invest in, give us the money to invest in the things that we need for our local area?" **Outreach worker, Frontline, Southwark**

Some service providers raised issues with Care Act responsibilities and pan-London services that bring individuals with no connections into the borough. Such individuals cannot be discharged from hospitals because they have restricted eligibility for support in the area and would subsequently be at risk of sleeping rough. One participant provided an example of a patient who had confirmed they would not return to the area where they had a local connection and therefore had not been discharged because they were risk of sleeping rough. This participant felt this challenge was due to individuals being referred to in-patient health services in Southwark, but Southwark Council not having responsibility for their housing support. She felt Hospital Discharge Navigators may be able to help health services signpost individuals to appropriate housing support. However, she also felt that this was an ongoing challenge because health services' Care Act responsibilities do not align with pan-London services for people at risk of homelessness.

“Unfortunately, NHS England allows you to admit someone to hospital in the place that they're at, so then you get difficulties because you've got someone in the psychiatric hospital, long stay, who's got no social care and housing responsibility in that borough.” **Service provider, Strategic, Southwark**

Service providers spoke about pan-London initiatives, such as inner-London borough partnerships that allow for exchanges and transfers of individuals to try and prevent individuals sleeping rough or having to go into temporary accommodation. The limited housing stock in Southwark means services may work with surrounding local authorities, such as Lewisham, to try and find potential accommodation for clients. One participant detailed how their team works with other local authorities to refer applicants who may be at potential harm in their authority to somewhere they may be safer. Service providers recognised that strengthening such partnerships is important to help leverage resources and identify joint solutions to tackle homelessness. However, they acknowledged that client expectations and differing priorities between authorities can sometimes hinder their effectiveness.

4.4 Collaborating on prevention within Southwark

4.4.1 Institutional discharge

Service providers expressed a sense of disconnect between some of the services operating within Southwark. Specific concerns were raised around hospital and prison leavers. Such individuals may have specific physical and mental health needs that require adapted or supported accommodation. However, as in the example above, a lack of early preventative communication between discharge and housing teams, sometimes not until the point when the individual is ready to be released, can reduce the availability of support options and can result in individuals being placed in unsuitable accommodation. One participant outlined the challenges they have had with adult social care. They detailed how last-minute referrals from hospitals with limited information, accompanied with the pressure to free up beds, can leave individuals at risk. For instance, the participant explained how they had recently received a referral from the hospital for an individual who was an amputee on the day she needed to be discharged. The lack of prior communication and time constraints meant they were unable to find her suitable accommodation, resulting in a delayed discharge and prolonged hospital stay, consequently occupying a bed for an extended period.

With this barrier in mind, one service provider detailed how they now have a dedicated officer that works with the probation service to arrange transition support for individuals before they are released from prison. In doing assessments over Zoom a month before the individual is released, they can ensure they understand the client's needs and can suitably place them.

4.4.2 Implementing support at the right time

Service providers emphasised the importance of providing support quickly for people at risk of homelessness and felt that Southwark had robust processes for organisations to refer individuals to housing services. One participant also noted that it is straightforward to then support individuals to apply for benefits such as Universal Credit because it is part of their Personal Housing Plan. Nevertheless, another service provider reported that poor communication between the housing

team and Jobcentre Plus/the Department for Work and Pensions could result in delays to setting up Universal Credit. This in turn presents a challenge to supporting individuals to access financial support for accommodation at the point they need it to secure stable accommodation. The participant explained that these delays put individuals at risk of falling into arrears with their landlord, which can then be used as a basis for eviction.

"It can be quite frustrating when you're doing this sort of role. A lot of the time when you need immediate action... , you don't really get it as quickly as you would want." **Service provider, Frontline, Southwark**

4.4.4 Using data to support prevention

Service providers indicated that there are barriers to working with and sharing data between some of the different services operating within Southwark. One participant detailed how there can be issues working with external partners who may not know how the systems work and what processes like duty to refer are. Another participant highlighted how information does not tend to be shared with services they do not regularly work with. This can create barriers to support and cause delays in referrals for those who need immediate help.

"Internally, it's fine, it's very good and with our Commission Outreach team, but with the other services, we don't really share unless they request any information that we have around stats and performance." **Local authority service commissioner, Southwark**

Participants working in health and social care services described examples of good joint working practices across local authorities in London. Recognising the importance of being able to share information, service providers detailed the channels of communication and data sharing agreements in place that enable efficient working and avoid repeatedly asking questions that may be triggering for people at risk of rough sleeping.

