

**Routes out of**

**Rough  
Sleeping**

**Task group**

**REPORT  
2017**

# FOREWORD

***At the start of the Twenty First Century, in one of the world's richest economies, no one should have to Sleep Rough.***

I am proud to represent a great and wonderful city. Our city is renowned for its warmth, generosity, hospitality and comradeship.

So whilst my heart is warmed by the daily acts of giving and kindness to Rough Sleepers which I see on our streets, I am saddened and angered that Rough Sleeping still exists.

There can be no reason or excuse for Rough Sleeping. The UK has the resources and the ability to make it a thing of the past. And here in Liverpool, that is our aim.

As a Local Authority, Liverpool spends £11 million pounds per year tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Despite seven years of Government cuts, we have continued to prioritise services and support for the poorest in our city, and that includes one of the most important groups of all – those who have, or at risk of having, no home.

Our record in this city is good. Public Health England's figures show we are the number 1 city for tackling homelessness. Each year we help 6,000 people avoid becoming homeless, and 99% of those we help off the streets don't return there. Liverpool City Council provides many good services, including:

The Whitechapel Centre provides a wide range of outreach services, including showers and washing machines, and run the No Second Night Out programme

Mildmay House provides support for single adults

Transforming Choices helps those with alcohol addictions change their life with a residential programme

Specialist shelters provide support for a wide range of situations such as Domestic Abuse and complex needs.

But over the past few years we have seen the number of people on our streets increase. Some are Rough Sleepers. Others are not.

We are committed to ensuring no one is Rough Sleeping on our streets and, despite all of the investment and political commitment, we know more needs to be done. Which is why we have commissioned this report. An independent report. A report which will outline where we can improve and what more can be done to tackle Rough Sleeping.

However, we must be strong and we must be brave. We must tackle those people who are using the plight of Rough Sleepers as a cover for begging, drug and alcohol abuse and other criminal activities. The actions of these people impact not just on the warmth and generosity of our City but also place Rough Sleepers at a greater risk of harm.

On behalf of the Council and the Mayor, can I thank everyone who has been involved in this review - the task group members, the service providers, the volunteers and, of course, the Rough Sleepers themselves.

**ANN O'BYRNE, DEPUTY MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL**

## INTRODUCTION

***The Routes Out of Rough Sleeping Task Group was established by the Mayor of Liverpool in response to the growing numbers of rough sleepers in Liverpool. The Mayor asked the Task Group to examine the current services which existed to support rough sleepers and to identify ways to improve the service.***

We found that City is doing well in supporting Rough Sleepers. We found much evidence of success and good practice - sometimes despite national Government policy which is actually helping to create unnecessary Rough Sleeping.

We also concluded that more could and should be done to help Rough Sleepers and have produced a number of recommendations which we hope will prove helpful to everyone involved in helping to support Rough Sleepers whether that be the public sector, the voluntary and charitable sector or those many members of the public who we know are committed to helping the Rough Sleepers they see on the street every day.

We also found that there are a range of people on our streets who are not Rough Sleeping but who use the cover of public sympathy for Rough Sleepers to beg money to support drug and alcohol dependency. We believe that this growing culture of illegal street behaviour needs to be tackled as it places the health and wellbeing of actual Rough Sleepers at greater risk.

I was proud and privileged to be asked to chair the Task Group. The job has been made easier for me with the support and experience of my colleagues appointed to the Task Group and I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of everyone involved.

All the people appointed to the Task Group have a passion to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society get the best possible support to enable them to lead fulfilling and independent lives.

The support of all the agencies we have visited, staff and members has been vital to ensure that we have got answers to our questions and I wish to thank them for all their support in this process.

Finally I would also like to thank the Mayor as well as Councillors Ann O'Byrne and Frank Hont for their support and openness to challenge.

Our recommendations are as a result of all this work and we hope that they will be used as a foundation for many years to come and ensure Liverpool is at the forefront in the services we offer to the most vulnerable.

**JOHN FINNIGAN, INDEPENDENT CHAIR**

## SUMMARY

***The number of people on the streets of Liverpool is visibly on the rise. This is a concern to everyone. Some of these people are Rough Sleepers but many are not. This review, carried out by an independent task group, seeks to better understand the scale and nature of Rough Sleeping in Liverpool and produce a series of recommendations about what more can be done to ensure no one Rough Sleeps in our City.***

Liverpool City Council, despite significant budget cuts faced by the local authority still spends £11m per year on support to prevent and address Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, providing a range of commissioned services to support Rough Sleeping and Homelessness in general. This provision is bolstered by a range of voluntary sector partners who also work, sometimes independently of the City Council and each other, to support people who are on the streets in the City. Around 6,000 people are helped every year and of those, a very small number of people end up Rough Sleeping.

Despite the many and varied efforts of these various agencies, and a good track record in comparison with other cities, the rise of people seeming to live on the street is visibly on the rise, particularly in Liverpool's City Centre.

The Routes Out of Rough Sleeping Task Group has therefore been commissioned by the Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson in response to this increase, focusing exclusively on the small number of people sleeping rough and looking at what could make a difference to this important group. The group is independent of the Council and its work has involved taking evidence from a range of sources over many months. The work is an addition to, and supportive of, the broader Homelessness Strategy which sets out the City's priorities for addressing Homelessness over the next 5 years.

### ***The Task Group has concluded that:***

- ▶ Rough Sleeping in Liverpool is at the lower end of the English Core Cities average but the number of Rough Sleepers is growing.
- ▶ The scale and public perception of Rough Sleeping has been confused and inflated by the numbers of people begging and street drinking who are assumed to be Rough Sleeping.
- ▶ A lack of a coordinated media campaign adds to this confusion and can create the wrong impression of the level and needs of Rough Sleepers.
- ▶ Poor mental health is a primary route into Rough Sleeping and Rough Sleeping itself impacts upon mental health. Quality mental health services therefore are critical in

preventing Rough Sleeping and in supporting people out of Rough Sleeping – but these services are under financial pressure.

- ▶ Substance use (both drugs and alcohol) is another primary cause of Rough Sleeping and is often related to mental health issues in either a causal or symptomatic manner. Again, quality health provision is crucial in tackling this issue.
- ▶ People with No Recourse to Public Funds are at particular risk of rough sleeping and helping this cohort is difficult and complex due to Government policy.
- ▶ Despite significant budget cuts, Liverpool City Council continues to invest significantly in Homelessness and Rough Sleeping provision and often acts as a model of best practice for other local authority areas.
- ▶ There is a clear commitment from the City's leaders to tackle Rough Sleeping.
- ▶ The provision which exists is generally successful at moving Rough Sleepers into a more sustainable life style but ultimately there are some Rough Sleepers who do not accept support to move on.
- ▶ A range of 'myths' exist to explain why people can't move on but little evidence exists to support these rationales.
- ▶ The local authority commissioned provision sits alongside a range of voluntary sector provision, some of which is self-organising and levels of integration between provision is variable.
- ▶ More needs to be done to coordinate and improve the existing provision and to innovate to find new and more effective methods of delivery.
- ▶ There are a number of people on the streets of Liverpool who are not Rough Sleepers but who are begging, often to support drug and alcohol addictions. In some cases, this group is linked to wider crime and criminal offences. This group of people take support away from Rough Sleepers and can pose a danger to Rough Sleepers.
- ▶ More needs to be done to effectively tackle the group in order to protect and secure residents, businesses and Rough Sleepers.

