

WORKING WITH ROUGH SLEEPERS IN WATFORD



Services available and best practice guidelines

Agreed and adopted by the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum, May 2019



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Mayor's foreword



Over the last year there has been a significant increase in the number of rough sleepers being supported in Watford at any one time mostly by voluntary agencies in the borough; most rough sleepers are often vulnerable as they have complex needs as well as not having a roof over their heads. The voluntary agencies who assist rough sleepers do an excellent and valuable job. Their assistance ranges from advice to accessing relevant support and help with a range of issues including legal and financial needs, alcohol and substance use, accessing mental health care and providing accommodation.

Working with and supporting people who are sleeping on the streets is not straight forward.

Safeguarding the privacy, safety and dignity of rough sleepers in our town is paramount. We all have one aim: to work together to assist rough sleepers, with respect and sensitivity, to leave and stay off the streets. This set of best practice guidelines will help with that by doing the following:

- Increasing everyone's knowledge in the town about the valuable services already available for rough sleepers here in Watford and
- Providing advice and guidelines to protect and safeguard rough sleepers, workers and volunteers alike in working with the rough sleeping community in Watford.

I'd like to thank the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum for creating these guidelines and for the great contribution they make to our town. The forum is a strong partnership of organisations working together to combat homelessness in Watford.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford
March 2019

Introduction

These best practice guidelines were adopted by the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum in May 2019. They set out a common understanding of the key issues and the most effective ways of working with and supporting rough sleepers in Watford. In addition, they support one of the Forum's key aims of reducing the number of people rough sleeping in Watford by tackling practices that, unwittingly, help rough sleeping to persist. The guidelines were inspired by a similar set of principals researched and adopted by the Manchester Homelessness Partnership.

The Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum is a group of voluntary and statutory organisations working with Watford Borough Council to discuss strategic and operational approaches to tackling homelessness in the borough, including rough sleeping. It meets 6 - 7 times a year and is chaired by Watford Borough Council. More information about the Forum's purpose and who attends are set out in Appendix A.

This document is aimed at:

- Charities, voluntary groups and statutory agencies working with rough sleepers in Watford
- Individuals who want to support rough sleepers

and

- Defines what a rough sleeper is
- Provides information about the services available for rough sleepers in Watford and who provides them
- Shares advice on working with rough sleepers safely and without unwittingly helping to keep them on the streets
- States the role of the council's Housing Team and the Community Safety Partnership
- Sets out the role of Your Change Watford in raising funding for preventing and tackling rough sleeping in the borough
- Explains some of the jargon used (see Appendix B)

Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Members

The members of Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum endorsing these best practice guidelines include the following organisations:



What is a rough sleeper?

The definition of a rough sleeper used in Watford is a nationally adopted one. Each autumn, on one night sometime in October or November, every local authority in England does a count or an estimate of how many rough sleepers there are in their areas. This is a snapshot which is used for national statistics. A national charity, Homeless Link, co-ordinates the count on behalf of the government and asks local authorities to use the following definition of a rough sleeper:

“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’).”

It is acknowledged this definition may not be the layperson’s view of what rough sleeping is but it is the one used for the national recording mechanism of rough sleeper counts.



What are the three best things you could do to help rough sleepers in Watford?

The three most helpful things you can do to help rough sleepers in Watford are:

Refer - if you are concerned about a rough sleeper located in Watford, you can:

- Phone New Hope's 24/7 Emergency line on **0300 012 0168** and let them know where the rough sleeper is located and what your worries are about them
- Use Streetlink's mobile app or their website (https://www.streetlink.org.uk/StreetLink_HomePage#) to let them know about the rough sleeper.
- If the rough sleeper you are worried about is in immediate danger or needs urgent care call **999**

Volunteer - there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer with agencies who provide a wide range of services for rough sleepers in Watford and would welcome your help. Contact:

- New Hope - see their website: <https://www.newhope.org.uk/volunteer-2>
- GROW - contact **01923 256189** or email growhostel@uwclub.net

