

LEAD LONDON HOME

Lead London Home: Manifesto for single homeless people 2016 -2020

January 2016

Homelessness is a devastating experience with significant impacts for an individual's health and wellbeing. Mental and physical health problems can be caused or exacerbated by rough sleeping. Homelessness is also dangerous, with homeless people 13 times more likely to be a victim of crime than the general public.¹ Shockingly, the average age of death for a homeless person is just 47 – 30 years younger than the national average.²

Even in the 21st century, homeless people who ask their council for help can still be turned away to sleep on the streets. Most single homeless people are not considered to be a 'priority', meaning that their council has no legal duty to find them housing. Too many people end up sleeping on our streets as a result.

The Mayor of London has significant powers on single homelessness, including currently a £34 million budget and the ability to bring boroughs and services together.

The homelessness sector has united to call for six steps that together can make London the greatest city in the world at preventing and solving homelessness. We are calling on the mayoral candidates to commit to take action.

The next Mayor of London should:

- Lead a new drive to end rough sleeping, including providing at least 2000 homes and a Housing First programme for former rough sleepers.
- Prioritise homelessness prevention and support calls for a new law so that no one can be turned away by councils to sleep on the streets.
- Increase access to private rented sector housing and tenancy support for people on the lowest income.
- End destitution by working across the European Union to find solutions to EU nationals

¹ Reeve, K. (2011) *The hidden truth about homelessness: experiences of single homelessness in England*, Crisis

² University of Sheffield (2012) *Homelessness kills: An analysis of the mortality of homeless people in early twenty-first century England*, Crisis

sleeping on the streets.

- Embed the needs of homeless people at the heart of London's public services.
- Fight for a better deal for London to mitigate the negative impact of welfare reform on people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.

A new drive to end rough sleeping

Despite effective work by previous London Mayors, including launching the StreetLink phone line and website and the No Second Night Out service, the number of people sleeping rough is rising. 7,581 people were seen sleeping rough by outreach teams last year, including 880 under-25s³.

We need a new drive to end rough sleeping in the capital.

The next Mayor should:

- Invest in at least 1000 new homes to be let on a 'Housing First' basis for former rough sleepers.
- Allocate at least 1000 affordable homes for people moving on from hostels, building on the GLA commissioned Clearing House model.
- Fully protect the Mayor's rough sleeping budget and establish a group of experts from local authorities and the voluntary sector to oversee the implementation of the Mayor's rough sleeping work.
- Provide capital funding to boroughs on a sub-regional basis for rough sleeping outreach services and supported accommodation projects.
- Ensure there is a clear route off the street and wraparound support for people with the most complex needs right across the city, and specialist support for particular groups, including young homeless people, homeless women and LGBT homeless people.

Preventing homelessness

Most single homeless people and couples without children are not considered to be a 'priority', meaning that their council has no legal duty to find them housing. Many are instead given little or no help, despite clearly being extremely vulnerable. Homeless people not considered to be in 'priority need' are entitled to advice and assistance when they approach their council. While there are pockets of good practice from the best councils, too often this doesn't happen and people are simply turned away with no solution to their housing need.

The next Mayor should:

- Prioritise homelessness prevention by scaling up the GLA funded 'No First Night Out' pilot programme to support local authorities to work together to improve homelessness prevention services for non-statutory homeless people, and introduce expected standards of service.

³ CHAIN Greater London Annual Report 2014-15

- Encourage boroughs to establish a protocol on relaxing local connection criteria so this does not act as a barrier to homeless people or those fleeing domestic violence accessing help in an appropriate area.
- Use TfL advertising space to promote information about homelessness advice and assistance and routes to get help, such as StreetLink.
- Support calls for a new law to prioritise homelessness prevention, based on the government announcement that they will explore new legislative models.

A more secure private rented sector

25% of Londoners rent privately, compared to 20% nationally.⁴ Rent levels are higher in London than anywhere else in the country and have risen fastest, and conditions can be very poor at the lower end of the market. This creates problems for those on the lowest incomes, and the end of a private tenancy now accounts for 42% of homelessness acceptances in London.⁵

The next Mayor should:

- Establish a pan-London rent deposit bond scheme which local authorities and third sector partners can access to support people on very low incomes into the private rented sector, and fund high quality organisations who provide support and advice to help formerly homeless people access the private rented sector, including shared housing, and sustain their tenancies.
- Encourage local authorities to use their landlord licensing powers where appropriate to crack down on rogue landlords and properties with the worst conditions.
- Establish a pan-London social lettings agency.
- Call for greater powers for the Mayor of London to regulate the private rented sector, including setting up a cross-borough licensing scheme.

An end to destitution

36% of people who slept rough in London last year were from Central and Eastern Europe⁶, many of whom now have extremely limited access to help with benefits or housing. As a result, too many people who move to London in search of work end up destitute. Destitute asylum seekers are also at risk of sleeping rough in London.

The next Mayor should:

- Lobby for London's share of the European Aid for the Most Deprived fund to help EU migrants who end up sleeping rough in London and work with colleagues from across the EU to identify causes and solutions to migrant homelessness in Europe.

⁴ English Housing survey (2014)

⁵ DCLG homelessness statistics (2015)

⁶ GLA CHAIN Annual Report 2014-15

- Work with the Home Office and use Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to crack down on illegal employers, forced labour and trafficking to protect vulnerable migrants, and provide accommodation for those who have been exploited to move into.
- Ensure there is provision of emergency shelter in cold or extreme weather conditions for all those sleeping rough who have no recourse to public funds.
- Work in collaboration with agencies in European countries to reconnect rough sleepers who wish to return home to ensure there is appropriate support in place.

Homeless people at the heart of every service

Many homeless people have more than just a housing need. Many have a range of complex needs including physical and mental health problems, addictions and involvement in the criminal justice system. Homeless people must be able to access joined up services to help them move on in their lives. Health, education and employment services should all play a role in ending homelessness.

The next Mayor should:

- Call on services that work across London to make a public commitment to offer support to any homeless people they come into contact with, including the police and health services.
- Take urgent action to reduce the health inequalities and barriers to employment experienced by people who are homeless by using powers under the Cities and Devolution Bill to develop a pan-London pathway for people with complex needs to link up drug and alcohol, mental health services, skills, employment, criminal justice and housing services.

Mitigating welfare reforms

Many of the drivers of homelessness sit outside the Mayor's responsibility. Welfare reform hits London particularly hard. The Mayor should call for greater funding so they can mitigate the effect of housing benefit cuts and tackle homelessness more effectively.

The next Mayor should:

- Call for greater allocations of discretionary funding for London, including discretionary housing payments and increased targeted affordability funding, to mitigate the impact of housing benefit cuts.

Please commit to make homelessness a personal priority and to endorse these policies to prevent and tackle homelessness in London if elected Mayor in 2016.

