

# **ROUGH SLEEPING COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK**

# MAYOR OF LONDON

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## MAYOR'S FOREWORD

*Helping people sleeping rough in London to rebuild their lives has been a top priority for me as Mayor. I'm proud that in the five years of my first term as London's Mayor, City Hall's rough sleeping services helped almost 11,000 rough sleepers, with eight in ten leaving the streets for good.*

*As part of this, in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, London led the country in helping people off the streets and into safe accommodation when the virus struck. The rapid work undertaken by City Hall and London's boroughs helped avoid thousands more infections and many more deaths amongst some of the most vulnerable Londoners.*

*However, despite the new priority given to rough sleeping since 2016, too many in London are still becoming homeless and dying prematurely. Shockingly, the average age of death for the homeless in London is 45 years old. There is still insufficient funding from central government to give every rough sleeper the accommodation and support they need, and the end of national COVID-19 financial support and other emergency measures, such as the eviction ban, will inevitably lead to more Londoners finding themselves homeless. The way services are delivered will also need to change to manage the ongoing COVID-19 risk.*

*This new framework sets out my principles and priorities for the services I will commission over the next three years. I'm determined to do everything in my power to help end rough sleeping in London for good – and will continue to work with local and national government, and London's fantastic homelessness charities, to achieve this.*

## INTRODUCTION

*‘Rough sleepers should be supported off the streets as quickly and sustainably as possible. The Mayor’s central aim will be to ensure there is a route off the streets for every single rough sleeper in London.*

*The Mayor will fund and commission a range of pan-London services and other initiatives to complement those provided by local councils. These will focus on identifying rough sleepers and intervening rapidly to support them off the streets, providing specialist support for particular groups, and helping rough sleepers stay off the street.’*

London Housing Strategy, May 2018

London boroughs have the primary responsibility, and receive the bulk of funding, for providing homelessness and rough sleeping services. However, the Mayor has both a vision for and a key role to play in preventing and addressing homelessness. As set out in his London Housing Strategy, 2018, the Mayor funds and commissions pan-London and multi-borough rough sleeping services, projects and initiatives. These complement and supplement those provided, or commissioned, by boroughs.

This document is a new version of the Mayor’s Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework. Informed by a detailed assessment of London’s rough sleeping needs and consultation with key partners, its aim is to ensure that the Mayor’s services and initiatives contribute fully to London’s strategic aims and policies on rough sleeping. It sets out the overarching and cross-cutting priorities that will underpin the GLA’s commissioning activities over the three years from 2021 to 2024.

The Framework sets out both ‘commissioning priorities’ and ‘commissioning principles’. Commissioning priorities are areas where the GLA will focus resources when making commissioning decisions. They are important because they identify what is most needed in order to achieve the strategic aims, or because specific unmet needs have been identified through consultation and needs analysis. Commissioning principles govern how the GLA approach the priorities and how it will carry-out commissioning activities.

It is important to note that this document is designed specifically to inform the GLA’s own commissioning activities, rather than being a more wide-ranging strategy, or a reflection of the full extent of the work and policy supported by the Mayor and others to tackle rough sleeping.

## COMMISSIONING PRIORITIES

The commissioning priorities will guide decisions over which services should be funded in the coming years. The rough sleeping services which the Mayor funds are a central part of his programme of work to tackle rough sleeping in London.

The stated priorities are founded in the Mayor’s vision set out in the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action, published in 2018. However, due to the shifting nature of rough sleeping in London and changes in policy or practice from the Government, councils and other partners, some of the specific services to be funded under this framework may differ from those outlined in the Plan of Action three years ago. These changes have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including both the Everyone In response and the pandemic’s ongoing implications for some rough sleeping services.

The overarching priorities of the Mayor’s funded rough sleeping services are to fulfil one or more of the following objectives:

- 1 to prevent people from sleeping rough
- 2 to provide an immediate route off the streets
- 3 to deliver sustainable accommodation and solutions for those leaving rough sleeping
- 4 to ensure people have the support which they need to rebuild their lives.

There are also various cross-cutting priorities that are critical to tackling rough sleeping and will underpin the nature and shape of our services over the coming period:

- 5 to meet the health needs of people sleeping rough, including in relation to mental health and substance use
- 6 to ensure that at every stage, people receive advice or support as swiftly as possible
- 7 to provide specialist advice and support for migrants who are sleeping rough
- 8 to enhance provision from faith and community-based organisations and to complement services commissioned by borough local authorities
- 9 to maintain and improve the collection and use of data about rough sleeping in London
- 10 to ensure that services are genuinely adaptive to all people who sleep rough, considering age, gender, race and other characteristics, and including those with more specialist needs

### Overarching priorities

#### 1 To prevent people from sleeping rough

In 2020/21, 7,500 people were seen sleeping rough in London for the first time and over 1,300 returned to the streets having not been seen sleeping rough in the previous year. Preventing someone from spending even one night on the streets – as a new rough sleeper or as someone returning to rough sleeping – is of course always better than supporting that person to access accommodation and support once they are already experiencing the trauma of sleeping rough.