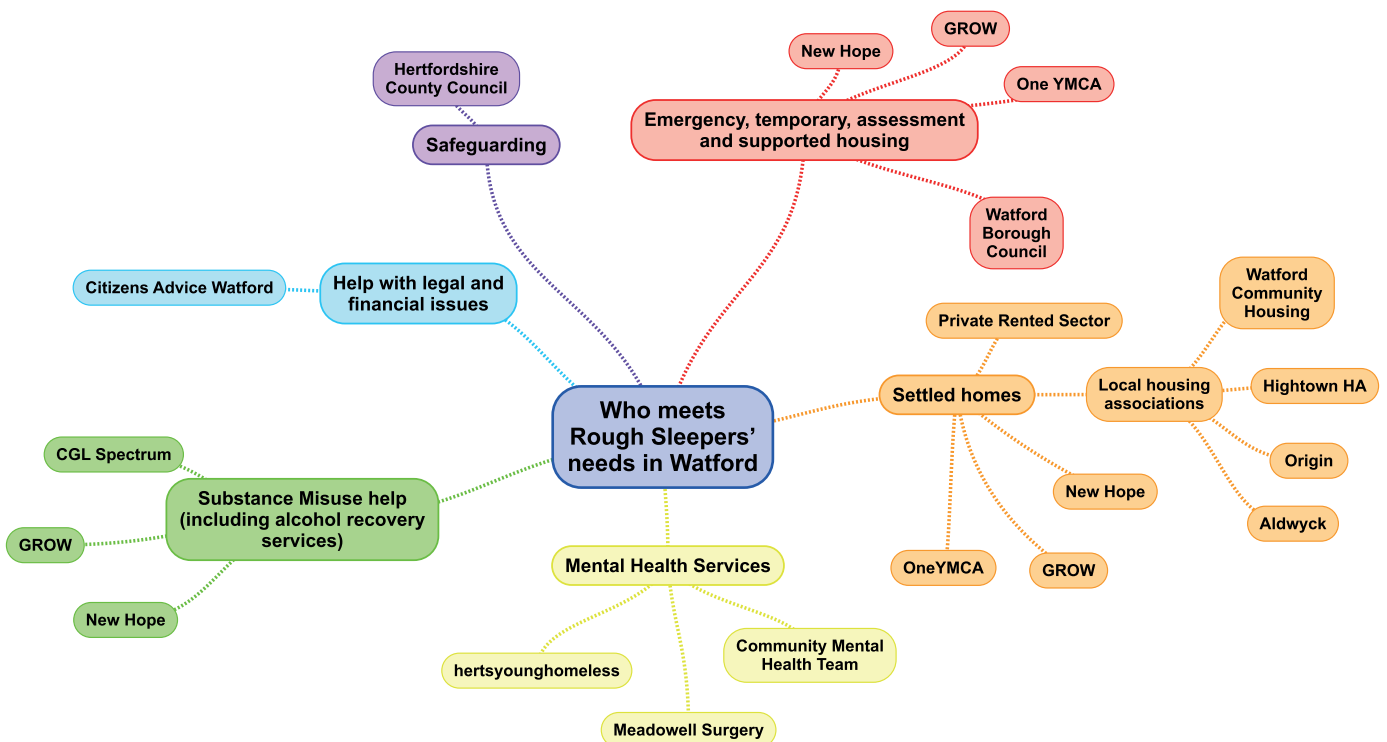
Donate - giving money to a person begging on the street does not guarantee that you are giving money to a rough sleeper as many do not beg. The money you give in this way could also be used to maintain someone's drug or alcohol habit whether they have a place to live in or not. Instead, you could donate your spare change to local Watford organisations working with rough sleepers through Your Change Watford. See page 21 for more details.

Services provided for rough sleepers in Watford

The following section sets out what services are available locally and nationally to assist rough sleepers that anyone, Watford residents or visitors, alike can use to report their concerns about anyone they believe is rough sleeping.

Watford has a number of long-established voluntary sector organisations (some have been in existence over 35 years) providing a range of services for rough sleepers including legal and financial assistance, access to accommodation and support services such as clinical help with substance misuse and mental health, meals, clothing, laundry and showering facilities. The funding of these organisations comes from a wide range of sources including donations, fundraising activities, rental income and from local government.

The services included in these best practice guidelines are those whose operations are partly funded by contributions from national government or by Hertfordshire County Council and/or Watford Borough Council. Below is an overview of which organisations assist in meeting the needs of rough sleepers in Watford.



Organisations or individuals who want to support rough sleepers should read these best practice guidelines and contact the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum members before carrying out their own provision.

