

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Review of Rough Sleeping Services	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Executive Director Adults and Health	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Housing Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 16 July 2024
<b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b> <p>We Make Camden states that everyone should have a place they call home – we know that safe, secure, affordable and accessible housing is important to people being able to access services and live good lives. As a Council, we want to use all our powers and resources to create more affordable and accessible homes and to help people experiencing homelessness access services and support that help them back into secure housing.</p> <p>In The Way We Work, our partner document to We Make Camden about how we will work to achieve our ambitions, we are committed to being a learning organisation and to listening deeply to our partners and communities. This report outlines the context, method, key findings, and recommendations of a review of rough sleeping services in Camden that follows on from a report made to the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 on the subject of an investigation into an incident on Huntley Street on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.</p>	
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b> <p>The report presents the context, method, findings, and recommendations of a review of Camden’s rough sleeping services, which has been led by Jess McGregor, Executive Director Adults and Health. This review was initiated following the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, at which the Committee received a report of the investigation into an incident on Huntley Street on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023. This report noted that University College London Hospital (UCLH), Metropolitan Police Officers and staff from Camden Council including Council community presence officers and staff from Camden’s waste and recycling contractor enforced a Section 35 Dispersal Order issued by the Metropolitan Police by moving people who had set up tents and living arrangements on land owned by UCLH and by disposing of those tents.</p>	

The purpose of the review of rough sleeping services in Camden has been to answer the following questions:

1. Does Camden have the appropriate policies, procedures and resources in place to respond well and in an empathetic way to people rough sleeping?
2. Do services meet the needs of a diverse group of people?
3. Are we making the most of strong community willingness to help and support people rough sleeping?

The review process has involved analysis of data and evidence relating to rough sleeping in Camden and rough sleeping services, interviews with Camden staff and practitioners from commissioned services and the voluntary sector in Camden, and consultation with neighbouring boroughs.

The review has found that rough sleeping services in Camden operate in a challenging context, characterised by exceptionally high levels of rough sleeping by national standards, short-term funding, and a very diverse and complex range of needs and vulnerabilities among people who sleep rough in Camden. Despite this, the review has found that rough sleeping services work well in Camden. There are areas where Camden may make improvements and explore different models of rough sleeping service, and so the review makes recommendations that may inform the ongoing work to make improvements to how rough sleeping services operate. There will be further opportunities as Camden develops a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.

#### **Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information**

No document(s) have been used in the preparation of this report:

#### **Contact Officer:**

Hugh Smith, Corporate Strategy Portfolio Lead,  
5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG, [hugh.smith@camden.gov.uk](mailto:hugh.smith@camden.gov.uk)

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the Housing Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of the report.



Signed:

Date: 03/07/2024

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 the Housing Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Executive Director Supporting Communities that provided information regarding an investigation into an incident on Huntley Street on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The report noted that University College London Hospital (UCLH), Metropolitan Police Officers and staff from Camden Council including Council community presence officers (CPOs) and staff from Camden's waste and recycling contractor were in the process of enforcing a Section 35 Dispersal Order issued by the Metropolitan Police by moving people who had set up tents and living arrangements on land owned by UCLH and by disposing of those tents. Evidence shared by citizens and community groups indicated that people who had set up tents on the UCLH land had been told that they needed to vacate the area or face enforcement, including arrest, and that personal items including a tent had been disposed of by staff members of a Camden commissioned service provided by Veolia who were wearing high-visibility vests with Camden Council logos.
- 1.2. The report noted that the Council has apologised to those immediately affected by the removal of tents from the UCLH site and that the Council has made it clear that disposing of people's belongings who are experiencing rough sleeping as part of enforcement or move-on activity, is unacceptable and against Camden's values.
- 1.3. The report noted that the Council "should review the whole of its rough sleepers service. This review should include ensuring the service has the appropriate policies, procedures and resources to respond well and in an empathetic way to an increasing rise of rough sleeping while ensuring services meet the needs of a diverse group of people and make the most of the strong community willingness to help and support rough sleepers. This review will be led by Jess McGregor the Executive Director Adults and Health."
- 1.4. Subsequent to this action being noted at the Housing Scrutiny meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Jess McGregor has led and completed this review. The purpose of this report is to present the review's key findings and recommendations and to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with a number of options for how members may continue to scrutinise improvement within the Council's rough sleeping services.
- 1.5. The decisions to undertake the review of rough sleeping services in response to the investigation into the November 2023 incident, to publish the findings and recommendations of the review, and to report to members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee on the substance of the findings reflect Camden's commitment to accountability, learning, and improvement. Camden has an organisational commitment, articulated in our corporate strategy *We Make Camden*, to "taking an active listening and learning approach and learn[ing] on behalf of and with others." This is an important means by which Camden seeks to achieve the ambitions outlined in *We Make Camden* for Camden to actively tackle injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong and open