The primary responsibility and funding for preventing homelessness lies with local authorities, whose statutory obligations have grown in recent years with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Despite this, the Mayor's rough sleeping services can make a valuable contribution to preventing people in London from sleeping rough. Some of the Mayor's existing commissioned services, such as the Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs) and Private Rented Sector Tenancy Sustainment Teams (PRS TSTs), help ensure that people who have slept rough previously do not return to the streets once they have been housed. The Mayor has also funded a number of initiatives, including a hospital immigration service for people at risk of being discharged to the streets and a 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' prevention hub, which have tested innovative models for preventative services.

The Mayor will continue to make full use of all the resources he has to stop people from returning to rough sleeping once they have been helped off the streets. This will be a key objective for all the Mayor's rough sleeping services. He will also support councils in their efforts to prevent new rough sleeping by including innovative services which complement local authorities' homelessness prevention work as an ongoing commissioning priority. Outside of City Hall's commissioning work, the Mayor will continue to campaign for local authorities to be adequately funded to carry out their statutory homelessness responsibilities in full.

## **2 To provide an immediate route off the streets**

We know that rapid interventions combined with assertive outreach are highly successful at helping people to exit rough sleeping quickly and sustainably. This not only greatly benefits the people using these services, but also reduces the costs to the public purse arising from longer-term rough sleeping. The longer someone spends sleeping rough, the more likely it is that they will experience deteriorating mental and physical health, be drawn into substance misuse and be exposed to the inevitable dangers and violence of street living.

In 2020/21, 73% of people who were new to the streets were seen sleeping rough just once. This is exactly the same proportion of as in 2019/20 and demonstrates the power of services, such as No Second Night Out (NSNO), to quickly and effectively end someone's homelessness. The 'Everyone In' approach which the Mayor pioneered during the Covid-19 clearly illustrated that when immediate routes off the street are provided, with the appropriate support in place, the impact on rough sleeping can be dramatic. By the end of May 2021, almost 9,000 people had been provided with emergency accommodation across London during the pandemic, including over 2,500 in GLA procured hotels.

The Mayor will work to ensure that the lessons learnt from the response to Covid-19 further enhance the pan-London immediate routes off the street which he funds. This includes immediate, safe accommodation, which should be accompanied by rapid holistic assessment and intensive casework to identify someone's most suitable path out of rough sleeping. New models which better tailor immediate routes off the streets for particular groups, such as migrants with unclear entitlements or longer-term rough sleepers, will also be a key priority. Where appropriate, the Mayor will continue to fund outreach provision which ensures that people sleeping rough in London can be assisted as swiftly as possible and supported to take the first step away from the streets.

### **3 To deliver sustainable accommodation and solutions for those leaving rough sleeping**

Ensuring a realistic and achievable pathway away from the streets is essential. Any offer must include sustainable accommodation, with support wherever it is needed, and - where their prospects would be better and safer if they did so - assistance to people from outside London or outside the UK who wish to receive accommodation and services in their home area.

The need to expand the offer of sustainable, longer-term routes out of rough sleeping has received renewed focus over the last Mayoral term. Through both the Mayor's Move-on Programme (MMOP) and the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), the Mayor is facilitating the delivery of at least 1,500 longer-term homes for people who have slept rough and also fund support for people living in these properties. A pan-London PRS procurement service for people who have slept rough and a number of small supported housing services without any local connection criteria have also been funded. These provide opportunities for stable accommodation additional to Clearing House and local accommodation options.

For some migrants with unclear or insecure immigration status, access to immigration advice and specialist support to clarify, evidence or obtain entitlements in the UK is key to identifying sustainable routes off the streets in the UK or in another country if desired. For this reason, the Mayor has expanded his provision which specifically supports migrants who are sleeping rough and has also worked to ensure that specialist advice is embedded in all other relevant services.

Increasing the available options for people to leave rough sleeping in the longer-term, both through the provision of housing in London or support to access this elsewhere, will be an ongoing priority for the Mayor. Future commissioning will consider the full range of accommodation models which might be needed to deliver a genuinely personalised response, including both supported and independent accommodation, and transitional and longer-term options. The Mayor recognises the value of the Housing First model and will continue to explore what more can be done to proliferate the model in London.

