

Rough Sleeping Housing and Growth Committee Briefing Note

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1. How are rough sleepers supported in Barnet?

Barnet Homes' Rough Sleeper Team receive referrals through different routes, including from:

- Street Link's Rapid Response Outreach Team
- St Mungo's No Second Night Out Team
- other council services, and
- local councillors and residents.

The Rough Sleeper Team undertake outreach work twice a week, from 5am on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The team try to cover as much of the borough as possible, as they seek to locate rough sleepers who have been referred to them. The team also visit areas which are common for rough sleepers to bed down, such as in the Grahame Park estate.

If a rough sleeper is located bedded down or about to bed down, their details are taken, and they are added to the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) – a multi-agency database which records information about people sleeping rough in London, and which is managed by Homeless Link.

Once the Rough Sleeper Team establishes contact with a rough sleeper, the team seeks to complete a triage and full housing needs assessment, to determine what housing assistance can be provided.

2. The 'Everyone In' initiative

On 26th March 2020 – at the beginning of the pandemic – the Homelessness Minister provided clear instruction to local authorities in England, asking them to accommodate everyone who was rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, regardless of whether they were verified rough sleepers. The 'Everyone In' initiative resulted in rough sleepers being offered accommodation irrespective of their immigration status and whether they had recourse to public funds. This initiative lasted from March 2020 to March 2022.

We note that during the pandemic:

- The Rough Sleeper Team receiving a high volume of referrals from trusted agencies including HAB. Within the public health emergency, the Rough Sleeper Team accepted these referrals – but lacked the capacity to complete their usual checks. The volume of referrals resulted in a large increase in the number of rough sleepers residing in temporary accommodation (TA) in Barnet.
- Barnet Homes worked closely with Homeless Action in Barnet who coordinated food deliveries for customers with no recourse to public funds who were living in TA. This provision is no longer in place.

Since the Everyone In initiative has ended, Barnet Homes now only accommodates verified rough sleepers (i.e. those who show up on the CHAIN database). Currently, there are some customers with no recourse to public funds residing in TA, but this is being addressed as customers' immigration cases are resolved. Individuals who were accommodated during Everyone In have received a full housing needs assessment, and Barnet Homes has sought to resolve their housing issue – for example through referrals to the Single Homeless Team.

3. Data on Barnet Homes' rough sleeper cohort

Between Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2022/23, Barnet Homes received 350 approaches for assistance from rough sleepers¹. Since the increase in the beginning of 2020/21, there is an average of around 18 rough sleepers approaching Barnet Homes per quarter.

Rough Sleeper approaches from 2019/20 to 2022/23 (YTD)					
Fiscal Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
2019/20	3	5	32	63	103
2020/21	81	19	27	23	150
2021/22	23	12	8	17	60
2022/23	20	17	-	-	37
Grand Total	127	53	67	103	350

There is seasonal variation, with more approaches for assistance during the colder months in Q3 and Q4.

Age

At the date of approach:

- For the full period (2019/20 to 2022/23 year to date as of the end of Q2), 35.7% of rough sleepers were 35-44 years' old. In 2022/23 to date, 40.5% of rough sleepers have been in this age group. In contrast, 20.8% of the borough of Barnet's residents are 35-44².
- 24.0% of rough sleepers were 45–54-years' old (this is the second largest age cohort). In 2022/23 to date, 24.3% have been in this age group, with an increase in those aged 55-64. In contrast, 18.1% of Barnet's residents are 45-54².

Gender

- For the full period, 83.1% (291/350) rough sleepers were men, and 16.9% (59/350) were women. In 2022/23 to date, 75.7% have been men. Whilst the proportion of women who have been rough sleepers has been increasing year-on-year during this period, there is disproportionate representation of men who are rough sleeping, as in Barnet only 48.4% of residents were men, compared with 51.6% of residents were women³.

¹ Here, we include those whose primary homeless reason on Jigsaw is the 'Rough Sleeper Project', or whose secondary homelessness reason is 'Rough Sleeper'.

² Based on 2021 Census results of those aged 20 and older.

³ Based on 2021 Census results of all residents within the borough.

