

# "Is the Government on track to meet its manifesto commitment to 'end the blight of rough sleeping' by the end of this Parliament?"



The Salvation Army's response to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness

## About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered charity present in 700 communities in the UK. We have worked with people with experience of homelessness for over 130 years. Today, our services include:

- The provision of over 2,200 units of supported housing in Lifehouses (residential homelessness services) across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Housing First services in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Glasgow, South Lanarkshire and Inverness offering intensive support to people with experience of sustained and recurrent periods of rough sleeping.
- Non-residential services offering outreach to people who are currently rough sleeping and floating support for people living independently in their own homes.
- Church and community-based programmes offering practical support, including meals, cold weather shelters, opportunities to share fellowship and ease possible isolation, and the provision of information on social security and immigration.
- A Families Ministries Unit that exists to empower, equip and enable people of all ages to journey together, building appropriate relationships with others, having the intention of bringing them to faith in Christ and spiritual maturity.
- Social enterprise opportunities, such as a bicycle repair shop and a sandwich-making and selling project in Booth House Lifehouse, Swindon.

## 1. Review of the commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024 – where are we now?

### a. Do you think the Government will meet its manifesto commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2024? Please explain your reasoning in less than 500 words.

While significant progress has been made on this issue, we fear that on the current trajectory, the Government will fail to meet its manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024.

The Salvation Army has concerns that while funding has been made available in recent years to tackle rough sleeping, this has primarily been used for creating accommodation, rather than also tackling the root causes of homelessness.

To truly break the cycle of rough sleeping, individuals need not only decent long-term accommodation, but also support to overcome many of their wider issues such as addictions or mental health needs. If these needs go unsupported, then individuals given temporary accommodation are at risk of returning to the streets.

Recent CHAIN statistics<sup>1</sup> showed that 70% of rough sleepers in London<sup>2</sup> have support needs for mental health, drug or alcohol problems. With this in mind, we believe that the Government will not be able to

<sup>1</sup> Rough Sleeping in London (CHAIN reports), Q4 2021/2022.

completely eliminate rough sleeping unless it addresses these root causes. We believe that the Government could still to meet its manifesto commitment if a concentrated effort is directed at tackling these wider issues and funding support services.

### **b. i. What does successfully ending rough sleeping in England look like?**

The Salvation Army supports Crisis' shared definition of ending homelessness<sup>3</sup>. In summary this is built on the principles:

- No one sleeping rough
- No one forced to live in transient or dangerous accommodation such as tents, squats and non-residential buildings
- No one living in emergency accommodation such as shelters and hostels without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, secure and decent accommodation
- No one homeless because of leaving a state institution such as prison or the care system
- Everyone at immediate risk of homelessness gets the help they need to prevent it happening

Whilst we note the differences between an absolute zero approach and a functional zero approach<sup>4</sup>, we believe that, with rough sleeping being the most dangerous form of homelessness, it is important we adopt an absolute zero approach.

Quite simply, this means no individual having to sleep rough on the streets with any individual at risk of this being supported into emergency/temporary accommodation.

### **ii. How can we best measure this?**

There are currently significant problems with the way rough sleeping is measured. England's snapshot approach does not provide a robust, detailed picture of how prevalent rough sleeping is on a day-to-day basis.

The Salvation Army believes the best way to measure rough sleeping is through the UK-wide adoption of the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) which currently reports on the level of rough sleeping in London. The Chain methodology consists of outreach teams, accommodation projects, day centres and specialist projects inputting data into one combined system as they come into contact with rough sleepers. The system allows users to share information about work done with rough sleepers and about their needs, ensuring that they receive the most appropriate support and that efforts are not duplicated.

As well as providing more detailed information about individual rough sleepers, this methodology has the capacity to include every interaction and not just those limited to one night in an entire year, per current England and Wales methodology.

### **c. What progress has been made, and what government action to tackle rough sleeping since 2019 do you think has been most important/ impactful?**

There is no doubt that good progress has been made in the effort to eliminate rough sleeping. The most recent count (conducted in 2021) in England showed there had been a 9% reduction since the previous year and this was also a 43% fall since 2019<sup>5</sup>. These figures however should be taken within the wider context of a 38% increase since 2010.