## **ACTION 1 - ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS**

Led by a senior politician, the Community of Practice would bring together all agencies delivering rough sleeping support in order to coordinate provision across the Local Authority, Health and Police as well as formal and informal voluntary/charitable sectors. The Community of Practice would meet regularly to share intelligence and plan/problem solve to reduce duplication and maximise the effectiveness of delivery. The Community should include those with lived experience and, where practicable, existing service users.

## **ACTION 2 - COORDINATE VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVISION**

Currently, voluntary Street Teams provide a service which alleviates some of the worst, immediate effects of street living and rough sleeping. At the same time however, the work of these Teams can inadvertently support a continuation of a lifestyle which is ultimately damaging to the very people the Street Teams wish to help. More therefore needs to be done to coordinate the valuable work of the Street Teams in providing direct, on-street support with the work of professional agencies who can effectively move people on to more sustainable lifestyles. The voluntary work should be prioritised to support those Rough Sleepers with least access to support from the State, for example people with No Recourse to Public Funds. This coordination should be delivered by the Community of Practice outlined in Action 1 and should include consideration of how proper and relevant training can be provided to the volunteers involved.

## **ACTION 3 - CAMPAIGN FOR A NATIONAL CHANGE TO NO RE COURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS**

One of the most pernicious causes of Rough Sleeping is No Recourse to Public Funds. It leaves people isolated and vulnerable and creates a massive degree of uncertainty about what help and support can be provided. It can result in there being no long term solution to the problems faced by some Rough Sleepers.

The Communications Campaign outlined in Action 4 should include specific, cross partner actions to lobby Government for a clear legislative change.

## **ACTION 4 - DELIVER A CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN**

There is significant public confusion over levels of rough sleeping, its causes and the approaches needed to deliver an effective solution. All agencies should sign up to a single PR and Communications strategy which includes:

- ▶ Clear information on the services available and how to access them provided by an effective public information campaign,
- ▶ The development of an app to provide information for the general public and Rough Sleepers,

- ▶ Explain No Recourse to Public Funds and why there is a legal limit to the support available to people Rough Sleeping because of No Recourse to Public Funds,
- ▶ Myth-busting information regarding the type and nature of the services available to support rough sleepers including dealing with misconceptions such as charges to access support, acceptance of pets, local connection requirements and service barring/exclusions,
- ▶ A clear message on the best way the public can support Rough Sleepers.

## **ACTION 5 - PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE MECHANISM FOR CHARITABLE GIVING**

There is no way to establish the amount of direct charitable giving which is currently taking place. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is significant and that much of the money giving is not reaching the people most in need. To prevent this, the Chang£ campaign either needs to be refreshed and relaunched or a new campaign needs to be established in the City alongside the Communications Campaign identified in Action 2. The money raised should be prioritised to support those Rough Sleepers with least access to support from the State. Consideration should be given to adopting a model similar to that used in Bristol.

## **ACTION 6 - PROVIDE MORE JOINED UP AND BETTER RESOURCED HEALTH PROVISION**

The majority of Rough Sleepers suffer from mental health issues and/or drug/alcohol addiction. We are concerned that existing health services are contracting and that health provision is not joined up or accessible. We would ask that relevant Health Commissioners should be tasked with producing a clear investment plan to meet these needs and resolve these concerns. This action plan should be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for agreement.

## **ACTION 7 - DELIVER A MORE SUSTAINABLE HOUSING SOLUTION FOR VULNERABLE, YOUNG PEOPLE**

Restrictions on Housing Benefit and a lack of specialist housing for young people mean that some vulnerable young people are caught in unsuitable housing conditions - living in poor quality HMOs, surrounded by strangers and with landlords who are unable to understand, let alone, meet their needs. Combined with insecure tenure, many of these vulnerable young people are susceptible to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. We would ask that the Local Authority and the City's many social housing providers work together to develop and deliver a social housing model which works for young, single people who may have complex needs.

## **ACTION 8 - REVIEW EXISTING PROVISION TO ENSURE QUALITY & RELEVANCE**

We note that a number of service users expressed concern about the quality of provision and raised issues about safety, appropriateness and sustainability of the hostel services they experienced. It is our view that Liverpool City Council should carry out a review of existing No Second Night Out and associated provision to ensure that it remains of suitable quality and approach. This review should be overseen by the Cabinet Member for Housing and its results made public.

## **ACTION 9 - ENSURE ONGOING INNOVATION THROUGH INVESTMENT**

In our view, much of the support for Rough Sleepers in Liverpool already is at the leading edge of best practice. However the problems of Rough Sleeping continue and the Local Authority is about to be given new duties to prevent Homelessness (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) which will also impact on Rough Sleeping. We also note that for some people, hostel provision does not provide a suitable route out of Rough Sleeping. Ultimately therefore the Council needs to ensure it invests some of its available resource in schemes to pilot new routes out of Rough Sleeping with the aim of mainstreaming the lessons and information from these pilots into mainstream provision.

## **ACTION 10 - TACKLE THE WIDER ISSUE OF STREET LIVING**

We acknowledge that most of the people on the streets whether beggars, street drinkers or Rough Sleepers have mental health challenges or drug addiction issues and are, to some degree or other, vulnerable. However, the City is faced with a growing number of people on the streets who do have homes but who are begging in order to sustain drug/alcohol dependency or for other, sometimes criminal, reasons. If robust action is not taken to resolve this issue then the impact on residents, businesses and Rough Sleepers will become unsustainable. The Local Authority, Police, BID/local businesses and other relevant partners needs to consider the implementation of strategies which will disrupt and discourage this behaviour.

### ***Next steps***

The Council should produce and publish an action plan which outlines how the recommendations of this report, if accepted, are being implemented. This will need to include timeframes and named individual responsible for the delivery of key actions and should be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## WHAT IS THE ROUTES OUT OF ROUGH SLEEPING TASK GROUP?

***Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of Homelessness but its root causes are varied and complex. Each rough sleeper will have their own individual story to tell and each rough sleeper will require their own individual solution to support a transition away from Rough Sleeping and towards a sustainable home. As such, there is no single solution to Rough Sleeping.***

Liverpool City Council provides a range of commissioned services to support rough sleeping and homelessness in general. Despite significant budget cuts faced by the local authority it still spends £11m per year to prevent and tackle Homelessness including services focused on Rough Sleeping. This provision is bolstered by a range of voluntary sector partners who also work, sometimes independently of the City Council and each other, to tackle Homelessness in the City.

