

Rough sleeping

The Royal Borough offers a network of support services and housing options for rough sleepers and residents facing homelessness. We are working with partner organisations including Thames Valley Police to ensure residents, visitors and businesses are protected from anti-social behaviour.

Who is responsible for helping rough sleepers?

The Royal Borough is responsible for supporting rough sleepers. Anyone with a connection to the borough will be offered support suitable to their needs by the Housing Options team. Individuals from outside the borough are helped reconnect with their own communities. When the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is activated, anyone seeking assistance as a rough sleeper will be offered emergency accommodation.

What support is offered to homeless residents?

John West House is an eight bed accommodation where people can be assisted to improve their situation through the provision of on-going support. It helps people to address their complex needs and assists them out of a cycle of homelessness. The council also commissions an alcohol and drug support service, with integrated mental health support.

How does this compare to other local authorities?

Some councils rely heavily on the voluntary sector to provide such services. Although the Royal Borough supports the third sector and works with a range of organisations including the Windsor Homeless Project and the Brett Foundation.

It is also proud to commission direct support to residents. All local authorities will provide assistance under SWEP and this comes into effect during severe weather.

In addition to the expected requirement, the Royal Borough provides additional assistance over a longer period of time to those who are at risk of rough sleeping.

What happens when someone makes a homeless application?

The new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect on Tuesday 3 April 2018 and has changed the way that local authorities respond to those who are homeless or threatened homelessness.

The ethos of this Act is to prevent or relieve homelessness wherever possible therefore the service will always try to negotiate with landlords, mortgage companies or families in the first instance to enable people to stay in their accommodation. Once it has been established that prevention or relief is not possible, a decision will be made as to what longer term duty, if any, the council has to the household.

How can the housing options team help residents?

Housing officers will support people to stay in their current accommodation. This can include mediating with parents by creating a behaviour contract or making representations to private

sector landlords on behalf of our customers at court. The Housing Options team can help create a payment plan to help clear arrears on private rental placements or in exceptional cases may pay arrears. This will help sustain their current placement.

Interest free loans can be offered to help residents secure alternative private sector accommodation if they meet the criteria for this.

Are the rough sleepers being housed outside the borough?

We try and place people as sensitively as possible. Where possible we will try and house people close to their communities. However priority is given to families or people who need to be kept in touch with support services or schools.

When someone is placed outside the borough we may be able to provide travel warrants to help them reach the accommodation and, where appropriate to return to the borough.

How does the SWEP work?

Where a person is homeless and may need to sleep rough they can approach the Housing Options Service who will carry out an initial assessment of their needs. Outreach teams, members of the public or individuals can directly refer themselves to the Housing Options team.

They can do this by walking in to Windsor or Maidenhead library, or by appointment in Ascot library, or through an email or 24-hour phone line. They will be put in contact with the Housing Options team or helped reconnect with their home area as appropriate.