

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Rough Sleeping No Second Night Out Policy

Approved:

Review due:

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1. Introduction & Aims of the Policy

- 1.1 A person is generally considered homeless if they do not have settled accommodation that they are legally able to occupy, or that their accommodation is considered 'not reasonable'¹ to continue to occupy. Homelessness is a very complex issue that is caused by a range of factors and can result in individuals sleeping rough on the streets.
- 1.2 Rough sleepers are people who sleep or bed down in the open air, such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, bus shelters and parks or sleep in buildings that are not designed for habitation. The longer a person sleeps rough on the streets, the greater the risk that they will come to harm. This may be in the form of deteriorating physical and mental health, temptation to commit crime, drug and alcohol abuse or harm from other members of the public.
- 1.3 Whilst there is no legal protection for people sleeping rough who do not have a priority need² for accommodation, tackling homelessness is at the centre of Runnymede Borough Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24. No one should have to sleep out on our streets in the 21st century, which is why we are committed to ending rough sleeping in the Borough of Runnymede. As stated in the Strategy, '*a single rough sleeper without access to accommodation or assistance is not acceptable*'.
- 1.4 The implementation of this No Second Night Out Policy aims to ensure that no one who sleeps rough in Runnymede will spend more than one night on the streets. Runnymede Borough Council will also ensure proactive prevention methods are in place so that rough sleeping is not an option for any individual.
- 1.5 The aims of the policy are to ensure no one spends more than one night in the street, by:
 - Quickly identifying those that are sleeping rough in Runnymede through notification
 - Rapid response to notification of rough sleepers
 - Ongoing support and assistance for anyone that has slept rough in Runnymede
 - Intensive engagement to break the cycle of homelessness and secure positive housing outcomes
 - Introduce preventative measures to reduce the need to sleep out

¹ **Homelessness:** Housing Act 1996, Section 175(3) provides that a person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

² **Priority Need:** Housing Act 1996, Section 189(1) Sets out the persons who have a priority need, this could be if someone is vulnerable as a result of their health, age, leaving an institution etc.

2. Notification and Identifying Rough Sleepers

- 2.1 Early notification of a rough sleeper can make a huge difference to the outcome for that person. If a member of the public becomes aware of a person or persons who is sleeping on the streets of Runnymede, we urge them to notify the Council so that we can attend the reported sleeping site and offer support and assistance to the individual(s). To inform Runnymede Borough Council of a rough sleeper, you should either:
- Call the Housing Solutions Team on 01932 838383
 - Email roughsleeping@runnymede.gov.uk
 - Log the details on <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/> and the details will be passed to us
- 2.2 As part of this policy, through our Housing Navigator, we will conduct monthly rough sleeper counts and estimates. This will involve actively searching the Borough for evidence of encampments or people who are sleeping rough. We will also gather intelligence through our partnership working with local organisations, police, charities, and churches.
- 2.3 The Council also take part in the annual rough sleeper count that is carried out across the Country every autumn. The official street count is a snapshot figure of who is sleeping rough on one single night, giving a nationwide picture. Whilst this is important, our regular reporting and monitoring will provide a more accurate picture of rough sleeping within Runnymede over the year

3. Response to notification of a Rough Sleeper

- 3.1 On receiving notification or having identified a rough sleeper we will undertake an initial assessment of their needs. We aim to provide a rapid and consistent approach to all reports of a rough sleeper and therefore we are committed to visiting and completing an assessment of the rough sleepers needs within one working day of receiving notification.
- 3.2 A homeless application will be taken in all instances, other than where the Council have already taken a homeless application and determined the

duties, if any, are owed to that person. Where a homeless application has already been concluded, unless there is ground for a fresh application, there may be no further duty on the Authority other than one to provide the person with advice and assistance.

- 3.3 During the initial assessment we will determine whether the rough sleeper has a local connection³ to the borough of Runnymede. If they do not, we will take steps to reconnect them to the borough of their origin, (see 3.13-3.15 reconnection).
- 3.4 As part of the homeless application process the Council will support the individual in accordance with the legislation and accept any subsequent duties that may arise, for example this may include a relief duty⁴ and a personalised housing plan⁵.
- 3.5 Alongside the initial assessment, should the applicant be a verified rough sleeper, we will offer emergency accommodation to prevent a second night of rough sleeping. This offer of accommodation will be regardless of whether we have reason to believe that the person has a priority need, however it will not be made to those where the Authority has determined no duty applies. The emergency accommodation may be an offer of B&B, a placement in our Emergency Sleep pods or within temporary accommodation. A risk assessment will be carried out when considering what accommodation is suitable for the individual.
- 3.6 In the event of an emergency or severe weather, the Council may be able to provide emergency accommodation to those where no duty is owed. See SWEP (3.10-3.12).

No Recourse to Public Funds

- 3.7 In some instances, a rough sleeper may be a person from abroad and have an eligibility status of “no recourse to public funds”. In accordance with the

³ **Local Connection:** Section 199(1) Housing Act 1996 (as amended) provides that a person has a local connection with a District where a person has resided in the area for 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years, or where they are employed in an area, or where they have a close family member who has resided in the area for the last 5 years. Some special circumstances may also apply.