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<sup>2</sup> Data collection on rough sleeping is very limited across the country. London currently has the most robust methodology through the detailed Chain quarterly publications. London also offers a good proxy for the rest of England as it has one of the highest proportions of homeless people in the country.

<sup>3</sup> The Plan to End Homelessness, CRISIS.

<sup>4</sup> Absolute Zero refers to a complete and total end to rough sleeping. Functional Zero commonly refers to severely reducing the rate, although specific definitions can vary.

<sup>5</sup> Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, March 2022

The 'Everyone In' programme has, without doubt, been a seismic moment in the battle against rough sleeping. Taking 37,000<sup>6</sup> people off the streets/communal accommodation and moving them into safer, temporary accommodation protected a significantly high proportion of some of society's most vulnerable people.

However, the Government action that could yet deliver the most important change to rough sleeping is the substantial financial investment the Government outlined in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review<sup>7</sup>. The annual commitment of £640 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping has delivered a substantial opportunity to change the narrative around rough sleeping permanently. Only time will tell if this commitment makes the biggest impact however, because providing the money is only one step. The next is ensuring this money goes to the right areas and The Salvation Army believes that this must include addiction and mental health support services. It is these services that help rough sleepers conquer the wider issues in their lives and give them the tools to adapt and manage life away from the streets.

#### **d. What examples of best practice to end rough sleeping can you share from a local, regional or national level in England?**

The Salvation Army have piloted a number of innovative programmes and methods to support people rough sleeping and with complex needs:

##### ***Project Malachi***

Project Malachi is a joint venture funded to the tune of £5million by The Salvation Army and Redbridge Council.

Malachi Place will provide year-round accommodation and wider support for people who have been sleeping rough. The Salvation Army will provide specialist 24-hour on-site support for residents to help them deal with the many issues that led them to sleeping rough, like domestic violence, childhood trauma, relationship breakdown, as well as mental ill health.

The building is made up of 42 self-contained flats, finished and decorated to provide safe and comfortable homes. The flats were fitted out off site and lifted into position by crane to create the four-storey building. Each flat has a bed/sitting room with its own cooking facilities and private toilet and shower. There is also a bicycle workshop which will open in May where residents can learn skills to help them find a job.

##### ***Amazing Grace Spaces and Sheffield City Council Partnership***

The Salvation Army has worked with Amazing Grace Spaces and Sheffield City Council to help support rough sleepers who have complex needs. For many of these people, due to their support needs, they can struggle in traditional hostel style accommodation.

As part of a pilot scheme, The Salvation Army has provided two pods providing support to the clients to help them move into more permanent accommodation. Each sleeping 'pod' provides a bed, chemical toilet and charging facilities.

##### ***NAPpads***

The 'NAPpad 20' (Night-time Accommodation Project), uses microwave technology to ensure rough sleepers seeking shelter are safe. The pads have been designed by Protectal Ltd with The Salvation Army.

They provide temporary accommodation to help people who are finding it difficult to get off the streets and into accommodation. The pilot is also being supported by City of York Council who have temporarily provided land for the scheme and support for those using the Pads.

NAPpads are fitted with non-invasive 'vital life signs' sensors sensitive enough to detect whether someone has stopped breathing so emergency services can be alerted, giving responders vital minutes to save a life. The vital signs sensors are based on technology used to combat sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

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<sup>6</sup> Covid-19: housing people sleeping rough, House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, March 2021

<sup>7</sup> Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, Her Majesty's Treasury, October 2021.

**e. What in your view are the general lessons to be learnt from Everyone In initiative in regards to tackling rough sleeping?**

First and foremost, the 'Everyone In' initiative has shown that the aim to eventually eliminate rough sleeping in its entirety is a realistic and feasible proposal.

However, despite the positives of 'Everyone In', emerging statistics are showing more people are approaching their local authority because they are at risk of homelessness. From October-December 2021, 31,090 households were assessed as being threatened with homelessness which was a 7.3% increase from the same quarter the previous year<sup>8</sup>. This provides a stark reminder of the need to take a long-term view of reducing homelessness and that progress is not meaningful unless it is sustained.