New Hope

● 24/7 emergency phone line and Outreach Services

Specially trained staff on the end of a phone line to offer advice and support to those facing homelessness in the Watford area. Going out on to the streets to work with rough sleepers and encouraging them to engage with health and other services they need to get into settled accommodation

How to access:

- ◆ Tel: **0300 012 0168**

● Rough Sleeper Prevention Service

Showers, hot breakfasts, change of clothes, laundry, advice, collecting post, packed lunches, signposting and support, support plans aimed at getting people off the street and to tackle any needs they have which prevent them leading independent lives in their own accommodation

How to access:

- ◆ Open Monday to Friday at **4 Whippendell Road, WD18 7LU**
- ◆ Drop in: 8.30 - 10.30am for hot breakfast, shower and laundry facilities and takeaway lunch.
- ◆ From 01/05/19, we will only be offering 1-2-1 appointments from 11am - 1pm. "Walk-ins" can be seen between 8.30am - 1pm and 1.45 - 3.30pm

● Rough Sleeper Navigator Team

Bringing together in one place, wrap around support for rough sleepers with complex needs including mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, and legal and financial issues, plans to prevent people ending up on the street in the first place but also assist rough sleepers off the street. This team has staff with expertise from New Hope (accommodation), hertsyounghomeless (mental health support), CGLSpectrum (substance abuse support) Citizens Advice Watford (support with legal and financial issues).

How to access:

- ◆ Open Monday to Friday 8.30am - 4pm at **4 Whippendell Road, WD18 7LU**
- ◆ Referrals can be made by email: intervention@newhope.org.uk or phone: **01923 819929**

● **Assessment and Emergency Beds**

Aimed at individuals who have recently slept rough, working with them towards independence through providing support to tackle issues around substance use or mental health. Open to those with no local connection to Watford and with no access to benefits. The service is accessible by migrants and young people at risk of rough sleeping.

How to access:

- ◆ Referral from the Rough Sleeper Prevention Service or the Navigator Team - see the contact details on the previous page.

● **Emergency/Winter Shelters**

December to March Winter Night Shelter (SWEP+) open for any rough sleeper in Watford including those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

- ◆ 15 beds available every night from the beginning of December to the end of March
- ◆ The shelter is free to access, no charge is made to stay
- ◆ Service users are not allowed to bring in alcohol or drugs
- ◆ Supper is available
- ◆ Service users are encouraged in the morning to go **The Haven at 4 Whippendell Road, Watford WD18 7LU** where they can get a hot breakfast, shower, change of clothing if needed, laundry facilities and advice and support to help get off the street. This is offered free to service users

How to access:

- ◆ Through the Rough Sleeper Prevention Service at New Hope - see above
- ◆ 24/7 helpline on **0300 012 0168**
- ◆ Police referral from **Watford Police Station at Shady Lane, Watford WD17 1DD** between 8 - 10pm Monday to Friday and 6 - 8pm on Saturdays and Sundays

● **Emergency night shelter (SWEP)**

Open for any rough sleeper in Watford including those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

- ◆ Nine beds (six for Watford and three for Three Rivers) when the temperature in Watford drops below 0°C. The emergency night shelter is also activated when a red weather warning has been issued for the Watford area by the Met Office. Held at **The Haven Support Centre, 4 Whippendell Road, Watford WD18 7LU** if there is not enough room at the Winter Night Shelter.
- ◆ This is a free service, no charge is made to stay at the emergency night shelter
- ◆ Service users are not allowed to bring in alcohol or drugs
- ◆ In the morning, service users can get a hot breakfast, shower, change of clothing if needed, laundry facilities and advice and support to help get off the street. This is offered free to service users.

How to access:

- ◆ Through the Rough Sleeper Prevention Service at New Hope – see above
- ◆ 24/7 helpline on **0300 012 0168**
- ◆ Police referral from **Watford Police Station at Shady Lane, Watford WD17 1DD** between 8 - 10pm Monday to Friday and 6 - 8pm on Saturdays and Sundays



- **Support service for single homeless men aged between 25 and 65 with complex needs, primarily drugs and alcohol**

How to access:

- ◆ Complete referral form available online (http://growhostel.org.uk/download/GROW_Referral_New.pdf) or from GROW at **36 Rickmansworth Road, Watford, WD18 7HT**



Herts Young Homeless

- **Works with 16 - 17 year olds as well as their families/carers in order to prevent homelessness.**
16 - 17 year olds who are found to be at risk of street homelessness can be referred to the Crashpad service, which is a room in a supported accommodation facility. The organisation assists:
 - ◆ young people aged 16 - 24 who may be homeless or facing homelessness
 - ◆ 16 - 65 year olds who are risk of homelessness because they have both mental health needs and substance misuse issues (dual diagnosis).
 - ◆ Anyone aged 18+ with mental health issues and additional complex needs

How to access:

- ◆ **Homeless Hub for 16 - 17 year olds:** Freephone **03003 230130** or email: info@homelesshub.help or online at <https://homelesshub.help>
- ◆ **18+ Hub for 18 - 24 year olds:** Freephone **08000 355 775** or email: advice@hyh.org.uk
 - Can provide one-off telephone advice to young people aged 18 - 24 who require guidance on their current housing situation, private renting or money advice/benefit information.

