



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Rough Sleeping Action Plan

February 2018

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

The Two Year Action Plan to reduce rough sleeping reflects the concern of the Welsh Government and its partners at the recent rise in rough sleeping and the priority we give to reversing this. We are determined to, make stronger progress in meeting our long term objective of ending the need to sleep rough.

This action plan has been developed in partnership with stakeholders working with rough sleepers, including Rough Sleepers Cymru and the WLGA. It is intended to be a dynamic working document, and will be subject to continuous review and change as necessary.

Context

The Ten Year Homelessness Plan 2009-19 set out our aim of ending the need for anyone to sleep rough. Rough sleeping continues to be a difficult issue both to measure and to address. Despite increases in the funding applied to helping people who have no home, rough sleeping has been rising in Wales as part of a broader UK trend.

The causes of rough sleeping involve personal and structural factors, often interacting to leave people with no option but to sleep rough. The severe problems in the housing market mean that affordable housing may be unavailable. Employment and welfare benefit problems create a very difficult context for people on low incomes. These issues are often compounded by personal problems such as ill health, substance misuse and criminal behaviour.

Outreach and other services for rough sleepers have grown in recent years, but access to emergency accommodation remains patchy, and not always suitable or accessible for all who need it. Some rough sleepers become entrenched in sleeping rough, and may become unwilling to try better alternatives.

What we want to achieve

The Welsh Government is determined to reduce rough sleeping and end the need for people to sleep rough. This requires commitment not just from us but also from local authorities and a wide range of other organisations and sectors. We believe that no one should have to sleep rough. We want to see a range of joined up outreach, drop-in and accommodation-based services being delivered by housing, healthcare, employment and support service providers. These need to be person-centred, widely available, easily accessible and targeted at the needs of rough sleepers. They need to be focussed on the ambitions, circumstances and potential of each individual service user. They need to provide a holistic approach to addressing the practical and emotional, physical and psychological, social and behavioural needs of rough sleepers.

Services need to work together proactively to prevent rough sleeping, as well as encouraging the resettlement of rough sleepers, and supporting them to reintegrate into society, fulfil their aspirations and become valued members of the community. We want to see the development of improved systems for monitoring and measuring the extent of rough sleeping, service outcomes and our success in eliminating the need to sleep rough.

Taking the action plan forward

The Welsh Government will work with stakeholders to ensure delivery of the action plan. As more understanding of the problem and how best practice can prevent and reduce it emerges, the plan will be reviewed and actions may be added or amended.

The actions are in most cases primarily the responsibility of front line services including local authorities. However, Welsh Government is keen to support and drive progress, taking a leadership role where required.

Quarterly reports will be provided to the Rough Sleepers Working Group and the Homelessness Strategies Working Group to enable them to monitor progress. Reports will also be provided to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration.

The plan does not identify specific resources against each action. This is partly because most of the actions can be taken forward within existing resources, including the additional funding to be made available by Welsh Government over the next two years, and partly because the resources will in many cases come from more than one source.

Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2018-2020

Prevention

It is vital every effort is made to prevent people from having to sleep rough, which can trap people into extremely damaging situations .

We will:

1. Support the early referral of new rough sleepers to services through Streetlink and other public information and advice channels. (By July 2018)
2. Conduct research to understand the causes of the recent increase in rough sleeping and identify opportunities to improve its prevention, including the role and suitability of emergency and temporary accommodation. (By July 2018)
3. Promote the prevention of rough sleeping through emergency housing arrangements and maximising the effectiveness of homelessness prevention under s66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and, where

rough sleeping cannot be prevented, support a no second night out approach.

4. Promote and engage with the work being undertaken to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), to help address contributory factors to rough sleeping in later life. This will include training for workers in trauma informed practice and related skills to help them to support rough sleepers with an appropriately sensitive and empathetic approach. (By December 2018)

Support

Rough sleepers often have multiple and complex needs, and can only be effectively helped with flexible, person-centred support.

5. Foster, through guidance and advice, the application of Supporting People resources to support rough sleepers into accommodation and to help them sustain that accommodation in order to help them avoid further rough sleeping. (From April 2018)
6. Promote services which help build the skills and confidence of rough sleepers and help them to access training and employment, including day services. This will include a report on effective practice. (By December 2018)
7. Encourage the development of peer support to help rough sleepers move away from the streets, including training for peer mentors. (From April 2018)
8. Promoting a positive message to the public about the best way to help a rough sleeper, and raise awareness of the difference between street based activity and those who are actually homeless. (From October 2018)

Outreach

Services need to be proactive in delivering help to people sleeping rough, engaging assertively as necessary in a way which offers early and constructive solutions.