Despite the many and varied efforts of these various agencies, the rise of people seeming to live on the street is visibly on the rise, particularly in Liverpool's City Centre.

The Routes Out of Rough Sleeping Task Group has therefore been commissioned by the Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson in response to this increase. The work is an addition to, and supportive of, the broader Homelessness Strategy which sets out the City's priorities for addressing Homelessness over the next 5 years.

## **Who are the task group?**

**We are a group of independent people who have a joint, professional interest in Rough Sleeping.** The members of the group include (L-R)

**Simon Whitter**, Voluntary Sector

**Cllr Emily Spurrell**, Mayoral Lead for Community Safety (now Deputy PCC)

**John Finnigan** (Chair), Liverpool Homeless Football Club

**Ann O'Byrne**, Deputy Mayor (not a member of the Group)

**Maxine Ennis**, Chief Executive of Rotunda Community College

**Colin Heaney**, Director of Development and Programmes at LCVS



John Finnigan agreed to chair the group.

*“In our view Rough Sleeping has a terrible, unacceptable impact on both people who are Sleeping Rough and on the wider community. We came together at the request of the Liverpool Mayor, Joe Anderson, in order to independently consider the issue of Rough Sleeping in Liverpool and provide suggestions about how the problem could be better tackled.”*

**The Task Group has over 70 years of experience of working with  
Rough Sleeping**

## WHAT IS THIS REPORT?

***This is a report about Rough Sleeping. It is not an academic study or an audit of service provision. Rather it is an account of the work we have undertaken, a record of the information we have gathered and illustrates our views and conclusions based on this information and our own, personal expertise.***

This report is not about Homelessness. We accept that the issues of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping are interlinked but they are not the same. There are many Homeless people who are not Rough Sleepers and, as our work has uncovered, many Rough Sleepers who are not Homeless. Homelessness is a majorly important issue but it sits outside the scope of our report.

The conclusions we have reached are based on these two sets of information. They are our own conclusions. We do not present them as infallible and we know that some people may disagree with them but they are presented openly and honestly in an attempt to help end Rough Sleeping.

## WHAT DID WE DO?

***We used a combination of data and interviews to identify what was working and what wasn't. Our methodology was simple and straightforward.***

- ▶ We met on five occasions to plan out work and our approach.
- ▶ We asked Liverpool City Council to provide us with the information they had about Rough Sleeping and relevant support services. We accept that statistical data can be misleading and so sought independent views by carrying out a range of interviews.
- ▶ We went out and interviewed a range of people including service providers, service users and people who were Rough Sleeping when we spoke to them. In total we carried out 131 interviews. We offered anonymity to all the people we interviewed in order to encourage honesty and openness.
- ▶ We accept that some of the interviews may contain bias, misconception or limited viewpoints and so tried to balance the results of interviews using the data provided by Liverpool City Council.
- ▶ Having collected our information, we met on 4 occasions in order to draw our conclusions which are now presented in this report.

### ***What we did:***



- **5 planning meetings**
- **305 pages of information reviewed**
- **131 people interviewed**
- **42 hours in reaching our conclusions**

## WHAT IS ROUGH SLEEPING?

**Rough Sleeping is defined by the Government as ‘people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes’ (a makeshift shelter sometimes made from cardboard boxes).**

Rough Sleeping is not the same as Homelessness. Many Homeless people do have somewhere to go and somewhere to stay and sleep but they do not have a permanent, suitable place which they can call a home. Conversely there are people Rough Sleeping who actually do have suitable homes to go to but who still Rough Sleep. Of the 50 or so people Rough Sleeping that we interviewed, the overwhelming majority in fact had somewhere they could go to sleep (a home, a hostel etc.).

The situation is made more complex because not all people on the streets are in fact Rough Sleepers. People who beg or street drinkers are often mistaken for Rough Sleepers.

Clearly the situation is complex and the outward perception of Rough Sleeping is not always what it seems.

The situation is made more confusing by the number of people who claim to be Rough Sleepers with nowhere to go but who are in fact beggars preying on the sympathies of the general public and taking much needed support away from where it is actually needed. Some of this activity is associated with wider street crime and organised crime and serves to place genuine Rough Sleepers at greater risk. In our experience, this cohort is larger than the number of people who are Rough Sleeping because they do not have a place to stay.

**“We’re not like them  
that you see every day  
on the street in the open  
that look rough and  
homeless. They are  
beggars. Rough  
sleepers do not  
congregate, we tend to  
be on our own.”**

**Quote from Rough Sleeper**

## WHAT CAUSES ROUGH SLEEPING?

***Routes into Rough Sleeping are many and varied and each Rough Sleeper will have their own story to tell. Predominantly however we found three major causes for Rough Sleeping:***

- ▶ Substance addiction
- ▶ Poor mental health
- ▶ People with No Recourse to Public Funds

This view was confirmed by most of the people we interviewed. Several interviewees pointed to issue relating to poor mental health and chaotic substance misuse as the primary reasons for people continuing to Sleeping Rough. This is supported by data provided to the Task Group from The Whitechapel Centre which suggested that 71% of Rough Sleepers during 2016/17 had experienced mental health issues. Many interviewees also acknowledged the recent increase in IV Drug Use over the last 12-18 months. There was also a consistent theme regarding those with No Recourse to Public Funds who end up Rough Sleeping.

Many Rough Sleepers have both mental health problems and substance abuse issues - this makes them doubly difficult to support out of Rough Sleeping. We cannot determine the causal links between mental health and substance addiction but clearly, in our view, there is a link.

For some people their Rough Sleeping lifestyle is closely linked to their substance addiction including both drugs and alcohol - by living on the streets they are able to beg for money to feed their addiction and also have ready access to drug dealers who exercise a large degree of control and influence over the Rough Sleeper. For some, but by no means all, Rough Sleepers, moving in off the streets can only happen once they have also decided to tackle their addiction issues.

Whether it is a lack of mental health services, insufficient or ineffective substance abuse support or the impact of benefits cuts which has pushed these people into Rough Sleeping

***“...generally 7 or 8 rough sleepers each month have no recourse to public funds; usually it’s the same people. They tend to be Eastern Europeans. (We) will work with Whitechapel to try and offer support – individuals can still access Whitechapel day centre and help with employment, if they are work ready etc. But the barriers are with substance misuse and routes out of rough sleeping. Accommodation is challenging as they do not have access to Housing Benefit.”***

***Quote from Liverpool City Council staff member***

is beyond the scope of this report but we note that this pattern is, in our experience, clearly a national rather than a local issue.

There are currently a range of people who have permission to live in the UK but who have No Recourse to Public Funds. People with No Recourse to Public Funds are unable to claim the vast majority of benefits and the local authority is legally prevented from helping to find them a home. Unsurprisingly therefore, people with No Recourse to Public Funds can become Rough Sleepers. This is a national issue rather than something specific to Liverpool.