communities where everyone can contribute; for Camden communities to support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well, and age well; and for everyone in Camden to have a place they call home.

- 1.6. The undertaking of the review also reflects Camden's model of leadership, which seeks to create a culture that enables constructive challenge for the purposes of learning and improvement, with a view to ensuring the best possible public services for Camden residents and communities.

## **2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Develop a fully costed proposal for an optimum rough sleeping system to meet Camden's needs
- 2.2 Ensure that future bids for short term funding ensure as far as possible that Camden can deliver sustainable and impactful rough sleeping services
- 2.3 Develop a strategic approach to enable more assertive influencing of government in respect of rough sleeping and the design of government funding that seeks to address rough sleeping in partnership with local authorities
- 2.4 Move away from language that reflects a binary understanding of support for people rough sleeping and enforcement approaches, and develop a local framework that describes the right partnership interventions to tackle rough sleeping that correspond to the support needs of individuals and the circumstances of individual cases.
- 2.5 Work with local partners to ensure that as much flexibility as possible within the established parameters of CHAIN is applied to the verification of people sleeping rough. Work with local partners to ensure that where people do not meet the criteria for CHAIN verification there is an appropriate support offer available to them. Draw on evidence and learning from Camden initiatives regarding alternative verification processes of women and young people sleeping rough to lobby for changes to the CHAIN verification process that would provide for age- and gender-informed recognition of all forms of rough sleeping.
- 2.6 Review Camden's current out of hours response for crisis situations
- 2.7 Share the final recommendations from this review with people with current lived experience to comment on to inform implementation
- 2.8 Review Camden's approach to 'Off the Street' accommodation with a view to considering viable operational improvements in the short term as well as long-term evidence-based strategic change, including the viability in Camden of a Housing First approach at a scale that corresponds to the challenge of homelessness and rough sleeping in Camden that draws on evidence of best practice.
- 2.9 Ensure that current work to improve the health, care and support offer for people who are rough sleeping and recently off the streets is underpinned by a robust approach to evaluation

- 2.10 Continue to take a broad and inclusive approach to the Homelessness Transformation work and the revived Rough Sleeping Forum
- 2.11 Continue to support and learn from the test and learn project that is exploring how the Shared Lives approach can enhance Camden's preventative work with asylum seekers living in Home Office accommodation, building on the opportunities that community willingness to help offer.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW**

- 3.1 The purpose of the review of rough sleeping services in Camden has been to answer the following questions:
  - 1. Does Camden have the appropriate policies, procedures and resources in place to respond well and in an empathetic way to people rough sleeping?
  - 2. Do services meet the needs of a diverse group of people?
  - 3. Are we making the most of strong community willingness to help and support people rough sleeping?
- 3.2 The focus of the review has been on learning and identifying actionable recommendations that may enable future improvements within Camden's rough sleeping services and improve the experiences of people who sleep rough when they interact with services.

