

Press release: Grant announced to help improve the health of rough sleepers

Public Health England (PHE) is today, Friday 10 May 2019, announcing a call for bids for a share of up to £1.9 million, to be awarded to projects involving partnerships between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) that test models aimed at improving access to health services for people who are sleeping rough.

Successful projects will focus on improving access to health services for people with co-occurring mental ill-health and substance misuse problems who are currently, or at risk of returning to, sleeping rough.

The deadline to submit an application is Friday 5 July 2019, with successful projects announced later this year.

On a single night in Autumn 2018, 4,677 people were recorded as sleeping rough in England. There is much more to do to address the root causes of homelessness and ensure that people who do sleep rough are properly supported.

The government's [Rough sleeping strategy](#), published in August 2018, sets out the vision for ending rough sleeping once and for all, with the aim of halving it by 2022. It recognises the need for action to support people sleeping rough now to move off the streets, including targeted support to enable access to health services.

Many people rough sleeping also experience mental and physical ill health and have substance misuse needs. Of the [people seen sleeping rough in London in 2017 to 2018](#):

- 50% had mental health needs
- 43% had alcohol misuse problems
- 40% drug misuse problems

Outside of London, where people are more likely to sleep rough for longer, support needs may be higher.

Rosanna O'Connor, Director of Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Justice at Public Health England said:

We know that people sleeping rough, particularly those with mental health and substance misuse problems, often find it difficult to use local health services.

Without getting the vital help and support they need to look after their health problems, some of the most vulnerable people in our communities face a 'revolving door' situation where they are repeatedly in and out of stable accommodation, while their health

deteriorates.

This funding will enable the testing of models that are effective in breaking this pattern and in helping people to turn their lives around.

Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Heather Wheeler MP, said:

People should not face barriers to accessing healthcare simply because they do not have a roof over their heads.

Our £100 million-backed rough sleeping strategy aims to ensure that people experiencing rough sleeping can access the health care they need, when they need it.

The funding announced today will help local authorities and NHS services work together to improve access to services for those who have mental ill-health and substance misuse needs – helping them break free of the challenging cycle of health issues and homelessness.

For successful areas, this grant will be used to test models that are effective in improving access to health services. The models will be evaluated, and it is hoped that the learning from this will inform national policy and local commissioning of health and support services for people who rough sleep.

To support local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to develop their applications for funding, PHE has also today published [guidance and further information on how to apply](#).

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services.

We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE_uk](#) and [Facebook](#).