- The 18+ Hub can also signpost to other agencies or services. For those within a priority group (please see website: <https://www.hyh.org.uk/our-services/18plus-hub>) service users can be allocated a worker who will provide solution-focused, housing-related support.
- ◆ **Dual diagnosis Link worker for 16 - 65 year olds:** Tel: 03333 202 384 or email: health@hyh.org.uk
 - For those who need help with both mental health and substance misuse issues
- ◆ **Hertfordshire Complex Needs service for anyone aged over 18 with mental health and additional complex needs** Tel: 01707 891120
 - provides housing expertise and community support to people recovering from mental health issues and additional complex needs such as substance misuse and learning disabilities. Practical support is provided to promote personal independence and recovery.

Meadowell Centre

- **GP service for rough sleepers and those sofa surfing or in temporary accommodation such as local hostels:** Offers a one stop shop for homeless patients including: full general medical services, specialist services for the treatment of drug and alcohol misuse, maintenance opiate replacement therapy, alcohol home detox support, drop in sessions for those with complex needs including mental health, counselling on site and foot health sessions.

How to access:

- ◆ Located at **Ground Floor, Colne House, 21 Upton Road, Watford, WD18 0JP**
 - ◆ Tel: **01923 630333**
 - ◆ Open for appointments: 9am - 1pm and 2 - 5pm Monday to Friday but patients can also be seen the same day if necessary. The surgery is closed at the weekends. All prescriptions are given by appointment with a GP including repeat ones
 - ◆ Clinics are offered without referral by a GP for asthma, COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), dressings, learning disability health check, phlebotomy, smoking cessation, travel health
- **NHS 111 and 999**
 - ◆ Call **111** if a rough sleeper needs urgent medical help out of office hours
 - Advice and support available seven days a week, 24 hours a day
 - ◆ Call **999** for a rough sleeper with a medical emergency



● **Watford Council's Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Service**

Provides general housing advice and may provide temporary accommodation for rough sleepers who are vulnerable and have complex needs.

How to access:

- ◆ Online - complete the council's Housing Advice Form - a Housing Solutions Officer will get in touch with you within five working days (<https://tinyurl.com/Housing-Advice-Form>)
- ◆ Tel: **01923 226400**, ask for the Housing Solutions Team
- ◆ Email: housing@watford.gov.uk

● **The council's website also offers information on:**

- ◆ Who to approach and what to do if you are facing homelessness - see www.watford.gov.uk and select *Housing and community* and then *Homelessness* or *Housing Advice and Support*
- ◆ How to look for a private rented home - see www.watford.gov.uk and select *Housing and community*, then *Home seeking*, and then *Looking for a private rented home*
- ◆ How to apply to the council's Housing Register for a housing association home - see www.watford.gov.uk and select *Housing and community*, then *Home seeking* and then *Applying to the council's Housing Register*



Nationally, the **Streetlink** service allows anyone to report the location of someone they think may be sleeping rough through their website, <https://streetlink.org.uk>. Streetlink will follow up reports, make contact with the person identified and connect them with local services that can help them, eg, New Hope. Streetlink also has a mobile phone app which can be downloaded and used to report the location of rough sleepers.

Best practice guidelines on supporting and working with rough sleepers in Watford

Unwittingly, some help given to rough sleepers can backfire and have the effect of helping them maintain their rough sleeping life rather than encouraging them to leave it. The following guidelines have been compiled from information given by many rough sleepers, people with lived experience of rough sleeping and voluntary organisations and charities in Watford and elsewhere in the country.