Ethnicity

- White and Black or Black British were the two most common ethnicity groups of rough sleepers.
- For the full period, 71.8% (245/341) rough sleepers whose ethnicity data was captured were White. In 2022/23 to date, 60% have been White. In contrast, 67.6% of Barnet's residents are from a White background³.
- For the full period, 11.1% (38/341) rough sleepers were from a Black or Black British background – compared with 7.9% of Barnet's residents³. In 2022/23 to date, 17.1% have been from a Black or Black British background; there has been an increase in those from a Mixed or Multiple ethnicity background and those from an 'Other' background.

4. Single night figure estimates for rough sleepers

Every year, local authorities in England report how many people they believe are rough sleeping on a typical night between 1st October and 30th November. These single night figures enable the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to track trends in rough sleeping numbers.

This year, Barnet's spotlight street count took place from midnight on Thursday 17th November into the morning of Friday 18th November. Barnet reported a figure of 8 rough sleepers in 2022 – and this figure has been verified by Homeless Link. This single night estimate only includes individuals who Barnet Homes has robust evidence of rough sleeping in the borough on the date in question. The following groups are included in the count:

- People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments).
- People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").
- The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or Travellers.

The 'real' number of rough sleepers is likely to be higher than the estimate, but the same methodology is used each year and the annual snapshot is a good indicator of trends in rough sleeping.

The 2022 figure compares favourably with previous years. 13 people were reported rough sleeping in 2021, and 24 people were reported rough sleeping in 2018 and 2019. See table 4 in appendix 1 for additional results. See also appendix 2 which benchmarks the rough sleeping picture in Barnet against our peers – using data from 2021.

5. Intervention and support

Aside from Barnet Homes' Rough Sleeper Team, the following services and initiatives exist in Barnet to provide support to rough sleepers:

Service or initiative	Description
Barnet 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' Hub	This 17-bed rough sleeper assessment hub provides an immediate “off the streets” offer for rough sleepers. With support provided by Homeless Action in Barnet, this is a short stay for assessment and support with the aim to move occupants on to sustainable long-term accommodation.
BOOST	The Barnet Group-led service BOOST provides free and accessible support for any resident of Barnet. The team comprises staff from Barnet Homes, Barnet Council BELs, Discretionary Housing Payments and Future Path. BOOST also provides employment support for rough sleepers.
Change Grow Live	Barnet Homes has been awarded a total of £709,936 from the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant. The 2022/23 amount totals at £352,179 and the 2023/24 amount totals at £357,757. This funding is being used to fund specific posts within 'Change Grow Live'. Change Grow Live is a national health and social care charity, supporting people with drugs, alcohol, housing, and other challenges. The posts in Change Grow Live include a Substance Misuse Outreach Worker, a Romanian Outreach Worker, and an Assertive Outreach Nurse. There was due to be a Dual Diagnosis Worker, but there were difficulties with recruiting to this post.
Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL)	Barnet Homes can obtain advice from EASL regarding rough sleeper cases, and staff from this service will come out to meet rough sleepers on the streets, or in other settings, to provide professional opinions and reports. The Rough Sleeper Team meet monthly with EASL to discuss cases.
Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB)	The HAB day centre (36b Woodhouse Road, N12 0RG) provides a range of services to rough sleepers in the borough. These include hot meals, showers and laundry facilities, access to medical services, free internet access, a clothes store, housing advice and support.
Immigration support	Immigration support is commissioned sub-regionally and can be accessed by any rough sleeper who needs assistance with their immigration case.
Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme	<p>In July 2021, Barnet Homes were awarded £5.4 million to deliver 55 homes under the Mayor’s Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP).</p> <p>RSAP properties are let on an assured shorthold tenancy basis for 2 years. Floating support is in place for the duration of the tenancy, and Housing Needs Officers manage the move on process as the end of tenancies near. If a rough sleeper is not ready to move on their tenancy will be reviewed, and they may be able to remain in the property for an additional year. Regarding tenancy sustainment, the Rough Sleepers Coordinator has advised the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two rough sleepers have abandoned their tenancies. • There have been no evictions to date, although three rough sleepers are facing possession proceedings. • Two rough sleepers’ properties are subject to closure orders.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)	Barnet has a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which operates during periods of severe weather to provide emergency accommodation for all rough sleepers in the borough. Access to this provision is through outreach services, Housing Options and HAB.
Together in Barnet	The charity runs a winter night shelter in the borough for rough sleepers during October to May.

6. Key drivers for rough sleeping

Barnet Homes' Rough Sleepers Coordinator confirms that poor mental health and substance misuse are key drivers for rough sleeping. All rough sleepers are deemed to have complex needs due to the high likelihood of health complications within this group. We note that 30% (87/290) of rough sleepers who approached Barnet Homes since 2019/20 had a drug or alcohol dependency. This data was not captured for 60/350 individuals.