**g. The Government has promised in its 2019 manifesto to end rough sleeping by expanding successful pilots and programmes such as the RSI and HF:**

**ii. What role can Housing First play in helping the Westminster Government deliver its manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024?**

Housing First has the potential to play a major role in tackling rough sleeping. One of the biggest challenges to eliminating rough sleeping is the ability to keep people off the streets permanently. For many people simply getting accommodation is not enough to break the cycle of homelessness, and challenges like addictions and mental health problems can soon lead to individuals returning to the streets. In London alone, during 2020/2021, 1361 (12%)<sup>9</sup> rough sleepers were returning rough sleepers<sup>10</sup>.

We are aware that in recent parliamentary debates, the Government have expressed some concerns around the application of Housing First. However, Housing First plays a significant role here because the programme supports those with a history of rough sleeping and complex needs and gives them the wrap-around support they need to tackle these wider issues. With an increase in the number of homeless people with mental health problems or using substances<sup>11</sup> the need for this type of in-depth support is going to increase.

Housing First also has the potential to deliver financial savings to the Government. Emerging research by The Salvation Army, to be published next month has shown that The Salvation Army's Housing First services have produced a £750,000 saving for the government through service users' reduced use of public services like A&E and arrest/detainment<sup>12</sup>.

**h. What changes would you like to see in terms of national or local funding arrangements to tackle rough sleeping (no more than 3)?**

- **Prioritising addictions/mental health support.** The Salvation Army is calling on national and local Government to adopt a holistic view of homelessness and ensure funding is prioritised for tackling some of the root causes of homelessness.

While buildings have been prioritised in the past, we want to see mental health and addictions support services funded to help our homeless population tackle some of the most important wider issues in their lives that are impact their ability to stay off the streets.

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<sup>8</sup> Statutory Homelessness in England: October to December 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government April 2022

<sup>9</sup> Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, March 2022

<sup>10</sup> Returning rough sleepers are individuals who were first seen rough sleeping prior to 2019/20, not seen rough sleeping during 2019/20, but were seen again in 2020/2021.

<sup>11</sup> Statutory Homelessness in England: Financial Year 2020/2021

<sup>12</sup> Housing First Service Analysis, The Salvation Army, To Be Published June 2022

Official data shows local authority investment in mental health and substance use support has decreased in the last decade<sup>13</sup>. However, during this time, the number of homeless people dying of drug poisoning<sup>14</sup> as well as the general number of homeless people with these substance needs has increased<sup>15</sup>.

**- Adapting investment to emerging trends.** The Salvation Army has warmly welcomed the Government's investment on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping; however, it is important to note that this is not necessarily the end of the funding issue around homelessness. Ensuring that everyone is off of the streets is only part of the solution and there needs to be a prolonged focus to ensure people stay off of the streets.

The Government should look to introduce the simple fiscal rule that if rough sleeping numbers remain steady or increase, central government funding cannot decrease from the previous year's expenditure.

### **3. What is needed to prevent, secure and sustain an end to rough sleeping in England?**

#### **a. In your opinion, what are the main national policy and practice changes still needed to sustain an end rough sleeping in England beyond 2024? Please order these in terms of importance**

In addition to investing tackling the root causes of homelessness (as outlined in our previous answer):

**An expansion of Housing First.** As we have already outlined in this submission, Housing First has been proven to play a significant role in helping those people who have a history of repeat homelessness. To eradicate rough sleeping on a long-term basis, it is important that those individuals who are helped off the streets are given the support to tackle the root causes of their homelessness so they do not return to the streets. Housing First plays a major role here by giving people a home and providing wrap-around services to help tackle the wider issues in people's lives such as mental health needs and addictions. It also has the potential to offer a cost-effective solution by reducing the amount of times (and therefore cost) individuals use public services like A&E and the police<sup>16</sup>.

