



Rough Sleeping Encampment Draft Policy

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1. Policy Overview

1.1 Introduction

Bristol has experienced a huge increase in rough sleeping. The annual rough sleeping count reported to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government has increased from 9 in November 2012 to 86 in November 2017.

During the period from 1 Jan 2017 – 31 Dec 2017, there were 773 people who were sleeping rough in the city who the Rough Sleeping Service worked with:

- 482 people (62.4%) have a local connection to Bristol;
- 173 People (22.4%) had no recorded local connection;
- 118 people (15.3%) had a clear local connection elsewhere in the UK.

Rough sleeping is not a problem specific to Bristol and is on the rise nationally. Housing affordability and supply combined with changes to benefits means that people will continue to struggle to afford and maintain tenancies.

The underlying causes of homelessness in Bristol are:

- Rising housing demand in the region.
- Rising house/rental prices.
- Reductions and freezes in welfare benefits as a result of Welfare Reform - which is increasing homelessness and also limiting how quickly people move on from supported housing.

As well as the negative effects on homeless people themselves, homelessness can impact on how other citizens are able to use public land in Bristol. Bristol City Council needs to manage its land to ensure it can be used as intended for everyone. In order to do this we propose to introduce a consistent approach to how we manage the impact of rough sleeping encampments on our land.

Bristol City Council is committed to the Rough Sleeping Partnership's Vision Statement of:

No-one should have to live on the streets. Sleeping rough is dangerous and severely impacts on people's health. It can have a detrimental effect on communities and should not be a lifestyle choice. We believe everyone has the capacity to recover and sustain a life away from the streets. People sleeping rough are at significant risk of becoming victims and/or being seen as perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour. We should all live without fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

By working together we will do everything in our power to make this happen.

A Rough Sleeping Partnership (The RSP) designed to reduce and prevent homelessness was set up by Bristol City Council in 2015.

For the purpose of this policy 'rough sleeping' is defined as;

- People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)

- People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, derelict boats, or stations).

For the purpose of this policy ‘rough sleeping encampment’ is defined as:

- Any tent, shelter, temporary structure and/or collection of bedding and belongings on a specific area of Council owned land.

Neither the definition nor the procedure makes any judgements upon the individuals who are occupying or erecting such encampments.

For the purpose of this document The Rough Sleeping Service can be defined as:

- The service commissioned by Bristol City Council to engage and work with people who are sleeping rough to help them off the streets and into accommodation and support, and moving them towards independent living. The service is run by St Mungo’s who are based at the Compass Centre. The Outreach workers in the service spend much of their time engaging with people who are sleeping rough on the streets or with drop ins at partner agencies who also work with people sleeping rough or from locations where people are likely to start sleeping rough such as when being released from prison.

1.2 Aim(s) of the policy

The policy outlines how we propose to manage rough sleeping encampments on council land in order to achieve the following aims:

- To ensure we recognise that people and their circumstances are unique so that the support we offer them is tailored to fit the individual.
- To ensure that appropriate measures are in place to support people who are sleeping rough to move off of the streets.
- To ensure that people who are sleeping rough in encampments are offered an improved offer agreed with St Mungo’s of allocated space pre-booked in an emergency night shelter for at least a week. The person can take their dogs and up to two bags of possessions per person with them into the shelter, with all other items stored. This will allow the individual to be supported and assessed with a clear plan to help them to move off the streets.
- To ensure that anti-social behaviour and health and safety issues related to rough sleeping encampments are managed in a timely manner.
- To ensure that appropriate measures are in place to manage waste associated with rough sleeping encampments.

1.3 Links to council’s corporate aims

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a key commitment of the Corporate Strategy 2018-2023:

- Reduce the overall level of homelessness and rough sleeping, with no-one needing to spend a ‘second night out’.

This commitment is expanded in Theme 1: Empowering and Caring, which says we want to minimise incidences of rough sleeping and homelessness in Bristol and enable citizens in housing need to access affordable housing that meets their needs. This includes action planning with, and supporting vulnerable people to sustain their tenancies, maximise their income and access employment. We will do this within the guidance of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

This policy also supports our [Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013](#).

1.4 Policy Statement(s)

The Corporate Strategy 2018-2023 states:

Bristol has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country. Some 979 households in the city were accepted to be statutorily homeless in 2016–17. This figure was down on the 1,006 homeless households recorded for the previous year, but it still means that around one in every 198 households in the city were homeless in 2016/17. In November 2016 there were also 74 rough sleepers identified in Bristol at the national Rough Sleeper count.

Rough sleeping differs from homelessness in that someone can be homeless if they are staying in temporary accommodation, but they are not ‘rough sleeping’ as they do have a proper roof over their head at night. Bristol’s figure represents one of the highest rough sleeper counts recorded nationally and it is accepted that the annual count may underestimate the true scale of rough sleeping in the city.

We want to minimise incidences of rough sleeping and homelessness in Bristol and enable citizens in housing need to access affordable housing that meets their needs. This includes action planning with, and supporting vulnerable people to sustain their tenancies, maximise their income and access employment. We will do this within the guidance of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Working alongside our internal and external partners and following the actions within our Trailblazer programme, we will identify and offer support to households who are at potential risk of homelessness within the city.

2. Rough Sleeping Encampments policy detail

To ensure there is a consistent and rapid response to dealing with rough sleeping encampments we will work closely with our partners to identify and record instances of people who are sleeping rough, and the engagement and support opportunities offered to them.

We will respond to people sleeping rough in a timely manner and support them to find the help they need. We will ensure that the individual is placed at the centre of all we do.

Our phased approach to managing each rough sleeping encampment is shown in Figure 1.

In following this approach we will:

- Recognise that all circumstances are unique so that all outcomes are tailored to fit the individual.
- Ensure that people sleeping rough in encampments receive an improved offer agreed with St Mungo’s of allocated space pre-booked in an emergency night shelter for at least a week.

- The person can take their dogs and up to two bags of possessions per person with them into the shelter, with all other items stored.
- This will allow each individual to be supported and assessed with a clear plan to help them to move off the streets.
- Work on a case by case basis and take into consideration the complex needs of the individuals occupying rough sleeping encampments and the needs of the wider community.
- We will coordinate a multi-agency response to rough sleeping encampments.

Our Partners include:

- The Rough Sleeping Service.
- The Rough Sleeping Partnership, which includes:
 - Drug, alcohol and mental health providers.
 - Local faith groups.
 - Police and criminal justice system.
 - Health services/commissioners.
 - Destination Bristol.
- We will assess whether anti-social behaviour prevention work is needed, if health and safety issues need to be addressed or if it is necessary to take legal action to ensure that the area of land is used for its intended purposes and can be enjoyed by all.
- We will identify and manage waste issues associated with people sleeping rough and rough sleeping encampments to ensure that council land can be safely used by everyone.

All those considerations will then feed into a response appropriate to the particular encampment.

That response will give due regard to proportionality and reasonableness and will have at its heart considerations that are person centred, and take into account the safety of the individual in the encampment and the wider community.

We also need to support council staff and contractor staff who have to remove associated hazards (particularly sex and drugs litter and human waste) that are regularly associated with short and long-term rough sleeper encampments.

2.1 Equality and diversity

The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all and it is our commitment to ensure that we remain focused on the needs of the individual and how they can best access support and services to help them leave the streets.

3. Links to other corporate documents

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- [Corporate Strategy 2018-2023](#)
- [Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018](#)

4. Legislation

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Highways Act 1980
- Local Government Act 1972
- Localism Act 2011
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Act 2014
- Health and Safety At Work Act 1974

5.0 Supporting procedures – Figure 1