⁴ **Relief duty:** Section 189B requires housing authorities to help people who are homeless to secure accommodation

⁵ **Personalised housing plan:** The Section 189A duty is to assess an applicant’s case and to develop a personalised housing plan with reasonable steps for the Authority and the individual to take in order to enable the person to positively resolve their housing situation.

legislation⁶, they would not be eligible for homeless assistance or benefits and as such, would not qualify for emergency accommodation. However, we are committed to ending all rough sleeping in Runnymede. Therefore, we will still offer emergency accommodation under this policy to those that have no recourse to public funds.

- 3.8 This discretionary offer of emergency accommodation will be made under Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 – a duty that is capable of permitting the provision of temporary accommodation by a Council as a step for improving the health of people in the area. This offer of accommodation will not be indefinite, and the person will need to demonstrate that they are engaging with the Housing Solutions team to find a solution to their difficulty. Failure to engage will result in the accommodation provided being brought to an end.
- 3.9 The Housing Navigator will support the individual to apply for eligibility status, discuss returning to their country of origin if safe and reasonable to do so, liaise with the Home Office regarding their documentation status as well as whether they qualify for National Asylum Support Services (NASS) assistance and where appropriate, support the person to obtain employment so that they are self-sufficient.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

- 3.10 Runnymede Borough Council operate a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol to safeguard the wellbeing of those rough sleeping during periods of severe weather, especially in winter months. There is no single definition of severe weather, as any weather that could increase the risk of harm to people sleeping rough can be classed as severe. Typically, SWEP is triggered when the temperature a night is set to be 0c or below for three consecutive nights.
- 3.11 If a rough sleeper does not qualify for support through this Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out scheme and the weather is considered to be a risk to the health and wellbeing of a rough sleeper, we may be able to offer emergency accommodation for a short period until the severe weather improves.
- 3.12 A copy of Runnymede Borough Council's SWEP is available at request.

⁶ **Eligibility:** Section 185 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended)

Reconnection to originating borough

- 3.13 Rough sleepers who do not have a local connection to the borough of Runnymede, but who do have a local connection to another local authority, will be reconnected with that authority if it is safe to do so. Accommodation will be provided whilst the reconnection is made so that the person is not left on the streets.
- 3.14 If the conditions for a referral are made, a reconnection will be made formally under Section 198, Housing Act 1996 (as amended), which allows a local authority to refer a case to another housing authority. Runnymede Borough Council will be under no further duty towards this person, even if they refuse the reconnection.
- 3.15 In some instances, Runnymede Borough Council will be able to cover the costs of travel to enable a rough sleeper to return to the area with which they are connected.

4. Ongoing Support for Rough Sleepers

Help getting off the streets

- 4.1 Rough sleepers will be provided with support by the Housing Solutions team to ensure that they do not need to return to the streets now or in the future. Rough sleepers will be put onto 'pathway plans' to guide them through the process. The plans are tailored to the individual and are categorised as: Addiction, Education and Employment, Ex-offender, Domestic Abuse, Ex-armed Forces, Finances and Health. It is possible to utilise more than one category.
- 4.2 With help from the pathways, the Team will support the rough sleeper to find appropriate accommodation. This may be supported housing, private rented accommodation, or social housing. Pathway plans will ensure rough sleepers will have assistance setting up their new home, arranging utilities and paying their rent so that they do not lose their new home.
- 4.3 A small personalisation budget is available to rough sleepers through the Council's homeless prevention grant. This fund can be used to facilitate

transport, provide food, access to a mobile phone or other. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and sign off for funds will be authorised by the Head of Housing Solutions or Head of Housing & Business Planning.

Reconnection with family

- 4.4 Rough sleepers often have traumatic or chaotic backgrounds where relationships and family life has deteriorated to such an extent that the individual is forced to leave accommodation and end up sleeping rough. Runnymede Council help to negotiate with family members to reconnect that individual, where it is safe to do so.

Access to healthcare

- 4.5 Whilst the Housing Solutions Team primary role is housing, the Officers will signpost and support rough sleepers to access appropriate healthcare. This may include registering for a GP and dentist or a referral to services such as drug and alcohol teams for help with addictions. The Housing Navigator will utilise the resources of the partners working with the Council through the FUSE group (see 5.7 below) to identify, and where appropriate, refer to other health agencies such as dentists, opticians.
- 4.6 Housing Solutions, where possible, will guide rough sleepers to getting vaccinated against Covid-19 should the applicant wish.
- 4.7 Joint working with the social prescribing team will ensure that individuals receive the support they need. For example, through referrals to therapies, mental health services etc.

Help people into work

- 4.8 The housing team will ensure that rough sleepers are able to access all of the benefits that they are entitled to in order to enable them to get back onto their feet. However, we will also work with our partners in the Job Centre to ensure those who are able to work, are provided with the skills and support to access employment, volunteering and education.