### **4 To ensure people have the support which they need to rebuild their lives.**

Leaving rough sleeping behind is not simply achieved by putting a roof over someone's head. To ensure a truly long-lasting solution, there needs to be adequate access to appropriate support at the right time to enable people to move on with their lives. The consequences of not providing the support which people need throughout, is that some people will stay rough sleeping for long periods and others may leave the streets but then once again become homeless. People risk becoming trapped in a revolving door of periods of rough sleeping and short-lived solutions to their homelessness. In 2020/21, over 1,300 people returned to the streets of London having not been seen sleeping rough in the previous year.

In recent years, the Mayor has placed an ever-greater focus on ensuring that the right support is reaching people at the right time. In some instances, this has been specialist services for people that are sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation, including launching the Rough Sleeping and Mental Health Programme (RAMHP) across four mental health trusts and funding a peer led outreach team in some London boroughs. In other cases, the focus has been on ensuring that when people enter longer-term accommodation, they have the support they need to make this a success. For example, the work of the Mayor's Tenancy Sustainment Teams has been expanded to also support people in the vital initial months of a new tenancy in the Private Rented Sector, with great success in supporting people to maintain their accommodation.

Going forward, the Mayor will continue to fund services which ensure that people receive the support they need at every stage and regardless of circumstances. Where appropriate, the Mayor will fill the gaps and pilot new initiatives in specialist provision for those who require a greater intensity or different type of support. The Mayor may need to sometimes work in partnership with councils and health authorities to make this happen. There will be also be a focus on ensuring that people are empowered with the skills they need to maintain stays in accommodation, regardless of tenure type and whether this is a temporary or longer-term accommodation. Additional emphasis will be placed on ensuring these interventions are genuinely tailored to everyone they work with.

## Cross-cutting priorities

### **5 To meet the health needs of people sleeping rough, including in relation to mental health and substance use**

In London, over three quarters of people who are sleeping rough have support needs around drugs, alcohol or mental health and 9 out of 10 have a physical health problem. Academic research has found that people who are homeless have a much greater prevalence of health conditions including heart disease and lung conditions. The gravest manifestation of this is that the average age of death of someone who is homeless is just 44, 34 years younger than the general population.

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly illuminated both the severe health inequalities amongst homeless population and also the response which can be galvanised from across the housing and health sectors to provide people with the healthcare which they so need. This gargantuan effort should provide the basis for a renewed focus on improving health and wellbeing. In addition to exploring whether further specialist services, similar to the RAMHP and the Homeless Hotels Drug and Alcohol Support Service (HDAS) initiatives the Mayor has funded, could be commissioned, all the Mayor's new rough sleeping services will have a holistic approach to the health of service user's embedded within them.

**6 To ensure that at every stage, people receive advice or support as swiftly as possible**

In recent years, the Mayor's rough sleeping services have worked to ensure that people always receive advice or support as swiftly as possible. This has included, for instance, trying to improve how quickly we reach people that are sleeping rough, through the introduction of StreetLink London (which provides a dedicated phone line for those currently on the streets), the Rapid Response outreach service, and the Floating Hub model of very intensive casework for a short, time-limited period to quickly support longer-term rough sleepers off the streets.

In future commissioning, the Mayor's rough sleeping services will continue to consider not just the quality of support provided and the eventual effect, but ensuring that this is delivered as rapidly as possible, so people spend as little time as possible on the streets or insecure accommodation. There will be an increased focus on swift access to immigration advice and specialist support to evidence or obtain secure immigration status and entitlements, as this is vital for maximising positive outcomes for rough sleepers.

**7 To provide specialist advice and support for migrants who are sleeping rough**

The nationality profile of rough sleepers in London remains diverse, with a total of 129 different nationalities recorded during 2020/21. Non-UK nationals consistently represent around half of the people seen rough sleeping in London. Given their prominence among the rough sleeping population, this cross-cutting priority ensures all of the Mayor's the rough sleeping services play a role in addressing the needs of migrant rough sleepers.

The Covid-19 emergency accommodation for rough sleepers highlighted the high numbers of homeless migrants with immigration needs in London and the limited specialist advice and support available. However, it has also shown that with the right type of support, many have been able to engage and positively move on from the streets. Additionally, it has emphasised the benefits of increasing collaboration and improving understanding between the migration and the homelessness sectors.

The Mayor will continue to invest strategically in specialist advice, support services and capacity building to meet the needs of Londoners with insecure immigration status. However, without changes to immigration-based restrictions, it will not be possible to resolve rough sleeping in London and so the Mayor will also continue to oppose the hostile environment, which threatens social integration and leaves vulnerable people without access to essential services.

**8 To enhance provision from faith and community-based organisations and to complement services commissioned by borough local authorities**

Smaller organisations, including those that are faith and community-based, have a long tradition of providing services to rough sleepers in London. This all true all year-round but they play an especially significant and valuable role in supporting people during the coldest months of the year; accommodating hundreds of people in this time. The Mayor is very supportive of the volunteering efforts and engagement of the community in activities to help

tackle homelessness where those efforts are ultimately focused on helping rough sleepers off the streets or to assist vulnerably-housed people to remain in accommodation.