"In order to work effectively for somebody who's got multiple needs and multiple agencies involved, we have to have really good, long-standing cooperative, productive, positive relationships with our network." **Service provider, Strategic, Southwark**

However, there was some frustration expressed by service providers about data sharing between local authorities outside of London. One service provider felt that communication between third sector organisations and other local authorities was often disconnected. Differences in the ways in which local authorities operate can create barriers to accessing information, which can limit the effectiveness of the support that can be provided to those sleeping rough.

"A lot of our third sector colleagues face real barriers in accessing information, so they go to a community team in Devon and say, 'Oh can you tell us about person X,' and they'll just say, 'No, it's sling and hook,' unless you've got consent from them, which they're not going to get because they're really unwell." **Service provider, Strategic, Southwark**

5 Birmingham

5.1 Background and context

Data on the numbers of individuals sleeping rough in Birmingham are provided below. Table 5.1 compares the numbers identified as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 to the same exercise in 2021, using data from the annual snapshot survey, and shows a 26% increase over the preceding 12 months. Table 5.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of those found to be sleeping rough in Autumn 2022, which showed them to be predominantly male, originating in the UK, and aged 26 or above. Please note totals may not equal due to missing data for some individuals.

Table 5.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in Birmingham

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Birmingham	31	39	8	26

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)

Table 5.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in Birmingham, Autumn 2022

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	Over 26 years
Birmingham	36	3	30	2	2	1	33

Source: Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 2a-c)

Alongside this, data from Rough Sleeping Management Information in England shows there were an average of 24 new people found sleeping rough each month in 2022 and an average of 28 new people per month from January to March 2023. In March 2023, there were 28 people recorded as new to rough sleeping in Birmingham over the course of the month.²³ This is an increase of six people compared to March 2022, and is the latest available data on people new to rough sleeping, at the time of this report.

5.1.1 Research methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative case study was conducted in two stages. This involved conducting seven service provider interviews (one paired, eight interviews in total) between December 2022 and March 2023. Following these interviews, case workers supported the research team to recruit and conduct further interviews with five individuals new to rough sleeping in Birmingham.

²³ Rough Sleeping Management Information in England, March 2023 (Table 2j): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

The fieldwork with people new to rough sleeping focused on those who were either living in *Off the Street*²⁴ accommodation or were currently sleeping rough²⁵. All were individuals either new to sleeping rough altogether or new to rough sleeping in Birmingham. The interviews were conducted between March and April 2023.

The sample of five individuals new to rough sleeping included two men and three women, ranging in age from their twenties to their forties. All participants were White British and UK nationals. Prior to rough sleeping, most participants had been living in supported exempt accommodation, with one participant who was living in commissioned supported accommodation. Participants' health-related support needs included mental health and substance misuse.

5.1.2 Reasons for leaving last settled accommodation

Reasons for leaving their last settled accommodation varied across the participants, including:

- Disputes with a landlord
- Difficulties sustaining a tenancy
- Condition of properties offered/available
- Domestic abuse

In addition to the reasons provided by individuals new to sleeping rough, the service providers highlighted several reasons why people leave their last settled accommodation in their experience. These factors most commonly included relationship breakdown, alcohol and/or drug dependency, financial instability resulting from job loss, mental health issues and unsuitable housing – which may be experienced individually or serially. Examples of unsuitable housing cited by the participants new to rough sleeping included Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) which lacked heating and hot water, and with bed bug and cockroach infestation, blocked sinks, damp and mould and in a general state of disrepair. One participant noted that even their previous unsuitable accommodation was preferable to sleeping in a hostel, where they would be exposed to drug use and would not feel safe.

“We find a lot of the people who we work with, it isn’t just the case of they’ve lost their tenancy and ended up rough sleeping. There’s a full history leading up to that; numerous tenancy breakdowns, accommodation that’s just not fit for their demands.” **Outreach team, frontline, Birmingham**

Understanding the reasons for individuals leaving their last settled accommodation provides insight into the type of support services that may support people away from a crisis situation and becoming homeless. The examples cited in the Birmingham interviews reflect the main drivers of rough sleeping reported elsewhere in the study. Consequently we have focused on the experiences and perceptions of individuals sleeping rough for the first time, and of the local authority and others involved in homelessness services, in terms of the key steps in addressing rough sleeping where identified and working to prevent instances of it happening in the first case.

5.1.3 Service provision

There are a range of organisations involved in the commissioning and provision of homelessness

²⁴ Off the Street accommodation options include emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters.

²⁵ Can include people who were new and supported off the street within the last five months, but then returned to rough sleeping.

and associated services in Birmingham. The commissioning of services within Birmingham City Council sits within the adult social care team, whilst the homelessness remit sits within the Birmingham City Council housing team. They also work together with statutory services such as the Police, Probation Service, health, mental health and social care services.