### **4. METHOD AND APPROACH**

- 4.1 The review of rough sleeping services in Camden has been led by Jess McGregor, Executive Director Adults and Health. It has been undertaken with the close cooperation of rough sleeping services in Camden as well as other relevant council services and partner organisations including the NHS, the Metropolitan Police, and voluntary sector organisations and community groups in Camden.
- 4.2 The review has been evidence-led, informed by relevant data and evidence that provides insight into the nature and scale of rough sleeping in Camden, the experiences of people who sleep rough, the perspectives of partner agencies and organisations, good practice in service provision that supports people who sleep rough, and evidence-based practice in neighbouring local authorities. Camden staff have considered relevant internal council documents; undertaken interviews with Camden officers, practitioners employed by commissioned services, and representatives of partner and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations; and taken part in shadowing and site visits to understand how rough sleeping services operate.
- 4.3 The review has also looked outside Camden to understand where there is evidence-based practice that is working well in other places and to identify

lessons that might be learned for Camden. The review has consulted officers from two of Camden's neighbouring boroughs – Islington and Westminster – and in so doing Camden officers have gained insight into Camden's strengths and where there may be areas for improvement.

- 4.4 The review has sought to place the experiences of people who currently sleep rough or have previously slept rough in Camden at the centre of its considerations, and to do so in a way that is mindful of the trauma that many people who sleep rough experience. For this reason, rather than asking people to repeat or relive trauma by engaging them in new primary research, the review's approach has been to gain insight by drawing on existing research into the experiences of sleeping rough in Camden. In particular, the review has drawn on the Homelessness System Transformation co-production work and the Single Homeless Project (SHP)'s peer research.
- 4.5 Many of the partner agencies and commissioned services that were engaged during the review shared anonymised stories of individual people that described the experiences of people who they are currently supporting. These stories highlight the complexity and diversity of the experiences that people have when they sleep rough in Camden and when they interact with support services. Notably, they highlight how individual characteristics such as a person's immigration status, a health condition, a substance dependency, or an experience of domestic violence or abuse can materially impact the experience of rough sleeping and require forms of support that respond to this complexity and diversity and address the factors that have contributed to the experience of rough sleeping. These stories bring the nature of rough sleeping in Camden to life and have therefore been valuable assets for the purposes of the review. They are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.6 The scope of the review has included the question of the extent to which the Council is making the most of strong community willingness to help and support people who sleep rough. The review timescales did not allow sufficient time to commission specific community conversations, but the review has analysed complaints that the Council has received about rough sleeping and Members' Enquires raised by Councillors that convey concerns expressed to them by residents.
- 4.7 The review has considered a number of previous and ongoing council initiatives around rough sleeping, including the development of the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, the ongoing Homelessness System Transformation, the restart of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum chaired by Cllr Callaghan, the Cabinet Advisor report on rough sleeping completed by Cllr Cotton, the multi-agency Women's Homelessness Forum, and the Anti-Social Behaviour Taskforce. This is a high-profile area with much interest and commitment, and a corresponding level of activity.

## 5. CONTEXT

### 5.1 Rough Sleeping in Camden

- 5.1.1 Rough sleeping in England has increased year-on-year for the last two years. Official statistics from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities suggest that an estimated 3,898 people slept rough in England in 2023, which represents an annual increase of 27% and the highest number since 2015. In London, an estimated 1,132 people slept rough in 2023, which represents an annual increase of 32%. The context for this increase in rough sleeping is a national housing crisis, the effects of which are felt most acutely in inner London, in which housing has become increasingly unaffordable and supply of new affordable housing has not kept pace with demand.
- 5.1.2 Camden has the second highest number of people sleeping rough in London and in England. Westminster is the only borough with a higher number. Figures for 2024 so far are significantly higher than those for previous years, indicating an upward trend in the number of people sleeping rough in Camden.
- 5.1.3 Compared to national and London averages, a relatively high proportion of people who sleep rough in Camden are non-UK nationals, have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and/or are people leaving Home Office accommodation. Approximately 80% of people who sleep rough in Camden have no local connection. A significant number of people who sleep rough in Camden have experienced intermittent periods of rough sleeping over a number of years and experience multiple disadvantages including substance dependency, mental illness, and additional health and social care needs.
- 5.1.4 There is an awareness among rough sleeping services in Camden that there are 'hidden' rough sleepers in Camden. We have limited data on these people, who are more likely to be sofa surfing or sleeping on transport than on the streets, but evidence suggests that while women comprise approximately 20% of people who sleep rough, women and young people are likely to be overrepresented among 'hidden' rough sleepers.
- 5.1.5 The unique nature of rough sleeping in Camden is characterised by four particular challenges for the system of public and VCS services that seek to support people who sleep rough. These should be considered areas of focus, and which have therefore informed the review's findings and recommendations:
1. Supporting rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds
  2. Meeting people's complex health and care needs
  3. Taking a balanced approach to enforcement
  4. Identifying and tackling hidden homelessness