9. Promote assertive outreach services and a case management approach to help each individual rough sleeper to secure accommodation, supported by an appropriate IT system. (From March 2019)
10. Support rough sleepers, who wish it, to return to areas where they have family or other strong connections, within a case management approach which includes support to access accommodation and a clear transferring protocol. (Ongoing)

Emergency Accommodation

No-one should need to sleep rough, and the availability of suitable emergency accommodation is essential to avoid this.

11. Ensure access to safe emergency accommodation with support is available throughout the year, by widening the range of provision and improving move-on to release bed spaces. This should be evidenced in statutory homelessness reviews and strategies. (From January 2019)
12. Review severe weather plans and ensure they all offer appropriate protection and support for rough sleepers, and proactively help them to access more suitable housing and support. (By March 2018 and November 2018)

Housing First

For many people, Housing First offers the effective solution to their situation, as evidenced consistently through research.

13. Encourage the application of Housing First principles (and review experiences of implementation) to enable rough sleepers to find settled accommodation, including the use of individual budgets to aid resettlement and incentives to improve access to the private rented sector. (By October 2018)

Legislation and statutory guidance

The legal framework must be designed to ensure people are offered help to avoid sleeping rough, providing assistance when they are at risk or sleeping rough. Part 2 of the Housing Act 2014 has not yet achieved this.

14. Require local authorities to review the needs of rough sleepers in their area and plan to meet their needs within their local homelessness strategies to meet duties under ss50-52 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Planning should include addressing the needs of women, couples, and people with pets. (By December 2018)
15. Provide stronger statutory guidance on rough sleeping, to ensure effective application of homelessness legislation to improve outcomes for rough sleepers. This will include clearer guidance on assisting those with no local connection, to ensure they receive personalised assistance to secure accommodation. (By July 2018)
16. Consider the case for amending secondary legislation to modify priority need groups, including rough sleepers. (By January 2020)

Measuring and Monitoring

Measuring rough sleeping is difficult, but we need to measure as best we can the extent and nature of rough sleeping in order to plan to end it.

17. Develop continuous monitoring systems across Wales to improve the measurement of rough sleeping and enable the tracking, assessment and recording of work with the person, aiming for individual level data which can be linked and shared across Wales. (By March 2019)
18. Review the annual national two week data gathering exercise to ensure appropriate details are collected of people claiming to be sleeping rough to assist policy development. By July 2018

Funding

We can only tackle rough sleeping if we provide the means to support services to implement this plan. The Welsh Government is committed to supporting this plan with funding. Local authorities also have a vital role to play in funding local services which prevent and relieve rough sleeping.

19. Provide funding to drive a reduction in rough sleeping, encouraging innovative approaches to tackle the problem, including incentives for private landlords. (From February 2018)
20. Invest in accommodation solutions and services specific to the needs of young people as alternatives to sleeping rough, working with the End Youth Homelessness Partnership. (From February 2018)

Joint working

Services can only be effective in helping rough sleepers if they work together to meet their needs. This means making clear arrangements to work in partnership to overcome any barriers for service users. Vulnerable homeless people will often need help in the form of advice and advocacy to enable them to access the services they need.

21. Improve access to health and substance misuse services for rough sleepers, through improved implementation of the Welsh Government's Health Standards for Homeless and Vulnerable Groups. This will include development of model joint working protocols for engaging mental health and substance misuse services with rough sleepers. (From April 2018)
22. Strengthen pathways between services across local authorities, voluntary agencies, health and housing sectors, to ensure that staff have sufficient awareness and training to appropriately signpost and enable individuals to navigate through the system to access the help they need. (From April 2018)

Promoting Good Practice

There is a wide range of expertise across Wales, the UK and internationally around rough sleeping. We must use this to learn and innovate in order to improve outcomes for people sleeping rough.

23. Work with partners to strengthen the understanding of developing good practice in helping rough sleepers, particularly Rough Sleepers Cymru, including through events, workshops and websites. (Ongoing)
24. Convene a national conference on rough sleeping to explore best practice across the UK and internationally. (By November 2018)