Over recent years, the Mayor has delivered his work supporting these organisations, largely through the partnership with Housing Justice – which has funded additional bedspaces, facilities and staffing, and during the pandemic aimed to reduce transmissible settings and worked with City Hall to accommodate hundreds of people from communal shelters in hotels. He has also funded initiatives such as a capacity-building project to assist small organisations to more effectively support homeless migrants. Further supporting the efforts of faith and community-based organisations to address rough sleeping will be an ongoing priority for the Mayor.

In addition to this, the Mayor wishes to ensure that pan-London rough sleeping services commissioned truly enhance and strengthen local services commissioned by London boroughs. Decisions on the GLA's funded rough sleeping services will, at every stage, be informed by whether they are coordinated with, and adding value to, the provision which has been commissioned at a local level.

## **9 To maintain and improve the collection and use of data about rough sleeping in London**

The provision of detailed information about people sleeping rough is essential, at an individual and aggregate level. This is both to ensure a coherent and consistent approach by services dealing with each person sleeping rough and to enable service providers, commissioners and policymakers to identify trends and shape their responses accordingly. The CHAIN database serves a range of very important purposes, from enabling rough sleepers to be linked to the most appropriate services and resources, to informing strategic responses from boroughs, the GLA or central government.

The Mayor will continue to fund a database of people sleeping rough in London and will maximise its potential to be used in ways that help people off the streets. This might include funding further developments to the system or entering new partnerships, such as that established with Missing People. Furthermore, the Mayor will ensure that all commissioned services are collecting and storing data securely and using this in the most effective way possible, for the benefit of the individual and the wider service and always respecting data protection rules.

## **10 To ensure that services are genuinely adaptive to all people who sleep rough, considering age, gender, race and other characteristics, and including those with more specialist needs**

The rough sleeping population of London is hugely diverse. It includes adults of all ages and of different nationalities, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations and people with huge range of past experiences and current support needs. A full analysis of this can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment for the Commission Framework. With this in mind, the Mayor's

rough sleeping services have strived to ensure that they are not only accessible for everyone who needs them but that they are tailored to the characteristics, circumstances and needs of all those who use the service. In some instances, it's been considered that a more targeted service is needed to best support a specific group, such as the grant funding the Mayor has given to London's first LGBTQ+ homeless shelter or the Women's Hidden Homeless Project.

Going forward, commissioning activities for the Mayor's rough sleeping services will have an even greater focus on ensuring they are genuinely adaptive to everyone who sleeps rough. This will include consideration of how services can better support women, people who are LGBTQ+, young people, and various significant minority groups within London's rough sleeping population, such as people of Roma ethnicity. Outside of demographic characteristics, it will be a priority to shape services that improve outcomes for people regardless of the type and level of their support needs, including people with multiple, complex needs and those who have experienced past trauma.

## COMMISSIONING PRINCIPLES

The commissioning principles guide commissioning activity of the GLA Rough Sleeping Team. They encompass areas such as the types of needs addressed; the types of service models favoured; the modes of engaging with the sector and procuring services; and other key underpinning principles.

### **Filling gaps not met at a local level**

Seek to identify and address needs, or gaps in provision, which are not being, or cannot be, addressed at a local level.

### **Services that make more sense on a regional level**

Take advantage of potential economies of scale and opportunities to increase consistency across London by considering services which can be better delivered on a pan-London level.

### **Piloting new and ambitious models/approaches**

Test and develop novel approaches to intractable issues, with the aim of proving successful models and supporting wider adoption.

### **Resourcing the sector**

Provide systems, structures and resources to support delivery of services across the sector.

### **Evidence-based**

Identify needs based on a wide range of types of evidence, and select interventions on the basis of evidence of the impact on desirable outcomes.

### **Developing the sector**

Package services so as to ensure that smaller providers are able to compete. Encourage interest from aligned sectors. Build resilience into systems and service models.

### **Value for money**

Ensure that value for money is secured in using public funds to achieve the desired outcomes.

### **Provide stability and allow for long-term planning**

Commission services on a stable long-term basis to allow other parts of the sector to plan accordingly and provide security to service providers.

### **Flexible and adaptive services**

Structure services and contracts such that they can be adapted quickly to new and emerging needs.

### **Encourage collaborative approaches**

Focus interventions and design services to target intersection points between sectors and aim to bring together stakeholders to achieve desired outcomes.

**Outcomes-focussed**

Commission services for the outcomes that they deliver, and structure contracts, payments and performance management accordingly.

**Align with wider Mayoral policies and principles**

Contracts and services will align with, and support, wider Mayoral policies, such as payment of at least London Living Wage, for example.