## 5.2 Resources and Provision

- 5.2.1 In September 2022, the Government published its 'Ending rough sleeping for good' strategy, with £2 billion of funding allocated over three years. This commitment included the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) extending the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to 2025 with £500 million funding for local authorities in England.
- 5.2.2 Camden has received £6.7m national funding from the RSI for the 2022-25 period. Despite Camden having the second highest number of people who sleep rough in England, Camden only receives the 10th highest amount of RSI funding. DLUHC have required the level of funding for each local authority to reduce every year from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to reflect falling numbers of people who sleep rough as a result of RSI-funded interventions. Consequently, Camden services have lost resource over time. Camden has significantly supplemented this national funding with £1.86m from its budget in 2023/24 to fund outreach and support services.
- 5.2.3 Camden has used RSI funding to fund homelessness prevention, outreach, and specialist services. This approach reflects the Council's commitment to prevention, while remaining mindful that the majority of people who sleep rough in Camden do not come from Camden originally and there is therefore a ceiling on the effectiveness of local prevention measures in terms of impact on rough sleeping in Camden. This approach also reflects Camden's commitment to culturally competent homelessness services and recognises the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different population groups by funding specialist and targeted support.
- 5.2.4 At present, there has been no indication from the Government that RSI funding will continue after 2025. This means that Camden's rough sleeping services are dependent on short term funding and a workforce without permanent contracts. This creates existential risks for Camden's rough sleeping system.
- 5.2.5 It is important to acknowledge that Camden's partner agencies, including the NHS and the Metropolitan Police, work together with Camden to address rough sleeping and commit resources and staff time to do so.

## 5.3 Improvement and Transformation in Camden

- 5.3.1 The review was undertaken with an awareness that rough sleeping is an area in which there has been significant local attention and activity. As part of the review process, officers reviewed a number of reports and programmes of work as highlighted below.
- 5.3.2 In February 2023, the Housing Scrutiny Committee received the report of the Cabinet Advisor on Supporting Rough Sleepers. This report explored and set out recommendations on supporting rough sleepers through a public health



approach, with a particular focus on those with long-term health conditions, mental health conditions and struggling with substance misuse. The recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser's report were endorsed by the Housing Scrutiny Committee. In the course of this review, officers identified considerable progress towards delivery of the report's recommendations, including measures to prioritise prevention, commission specialist support, embed trauma-informed approaches in services, and integrate services.

5.3.3 Over the past two years, the council has been implementing a Homelessness System Transformation programme. This is a three-year programme, running until March 2025, which aims to implement a more holistic, integrated approach to homelessness in all its forms. The programme takes a 'whole system' view of homelessness and brings key partners together alongside people with lived experience to coproduce changes to how homelessness services operate in Camden. In the course of the review, officers identified progress towards the programme's goals, including implementation of trauma-informed support, integration of multi-agency working through use of 'Personal Passports' and the 'Team Around Me' case discussion tool, creating conditions for Housing First approaches through joined up work between Adult Social Care and Housing, establishment of the Women's Homelessness Forum, and coproduction of recommendations for the Council's Autism Strategy.

5.3.4 Over the past year, Adult Social Care has been strengthening its approach to supporting people who are homeless. This has been in response to evidence from the Homelessness System Transformation programme and learning from recent Safeguarding investigations. Adult Social Care has increased joint working with rough sleeping services, reviewed Safeguarding processes and collaborated with Housing colleagues to develop a safeguarding assurance oversight process which will routinely visit Camden's hostels throughout the year. The recent re-organisation of Camden's Adult Social Care Neighbourhoods Service has led to the development of a new Multiple Disadvantage Team. This will consist of social workers and caseworkers working across specialisms with people who have co-occurring needs such as substance use, mental health, care and support needs, and homelessness. Two dedicated homelessness practitioners will join this team with one focussed on rough sleeping. This post will be embedded within rough sleeping services.