Additionally, third sector organisations focusing upon specialised service areas also provide preventative support, servicing housing needs or providing support in the recovery and mental health space. These organisations include SIFA Fireside, Change Grow Live (CGL), Spring Housing, St Basils, The Salvation Army, Cranstoun, Trident Reach and Crisis.

Targeted preventative provision includes services for those leaving prison (through an Offenders Hub due to the nature of release at HMP Birmingham), and/or female only housing space for those fleeing domestic abuse. Birmingham also has a large volume of non-commissioned supported exempt accommodation, which is seen as an attractor for new people homeless to the area, but as described at 5.2.3 can be of varying quality and suitability.

Birmingham City Council also receives funding from DLUHC through programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) which funds various elements of outreach, navigation and bed provision, often through some of the third sector service providers listed above.

5.2. Factors leading to flow of rough sleeping in Birmingham

5.2.1 Location

As general pull factors, service providers described Birmingham as an urban, metropolitan area, in the centre of the country with key transport hubs, ample housing stock and a diverse and welcoming community feel. The interviews with both service providers and with people new to sleeping rough found that word-of-mouth was one way in which people could hear about the availability of accommodation and services for homeless people locally.

Birmingham's reputation as a metropolitan area with diverse community groups also plays a part in attracting individuals at risk of rough sleeping. The city is known for its multiculturalism, community organisations, and support networks catering for people of all backgrounds.

5.2.2 Awareness of support options

Many people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, in Birmingham are unaware of services designed to help them maintain existing or secure new stable housing and access vital support. People with experience of sleeping rough suggested that support is not well publicised, even within co-located service centres, particularly for those with more complex needs, or facing additional issues such as mental health needs or domestic abuse.

One participant who was a survivor of domestic abuse, said she had not been offered, or sought out specialised support for survivors of domestic abuse, and felt there was not much help in the community. A council property under her name was in rent arrears, which she felt unsafe returning to when her ex-partner was released from prison. She reported being unable to get housing support from the Council due to the arrears in her name, and so was sleeping rough. Her mental health condition, lack of awareness of housing support, and lack of support for her as a survivor of domestic abuse contributed to her decision to sleep rough.

Service providers suggested that men in particular can often find it challenging to seek help when they are at crisis point, which can often make them more vulnerable to rough sleeping as they miss the prevention stage.

“Males are less likely to want to ask for help because they think it’s a sign of weakness. If they’re experiencing a crisis.... rather than addressing the issue at that point, it gets swept under the carpet because they don’t want to actually go somewhere and say, ‘look I need some support right now’.” **Team leader, Frontline, Birmingham**

Trust in statutory services, including those supporting people at risk of rough sleeping and more widely, is vital to help prevent the flow of rough sleeping. This lack of trust could be underpinned by feelings that their cases were not being listened to when they experience delays in identifying new properties, or where the support received had been inconsistent. Even when people new to rough sleeping were aware of the support available to them, they also reported lacking the confidence to engage, and felt they had no other option but to sleep rough.

Several people new to sleeping rough found it daunting to attend appointments or to approach the local authority for tenancy sustainment and other homelessness support services directly. The use of complicated language, and unfamiliarity which had to be faced alone, often made them feel overwhelmed. Participants new to sleeping rough suggested that it would be helpful to have someone there who could explain things in simpler terms or simply accompany them.



“It would be helpful to have someone to go to appointments with me. I don’t feel confident asking for help and knowing where to go or completing forms – stuff like that.” **Female sleeping rough, aged 20-30, Birmingham**

5.2.3 Housing availability

One of the main attractions for people outside the area was the large and varied housing stock in Birmingham. Service providers from the council and the voluntary sector, and participants new to rough sleeping described Birmingham as being known to have a significant amount of non-commissioned exempt accommodation²⁶, affordable housing options, emergency shelters, and supported accommodation. The individuals new to rough sleeping from out of the area described being aware of this, and that it was a pull factor compared to areas with fewer housing options or stricter eligibility requirements.

Frontline service providers were aware of landlords in Birmingham advertising their properties outside the city, drawing people in from different areas that may be struggling to find affordable accommodation, such as in London. One individual new to rough sleeping recounted that they began rough sleeping due to a tenancy opportunity falling through in London, and moved to

²⁶ Non-commissioned exempt accommodation is supported housing that has not been commissioned by a public body with a legal duty to provide accommodation. According to Crisis this often accommodates marginalised groups such as prison leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse, people leaving asylum seeker services, and individuals whose homelessness is compounded by substance dependence or mental health needs. In some areas this has led to an increase in non-commissioned exempt housing in Houses of Multiple Occupation. Crisis – *Policy Briefing Exempt Accommodation* <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246160/crisis-policy-briefing-exempt-accommodation.pdf>

Birmingham after hearing accommodation was available in the area. The participant found their first HMO space shortly after arriving but concerns over personal safety and exposure to drugs led them to leave and return to rough sleeping.

