

Rough Sleeper Policy

Version control

Avoid referring to printed versions of this document. Printed versions may be out of date.

Owner/responsibility for compliance		Head of Homelessness and Housing Equalities	
Status (draft / approved & live)		Approved and live	
Version no:	Date approved:	Approved by:	Summary of changes made to each version:
1.1	11 December 2024	Cabinet	New policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is intended to support Swindon Borough Council (the Council) in its function to provide the statutory duty to prevent homelessness and to help with people who are threatened with homelessness or are homeless and are at risk of, or currently rough sleeping.
- 1.2 This policy outlines the Council's approach to individuals found rough sleeping in Swindon and those that may be at risk of rough sleeping in Swindon. Preventing and responding quickly to those rough sleeping is a priority for the Council's Housing & Homelessness services.
- 1.3 In developing this policy residents' and partnering agencies' views and feedback have been considered. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

2 Aims/objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to reduce rough sleeping in Swindon.
- 2.2 The Council aims to do this by:
- Responding quickly to reports of rough sleeping.
 - Employing effective up-stream prevention work.
 - Taking a multi-agency approach to support those rough sleeping/ at risk of rough sleeping.
 - Helping residents to sustain their tenancies.
 - Providing training to any person who may work with someone with the potential to rough sleep.
- 2.3 When rough sleeping occurs, the Council will take prompt action to help resolve the situation; the response will focus on prevention, assessment, and advice.

2.4 The Council is committed to developing trauma informed ways of working. Trauma-informed organisations assume that people have had traumatic experiences, and as a result may find it difficult to feel safe within services and to develop trusting relationships with service providers. Consequently, services are structured, organised and delivered in ways that promote safety and trust, and aim to prevent re-traumatisation.

3 Definitions

3.1 Rough sleepers are defined for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates as:

- People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments).
- People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

3.2 The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers.

3.3 'Bedded down' is taken to mean either lying down or sleeping. About to bed down includes those who are sitting in/on or near a sleeping bag or other bedding.

4 Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all individuals rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

5 Approach

5.1 The Council has adopted a series of principles to underpin its approach to Rough Sleeping. The Council will:

- Respond as quickly as possible to any alerts or reports of rough sleepers.
- A trained Housing Options Officer will carry out an assessment.
- Take a trauma informed approach when working with its clients.
- Make an offer of accommodation to eligible individuals found to be rough sleeping who have a local connection to the area. For further details see the Council's Allocations Policy.
- Offer a bespoke support service to each client.
- Offer a housing first service to entrenched rough sleepers.
- Offer tenancy support to those in a property to aid with tenancy sustainment.
- Make an offer to all known rough sleepers during severe weather, regardless of eligibility.
- Work with partners to take a multi-agency approach when offering support and finding solutions.

6 Prevention

- 6.1 The Council aims to prevent rough sleeping from occurring where possible and uses the following to focus on prevention:
- Provider meetings take place monthly to explore internal moves between schemes to prevent people returning to rough sleeping where possible.
 - Tenancy support is put in place if the Council is notified of anyone struggling in their tenancy.
 - Using a multi-agency approach to ensure individuals are supported by the correct agencies.
 - Providing targeted action for people who are most at risk of rough sleeping across the system at some of the most challenging transitional points in people's lives.
 - Ensuring adequate affordable housing in Swindon is available to those at risk of rough sleeping.

7 Support

- 7.1 Some clients may be vulnerable and will need help and support to enable them to sustain their tenancy. The Council will support those tenants through specialist advice and action provided directly or by signposting to the appropriate agencies.
- 7.2 Navigators, Floating Support Workers, and Housing First support workers are in post to support those on the homelessness pathway.
- 7.3 Outreach workers are there to provide an initial support service including signposting to appropriate agencies.

8 Investigating and enforcement

- 8.1 The Council is committed to ending Rough Sleeping and will take measures to ensure it takes appropriate investigation and enforcement measures to stop anti-social behaviour which may come about as a result of people sleeping on the streets.
- 8.2 The Council will ensure that incidents of begging can be easily reported to us using a range of communication channels, including calling 01793 445500 or emailing details to customerservices@swindon.gov.uk.
- 8.3 The Council uses a stepped approach of incremental case progression that seeks to resolve the issue using the least intrusive interventions.
- 8.4 The Council aims to provide as much support as possible before exploring any enforcement to move anyone on.
- 8.5 The Council will work collaboratively with Police and Community Safety Partnership to explore closure orders where appropriate to prevent cuckooing and anti-social behaviour.

9 Partnership working

- 9.1 The Council will work collaboratively with other agencies, including the Police and other statutory and voluntary bodies to develop strong partnerships. The aim of these

partnerships will be to share experience and information, and co-ordinate action to prevent or reduce rough sleeping.

- 9.2 The Council will meet regularly with their Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government advisor to ensure all Rough Sleeper Initiative interventions are running in line with funding terms and delivery of service.
- 9.3 The Council will develop formal information sharing protocols and partnership agreements to allow it to prevent or respond quickly to rough sleeping.
- 9.4 The Council will use information provided by other agencies to act where appropriate, to prevent incidents of rough sleeping.
- 9.5 The Council will log all reports of those found rough sleeping in its daily outreach reports.
- 9.6 The Council will – as required - submit monthly returns to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in regards to those rough sleeping and a breakdown of the situations of those individuals.
- 9.7 The Council will facilitate a monthly multi-agency meeting where all individuals known to be rough sleeping are discussed so support can be offered from the appropriate agencies. The Council will use an information sharing protocol and agreement to manage information sharing appropriately.

10 Monitoring and review

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or regulations change.