Housing First

- 4.9 Runnymede Borough Council have secured funding through the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Two successful funding bids have been granted to implement two schemes:
- a) RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme): Funding has been approved to purchase three 1-bedroom properties for rough sleepers.
 - b) RSI (Rough Sleeping Initiative): Funding has been agreed to provide a housing first⁷ type scheme within the three purchased properties.
- 4.10 The intention of these schemes is to provide a rough sleeper with a stable home first and then enlist support services to help the individual learn how to maintain their tenancy and rebuild their lives. This is a popular model of support both nationally and globally, with proven positive outcomes for entrenched rough sleepers. The support services may include health and wellbeing services, tenancy sustainment support and skills development training.
- 4.11 These properties will be let on an initial 12-24 month agreement with move on plans created and put in place to enable the individual to gain the skills needed in order to move on and live independently. Therefore, freeing up the accommodation for another individual with complex needs that is rough sleeping.

5. Homeless Prevention

- 5.1 Rough sleeping can be avoided in many cases if people access the support and accommodation they require at an earlier stage. Runnymede Borough Council focus on homeless prevention as per its duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Section 195 of the Act requires Council's to work with eligible applicants to try and prevent homelessness or secure alternative accommodation.
- 5.2 We do this by recognising the need for early identification of the root cause of homelessness before the applicant sleeps rough on the streets. This may include facilitating mediation and negotiation with family members, where safe to do so. Often parental exclusions are resolved by negotiation, thus

⁷ **Housing First:** Provides intensive, person centred, holistic support that is open ended, giving homeless people with health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives.

preventing a young person from sleeping rough due to a lack of support network or skills to secure and maintain a tenancy.

- 5.3 Runnymede Council will also continue to liaise with support agencies such as mental health groups and addiction recovery services to tackle the root cause of the threat of homelessness before the problems escalate.
- 5.4 The other key prevention tool is tenancy sustainment. This is achieved by ensuring that the person has an income and expenditure assessment so as to identify where excess spending is occurring and re-direct that to rent arrears, for example. Secondly, putting the applicant in touch with employment services or educational services in order to equip them with life skills to maximise income and thus avoid a perpetual cycle of rent arrears.
- 5.5 Other life skill support such as signposting to cooking courses, volunteering opportunities and wellbeing groups is another core prevention feature. This provides the individual with confidence to be in more control of their lives and help reduce the risk of sliding into a pattern not being able to maintain tenancy and potential rough sleeping when they feel there are no other options.
- 5.6 The key to this is responding quickly. Therefore, if you are aware of somebody who is at a threat of homelessness, please contact our Housing Solutions team: housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk

Homeless Task Group

- 5.7 The Council host a bi-monthly Homeless Task Group, also known as FUSE (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower). This group pulls together local services, charities, churches and organisations who share our ambition to end rough sleeping and improve housing outcomes for individuals.
- 5.8 The agencies that we work with include; Police, Probation, hospital, revenues and benefits, department for work and pensions, Job Centre, Citizen Advice, Look ahead, The Salvation Army, Your Sanctuary, Runnymede Foodbank, iAccess, Richmond Fellowship, Surrey Adults Matter, Christians Against Poverty, social prescribing. This list is not exhaustive.
- 5.9 The joint working of this group will enable quicker identification and notification of a report of a rough sleeper and better joined up services for those individuals that need support moving away from the streets.

- 5.10 If you are an organisation that is interested in being a part of the FUSE group, please contact our Housing Navigator on roughsleeping@runnymede.gov.uk
- 5.11 The forum enables the Council to develop our rough sleeping pathways through joint working. Pathway support being in the form of (but not limited to): Guidance for ex-offenders, support with addiction, mental and physical health, help with maximising income, signposting and guidance into education and employment.

6. Monitoring and performance management

- 6.1 We aim to review this policy every year to ensure it reflects current legislation and latest examples of best practice.
- 6.2 Runnymede Borough Council will continue to work with local partners to tackle homelessness across the borough by meeting regularly, sharing information and good practice. Further, we will conduct monthly estimates and street counts, as well as the annual rough sleeper count.
- 6.3 The Housing Navigator will gather data and use the information captured to monitor and assess ongoing and/or emerging trends so that Runnymede Borough Council are able to be proactive in reducing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in the borough.
- 6.4 The team will monitor data, including:
- Number of people verified and supported off the streets
 - History and backgrounds of those verified to better understand patterns
 - The number of nights a person slept rough in the borough and the reasons why
 - Number of people reconnected and where they were reconnected to
- 6.5 The Council has a plan to end rough sleeping and has set operational targets that we will have 0 rough sleepers on the annual rough sleeper count for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 In producing this document an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is available as a separate document. If you would like to see a copy of this please request this directly by emailing housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk or contacting Housing Solutions on 01932 838383.

8. Related Strategies/Documents

8.1 In the Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018⁸, they set a commitment to half rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. This policy supports the objective of ending rough sleeping

8.2 The related documents for this policy are:

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy



Homeless Strategy
2019-2024.docx

- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol



Severe Weather
Emergency Protocol

9. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1					

⁸ Rough Sleeping Strategy: [Rough Sleeping Strategy August 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)