"I was bottom of the pile in London, they weren't entertaining me at all, then my brother told me about these HMOs – he said you'll be housed within a day." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Birmingham**

A second participant who was living in supported exempt accommodation in London reported that their landlord recommended and contacted another landlord in Birmingham, who met, transported and subsequently housed the participant at the property. Unfortunately the property they were offered was felt to be unsuitable for habitation, and following a dispute with their landlord over repairs left the property. As the individual was new to the area, they did not know where to turn, and resorted to sleeping rough for the first time.

Birmingham has a large stock of non-commissioned exempt accommodation with limited regulation that is easy to access. This was highlighted by both service providers and rough sleeping participants as one of the key attractors for people outside of the area who are at risk of rough sleeping, as well as providing accommodation options for local people at risk. However, several people new to rough sleeping described experiencing poor quality accommodation via this route, and more widely tenants were reported as often leaving such accommodation after a short period of time due to poor conditions or feeling unsafe or unsupported. Rough sleeping participants reported how they rarely saw members of staff after they were housed, and issues with anti-social behaviour and substance abuse made them 'feel safer on the streets.' Frontline service providers suggested that the prevalence of such accommodation and under-regulation of this sector had increased the flow of rough sleeping in Birmingham, as individuals with complex needs choose to sleep rough rather than maintain their tenancy.

People new to rough sleeping who had been housed in such accommodation indicated that complaints about the condition of a property to their landlord, or concerns around what was happening within the property, were often not followed up or dealt with, with individuals then taking the decision to sleep rough as an alternative.

"Making sure that accommodation is suitable for that person's needs, and they're not being set up to fail from the beginning. If they're not getting the support from the housing provider or the LA that was offered, then you're actually making them more vulnerable than they were to start with."

Service Lead, Strategic, Birmingham

"What I've noticed about these HMOs is that they'll put the same type of people in the same house... when I was living in them, I wasn't receiving any support - I started burying my head in the sand and started taking a lot more drugs." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Birmingham**



"I've been trying to get [the Council] to help me for two years and I'm fed up of trying now – I'll find my own place." **Male sleeping rough, aged 30-40, Birmingham, ("David")**

David spent over a decade working as a forklift driver and was living with his partner and children. However, David's world took a drastic turn as he lost his job and his relationship broke down with his partner, ultimately leading to him becoming homeless. David felt he had limited support and housing options from his local council, leaving him with few resources. He therefore decided to move to Birmingham, a city known for its homelessness services and housing stock. He was then able to secure housing in one of the city's Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

However, he described the condition of the property as uninhabitable which led to him sleeping rough in the city for the first time. While living in Birmingham he has stayed in several HMOs but has always had to leave due to the condition of the properties. Throughout his time in HMOs, he reported receiving no support from the council or other organisations. His experience of housing support in the past led to him feeling disillusioned with the quality of support available and he was reluctant to approach housing services at this time.

There are gaps and limitations in the quality of non-commissioned exempt accommodation. To address this, there needs to be improved coordination of housing placements to meet individuals' specific needs. Additionally, stricter regulation of non-commissioned exempt accommodation is essential to ensure housing providers maintain standards and landlords/housing providers are held accountable for their properties and those in their care.

5.3. Collaboration on prevention within Birmingham

For those new to the area, and about to become homeless or sleep rough for the first time, service providers reported confidence in their preventative function, with these individuals approaching Washington Court temporary emergency accommodation delivered by a local provider, for a bed, or contacting the out of hours service to arrange emergency accommodation on their first night.

"I think we're getting really good at doing some of that upstream prevention. A lot of the new people that are coming out at the moment aren't new to rough sleeping, they might just be new to Birmingham...we can identify those people quite quickly, so those people might not even spend 1 night rough sleeping, because we've got a really, really robust intervention where we can prevent first night sleeping out." **Strategic Lead, Birmingham.**

However, gaps in preventative service provision and its effectiveness were evident from feedback from service providers and people sleeping rough. Those in frontline positions highlighted issues of staff capacity to deliver the required services, and the sufficiency of current funding to provide a preventative function. This means that responses, particularly for those not engaging via local authority housing support services, may not be sufficiently rapid to prevent an initial night of rough

sleeping. Service commissioners also acknowledged the current resource constraints and practical difficulties around prevention in both the local authority and the third sector, despite intervening prior to the first night out being recognised as a critical point in preventing the flow of rough sleeping. The service commissioners consulted all agreed that this was despite the best efforts of the actors in the local homelessness infrastructure, and that a commitment existed to helping prevent rough sleeping from the outset. Nevertheless challenges remain:

“I think everybody wants to be working in the same direction but that doesn’t always happen; there’s a lot of red tape and bureaucracy within structures that makes it difficult. You’ve got someone in adult social care saying, ‘that’s not our remit.’” **Strategic Lead, Birmingham**

Service providers from a homelessness service for young people felt that the prevalence of young people sleeping rough in Birmingham was low because service provision was focused on preventing rough sleeping upstream. For example, an organisation supporting young people employs ‘navigators’ who work with young people who aren’t rough sleeping but may be at risk. These navigators assist with tenancy and employability matters, including education and volunteering opportunities. The same service provider also uses ‘personalisation funds’ to foster engagement with young people at risk of rough sleeping. These funds provide small amounts of money for activities like food shopping, haircuts, or going for coffee.

6 Brighton & Hove

6.1 Background and context

Data on the numbers of individuals sleeping rough in Brighton and Hove are provided below. Table 6.1 compares the numbers identified as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 to the same exercise in 2021, using data from the annual snapshot survey, and shows an 11% increase over the preceding 12 months (four individuals). Table 6.2 provides a breakdown of those found to be sleeping rough in Autumn 2022, which showed them to be predominantly male, aged 26 and over, and UK nationals. Please note totals may not equal due to missing data for some individuals.

Table 6.1: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2022 in Brighton and Hove

Local Authority	2021	2022	Difference	% Change
Brighton and Hove	37	41	4	11

Source: *Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 1)*

Table 6.2: Demographic information for people sleeping rough in Brighton and Hove, Autumn 2022

Local Authority	Male	Female	From UK	From EU	Non-EU Non-UK	18-25 years	Over 26 years
Brighton and Hove	37	4	35	4	2	0	37

Source: *Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England Autumn 2022 (Table 2a-c)*

Alongside this, data from Rough Sleeping Management Information in England shows there were an average of 54 new people found sleeping rough each month in 2022 and an average of 47 new people per month from January to March 2023. In March 2023, there were 50 people recorded as new to rough sleeping in Brighton & Hove over the course of the month.²⁷ This is an increase of 10 people compared to the same point in 2022 and is the latest available data on people new to rough sleeping, at the time of this report.

6.1.1 Research methodology

Fieldwork for this qualitative case study report was conducted in two stages. This involved conducting eight interviews with service providers and commissioners (six of which were paired, 14 individual participants in total). Following these interviews, five interviews were conducted with people new to rough sleeping. These individuals were identified by case workers in the rough sleeping sector and selected on the basis of being new to sleeping rough (within the last 1-5 months) in Brighton and Hove. The interviews with service providers and commissioners were

²⁷ Rough Sleeping Management Information in England, March 2023 (Table 2j): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-march-2023>

conducted between December 2022 and February 2023, followed by interviews with people sleeping rough between April and May 2023.

Participants new to rough sleeping included four males and one female, three originating from the UK and two from EU states. Two described living with partners in private rented accommodation, one was staying with friends long term, and two were sofa surfing prior to their first night sleeping rough in Brighton, two reported residing in the Brighton area for five years or more, while three were new in-movers to the area. Two reported having mental health needs, one an alcohol abuse issue, and one a combined mental health and drug misuse issues.

6.1.2 Reasons for leaving last settled accommodation

Reasons for leaving their last settled accommodation varied across participants and broadly aligned with those mentioned by service providers in Brighton & Hove. These included:

- Financial difficulties due to loss of employment
- Eviction from private-rented accommodation
- Restricted eligibility for support due to immigration status
- Disputes within the household



“My friend offered for me to stay in her kitchen... we ended up having a bit of an argument and we agreed it was best for me to go.” **Male sleeping rough, Brighton & Hove**

Steve moved to Brighton & Hove from another part of the UK two years ago to work on a large infrastructure project. However, this project stopped unexpectedly and he found it difficult to find alternative employment. He was using savings to cover his rent but ultimately had to leave his accommodation. He was able to stay with a friend on their sofa, but when he had to leave here he found he had no other option but to sleep rough. Steve was engaged by an outreach team after he started sleeping rough, but he felt it was not clear where he could get housing support when he was at risk of homelessness.

