Breaking the Cycle: What do we need to end rough sleeping?

The Prime Minister's pledge to end rough sleeping is welcome relief at a time when rates of homelessness sit at historic highs. But years of experience tell us that, to truly make a difference in people's lives, we need more than an emergency response.

With more than 750 members delivering homelessness services in every corner of England, Homeless Link are ready to support the Prime Minister to address the homelessness emergency. So, what do we really need to end rough sleeping – for good?

We need a clearly articulated long-term approach.

The new Rough Sleeping Programme sets out a much-needed ambition to offer a route off the streets for everyone who needs it. While emergency responses play their part, **a return to communal night shelters will not end homelessness.**

- During COVID, Everyone In worked because it offered the dignity and security of self-contained emergency accommodation. Such services are now widely accepted as best practice. **Local areas should be supported to deliver self-contained beds wherever possible.**
- Emergency beds must be followed by the right accommodation offer, but supported housing is in short supply. The Government must articulate its **long-term plan to mobilise next-step support and accommodation** and make sure the sector is resourced to deliver it.

We need a Rough Sleeping Unit set within Cabinet Office.

For the vision to become reality, all departments in Government must be working together to achieve the common goal of ending rough sleeping. **Prevention is absolutely key to achieving this.** This includes addressing policies that lead to people leaving hospitals, prisons or the asylum system and ending up on the street.

- **Cabinet Office should introduce a new Rough Sleeping Unit** to hold departments to account across Government; the Inter-Ministerial Group would be part of this unit. The unit would coordinate action at the national, regional and local levels.

We need to strengthen support for non-UK nationals.

According to the last rough sleeping snapshot, 24% of people sleeping rough are non-UK nationals. Attempts to end rough sleeping will not succeed without a meaningful review of our offer for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Government should:

- **Mandate local authorities to provide support for people with no recourse to public funds** in their emergency accommodation offer.
- **Permanently extend the asylum move-on period to 56 days** and develop a **national approach to preventing homelessness** for people leaving the asylum system.

We need meaningful investment in the homelessness workforce.

Our support system is only as good as the staff who deliver it, but years of stagnant pay and crisis conditions have undermined quality.

Please email Stefan.donnelly@homelesslink.org.uk for further information or to arrange a call.

- Introduce funding to ensure **support is provided alongside every bed**, paid at a level that enables high staff ratios and low caseloads, which are necessary to provide meaningful support.

We need existing services protected from closure.

The homelessness accommodation sector has shrunk 46% since the Supporting People ringfence was lifted in 2008. Despite new investment, many more services are at risk of closure and 35% have reduced their offer in the last year because of financial cuts. With further cost increases on the horizon, **Government must protect services from further closures.** We must see a focus on certain services which are particularly exposed to risk:

- **High-fidelity Housing First services,** which deliver intensive support for people with long-term needs. Despite an exceptionally strong evidence base, these services represent a higher upfront cost and have therefore been first in line for cuts in some areas.
- **Smaller, local support services** which may be better adapted to local needs but less able to absorb increased costs.
- **Floating support services,** which provide essential homelessness prevention but are too often seen as 'nice to have' and are therefore vulnerable to cuts.

We need long-term system transformation to end homelessness for good.

Our current system is not effective or sustainable. Continuing from the blueprint we have now will not work in the long run. We must move towards a housing-led system which prioritises prevention and holds support at its core, where homelessness is **rare, brief and non-recurrent.**

- **Rare**: where all public bodies take a prevention first approach, meaning homelessness is routinely prevented through universal measures like social housing and welfare, and anyone can access support to sustain their tenancy.
- **Brief**: where triage accommodation acts as a genuinely temporary step in support, meaning everyone has access to support and accommodation from day one and services collaborate to find the right housing option to prevent homelessness happening again.
- **Non-recurrent**: Where long-term accommodation and support is available that matches everyone's needs, meaning a network of housing and support scaled from low-needs to long-term care, integrated with wider health and social care support, so that people do not repeatedly fall back into homelessness.

A chance to reset: The Treasury's Value for Money review of homelessness spending

At current, we simply don't know how much money is spent on homelessness support. 54% of providers are funded primarily through Housing Benefit, which is not included in current cost analyses. In 2025 the Treasury pledged to deliver a Value for Money review of homelessness spending, which is vital for gaining a clear picture of what money is being spent on homelessness across Government, including through Housing Benefit. **We must see this commitment delivered.**

Get involved

We need Parliamentarians to maintain pressure on Government to get the long-term homelessness response right, to scrutinise the Value for Money review, and to stand up for homelessness service providers in your area. **Get in touch for draft WPQs you can submit.**

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