## **6. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The first question addressed by the review has been whether Camden has the appropriate policies, procedures and resources in place to respond well and in an empathetic way to people who sleep rough.

- 6.1.1 The review has found that rough sleeping services work well in Camden, despite the scale of the challenge that the services face, with Camden having the second highest number of people who sleep rough in England.
- 6.1.2 The vast majority of teams, partners, and individuals who were interviewed and consulted during the review shared a positive experience of working in Camden. It is notable that is the case despite significant resource pressures, which are common across London and England. There is not enough funding and resource in Camden to tackle the current levels of rough sleeping, and the funding that Camden receives from the Government is short-term with no indication of extension beyond 2025.
- 6.1.3 Camden invests about 15% of its national rough sleeping funding into prevention. Most people who sleep rough in Camden are not originally from the borough and approximately 80% have no local connection, and there is therefore a question about how effective Camden spending on local prevention initiatives can be. While Camden is committed to prevention in how we organise and operate our services, in order for preventative investment to have a material impact on levels of rough sleeping in Camden it needs to be made at pan-London and national levels as well as by Camden.
- 6.1.4 When considering the potential impact of preventative investment, it is important to note that single homeless people in Camden who are without a priority need for housing and who are not currently sleeping rough are at risk of moving into rough sleeping. This is a group of people whose need for accommodation is not met by their eligibility for accommodation or by statutory provision. There is a need for a service delivery model within Camden's Housing services, separate to Camden's rough sleeping services, that supports this group of people.
- 6.1.5 Camden's approach to rough sleeping has prioritised supporting people into accommodation. During 2024 a new hostel at Gray's Inn Road and an enhanced Housing First scheme will open and will add capacity to the available provision. However, there is not currently enough suitable accommodation to house the number of people who sleep rough in Camden, Camden hostels are operating at capacity, and the end of RSI funding in 2025 is a very significant risk to the financial viability of the accommodation that is currently operational.
- 6.1.6 Access to accommodation has become more difficult for the growing number of people who sleep rough in Camden. Camden hostels are operating at capacity, it is increasingly rare to find affordable accommodation in the private rented sector in Camden, and the number of people living in temporary accommodation has increased significantly in recent years. People who sleep rough may therefore be unable to find accommodation in Camden or may not currently want the accommodation that is available. There is a need to make support more accessible and more inclusive. For those people for whom accommodation solutions are not a realistic near-term option, there is a need to make rough sleeping safer while also ensuring that any anti-social

behaviour or criminal activity associated with rough sleeping or encampments, mindful that people rough sleeping are at increased risk of exploitation and abuse, is appropriately addressed.

- 6.1.7 The Rough Sleeping and Community Safety teams both have a robust range of procedures and guidance documents to ensure services work empathetically and effectively. However, Camden's local procedures for responding to Rough Sleeping related crises out of hours are limited.
- 6.1.8 Since the events of November 2023 a lack of clarity has emerged about the role of enforcement in addressing anti-social behaviour in circumstances where the anti-social behaviour is associated with rough sleeping. This has caused confusion and debate among local partners about the extent to which and the circumstances in which enforcement may be a suitable approach and how enforcement may be combined with an offer of support for people sleeping rough. While anti-social behaviour and criminal activity are not acceptable, and enforcement may be an appropriate response in these circumstances, it is clear that a polarised view of support and enforcement can be unhelpful when considering what an appropriate intervention in a particular circumstance may be.
- 6.1.9 Addressing rough sleeping is done most effectively through the provision of support and accommodation. When enforcement agencies need to respond to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity this can present further opportunities for connecting people to support if done well. Partners including the Metropolitan Police have advised that enforcement is only ever a last resort and that agencies precede enforcement action with consideration of affected individuals' vulnerabilities and needs. However, there is evidence that suggests that enforcement approaches also carry risks of further alienating people who sleep rough and ultimately making connections to appropriate support harder to achieve for some people. Camden Council and partners should consider how a framework of interventions to tackle rough sleeping may be developed so that there is greater clarity about when and how our full range of interventions can be best used to tackle rough sleeping.
- 6.1.10 Any approach to enforcement must be cognisant of the extent to which vulnerable and marginalised groups and people with experience of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation are over-represented among people who sleep rough. It is notable that people who sleep rough are more likely to be victims of crime than the general population. People with additional vulnerabilities including, but not limited to, people with complex health and care needs, people with cognitive impairment, people with disabilities, racialised and minoritised groups, non-UK nationals, and LGBTQ+ people are overrepresented among people who sleep rough.
- 6.1.11 Like other boroughs Camden experiences challenges related to features of the system that has been created to respond to rough sleeping, which have been determined at a London or a national level. These include the levels of central government funding that are available to local authorities to support