Understanding the reasons for individuals leaving their last settled accommodation provides insight into the type of support services that may support people away from a crisis situation and becoming homeless. The examples cited in the Brighton & Hove interviews reflect the main drivers of rough sleeping reported elsewhere in the study. Consequently, we have focused on the experiences and perceptions of individuals sleeping rough for the first time, and of the local authority and others involved in homelessness services, in terms of the key steps in addressing rough sleeping where it is identified and working to prevent instances of rough sleeping initially.

6.1.3 Service provision

Fieldwork in Brighton & Hove focused on those who were either living in *Off the Street*²⁸ accommodation or were currently sleeping rough.²⁹ These were individuals who had not been seen sleeping rough in Brighton & Hove before, either because they were new to rough sleeping altogether or new to the area (and may have previously slept rough elsewhere).

There are a range of key organisations involved in commissioning and providing services in Brighton & Hove. These include Brighton & Hove City Council Housing and Health and Adult Social Care, working in partnership with other statutory services such as Health, Children's Services, the Probation Service, Sussex Police and Housing Needs services.

These bodies also work with independent third sector organisations such as St Mungo's Outreach, BHT First Base Day Centre, YMCA Brighton, Youth Accommodation and Advice Service (YMCA Downs Link Group), Change Grow Live, Clocktower Sanctuary, Equinox, Southdown, Justlife, and Sussex Nightstop.

6.2 Factors leading to flow of rough sleeping in Brighton & Hove

6.2.1 Location

Brighton was widely felt to be an appealing location for those experiencing housing insecurity for a number of reasons. Participants in the research noted that there were high levels of tolerance towards people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in Brighton & Hove, with homelessness being viewed as a collective responsibility by those living locally. This, coupled with a high number of tourists, means begging can be lucrative, adding to the appeal of the area. Service providers further pointed to how this tolerant culture creates a welcoming environment for diverse communities, including for the LGBT population³⁰.

Service providers and commissioners described Brighton & Hove as a liberal area, known for its inclusive and accepting culture. People sleeping rough spoke positively about the people in the area, and one participant mentioned that they like living in Brighton because it is multicultural.

"We're a nice beachside town, and obviously, we are known to be LGBTQ friendly, and that's a massive thing for a lot of people [sleeping rough], that they want to be here." **Local authority service provider, Brighton & Hove**

People sleeping rough consistently mentioned the area's vibrant atmosphere, climate, and appealing beach setting. Service providers mentioned how the climate in particular often draws

²⁸ Off the Street accommodation options include emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters.

²⁹ Can include people who were new and supported off the street within the last five months, but then returned to rough sleeping.

³⁰ Research published by Stonewall in 2018 found that almost one in five (18%) LGBT people had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives: [lgbt in britain home and communities.pdf \(stonewall.org.uk\)](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-in-britain-home-and-communities.pdf)

people in from out of the area due to it being considered more pleasant than other cities in the summer months.

"There's so much going on. It's like London condensed down into a couple of square miles, with the sea. It's vibrant, lively, but you can also find quiet spaces depending on what you want to do."

Person sleeping rough, male, Brighton & Hove

Another draw to the area identified by service providers was Brighton's position at the end of the commuter line on the train. As the last stop on the train, Brighton is an end destination. According to service providers, this brings a lot of flow into the city, particularly via the routes which pass through London. One individual sleeping rough mentioned ending up in Brighton as a result of this.

"I was getting night trains because I had nowhere to sleep, so I would stay on the trains until they finished. Then there was one night, the last train was to Brighton. I was on the train and I was thinking, well I do have a couple of friends here." **Person sleeping rough, female, Brighton & Hove**

6.2.2 Service availability

Service providers and commissioners identified that those sleeping rough in Brighton & Hove often have no local connection to the area. The high proportion of people coming from out of the area was attributed by some service providers to the draw of Brighton and Hove's offer for housing support services. Service providers and commissioners mentioned the wide availability of both commissioned and non-commissioned services, and the cold weather protocol which provides support during spells of cold weather.

"There's a lot of commissioned services to help people who are experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. There's also a huge group of organisations and [voluntary] groups that are not commissioned that also help. There is an anecdotal statement that draws people in, the understanding that there's a lot of help and support available in Brighton." **Local authority service commissioner, Brighton & Hove**

In contrast, people sleeping rough interviewed did not cite the availability of services as the initial factor that drew them to the area. Instead, they mentioned relocating as a result of a personal connection (e.g. to stay with a friend or partner) before they ended up rough sleeping and accessing services.

Service providers described how support for individuals with health needs is often offered, and clients placed, outside of Brighton & Hove (e.g. in Eastbourne and Newhaven) where they do not have a support base. A long bus journey between these areas and Brighton & Hove can make it difficult for individuals with health support needs to access and engage with their local GP and with drug and alcohol services, which can lead to situations escalating and resulting in evictions and service disengagement which might have been prevented. In addition, there was mention of the limited capacity of mental health support, with long waiting lists and limited capacity among staff making initial engagement difficult and increasing the risk of losing their current accommodation.