In Liverpool, the majority of people who are Rough Sleeping because of No Recourse to Public Funds are economic migrants from Eastern Europe rather than refugees. Support is provided to help these people get work and afford rent but some, the most entrenched, are unable to take advantage of this support. Efforts are made to reconnect these individuals with their home country but they are often resistant to return as Rough Sleeping in the UK is a preferable option to Rough Sleeping in their home country. We estimate that about one third of Rough Sleepers in Liverpool are economic migrants from Eastern Europe.

We note that in some cities in the UK a lack of affordable housing can lead to Homelessness and then to Rough Sleeping. Equally a lack of hostel and other emergency provision is also sometimes suggested as a causal factor in Rough Sleeping. Based upon the information available to us and our own experience, we could find no evidence to suggest that either housing supply or a lack of hostel provision existed in the City.

Homeless people (and therefore Rough Sleepers) have priority access to social housing and in any given week there are a good number of social housing properties available and, on average, each week 10-15 properties are advertised on the Liverpool Property Pool Plus<sup>1</sup> scheme and subsequently not let. The Council also provides a range of support schemes to allow Homeless people (and therefore Rough Sleepers) to access private rented accommodation in the City. Social housing accounts for nearly 25% of Liverpool's housing stock. Private rented accommodation accounts for another 24% of the City's housing stock. We accept that due to rental price, the Bedroom Tax etc. not all of this accommodation is always available to Homeless people and Rough Sleepers but we can find no evidence to suggest a lack of affordable housing is a causal factor in Rough Sleeping.

Equally we note that Liverpool City Council currently commission 713 beds for single people. Every day there are, on average, thirteen beds which are not taken up.

However we are concerned that the nature of rented accommodation in Liverpool may be a causal factor in terms of Rough Sleeping. Social housing accommodation for younger single people is scarce and thus many of this vulnerable age group are reliant upon the private rented sector (HMOs etc.) where living standards are variable and where security of tenure

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<sup>1</sup> Property Pool Plus is the system used by Liverpool City Council and the majority of social landlords in the City in order to advertise and let social housing.

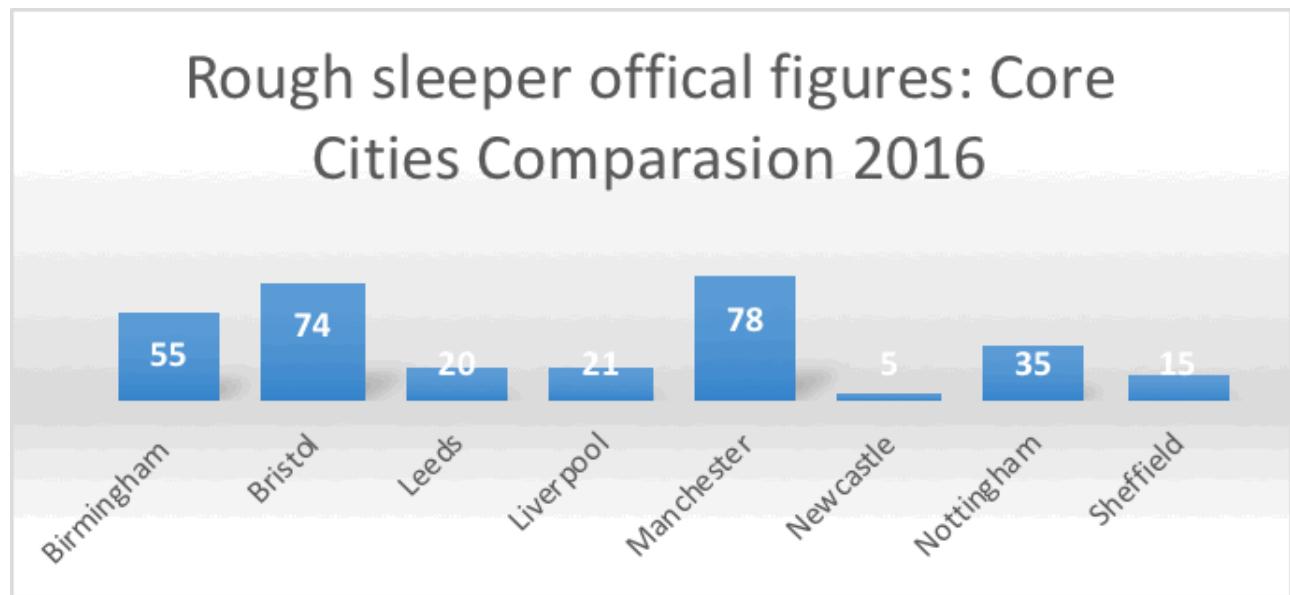
is poor. Much of this property is managed by small scale landlords with limited experience or financial capacity to provide the support necessary for people in crisis to sustain a tenancy. Equally, and understandably, many such landlords will be wary of letting a property to someone who may clearly be in need of complex support.

## HOW BAD IS THE PROBLEM?

***The Rough Sleeping Problem in Liverpool is increasing but it is not as severe as in some other English Core Cities. The scale of the problem is exaggerated by people who are not Rough Sleepers but who appear to be.***

All local authorities are required to carry out an annual estimate of Rough Sleepers in their area and provide this information to the Department for Communities and Local Government. In Liverpool this is carried out through a physical count of actual people Sleeping Rough on an average night. Data from 2015 to 2016 showed that the number of rough sleepers increased from 15 in the 2015 official count to 21 in the 2016 official count. We recognise that this is a snapshot of rough sleeping and is not necessarily indicative of trends, however, it is a consistent method of measuring rough sleeping over time, and counts have taken place at least yearly since 1998.

We believe the data outlined in Table 1 below is more crucial to the understanding of the scale and scope of the problem.