- **Telling who is a rough sleeper and who isn't:** The person you think is a rough sleeper because they are begging may have a place to live, maybe not in Watford. Many rough sleepers do not beg. Actual rough sleepers have said that:

“People who have their own place, come in to town and get all the best stuff. They sell it or swap it for things. We (the rough sleepers) don't get what we need because they are pinching it!”
- **Well-meaning gestures can be life threatening on the streets:** The brand new labelled jeans you gave someone could make them a target for attack, robbery and assault. Brand new items donated can become currency. One rough sleeper said he used to sell anything with a label and he didn't think twice about robbing another rough sleeper for their coat if he could sell it.
- **Handing out donations/new items and/or packs of goods:**
 - ◆ People are limited to carrying their possessions, some items will end up in the bin or dumped on the streets, especially if it is big, heavy or not really needed.
 - ◆ Bags of food left out on the streets will attract vermin/rats/mice/pigeons and can endanger the health of the rough sleepers and the general public.
 - ◆ Cans of food, unless ring pull, are not of much use and in any case most rough sleepers do not have access to means of heating food.
 - ◆ Fruit is always welcome, the softer the better, think bananas, as most entrenched or longer term rough sleepers are more likely to have dental issues.

“I keep getting given rock hard food, I just fancy a peach.”
 - ◆ Donations of clothing are welcomed at New Hope and GROW – see addresses and contact details in section above on services for rough sleepers.
- **Lending or giving money:** The advice is to never lend or give money, even lending a cigarette one day can lead to handing out a pack every time you go out – when and how do you say no when you have always said yes before? Easy, never say yes in the first place.

- **Offering people a place to stay:** A lot of people with lived experience of rough sleeping reported being made offers of 'a place to stay' by volunteers and individuals. The consensus on this practise was that the individual being offered felt unsure of the intention of the person offering, it made them feel at risk of abuse and that if the person offering did take someone home they may be inviting problems into their home.
 - ◆ The potential for things to go wrong inviting someone home is extensive and unless you move, that person knows where you and your family live. The main feedback was that rough sleepers felt this practise is completely unacceptable.

"I was staying in a flat and people kept coming around at all hours of the night, even when I asked them not to"
- **Leave valuables at home when working on the streets:** This is more about not wanting to create temptation out there. Not everyone is friendly.
- **Safe working with rough sleepers on the streets:** It is never advisable to work alone on the streets completing outreach or working with guests/service users. Always stay in small groups of at least three volunteers. It has been reported that volunteers have been followed to their bus home, offered stolen items and substances when working alone.
 - ◆ From rough sleepers' point of view some individuals spoken to reported feeling really overwhelmed when groups of people approached them with hot drinks, food and 'stuff'. They said they felt forced to take stuff.



- **Don't dispose of anything:** When asked, rough sleepers advised that volunteers should never take anything home or offer to dispose of anything due to the risk of needles. If anyone asks you to take old clothing or hold onto anything for them politely say no.

"I got given a sleeping bag and it was full of lice."

- **Don't make promises:** The people we all work with may have been let down by society and possibly their family. They already feel on the fringes of society, have had to learn to survive and may have lost their basic life skills. Any promises you make as a volunteer that you cannot fulfil will just compound the lack of trust and could potentially leave someone at risk of staying on the streets longer.

"I've been promised housing by loads of groups, nobody has done it yet."

- **Confidentiality is crucial:** Whatever information people give you should be treated with full confidentiality. Telling another rough sleeper information could put someone at risk. Every agency cited in these guidelines has their own policy on confidentiality which workers and volunteers must stick to.

- ◆ Rumours spread quickly and people are attacked over nothing.

"I got beaten up because someone said I had a disease, I haven't got any disease, but they got told by (street group name removed) that I did, so I got beat up."

- ◆ But if you have information that you feel is important you should report it to statutory services like Watford Police on **101** or voluntary services such the New Hope's Rough Sleeping Prevention Service on **01923 801382**. You can make reports about concerns you have anonymously.

- ◆ Never give out personal information: Mobile numbers, full name, home address or social media details. This includes adding individuals to your personal Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts. The best advice is to not leave yourself open to a possible negative situation, you could leave yourself and family in a very vulnerable situation.

"The atmosphere changes so quickly, I thought they were my friends and then they beat me up and stole all my stuff!"



- **Photography and social media:** During the research for these guidelines one of the main themes was about photos:
 - ◆ No photos, names or videos should be taken of rough sleepers without 100% authorisation of the people concerned.
 - ◆ Written consent is best and the individual must be of sound mind.
 - ◆ Remember the people pictured might have fled from abuse or have children and don't want their details and face plastered on the internet.
 - ◆ Please be respectful as most people reported that they felt like zoo animals when people took photos and it left them angry.
 - ◆ If you are honest with people they can say honestly if they are happy for you to share information about them.
 - ◆ Should you be privy to sensitive information YOU MUST clarify with the sender of the information if you intend to share it on social media, to other groups or in any way online without protection or encryption.
 - “Somebody put a picture of me begging on Facebook, anyone could see it. My family don't know I'm homeless and I don't want them to know.”*
 - “I was filmed begging on (street named) and they told me I wouldn't be on TV, then someone saw me on YouTube.”*