“The mental health services are broken in Brighton. It’s overwhelmed really. There are large waiting lists. It’s very difficult for a lot of clients to access primary mental health support. There’s two psychiatrists and four or five mental health people. It’s difficult to get an appointment in a timely manner.” **Accommodation provider, frontline, Brighton & Hove**

6.2.3 Providing documentation

Service providers mentioned that the high thresholds set to access support can make it difficult to access certain services for people becoming homeless, including to prevent them sleeping rough for the first time. One participant described how, instead of offering accommodation while investigating a priority need claim, the Council ask people to come back once they are certain.

There was also the reflection that stringent ID requirements can act as barriers for those at risk of rough sleeping accessing preventative services. An individual sleeping rough described the consequences this can have in terms of accessing support. This individual lost his passport, meaning he could not prove his ID to the council and could not be housed. He also mentioned that to get a replacement passport, he needs proof of address.

“The threshold or the proof that you need means that clients are mostly turned away. Like, photographic ID. Sometimes clients approach a council and an application isn’t taken or it’s not clear whether an application’s been taken.” **Outreach worker, frontline, Brighton & Hove**

Service providers also mentioned that emergency accommodation generally does not accept pets. Many clients will not accept an offer of accommodation which does not allow them to bring their pets, which may lead to them disengaging from support and so limit the options for emergency accommodation as part of a preventative approach.

Finally, some service providers felt that the conditions which needed to be fulfilled before individuals could access certain services, and the associated thresholds for inclusion, could benefit from review. This would help to remove a barrier to accessing accommodation to individuals at risk of rough sleeping, and to prevent others from sleeping rough for extended periods. This may involve accepting alternative forms of identification and supporting individuals in obtaining necessary documents, to ensure that stringent ID requirements do not exclude people from accessing services.

6.2.4 Immigration status

One service provider described the provision of support for clients with **restricted eligibility for support** (including people whose asylum claims had been refused, those in the process of getting asylum, and EU nationals with restricted eligibility for support). This participant mentioned how while a range of support is available to help individuals complete the necessary paperwork and to help them navigate the process, this support does not usually include accommodation for this group.

“The problem is usually we don’t have any accommodation for that group, for the no recourse group. Winter provision is an exception, and SWEP.” **Outreach worker, frontline, Brighton & Hove**

An EU-national sleeping rough described how they missed the application deadline for pre-settled status, leading them to be evicted from their private rented accommodation. While they now have pre-settled status, they are still limited in the support they can access while waiting for full settled status. For example, their application for Universal Credit has been continuously refused due to their settlement status. They mentioned that receiving support early to complete the necessary forms would have led to them getting their settled status in time to avoid them having to sleep rough.

Service providers described a **lack of trauma-informed support**, particularly among security teams in emergency accommodation settings. For clients with multiple and complex needs, and accompanying chaotic lifestyles, this can lead to individuals being evicted from accommodation. One service provider gave the example of how an alcohol dependent client may be evicted from emergency accommodation for drinking despite the risk of serious medical problems if they stopped drinking without appropriate support in place. This illustrates the importance of engaging with individuals known to be at risk of rough sleeping as a result of their multiple and complex needs prior to their first experience of sleeping rough, and of finding suitable accommodation for those who fall through the net and experience a first night out.

"Emergency accommodation or temporary accommodation providers need to be a bit more psychologically informed about the client group, and not set them up to fail. I think the provision of a high support care homes model would be really good." **Accommodation provider, frontline, Brighton & Hove**

6.3 Collaboration on prevention within Brighton and Hove

6.3.1 Service provision

Service providers and people rough sleeping mentioned the wide range of commissioned and non-commissioned services available to provide support. An individual sleeping rough mentioned, despite this range of support, it may be challenging to navigate and understand what is offered by all the different services.

"There is as much as you need that you can find. But it's finding it and understanding where things are. There's lot out there and it's an ecosystem that people (both providers and receivers) don't appreciate." **Person sleeping rough, male, Brighton & Hove**

Individuals sleeping rough for the first time spoke positively about instances where they had received support that was tailored to their individual needs. One individual spoke about the friendship and relationship they had built with the staff at their service provider, who were regularly arranging meetings and supporting them to rebuild their life. This includes setting up an assessment with an alcohol triage nurse and supporting with uncertainty surrounding accommodation post-rehab.