Poor mental health and substance misuse often interlink, and can lead to people sleeping rough. These two drivers can also lead to rough sleepers being responsible for antisocial behaviour once they are placed into accommodation.

7. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Preventing and reducing homelessness and taking steps to end rough sleeping continue to be a focus for the council and Barnet Homes. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is currently being refreshed and will focus on the statutory requirements under the Homelessness Act 2002:

- a) Preventing homelessness in the borough;
- b) Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the borough who may become homeless; and
- c) Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the borough who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The next section of this briefing note summarises some of the key issues and challenges Barnet Homes and partner agencies and council departments are facing in supporting rough sleepers. These issues will be targeted through both the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Housing Strategy, which is also being refreshed. Key areas of focus for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that relate specifically to rough sleepers are expected to include:

- Continuing to identify those most at risk of homelessness and further tackling the root causes of homelessness;
- Continuing to work in partnership, and strengthening this approach, to 'upstream' early intervention, provide support to those disproportionately affected by homelessness and/or rough sleeping, and strengthen housing-related support and personal support including with domestic abuse, mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction, and poverty, debt, and unemployment;
- Ensuring adequate advice and information to improve awareness and support; and

- Working to improve the supply of accommodation within the borough, including looking to address specialist and complex needs.

8. Issues and recommendations

In compiling this update for Members, to illustrate in more detail some of the challenges and the potential solutions or actions that could be explored, Barnet Homes' Housing Options Service have identified a set of issues and suggested recommendations to support rough sleepers more effectively. The recommendations will be explored through the refresh of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and following an internal review of the Housing Options Service that is currently taking place.

i) Lack of supported accommodation

Issues

Barnet Homes has access to short-term supported accommodation for rough sleepers, through:

- the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub - offering 6-week placements to rough sleepers
- the Golders Green scheme – operated by HAB, offering placements of up to 12 months to rough sleepers with low support needs.

If no room is available, rough sleepers are provided with standard TA units.

There is no longer-term supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single-person households who have medium to high support needs in Barnet. In practice, rough sleepers can rarely access supported accommodation through Adult Social Care – due to their higher thresholds for assistance.

The lack of sufficient supported accommodation causes the following issues:

- Standard TA is not always suitable for rough sleepers, since many have complex needs and require additional support that Barnet Homes is unable to provide.
- Rough sleepers living in Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) properties sometimes do not engage with the floating support that is offered – and when that happens their support needs are not met, leading to a decline in their health and increased risk of a return to rough sleeping.
- Rough sleepers can also sometimes cause anti-social behaviour and accrue rent arrears, which can make maintaining a tenancy difficult for this group. The Rough Sleeper Team engage with a lot of repeat customers who will return to the streets after they have been moved on to off-street accommodation.
- Universal Credit's rules stipulate that if a single person resides in supported accommodation for 3 months or more, then they become exempt from the single room rate. This exemption is usually needed to make studio properties affordable for our single applicants. While the Golders Green scheme can be used to obtain this exemption for rough sleepers with low support needs, there is no similar provision for vulnerable single-person households who are not verified rough sleepers. The limited move-on options for this cohort could place them at increased risk of becoming rough sleepers in future.

Recommendation

Barnet Homes' Service Improvement Team will produce a business case on the need to explore the procurement of additional supported accommodation to assist this vulnerable customer cohort. If additional supported accommodation could be procured, it would increase the

opportunity to support rough sleepers and single-person households with medium to high support needs.

ii) Rough sleepers can struggle to engage with support services

Issues and challenges

One of the key challenges to supporting rough sleepers is that it is difficult to maintain communication with them. There are a number of communication issues Barnet Homes has identified:

- Rough sleepers are sometimes uncontactable by phone. Barnet Homes currently relies on rough sleepers to either own a phone or to have access to a phone in some capacity in order for triage and full housing needs assessments to be completed.
- Rough sleepers often relocate to other areas, away from where they were found bedded down. It is then difficult for the Rough Sleeper Team to locate the rough sleeper again.
- Some rough sleepers cannot prioritise maintaining good communication with Barnet Homes due to the challenges they are facing in their lives.

Poor communication causes delays to rough sleepers receiving the support that they require. If the housing process takes a long time to complete, the risk of disengagement from rough sleepers increases.