people who sleep rough, Housing Benefit rules, and the system of verification with the London-wide Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) which requires people who sleep rough to have been verified as 'bedded-down' in order to be registered on the pan-London system and thereby access support. Because of the scale of Camden's rough sleeping challenge these cannot be ignored, and Camden could play a more assertive external influencing role within London and at a national level around rough sleeping systems and approaches.

6.1.12 The need for CHAIN verification presents a real challenge and prevents some people who are rough sleeping in a way that we understand as 'hidden' – and who are therefore less likely to be verified as 'bedded-down' in a public place - from accessing the support they need. Camden is already piloting more effective local procedures to overcome some of the challenges with CHAIN verification. Projects around different verification processes for women and young people are proving effective.

### 6.1.13 Recommendations

**(1) Develop a fully costed proposal for an optimum rough sleeping system to meet Camden's needs**

This should:

- Draw on the rich national, regional and local evidence base
- Consider whether / where there are genuine opportunities to prevent rough sleeping Camden and what the right proportion of funding allocation to those activities is
- Consider what the right balance of generic and specialist outreach is to support the maximum number of people without increasing disproportionality in outcomes for different groups.
- Include 7 day provision for an accessible hub for people who are rough sleeping
- Include out of hours outreach and crisis response
- Distinguish where possible between 'essential' and 'desirable' elements
- Incorporate later recommendations about a new approach to rough sleeping accommodation
- Enable
  - Clearer scoping opportunities for increased internal funding
  - A stronger proposal for possible future iterations of RSI funding
  - A stronger position to react to other external funding opportunities
  - A stronger narrative to underpin lobbying of government

**(2) Ensure that future bids for short term funding ensure as far as possible that Camden can deliver sustainable and impactful rough sleeping services**

**(3) Develop a strategic approach to enable more assertive influencing of government in respect of rough sleeping and the design of government funding that seeks to address rough sleeping in partnership with local authorities**

Use Camden's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy due in 2025 and the outputs of Recommendation 1 to develop a clearer story about Camden's challenges and ambitions. Camden should then work with other London boroughs and local authorities across the UK to make the case to the government for the key shortfalls of the current regional and national approach to be addressed, including short-term funding, lack of support options for people with no recourse to public funds, and inflexibility in the CHAIN verification process.

**(4) Move away from language that reflects a binary understanding of support for people rough sleeping and enforcement approaches, and develop a local framework that describes the right partnership interventions to tackle rough sleeping that correspond to the support needs of individuals and the circumstances of individual cases.**

This should be:

- Evidence based
- Coproduced with partners, community organisations and people with lived experience of rough sleeping
- Mindful of the need to protect people who are rough sleeping from crime and anti-social behaviour
- Mindful of the disproportionate vulnerability of people who sleep rough
- Clear that enforcement should never be used without an accompanying support offer
- Generative of trust and confidence in support services

The framework could be built around the helpful *Prevent, Identify, Intervene* frameworks that have been used effectively in youth safety and domestic violence and abuse partnership work in Camden.