- **Report issues of concern:** You should always officially report anything that causes you concern, NOT via social media, especially if you are concerned about the vulnerability of a rough sleeper be it through intoxication, behaviour or they are under 21, pregnant or have a physical/mental illness.
 - ◆ Make sure you tell someone in a position of either authority or a day service if you have a concern. If in doubt make a quick call to New Hope's Rough Sleeping Prevention Service on **01923 801382** or Watford Police on **101**. If you see rough sleeping or begging that concerns you at Watford Junction station you can phone British Transport Police on **0800 40 50 40** or text **61016**.

- **Young volunteers:** The recommendation was given by the majority of rough sleepers that although they see the merit in having young people helping the situation, they also reported they did not think it was a safe environment for under 18s to be out after dark or within large groups of homeless people due to the high potential for substance misuse, crime and violence.
 - “Education (of young people) should be done but only in school settings where it is safe.”*

- **Respect at all times:** Be respectful of yourself, the people we work with and each other. There is nobody better than anyone else or more important than the person stood next to you whether that be another volunteer or someone you are working with.

Rough sleeping – practical responses to begging

The reasons for rough sleeping and begging are complex. This section covers some of the common reasons given by rough sleepers and/or those begging and suggests practical responses that signpost and provide accurate information on where to seek help:

● *“I just need to get a coffee or some food”*

Here’s a list of all the places where rough sleepers can access free food across Watford

◆ **Wellspring Church Centre**

Address: **1 Wellspring Way, Watford, Herts, WD17 2AH**

Tel: **01923 331382**

Open: Monday - Friday, 2 - 4pm

◆ **Haven Support Centre New Hope**

Address: **4 Whippendell Road, Watford, Herts, WD18 7LU**

Tel: **01923 801382**

Open: Monday - Friday 8.30am - 1pm and 1.45 - 3.30pm

Hot breakfast served, access to shower and laundry facilities and one-to-one appointments with trained staff to help with any issues faced. A packed lunch is also provided for those rough sleeping or sofa surfing.



◆ **Watford Food Bank**

Address: **Unit 5, Empire Centre, Imperial Way, Watford, WD24 4YH**

Tel: **01923 804435**

Open: Monday - Friday. 10am - 1pm

● ***“I’m ex-forces and now I’m just forgotten”***

- ◆ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) offers help and advice with resettlement through the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>) and through Veterans Gateway (<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>).
- ◆ The MoD can also exercise its ‘Duty to Refer’ veterans to a local authority of their choice for help. The council’s Duty to Refer page explains what the MoD should do to assist - see www.watford.gov.uk, select *Homelessness* and then *I’m homeless or at risk of being homeless*, then *Duty to Refer*.
- ◆ Any of the organisations listed in the section above “Services provided for rough sleepers in Watford” will also be able to help

● ***“I’m frightened to go into the hostel because they are all on drugs in there”***

For the agencies offering accommodation listed in the section on “Services provided for rough sleepers in Watford”.

- ◆ There is ZERO tolerance towards possession of illegal drugs and substances, including alcohol, or use of them on any of their premises
- ◆ All agencies have policies which DO NOT CONDONE the use and possession of illegal drugs or substances that can be misused, including the unauthorised possession and/or misuse of prescribed medication.

● ***“I just need £5 to get into the shelter”***

- ◆ There are no charges for using the winter night shelter - see pages 8 - 13 for more details
- ◆ Anyone who accesses emergency, assessment, supported or temporary accommodation will be helped to make claims for benefits to help pay for their accommodation if they are eligible to apply.
- ◆ Unfortunately single rough sleepers who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) cannot be helped with accommodation (other than the winter night shelter and also the assessment beds at New Hope - see pages 9 - 10). Single rough sleepers who are pregnant or have children and have no recourse to public funds may be assisted by Children’s Services at Hertfordshire County Council.

● ***“The hostel is full so I’m on a waiting list. I’ve been told to stay out until there is room”***

- ◆ Challenge this by explaining all the provision for rough sleepers available in Watford - see pages 8 to 13 on “Services already provided for rough sleepers in Watford”

● ***“No one cares or wants to help me. I’ve tried to get help but.”***

- ◆ Explain the services available set out on pages 8 - 13 on “Services provided for rough sleepers in Watford?”