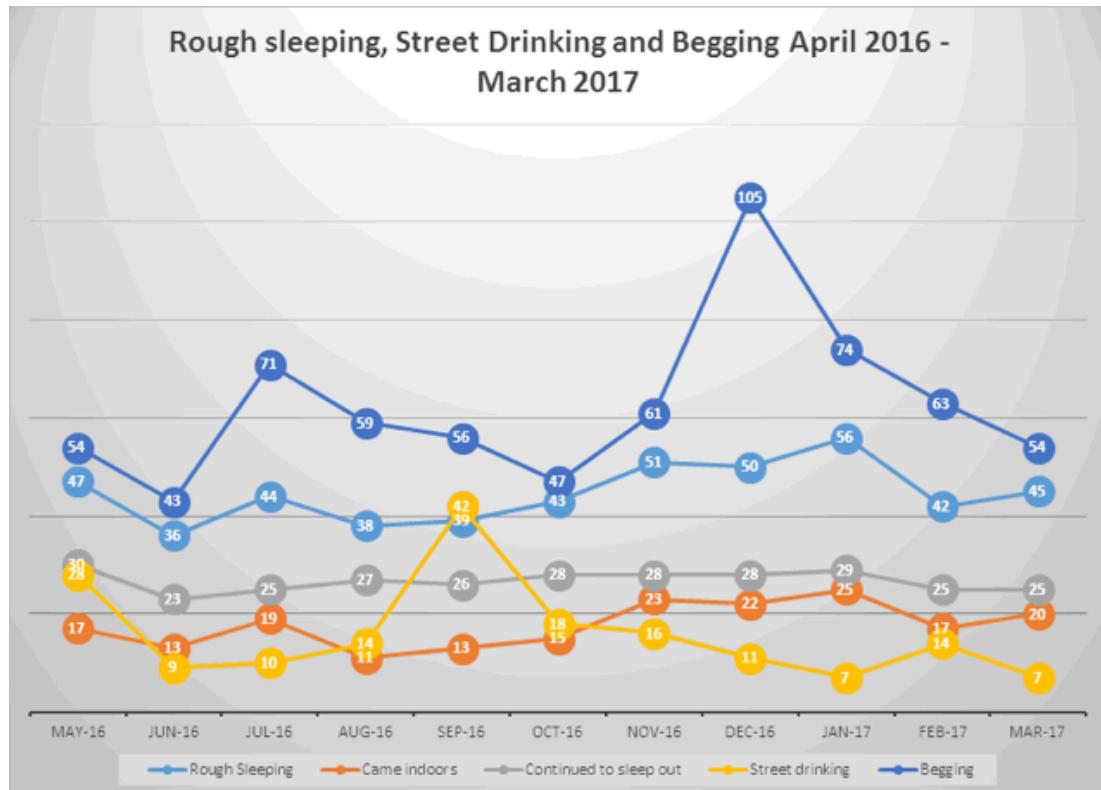


**Table 1**

The closest comparator city to Liverpool in term of size, location and socio economic factors is clearly Manchester where Rough Sleeping is clearly a much greater issue than Liverpool.

Clearly there are some cities which are doing better than Liverpool, particularly when population overall is accounted for, however, we believe this data indicates Liverpool is doing well in terms of dealing with the issues of Rough Sleeping in comparison to other cities.

We found that there was a high degree of consistency provided in the evidence sessions from interviewees regarding the extent of Rough Sleeping in the City. Both the Local Authority, stakeholders such as Police and service providers, confirmed that there are, on average, approximately 35-50 Rough Sleepers seen over the course of the month and approximately 50% of those will come indoors each month. For example, figures quoted at the recent Homelessness Forum stated that in March 2017 the Urban Outreach Service saw a total of 45 different people bedded down rough sleeping and that during the month, 20 were supported to come indoors while 25 continued to sleep rough at the month end.



The graph above demonstrates the numbers of Rough Sleepers, as well as other street lifestyles tracked over 2016/17. This supports the evidence provided by several interviewees that begging is significantly more of an issue in the City Centre than rough sleeping.

***Miss A was a young woman (24) who was living in a hostel. She came out to make money for alcohol - she said wasn't homeless but was subsidising her benefits to pay for drugs. She used the street teams most nights.***

***"You get good scran off them"***

***Case study 1***

## WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

***Our work revealed a number of areas where Liverpool is performing well. Our view is that the overall approach to Rough Sleeping is robust and well-coordinated.***

### A ROBUST APPROACH

Despite budget pressures, the Council continues to invest over £10million per year in services to prevent and tackle Homelessness. Much of this investment is in services which, ultimately, prevent the need for Rough Sleeping. In our view, this investment is key to helping ensure the actual numbers of Rough Sleepers in Liverpool remains at existing, comparatively low levels.

We also noted the high degree of political support for tackling both Homelessness and Rough Sleeping with two Cabinet Members, the Deputy Mayor and the Mayor all regularly engaged in tackling Rough Sleeping as demonstrated by the No Second Night Out approach developed and delivered by the City in 2012 which has strong backing from the City's leaders.

We also found that the Local Authority and its delivery partners also have a well-established pathway to support people out of Rough Sleeping as identified in the diagram below.

This also includes approaches to supporting people out of other street life styles.

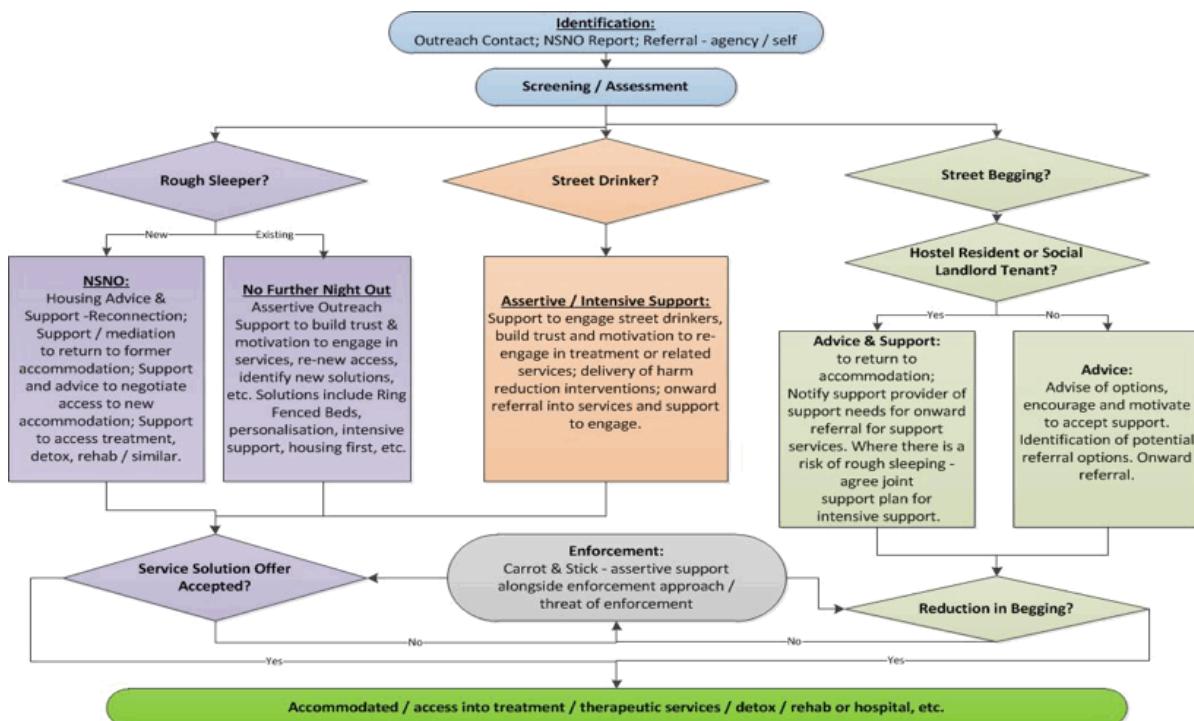
#### **No Second Night Out - Key Facts**

***No Second Night Out is a 24 hour service to ensure that no person needs to spend a second night on the streets.***

***Supports about 200 people per year out of Rough Sleeping***

***Receives 100-170 calls per months - often about the same people***

***Response time of about 2 hours to all calls***



In total, this approach supports about 200 out of people out of Rough Sleeping per annum.