**(5) Work with local partners to ensure that as much flexibility as possible within the established parameters of CHAIN is applied to the verification of people sleeping rough. Work with local partners to ensure that where people do not meet the criteria for CHAIN verification there is an appropriate support offer available to them. Draw on evidence and learning from Camden initiatives regarding alternative verification processes of women and young people sleeping rough to lobby for changes to the CHAIN verification process that would provide for age- and gender-informed recognition of all forms of rough sleeping.**

This should:

- Build on the work of the Women's and Young People's verification pilots
- Accompany ongoing efforts to lobby for changes to the CHAIN verification rules

#### **(6) Review Camden's current out of hours response for crisis situations**

This should:

- Clarify the relationship between Routes Off the Street and the Contact Camden Out of Hours Service
- Capture the full breadth of the current offer, including the relationship to Health and Adult Social Care Out of Hours services
- Communicate procedures for out of hours crisis responses to all key partners

#### **(7) Share the final recommendations from this review with people with lived experience of rough sleeping to comment on in order to inform implementation**

This should be done as part of the work to develop the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, and it is recommended that people are supported to take part and that they are reimbursed for their time.

6.2 The second question addressed by the review has been whether services meet the needs of a diverse group of people.

6.2.1 Section 5.1 of this report highlights some of the diversity of the people who sleep rough in Camden. The range of services and the diversity of people who sleep rough mean that there is no typical journey through rough sleeping support.

6.2.2 Camden benefits from a strong and diverse range of services across the public sector and the voluntary and community sector that share expertise in rough sleeping and a track record of working effectively with specific population groups. Camden's rough sleeping services are commissioned to be inclusive, holistic and person-centred. Guidance, protocols and stories of individuals (included at Appendix 1) demonstrate that services aim to work within the complexity and nuance of a person's life to support them. The review heard a consistent and clear desire among council and commissioned services to see the person first, not the 'rough sleeper'.

- 6.2.3 Practice in a range of teams is culturally, gender, and trauma informed, with specialist provision in place for the Roma community, women, young people, survivors of domestic violence, victims of trafficking and modern-day slavery, people experiencing serious mental illness, LGBTQ+ people, people with substance dependencies, people navigating the asylum system, and people with no recourse to public funds. Considering the legislative framework, there is an especially strong offer for people with no recourse to public funds. The Council has also invested heavily in preventative work with asylum seekers living in Home Office accommodation so that they are as prepared as they can be to find accommodation.
- 6.2.4 The review has heard from council and commissioned services that, for people who have had longer-term experience of rough sleeping, their rough sleeping is not primarily about the absence of accommodation, but the compounded and traumatic nature of their life experiences which manifest in complex health and care needs. The solutions to long-term rough sleeping therefore lie in well-resourced, trauma informed and relational practice with accessible health and social care services as well as appropriate accommodation that comes with support. Flexible and opportunistic services can therefore be most effective means of supporting people who have longer-term experience of sleeping rough.
- 6.2.5 Services including the NHS, Adult Social Care, and Housing can struggle to work flexibly and opportunistically and can therefore struggle to work effectively with people with longer-term experience of sleeping rough. Homelessness services have expressed concern about the levels of risk they are holding due to suboptimal accessibility and responsiveness of these services.
- 6.2.6 Camden is continually testing and evaluating new operational solutions to improve local responses to rough sleeping, internally and in partnership with NHS and voluntary sector partners. The transformation and improvement initiatives described at paragraphs 5.3.2 to 5.3.4 demonstrate intent to develop more flexible, responsive and accessible services for people who sleep rough.
- 6.2.7 The review heard about systemic challenges within mainstream models of support that undermine people's ability to move away from rough sleeping in sustained ways. The review also heard about a range of impactful accommodation models used with success around the country, in particular Housing First, which prioritises accommodation of people who have experience of homelessness in their own homes while providing holistic support that seeks to address the causal factors behind their homelessness and support them to sustain a tenancy.