"If you go into rehab for 28 days, what happens to my room? [Someone from the provider] has said we'll implement an after-care plan." **Person sleeping rough, male, Brighton & Hove**

Service providers also mentioned the value of attending to individual support needs, mentioning that support with form-filling can help those sleeping rough to access a wider range of services. One participant also suggested that services offering flexibility of appointment times can boost engagement among people sleeping rough.

6.3.2 Using data to support prevention

Service providers acknowledged the benefits of offering advocacy services, claiming that they boost the chances of acceptance into services across the City. Some service providers felt that access to services is enhanced by use of B-THINK, the shared database for Brighton & Hove of people sleeping rough and people in supported accommodation, as it supports multi-agency working across the whole of Brighton & Hove.

“There are a lot of categories within [B-THINK] which can report peoples' circumstances... what the plan is for that person with the GP or what other services are helping them, and really recording their experience and journey.” **Local authority service commissioner, Brighton & Hove**

The size of Brighton & Hove and the nature of multi-agency communication can enable access to services i.e. between the hospital and prison-leaver based teams. The Homeless Operational Forum is attended by groups working in rough sleeping services from across Brighton & Hove, and some service commissioners felt that this attracts a range of highly engaged groups and further enables multi-disciplinary working.

Finally, providing access to the B-THINK database to all local authority staff working in housing and homelessness services, and partners as appropriate, offers the opportunity to enable access to information on individuals uploaded by commissioned services. As well as improving local intelligence and enabling ‘data-driven’ responses, this will also remove the need for commissioned services to provide this information separately and help avoid delays in providing support to individuals at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping.

7 Concluding comments

The interviews with service commissioners and providers, and people new to rough sleeping, across the five case study areas provided a range of insights into the factors which can lead to people becoming homeless and sleeping rough for the first time. The testimonies of the individuals new to rough sleeping also provided insights into whether earlier intervention could have prevented them reaching their current situation. The findings from across all stages of the study are consolidated in the main report, which also includes a series of ‘suggestions for consideration’ to improve efforts to prevent rough sleeping.

The case study research also identified different challenges facing each area, notably amongst the service commissioners and providers in the three London boroughs. They reported how the capital was a strong attractor for people from across the UK (and between London boroughs) as well as internationally who may arrive in a borough with no, or only short-term, accommodation in place. Service commissioners and providers felt that while there were arrangements in place to coordinate activities between boroughs, and the CHAIN database was a helpful asset in this regard, more could be done to coordinate responses with individuals’ home authorities within the UK. Participants in the case study areas were all keen to share their experiences and learn from other authorities working on similar issues across the UK.

Finally, the service providers and commissioners acknowledged that implementing preventative approaches needed to be sufficiently resourced, with sufficient emergency accommodation to meet demand, and supported by appropriate levels of funding. If these elements are in place, success can and has been achieved, although as listed below there remain challenges as well as opportunities:

- **Identifying those at risk of rough sleeping for the first time** is challenging, given the different routes into homelessness and some individuals’ reluctance to disclose their status until a crisis point is reached. This can be a particular issue for areas with a high flow of rough sleeping from elsewhere in the UK and internationally, and more could be done to improve communications and information sharing between UK local authorities.
- **Early prevention work with particular at-risk target groups can be effective for those with particular needs** – such as helping prisoners to find accommodation prior to release, people leaving long-term hospital or care settings, and supporting survivors of domestic violence. These approaches could be employed more widely to address the needs of these and other high need groups.
- **Importance of intervening early** – as soon as individuals are identified as homeless or at imminent risk of becoming so, to help avoid people sleeping rough for the first time.
- **Awareness of homelessness services** – awareness of homelessness services amongst the participants new to rough sleeping, and how they can be accessed, was found to be very low. More can be done to raise awareness through the improved signposting services in locations most often used by individuals at risk, such as GP surgeries, Accident and Emergency

departments, Jobcentre Plus offices, education settings, across local authority premises and amongst the general public more widely.

- **Addressing barriers** - a series of barriers were identified to people securing accommodation and avoiding an episode of rough sleeping, including:
 - The **information required, and complexity of the housing application process**, can be off putting for some, and could be streamlined. This should also consider the difficulties reported amongst those unable to provide identification and other documentation to support their applications, and whether these can be relaxed.
 - **Accommodation availability and quality** – where the quality of some non-commissioned exempt accommodation was a cause for concern, and stricter regulation is required to ensure that housing providers maintain standards and are held accountable for the condition of their properties.
 - **Individuals at risk of rough sleeping were found to have limited trust in the statutory sector** – so additional training may be required for local authority staff to help embed a trauma-informed approach to engaging and establishing trust with those at risk.