It is therefore vital that the Government ensures the Housing First pilots are extended and prioritised in future funding plans

**- A continued investment in homelessness services.** We warmly welcomed the Government's significant commitment to homelessness in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review. However, it is important to acknowledge that if rough sleeping has not been eliminated by the end of this parliament then more funding will be needed to complete the job. The Government should look to introduce the simple fiscal rule that if rough sleeping numbers remain steady or increase, central government funding cannot decrease from the previous year's expenditure.

**- Generating a greater understanding of the scale of rough sleeping in the UK.** In order to fully understand how close we are to ending rough sleeping, it is vital to ensure that the data collected provides a comprehensive and robust reflection of the scale of rough sleeping. Currently data methodologies vary and there are questions over whether existing numbers are therefore accurate.

At The Salvation Army we are advocating for the extension of the Combined Homelessness and Information Network methodology to be extended to all urban areas in the UK. This methodology, currently London focussed, gives the most detailed and robust measurement of rough sleeping in the UK. If it were to be adopted across the UK, it would generate a far more detailed picture of rough sleeping, which would ensure funding decisions were meeting actual need.

**- Addressing the restrictions for EEA nationals and those with no recourse to public funds.** EEA nationals make up a significant proportion of the rough sleeping population. To ensure these people are supported out of rough sleeping, it is vital that they are able to access public funds in a similar way.

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<sup>13</sup> Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

<sup>14</sup> Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales, ONS, 2010-2021

<sup>15</sup> Statutory Homelessness in England, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2010-2021

<sup>16</sup> Housing First Service Analysis, The Salvation Army, To Be Published June 2022

- ***A continued introduction of innovative accommodation for rough sleepers.*** As we have outlined previously in this response, innovative programmes such as our NAPpads have played a big role in addressing the rough sleeping in urban areas. There will always be rough sleepers, for whom traditional forms of support may not be suited and so it is vital that as a society we continue to adapt to people's needs and provide tailor made solutions to helping get people off the streets.

**b. In your opinion, what are the main local policy and practice changes needed to successfully sustain an end rough sleeping in England by 2024? Please order these in terms of importance**

- ***Increased investment in substance use and mental health support.*** As previously outlined within this response it is vital that support services are funded to help rough sleepers tackle some of the root causes of their homelessness. This is not just an issue for national Government but local as well. Local authorities play a vital role in supporting local service provision and funding rough sleeping support. The Salvation Army would like to see all local authorities adopting a holistic view of homelessness and investing services to tackle these wider issues.

- ***Improved data collection on rough sleeping in urban areas.*** Also as discussed previously, data collection is absolutely vital in order to track and maintain progress in reducing overall levels of rough sleeping. We would like to see local areas adopting the same position as the Greater London Authority (GLA) in commissioning and funding the Combined Homelessness and Information Network. This will generate a much more detailed understanding of rough sleeping in urban areas and what funding level is needed to sustain an end to rough sleeping.

**c. Should government look beyond ending rough sleeping and commit to ending wider forms of homelessness beyond 2024? please explain.**

Yes, The Salvation Army would strongly support a commitment to ending wider forms of homelessness.

Although we welcomed the commitment to ending rough sleeping, this form of homelessness only accounts for a proportion of the overall level with many forms hidden from the public view. The other forms of homelessness that are in particular need of attention include those individuals who are sofa surfing and those who are stuck in temporary accommodation, such as B&Bs and hotels.

Although these forms of homelessness are not as visible as rough sleeping, they can have an equally devastating impact on individuals' lives. The Salvation Army also has concerns that more and more people are at risk of this type of homelessness, especially after the impact of the pandemic. In 2020/2021 there was a 3.5% increase in the number of people in temporary accommodation in England, although this figure was 24.6% higher for single, adult households<sup>17</sup>.

Committing to 'functionally end<sup>18</sup>' the reliance on specific forms of temporary accommodation would also be a logical 'next step' after the role temporary accommodation has played in fulfilling the Government's initial commitment to end rough sleeping.

Later this year, The Salvation Army will be publishing new research on the scale and problems facing temporary accommodation.

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<sup>17</sup> Statutory Homelessness in England: 2020/2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, September 2021

<sup>18</sup> Temporary accommodation will always have a role to play and so it is unfeasible to aim for a complete and absolute end to temporary accommodation.