The role of Watford Borough Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service

The council offers an in-depth service which is about:

- Preventing people who are threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless at all
- Helping people who are actually homeless find a new place to live as soon as possible
- Helping people help themselves to resolve their housing situation.

The council works with partner organisations in Watford to help deliver its homelessness service and follows duties it has under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force on 3 April 2018. To find out more about the duties of local authorities under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, please see the council's website (www.watford.gov.uk/housingadvice)

The role of the Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership covers the strategic threats and risks to Watford as a town, the wider community and individuals. It has a strategic and tactical remit to combat crime and disorder. Some of the Partnership's work is delivered through the Community Protection Group (CPG) that comprises representatives from the council, the police and the voluntary sector and was formed in 2007. The activities and strategies of the CPG cover a number of themes including anti-social behaviour, repeat victims of crime, extremism and safeguarding as well as dedicating part of its agenda to all those individuals recorded as rough sleeping within the borough. It works to bring about a reduction in risk to those rough sleeping and aims to meet the needs of those rough sleeping through assistance with stabilising life styles or enforcement for those refusing support and engaging in crime and disorder.

Anti-social behaviour issues can be reported by phone to Hertfordshire Police on **101** or reported online at: <https://www.herts.police.uk/Information-and-services/Advice/Anti-social-behaviour/Anti-social-behaviour>

Your Change Watford

The council launched a campaign in the summer of 2018 highlighting how donations to homeless charities can change lives. Two short films show that donating directly to local charities rather than people on the street can have a more useful impact in assisting rough sleepers. The films can be viewed on the council's website at www.watford.gov.uk/sparechange

Appendices



Appendix A - Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum

Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum began in July 2016 and has met 6 - 7 times per year since. Its purpose is “To reduce homelessness and improve services and provision for people and households at risk of or actually homeless within the Watford Borough Council area.” Its aims and responsibilities are:

- To reduce rough sleeping in the Watford area
- To reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation
- To develop effective pathways to settled accommodation for homeless households
- To ensure greater joined up working between Watford Borough Council and all homelessness agencies in the borough

The membership of the Forum comprises a wide range of organisations which receive funding through government whether that is national government, Hertfordshire County Council or Watford Borough Council. The Forum works strategically and operationally with Watford Borough Council which chairs the Forum, and includes:

- Voluntary agencies such as New Hope, GROW, OneYMCA and hertsyounghomeless
- Government departments like JobCentre Plus
- Advice agencies like Citizens Advice Watford
- Housing associations such as Watford Community Housing, Hightown and Aldwyck
- Health services such as Meadowell Surgery (which caters for rough sleepers), CGL Spectrum (substance use) and the Hertfordshire Partnership University Foundation Trust
- Watford Borough Council’s Housing and Revenues and Benefits Teams and the Community Safety Partnership

The Forum is also regularly attended by the council’s elected Mayor and the Portfolio Member for Housing and Property.

More information about the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum can be obtained from:

Liz Smale

Housing Strategy Officer

Watford Borough Council

Tel: **01923 278951**

Email: liz.smale@watford.gov.uk

Appendix B - Explanation of any jargon used

Jargon used	Explanation
<p>Assessment beds</p>	<p>Part of New Hope’s Emergency Accommodation Service, assessment accommodation provides crisis accommodation and intensive support for those experiencing homelessness for the first time. Unlike other homelessness services, assessment beds are open to those with no local connection and with no access to housing benefits, meaning that the service can help migrants and young people at risk of rough sleeping.</p>
<p>Complex needs</p>	<p>A person with ‘complex needs’ is someone with two or more needs affecting their physical, mental, social or financial well-being. Such needs typically interact with and exacerbate one another leading to individuals experiencing several problems simultaneously. These needs are often severe and/or long standing, often proving difficult to ascertain, diagnose or treat. Individuals with complex needs are often at, or vulnerable to reaching crisis point and experience barriers to accessing services, usually requiring support from two or more services/agencies.</p> <p>Someone described as having complex needs will have (although not limited to) two or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental health issues ● Substance misuse issues ● A dual diagnosis of mental health and substance misuse issues ● A physical health condition ● A learning disability ● A history of offending behaviour ● A physical disability ● Employment problems ● Homelessness or housing issues ● Family or relationship difficulties ● Domestic violence ● Social isolation ● Poverty ● Trauma (physical, psychological or social) <p>These needs are often severe, longstanding, difficult to diagnose and therefore to treat. Ongoing inequalities continue to exist and are only likely to increase as people live longer with a wider range of needs. Source: All Party Parliamentary Group Complex Needs and Dual Diagnosis: http://www.turning-point.co.uk/media/636823/appg_factsheet_1_-_june_2014.pdf</p>