We accept that there was some anecdotal evidence that sometimes the system does go wrong and that individuals can be in emergency or temporary accommodation for longer than we would ideally want however we believe these are likely to represent exceptions rather than common practice. We also accept that some people struggle to settle in hostel accommodation or have bad experiences in such accommodation. Again however we believe this reflects specific rather than general issues and concerns but believe the Council should do more to assure itself that provision is suitable and to provide a wider range of options in terms of supporting Rough Sleepers.

We also accept that further consideration needs to be given to greater investment in dedicated health services and we consider this in more detail later in the report.

## A WELL-COORDINATED APPROACH

All of the evidence we gathered suggested that the current approach is, by and large, well-coordinated across multiple service providers. Indeed much of the delivery in Liverpool leads the way in national best practice and there was little we could find elsewhere from which Liverpool could meaningfully learn.

We saw a co-ordinated multi-agency response to monitoring and addressing Rough Sleeping, led by the Local Authority in partnership with Merseyside Police, Liverpool Business Improvement District (BID), Brownlow Group Practice and the Whitechapel Centre.

We reviewed Mainstay, the gateway system for Housing and Support services which was created to provide improved access to short-term Housing Related Support services for people at risk of homelessness across Liverpool City Region. Mainstay provides comprehensive assessment for access to all services linked via a single IT System which delivers a range of benefits including;

- ▶ A single assessments for service users and accommodation providers,
- ▶ A shared, single client record,
- ▶ Clear prioritisation of housing need, ensuring both Homeless and Rough Sleepers have priority access to accommodation,
- ▶ Assessment Points available 24-hours a day at numerous locations within the city.
- ▶ Applicants are matched via the system to the most appropriate service for their needs reducing the amount of evictions and abandonments due to inappropriate placements.
- ▶ Decisions are agreed in set timeframes with accommodation providers meaning that applicants and assessing organisations will receive the outcome of decisions quickly.
- ▶ Multiple referrals can be made meaning that assessing services can quickly receive decisions from a number of different accommodation providers within a short timeframe.

In our view, this was an effective tool for coordinating the response to both Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

#### ***Leading best practice:***

***“A lot of people coming up from London to look at Liverpool from health perspective; often good practice is based on what we are already doing.”***

***“Nothing that I’ve seen that we are not doing here – similar models across the country re NSNO, sit-up, reconnection etc.”***

#### ***No Wrong Door:***

***“Liverpool City Council has commissioned its accommodation provision so that there is no wrong door into services. Wherever someone presents for help, there is a route for that Rough Sleeper to access support.”***

***Quotes from Liverpool City Council staff***

We accept however that coordination and integration with some of the emergent voluntary provision (e.g. Street Teams) and with existing health care services needs to be improved and we say more on this below.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

***Although the service overall is robust and well-coordinated, we found there where a number of areas that did not work as effectively as we would have hoped and these included:***

- ▶ Voluntary/charitable provision is not well integrated with the mainstream,
- ▶ Health interventions are not sufficiently robust, wide ranging or accessible,
- ▶ There are many myths about service provision and these lead to damaging confusion amongst Rough Sleepers and the general public alike,
- ▶ The range of routes and options to support people out of Rough Sleeping
- ▶ The mechanisms in place to deal with those who refuse support.

## VOLUNTARY PROVISION AND PUBLIC SUPPORT:

Local residents and those in and around the City Centre have largely responded supportively to Rough Sleepers. Even in these harsh economic times, we have seen evidence of regular and sustained giving of cash, food and donations direct to Rough Sleepers. There are regular accounts of people donating £10 and £20 at a time to individuals on the street in order to support them out of Rough Sleeping.

The most organised element of this rise in public support has been the establishment of Street Teams, volunteers who distribute food and other essentials to those they encounter on the streets.

We are proud of the efforts and generosity of the people of Liverpool. However we are concerned that this generosity is not being channeled in the most effective manner and, in some perhaps even many cases, is being taken advantage of by people who are

*"We are aware some of the people we are feeding are not homeless but we don't want to discriminate and if they are hungry we will feed them."*

***Quote from Street Team member***

begging, street drinking and even as part of organised crime.

We noted there were a range of people providing anecdotal information of people dressing up to look more like Rough Sleepers in order to beg as well as systematic pitches being established where a rota of begging was delivered from. Techniques in order to elicit sympathy including the use of dogs and ex-armed forces banners have all been cited as examples of professionalised begging which ultimately confuses the issue of Rough Sleeping and which draws aid away from where it is needed most - actual Rough Sleepers.

Our investigations noted that there are other ways that the general public can help such as through donating/volunteering with existing service providers/charities or by giving to the Change campaign run by the Liverpool BID Company however we noted that neither opportunity seemed well understood or well publicised.

At its worst, this direct aid can actually be counterproductive as, in whatever form the aid takes, it can ultimately be helping to sustain people in a long term damaging lifestyle of substance abuse and/or deteriorating mental health. This lack of coordination and direction in terms of giving is perhaps most harmful when considering the lost opportunity this presents. For many Rough Sleepers there are a range of State support services available to help them find a home and then get, and maintain, a healthy lifestyle and a successful tenancy. However people with No Recourse to Public Funds do not have the same opportunities from the State and could benefit far more from a coordinated and joined up approach amongst the charitable and voluntary provision which is currently taking place in the City.

*"What are we doing re NRPF – reconnection, employability? We need a system that provides an effective pathway; so we've accessed private funding for a small new project. Funding to underpin rent and employ a multi-lingual resettlement worker. We can work with 20 individuals – but an expansion and roll out is what is needed."*

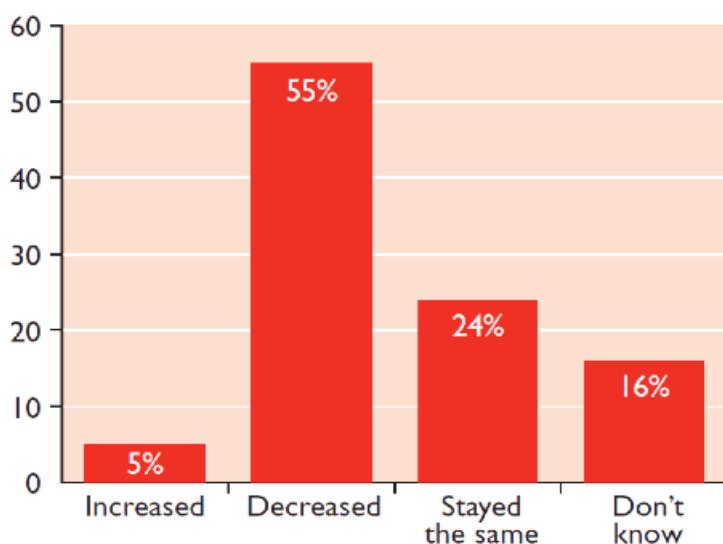
***Quote from Whitechapel staff***

## THE IMPACT OF HEALTH INTERVENTIONS:

During our research, we found a body of opinion to suggest that health interventions for Rough Sleepers are insufficient and not well coordinated.