Recommendations

This is a difficult issue to address. However, the Housing Options Service is purchasing cheap mobile phones to hand out to rough sleepers. This was a useful tool when SWEP was in place in mid-December.

In addition, Housing Options will ask on-site workers at Golders Green scheme (and other shared accommodation) to print out communications (e.g. letters about property offers) and to place them under rough sleepers' doors.

Appendix 1: additional data on the rough sleeping cohort

Table 1: Age group of rough sleepers by fiscal year							
Fiscal Year	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-89	Total
2019/20	1	25	38	24	15	0	103
2020/21	3	29	55	41	17	5	150
2021/22	8	15	17	10	6	4	60
2022/23 (YTD)	0	7	15	9	6	0	37
Grand Total	12	76	125	84	44	9	350

Charts 1 and 2: Age group of rough sleepers by fiscal year (number and %)

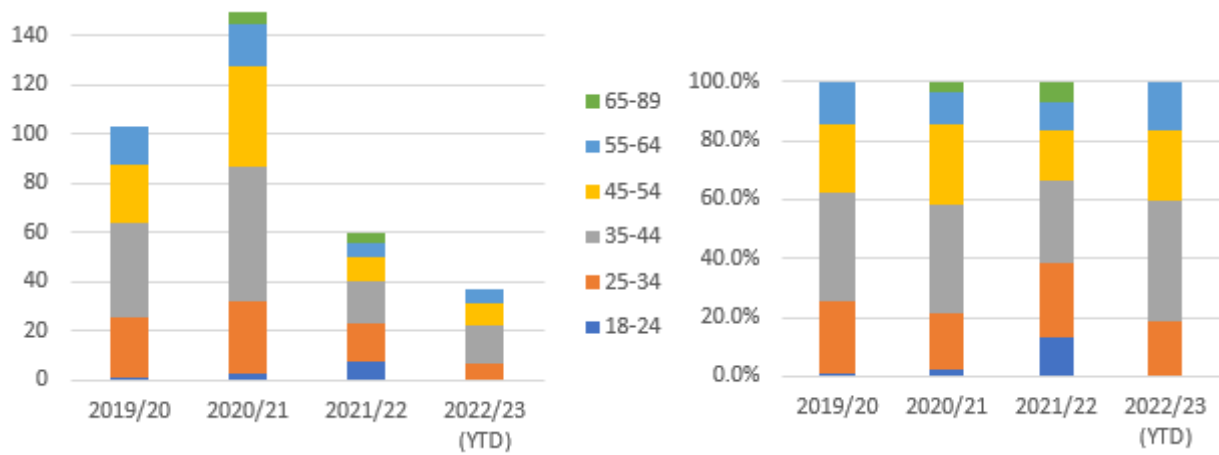


Table 2: Gender of rough sleepers by fiscal year					
Gender	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 YTD)	Total
Female	11	27	12	9	59
Male	92	123	48	28	291
Grand Total	103	150	60	37	350

Charts 3 and 4: Gender of rough sleepers by fiscal year (number and %)