Jargon used	Explanation
Emergency accommodation	<p>Part of New Hope's Emergency Accommodation Service, this short-term accommodation is offered for an initial 28 days providing support, meals and laundry facilities. Support is offered by key workers to help service users move on to a more stable home. Those wanting to access the Emergency Accommodation must have a live benefits claim with the ability to pay the £3 per night service charge and a local connection to the Watford, Three Rivers or Hertsmere area.</p> <p>Watford Borough Council may provide emergency accommodation at the beginning of someone's homeless application if they are a priority under the law (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). A household is a priority if it includes children, a pregnant woman with no other dependents, vulnerable people who may be elderly or have a disability or mental health issue. For single people who are homeless and deemed a priority, emergency accommodation will likely be a room in a hostel in Watford where bathroom and/or kitchen are shared. The council will agree a personal housing plan with the applicant which sets out actions both the council and the applicant will take to secure a settled home as soon as possible. Applicants will need to apply for benefits to help pay the rental charge.</p>
Settled homes	<p>Under the Homelessness Reduction Act a settled home is a home which is available to a homeless person for at least six months.</p> <p>In Watford there are a wide range of providers of settled homes at a broad range of rental prices. Private rented homes are the main supply of accommodation for most people in Watford and people do not need a local connection to access them. Housing associations have some availability but their homes are only available through the council's Housing Register and applicants need to live in Watford at the time they apply and have lived in the borough for five of the last six years. New Hope, GROW and One YMCA also provide settled accommodation but applicants need to be able to live independently or at least with a small amount of support from them. Where someone is on a low income (earnings or benefits) they can apply for local housing allowance to help pay the rental charge.</p>
Supported accommodation	<p>The accommodation here for former rough sleepers is usually a room sharing kitchen and/or bathroom situated in a hostel environment where support is provided on site with needs such as mental health, substance misuse, financial and legal issues, access to training, education and employment which all empower service users to become independent and self-reliant. Residents need to apply for benefits and make a contribution to the rental charge. New Hope and GROW are the main providers of this type of accommodation in Watford.</p>

Jargon used	Explanation
SWEP	<p>SWEP stands for Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. It is a protocol followed by all local authorities which requires them to respond to the needs of those who are rough sleeping in severe weather, especially in the winter months. The protocol is to ensure that during severe weather rough sleepers are safe and do not die and efforts are made to help them get off the streets. In Watford, SWEP is usually activated when the temperature is forecast by the Met Office to fall below 0°C or when a red weather warning has been issued. Nine beds are provided for rough sleepers at The Haven, 4 Whippendell Road, Watford (six for Watford rough sleepers and three for Three Rivers rough sleepers). There is access the following morning to a hot breakfast, laundry and shower facilities and trained advisors to help users plan leaving the streets for good.</p>
SWEP+	<p>For the first time SWEP+ has operated in Watford. SWEP+ is a winter shelter which has opened every night from 1 December 2018 to 31 March 2019 whatever the weather and made available 15 beds to rough sleepers that needed them. The winter shelter was held in various places including at St Mary’s Church, Wellspring Spring Church and OneYMCA. In the morning, rough sleepers were able to access The Haven to get a hot breakfast and packed lunch, access to shower and laundry facilities as well as help and support from trained advisors on how they can leave the streets for good. A winter shelter is being planned for the four month period from December 2019 to 31 March 2020.</p>
Temporary accommodation	<p>The term “temporary accommodation” (TA) is a catch-all phrase covering a number of different legal categories of temporary accommodation that may be provided by Watford Borough Council at various stages of a household’s homelessness application under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). These legal categories are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At the Relief stage of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA): referred to as emergency accommodation ● At the Investigation stage, usually after the HRA Relief stage has finished: referred to as emergency accommodation, or, if a household is initially placed in bed and breakfast and then moved into a unit in the council’s TA portfolio, it is called interim accommodation ● When the council has accepted a duty to house: this is called temporary accommodation ● When a duty has not been accepted and a review of the council’s decision is being undertaken: this is called discretionary accommodation. <p>Types of temporary accommodation provided range from a room in a hotel (aka B&B), a room in a hostel with shared access to bathroom and kitchen, a self-contained flat or house. For most single people who are former rough sleepers and are eligible for help under the Homelessness Reduction Act, accommodation is usually a room in a hostel.</p>





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