We noted that some services, such as the Homelessness Outreach Team based at Merseycare NHS Trust, have already reduced provision and that this is likely to continue. This is reflective of a national picture of decreasing provision. Information from St Mungo's 'Stop the Scandal Briefing' May 2016, shows that across 24 local authority areas, 55% of St. Mungo's staff stated that access to mental health services has decreased in the past 12 months.

Overall, do you think that the availability of NHS mental health services available to your clients has increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months?



### Not including Liverpool

Although this data does not include Liverpool, we could find no clear picture of the overall Liverpool provision for Rough Sleepers and neither Addaction nor Merseycare could tell us specifically how many rough sleepers they work with. Brownlow Group Practice also stated that it was difficult to estimate the number of rough sleepers. The outreach specialist services shared the view that limited resources hinder their ability to provide the services that are needed.

Across a range of comments we received on this issue, the need for change was summed up succinctly;

***“True multi-disciplinary team on the streets.....but also the capacity to provide/purchase personal care.”***

The evidence from providers and from service users all points towards the need for a:

***“Early intervention and support with mental health issues, before it reaches crisis point, in a central, visible location”.***

However the issues of how services can reach out and be more effective should be seen against the backdrop of severe cuts in provision due to the austerity measures imposed by central government. We have also seen cuts made recently by the Clinical Commissioning Group to voluntary sector mental health providers here in Liverpool, including to those preventative services that are key in terms of a longer term solution to the problems faced by those who may end up sleeping rough.

## MYTHS AND CONFUSION:

We have already noted the pervading confusion between actual Rough Sleepers as opposed to begging and street drinking. However we noted that there were a range of other myths and misunderstandings which seemed to pervade both public perception and the stated opinions of Rough Sleepers.

These included;

- ▶ Rough Sleepers have to pay to access hostel accommodation
- ▶ Homeless shelters do not accept dogs
- ▶ Rough Sleepers have been barred from support services due to past behavior
- ▶ They are from outside of the City and so cannot receive help or support.

We found all of these myths to be untrue.

We accept that not all provision can take dogs, we know that sometimes a Rough Sleeper will be banned (often for a short time) from an individual provider and we accept that Homeless people who come to Liverpool have less priority for local services than Homeless people in Liverpool but, generally, none of these myths should prevent any Rough Sleeper from finding the support they need to get off the streets, stabilise their lives and eventually find a permanent home.

Such myths serve to unnecessarily justify continued Rough Sleeping. We believe they can warp public perception unhelpfully and actually prevent Rough Sleepers from seeking support.

***"Local connection – relates to homeless assessment. It does not mean that people from other local authorities (LAs) do not get into our wider services e.g. 8-10% of people in our temporary accommodation services are from elsewhere. We feel this is another misconception. If someone does not have a local connection to Liverpool and are rough sleeping – they would still get priority access to services on Mainstay."***

***Quote from Liverpool City Council staff***

***"Tends to be one of the myths that people say when begging. If someone perceived to be barred from everywhere – they tend to approach Housing Options due to statutory responsibility and we can address that myth really quickly. We can always negotiate placements – it's written into contracts. For example, we've cleared service charges for people through personal budgets to allow people to re-access temporary accommodation."***

***Quote from Service Provider***

## **THOSE WHO DON'T ACCEPT HELP:**

Ultimately there will always be people who do not accept help. Their reasons may be many and different - for some Rough Sleeping is an integral part of their substance addiction, for others the pretence of Rough Sleeping is a cover for some other behaviour such as begging or Street drinking.

We heard clear evidence of how the Local Authority liaises with Merseyside Police in order to deal with those who pretend to be Rough Sleepers in order to beg. We also heard how the presence of this wider Street community of people begging, street drinking and buying and taking drugs in fact poses a threat to Rough Sleepers. However we noted that there is an understandable caution from both the Council and the Police in dealing with these individuals given the levels of public concern over genuine Rough Sleeping. Also actually telling the Rough Sleepers from other people living on the streets can be very difficult for public agencies.

This situation is made more complex by the support offered by the public to those living on the streets. Food, money, tents and clothing all helps to support people who choose to stay on the streets when there are in fact other, healthier, better options for them. The provision of such direct support is also helping to attract people into begging.

***Mr. B was a man of 37, he was on the street begging to support his drug use, and he had his own accommodation in Walton. "I wouldn't eat if it wasn't for the street teams, I get fed most nights"***

***Case study 2***

Conversely we noted that the presence of people Rough Sleeping and begging on the streets was a source of public anxiety and that for as many people wanting to help Rough Sleepers, there was an equivalent degree of public frustration that more was not being done to simply move people on.

***"I had a mental breakdown and slept rough. I was at the sit up for 3 - 4 weeks for somewhere to sleep. The sit up is a short time measure, it's a big room in hostel with sleeping bags"***

***Quote from Service user***

We also note that a preference for or attachment to Street Living and associated Rough Sleeping can cause some people to use emergency accommodation in a prolonged and chaotic fashion and without ultimately moving on to a more sustainable outcome. We heard some stories which caused us a degree of concern about whether the existing system ultimately does deal effectively with those Rough Sleepers who are choosing not to move on.

We accept that this is a very difficult public policy position to negotiate in that it requires the public agencies to strike a balance between individual freedom, social responsibility, community protection and longer term health and welfare issues. However clearly it is an issue of concern.

In our view, alongside the provision of support for Rough Sleepers, the City also needs a more robust approach to encouraging change and the Local Authority, Police, BID/local businesses and other relevant partners needs to consider the implementation of strategies which will disrupt and discourage this behaviour including, for example, the implementation of a Public Space Protection Order.

## OUR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

***We believe that Rough Sleeping provision in Liverpool is, overall, effective and well run. Significant funding remains in place despite wider budget cuts and there is clear commitment to solving the problem.***

Substance addiction, poor mental health and having No Recourse to Public Funds are the primary causes of Rough Sleeping in the City.

However, the City does not face the same levels of Rough Sleeping as some other English Core Cities and the actual problem of Rough Sleeping is exacerbated, in our view, by the larger numbers of people begging in the City.

The issue of Rough Sleeping is poorly understood by the general public and Rough Sleepers themselves. There are a number of unhelpful myths surrounding service provision and these need to be tackled.

The charitable and voluntary sectors are rising to the challenges of Rough Sleeping and wider street living but these key resources need better coordination and integration with mainstream services. Health provision also is not as integrated or effective as we believe it should be.