#### 6.2.8 Recommendations

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**(8) Review Camden’s approach to ‘Off the Street’ Accommodation with a view to considering Housing First at Scale Review Camden’s approach to ‘Off the Street’ accommodation with a view to considering viable operational improvements in the short term as well as long-term evidence-based strategic change, including the viability in Camden of a Housing First approach at a scale that corresponds to the challenge of homelessness and rough sleeping in Camden that draws on evidence of best practice.**

This should:

- Consider the current systemic issues that are limiting the effectiveness of Camden’s rough sleeping accommodation
- Consider the local, regional, national, and international evidence base around what works to effectively support people with experience of rough sleeping
- Consider alternative models that allow for personalised support
- Consider the location of accommodation both in relation to rough sleeping hotspots and other accommodation
- Explore whether there is scope for different funding models for accommodation that better enable people’s ability to sustain accommodation
- Seek to learn from the most successful national and international Housing First schemes
- Assess the short-term and long-term viability of Housing First approach in Camden at varying scales, noting the challenging context of the local housing market.

**(9) Ensure that current work to improve the health, care and support offer for people who have experience of sleeping rough is underpinned by a robust approach to evaluation**

The Council should continue to support the Homelessness Transformation programme, the re-design of Adult Social Care services and the work with the Integrated Care Board to create a health and homelessness multi-disciplinary team. However, the Council should ensure that this work is accompanied by a robust approach to evaluation so that the system around rough sleeping can iteratively learn and improve.

6.3 The third question addressed by the review is whether we are making the most of strong community willingness to help and support people who are sleeping rough.

6.3.1 It is important to recognise that there is not one, coherent community voice around rough sleeping.

6.3.2 The review found evidence of community concern for people who sleep rough in Camden. The majority of people who raise complaints and members



enquiries with the Council show compassion and concern for the people rough sleeping and reflect community willingness to help. The Council has recently decided to fund a test and learn project to explore how the Shared Lives approach, which seeks to encourage more households in Camden to become 'shared lives' carers by applying a discretionary Council Tax exemption to those households, may support asylum seekers leaving Home Office Accommodation. While it is too early to draw learning from this project, there is value in exploring how Camden could draw on community willingness to help by applying this model to enhance Camden's approach to supporting people at risk of rough sleeping, including the existing offer for people living in Home Office accommodation that includes support from good Work Camden and Renaisi.

6.3.3 Residents and businesses have become frustrated and concerned when met with visible, and sometimes disruptive, rough sleeping in their areas. Most of these concerns related to the vulnerability of people rough sleeping as well as specific tent sites and encampments which caused local residents to feel unsafe.

6.3.4 The review found willingness from a range of stakeholders including individual Camden residents, local community organisations and Councillors to do more to support people. Camden benefits from a rich and diverse network of community organisations, many of which are working to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Camden. It is clear that they play an important role and that there are developing opportunities for the Council and other partners to work more closely with them.

### 6.3.5 Recommendations

**(10) Continue to take a broad and inclusive approach to the homelessness transformation work and the revived Rough Sleeping Forum**

Use these opportunities to:

- Deepen relationships with community partners
- Broaden the collective resource, expertise and commitment to addressing rough sleeping in Camden
- Create constructive spaces for challenge and learning
- Co-design solutions
- Share information about Camden's approaches to rough sleeping

**(11) Continue to support and learn from the test and learn project that is exploring how the Shared Lives approach can enhance Camden's preventative work with asylum seekers living in Home Office accommodation, building on the opportunities that community willingness to help offer.**

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 The council is currently developing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, with a view to finalisation in 2025. Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee may be mindful of the recommendations outlined in this report when the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy is received by the Committee.
- 7.2 The Housing Scrutiny Committee may also wish to consider whether members wish to receive a report regarding the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report.

## **8. LEGAL COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

- 8.1. In considering the recommendations, the Council must inter alia have due regard to the impact those decisions will have upon the Council's statutory duty regarding equalities set out in Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010. In summary, these legal obligations require the Council and Cabinet, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (2) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (3) foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (which involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding). Under the Duty, the relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. In respect of (1) only, the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership is also relevant.

## **9. FINANCE COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

- 9.1. This report recommends that a fully costed proposal for an optimum rough sleeping system to meet Camden's needs is developed. If any additional resources are required as part of the proposal it will need to be considered in the context of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no proposals with environmental implications made in this report.

**REPORT ENDS**