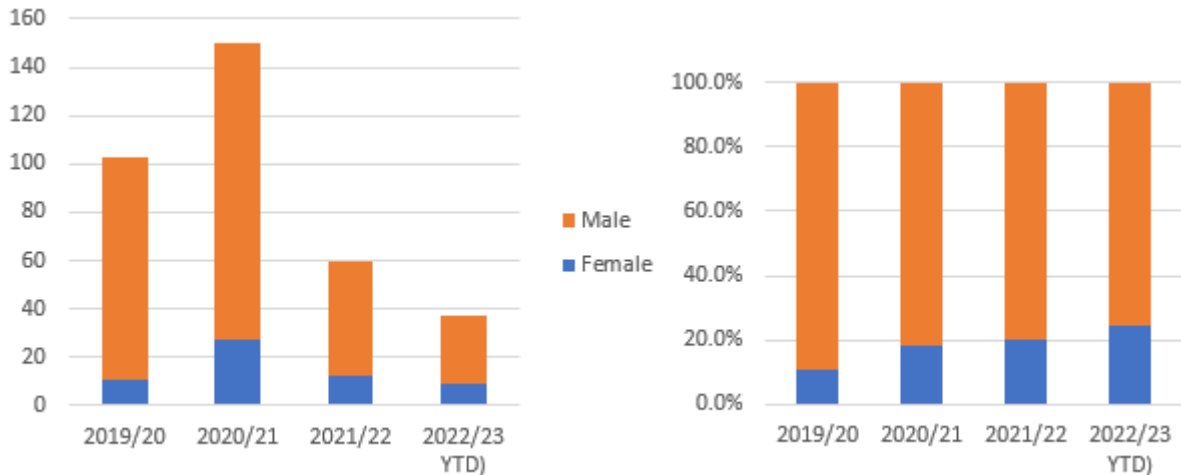


Table 3: Ethnicities of rough sleepers by fiscal year						
Ethnicity	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (YTD)	Total	%
Black or Black British	5	17	10	6	38	11.1%
Asian or Asian British	10	8	3	2	23	6.7%
Mixed Ethnicities	2	8	4	3	17	5.0%
White	77	109	38	21	245	71.9%
Any other ethnic group	3	0	1	0	4	3.2%
Don't know / refused	3	2	2	0	7	2.1%
Grand Total	101	145	60	35	341	100.0%

Charts 5 and 6: Ethnicities of rough sleepers by fiscal year (number and %)

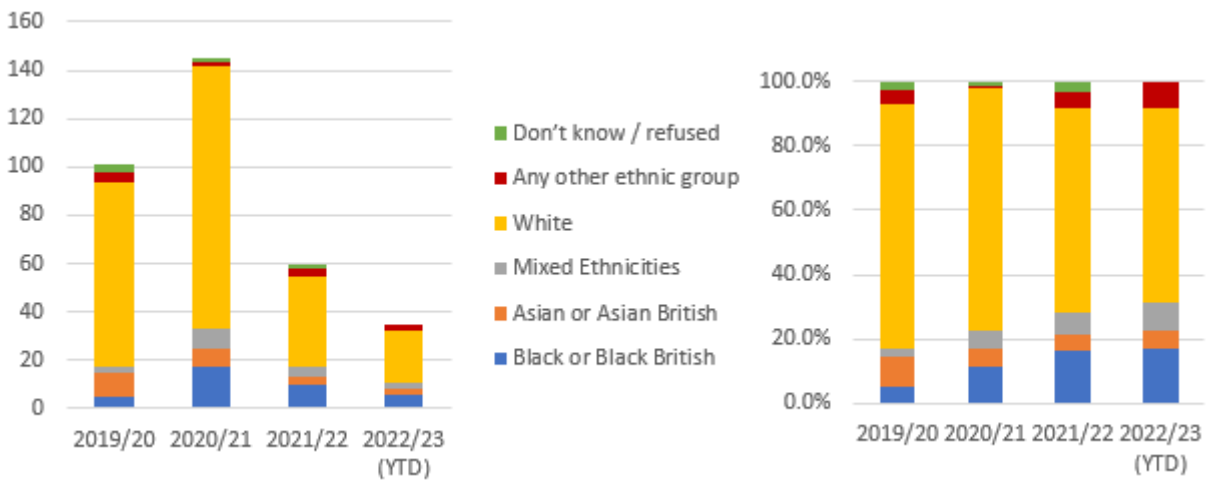


Table 4: Rough sleeper single night figures from the annual estimates	
Year	Count
2016	22
2017	21
2018	24
2019	24
2020	6*
2021	13*
2022	8

*We note that the Everyone In initiative will have resulted in fewer people sleeping rough – hence the low figures in 2020 and 2021.

Appendix 2: benchmarking against our peers

The table below provides comparative data on the number of people sleeping rough in London on a single night in autumn 2021⁴ - taken from last year's count. The 2022 data is not yet available.

Local Authority	Single night estimate
Barking and Dagenham	1-4
Barnet	13
Bexley	7
Brent	17
Bromley	1-4
Camden	97
City of London	20
Croydon	11
Ealing	23
Enfield	21
Greenwich	9
Hackney	11
Hammersmith and Fulham	1-4
Haringey	10
Harrow	1-4
Havering	1-4
Hillingdon	9
Hounslow	1-4
Islington	13
Kensington and Chelsea	11
Kingston upon Thames	28
Lambeth	29
Lewisham	7
Merton	5
Newham	17
Redbridge	15
Richmond upon Thames	1-4
Southwark	10
Sutton	1-4
Tower Hamlets	28
Waltham Forest	5
Wandsworth	18
Westminster	187

⁴ [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)