One of the most difficult to resolve challenges lie with people with No Recourse to Public Funds. Government policy here is fundamental to creating rather than resolving Rough Sleeping.

The City has seen a rise in both charitable giving and self-organising volunteer support in response to Rough Sleeping. This is welcomed but without proper coordination and integration is unlikely to have the positive impact which we would all want.

***We therefore recommend the following 10 Key Actions;***

### **ACTION 1 - ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS**

Led by a senior politician, the Community of Practice would bring together all agencies delivering rough sleeping support in order to co-ordinate provision across the Local Authority, Health services, the Police service, and the voluntary/charitable sectors, formal and informal. The Community of Practice would meet regularly to share intelligence and plan/problem solve to reduce duplication and maximise the effectiveness of delivery. The Community should include those with lived experience and, where practicable, existing service users.

### **ACTION 2 - COORDINATE VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVISION**

Currently, voluntary Street Teams provide a service which alleviates some of the worse, immediate effects of street living and rough sleeping. At the same time however, the work of these Teams can inadvertently support a continuation of a life style which is ultimately damaging to the very people the Street Teams wish to help. More therefore needs to be done to coordinate the valuable work of the Street Teams in providing direct, on-street support with the work of professional agencies who can effectively move people on to more sustainable lifestyles. The voluntary work should be prioritised to support those Rough Sleepers with least access to support from the State, for example people with No Recourse to Public Funds. This coordination should be delivered by the Community of Practice outlined in Action 1 and should include consideration of how proper and relevant training can be provided to the volunteers involved.

## ACTION 3 - CAMPAIGN FOR A NATIONAL CHANGE TO NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

One of the most pernicious causes of Rough Sleeping is No Recourse to Public Funds. It leaves people isolated and vulnerable and creates a massive degree of uncertainty about what help and support can be provided. It can result in there being no long term solution to the problems faced by some Rough Sleepers.

The Communications Campaign outlined in Action 4 should include specific, cross partner actions to lobby Government for a clear legislative change.

*"We could just end up warehousing people in temporary accommodation as it relies on service users ultimately getting work. We need a long-term solution."*

*Quote from Liverpool City Council officer*

## ACTION 4 - DELIVER A CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

There is significant public confusion over levels of rough sleeping, its causes and the approaches needed to deliver an effective solution. All agencies should sign up to a single PR and Communications strategy which includes:

- ▶ Clear information on the services available and how to access them provided by an effective public information campaign,
- ▶ The development of an app to provide information for the general public and Rough Sleepers,
- ▶ Explain No Recourse to Public Funds and why there is a legal limit to the support available to people Rough Sleeping because of No Recourse to Public Funds,
- ▶ Myth-busting information regarding the type and nature of the services available to support rough sleepers including dealing with misconceptions such as charges to access support, acceptance of pets, local connection requirements and service barring/exclusions,
- ▶ A clear message on the best way the public can support Rough Sleepers.

## ACTION 5 - PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE MECHANISM FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

There is no way to establish the amount of direct charitable giving which is currently taking place. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is significant and that much of the money giving is not reaching the people most in need. To prevent this, the Chang£ campaign either needs to be refreshed and relaunched or a new campaign needs to be established in the City alongside the Communications Campaign identified in Action 2. The money raised should be prioritised to support those Rough Sleepers with least access to support from the State. Consideration should be given to adopting a model similar to that used in Bristol.

***“We can only do so much as an accommodation provider but getting service users into detox and rehab in a joined up way is a challenge. We would like someone to come in and work with service users to engage them in treatment.”***

*Quote from Service Provider*

## ACTION 6 - PROVIDE MORE JOINED UP AND BETTER RESOURCED HEALTH PROVISION

The majority of Rough Sleepers suffer from mental health issues and/or drug/alcohol addiction. We are concerned that existing health services are contracting and that health provision is not joined up or accessible. We would ask that relevant Health Commissioners should be tasked with producing a clear investment plan to meet these needs and resolve these concerns. This action plan should be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for agreement.

## ACTION 7 - DELIVER A MORE SUSTAINABLE HOUSING SOLUTION FOR VULNERABLE, YOUNG PEOPLE

Restrictions on Housing Benefit and a lack of specialist housing for young people mean that some vulnerable young people are caught in unsuitable housing conditions - living in poor quality HMOs, surrounded by strangers and with landlords who are unable to understand, let alone, meet their needs. Combined with insecure tenure, many of these vulnerable young people are susceptible to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. We would ask that the Local Authority and the City's many social housing providers work together to develop and deliver a social housing model which works for young, single people who may have complex needs.

*"We moved away from social housing bedsits in Liverpool ten years ago. With the changes in HB for young, single people we need to reconsider that decision."*

*Quote Cllr F Hont,  
Cabinet Member for  
Housing*

## ACTION 8 - REVIEW EXISTING PROVISION TO ENSURE QUALITY & RELEVANCE

We note that a number of service users expressed concern about the quality of provision and raised issues about safety, appropriateness and sustainability of the hostel services they experienced. It is our view that Liverpool City Council should carry out a review of the pathway into services including No Second Night Out and associated provision to ensure that it remains of suitable quality and approach. This review should be overseen by the Cabinet Member for Housing and its results made public.

## ACTION 9 - ENSURE ONGOING INNOVATION THROUGH INVESTMENT

In our view, much of the support for Rough Sleepers in Liverpool already is at the leading edge of best practice. However the problems of Rough Sleeping continue and the Local Authority is about to be given new duties to prevent Homelessness (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) which will also impact on Rough Sleeping. We also note that for some people, hostel provision does not provide a suitable route out of Rough Sleeping. Ultimately therefore the Council needs to ensure it invests some of its available resource in schemes to pilot new routes out of Rough Sleeping with the aim of mainstreaming the lessons and information from these pilots into mainstream provision.

*Mr I, a heavy drinker,  
been on the streets  
for 6  
months. Doesn't  
want a flat and happy  
to be outdoors.  
Doesn't beg "people  
know me and just  
help me out"*

## ACTION 10 - TACKLE THE WIDER ISSUE OF STREET LIVING

***"We can't be  
complacent. We  
need to continue  
to innovate,  
develop new best  
practice. Having  
yesterday's best  
practice isn't  
good enough."***

***John Finnigan, Task  
Group Chair***

We acknowledge that most of the people on the streets whether beggars, street drinkers or Rough Sleepers have mental health challenges or drug addiction issues and are, to some degree or other, vulnerable. However, the City is faced with a growing number of people on the streets who do have homes but who are begging in order to sustain drug/alcohol dependency or for other, sometimes criminal, reasons. If robust action is not taken to resolve this issue then the impact on residents, businesses and Rough Sleepers will become unsustainable.

The Local Authority, Police, BID/local businesses and other relevant partners needs to consider the implementation of strategies which will disrupt and discourage this behaviour.