

Rough Sleeping Initiative Programme 2020-2025

Learning Review

Executive Summary

January 2025

Contents

Introduction and context	3
Objectives of the regional RSI programme	4
Key findings	4
Examples of commissioned activity	5
Conclusion	8
Next steps	9

Introduction and context

Homelessness is not a devolved responsibility to the Mayor of the West Midlands or West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The primary responsibility and statutory duty for homelessness sits at local authority level. The central purpose of the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce has been to bring together organisations, people and resources to support and add value to the work of our local authorities and other partner organisations that are involved in the prevention and relief of homelessness.

The WMCA Homelessness Taskforce sees that role as promoting homelessness prevention at the earliest opportunity through collaboration and collective effort to affect systemic change to [design out homelessness](#).

Between 2020 and 2025 the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce was successful in securing additional investment to the value of £2,712,399 from the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to contribute to the region's work on preventing and tackling rough sleeping.

The RSI is a central government funded grant stream, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), that has been running since 2018. It is focused on supporting the work of local areas to ultimately end rough sleeping.

Working with local authority and wider partners across the WMCA region, a programme of activity was developed that aimed to provide additionality, avoid duplication, test out innovation and to build the capacity of service systems across the region.

Objectives of the regional RSI programme

Our RSI investment plan centred around the region's ambition to prevent rough sleeping, wherever possible. Therefore, our planned activity with partners set out to help make incidences of rough sleeping:

- **Rare** - prevent those in crisis, and at imminent risk, from sleeping rough
- **Brief** - help people sleeping rough off the streets as quickly as possible; and
- **Non-recurring** - help those who have moved off the streets to successfully progress away from rough sleeping, avoiding a return to the streets.

We aimed to achieve this in three main ways:

- By **adding value** to the work of our local authority and wider partners, intentionally ensuring that we do not duplicate effort.
- By **creating and using economies of scale**, particularly supporting smaller local authority areas, investing in cross-regional initiatives to develop skills and capacity.
- By investing in and **testing out innovative approaches** that can be taken up by partners in the future.

Key findings

As we near the end of five years of the regional RSI programme, the evidence from this review suggests that overall, we have fulfilled a unique role by adding value to the work of our local authority and wider partners, avoided duplication of effort and met our intended aims by:

- Facilitating support for a significant number of people who have slept rough, achieving meaningful outcomes which will help prevent repeated instances of rough sleeping.
- Helping people sleeping rough to move off the streets quickly and into accommodation.
- Investing in prototype activity and cross regional initiatives to positively influence the region's ability and capacity to work together to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent across the region.

The graphic below highlights the number of people who achieved an agreed outcome as a result of using or engaging with one of the services or interventions we commissioned over the lifetime of the programme.



Examples of commissioned activity

Over the five years we invested in a wide range of projects and initiatives to meet the aims of our programme. This section highlights three different **examples** that demonstrate the range of work commissioned.

Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) Plus Offer: as part of our approach to **generating economies of scale** we commissioned a region wide comprehensive training and support package for staff and managers working in RSI funded projects, as well as some direct work with service users and their support workers.

The PIE Plus Offer was designed to ensure that staff working across the sector, with some of our most vulnerable citizens, were equipped to provide high quality psychologically informed interventions that took account of the complexity of the needs faced and presented by people who have been rough sleeping. The graphic below highlights some key impacts of the investment:



The findings of our review and the delivery partner's own review highlight the following benefits:

- Staff and services involved offered compassionate, trauma-informed understanding of people experiencing homelessness that is essential to providing effective services.
- Staff were significantly up skilled and confident to work in complex situations.
- Resilience and well-being of staff improved with reported reductions in staff sickness and improvements in retention.
- Developing service wide psychologically informed strategies and approaches.

Faith and Communities Development Officer: faith and community groups play a vital, if often unseen, role in helping to support people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping. The investment in the Faith and Communities Development Officer role - a good example of **adding value** - provided an opportunity to work with faith, community and smaller scale voluntary groups across the region to provide a greater level of co-ordination of services, encouraging greater integration with local authority and statutory pathways, and to support faith communities to make a paradigm shift in their contribution to designing out homelessness for people at risk of rough sleeping. Our aim has been to coproduce a change in focus from crisis to prevention activity, in particular emphasising the potential role of the sector in universal prevention.

“We were delighted to work with WMCA’s Faith and Communities Development Officer because we were able to pull our focus back and look at the causes of homelessness rather than dealing with the end result... We have also benefited from plugging into a network of individuals and organisations who do similar work across the West Midlands and share insights and expertise.”

Employment Support and Social Networks Projects: throughout the programme we have sought to **test out new approaches and innovation**. One example, is the investment in projects testing out new approaches to supporting people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping. The evidence is clear that having access to and being part of positive social networks and/or a good-quality job reduces the risk of homelessness in all its forms. We therefore invested in two streams of innovation, one focused on helping people into work or work related activity, and one focused on helping people build protective positive social networks. The core aim of each project was to help individuals build the critical protective factors (stable home, income, good relationships and health) that prevent homelessness or repeat homelessness.

The success of these innovative projects is demonstrated by the following outcomes:

- **59%** of people that engaged with the social network projects **sustained their tenancies for at least 6 months**.
- **43%** of people supported by the employment support projects actively engaged with **employment focused services** or training.
- **18%** achieved **sustainable employment**.

Going forward we plan to encourage partners to use this learning to enhance and develop their own versions of these prototypes.

These examples typify the work we have invested in and the outcomes that have been delivered by the programme, and we assert that they demonstrate the unique contribution that the WMCA’s programme has been able to make to the efforts of a much wider partnership across the region.

Feedback from a wide range of stakeholders supports our contention that our approach is both valuable and valued.

“It’s been really useful having the provider networking meetings that WMCA facilitate, it’s good to share ideas and talk about issues and what solutions others have found.”

“The regular meetings between us and the other authorities are useful ... it’s good to have that sort of information-sharing network. ... The combined authority does a good job of knitting us all together ... without being too formal or cumbersome.”

Conclusion

Overall, the evidence of the review suggests that the regional RSI programme has fulfilled a unique role by adding value to the work of our local authority and wider partners and by avoiding the duplication of effort.

Our role as a strategic authority and Taskforce, has enabled us to focus on work that helps build the skills and capacity of the sector. We have exploited economies of scale to develop cross regional responses to rough sleeping and we have used our inherent flexibility to test innovation and further our thinking on approaches that can help to ensure that rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible, so it is rare, and where it occurs it is brief and non-recurring.

Importantly stakeholders at all levels across the partnership have valued our strategic contribution and the ways in which we have maximised our role in delivering complementary outcomes that add value to their work.

The investments we have made have directly impacted on the lives of a significant number of people who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

Next steps

In December 2024, MHCLG announced funding allocations across all homelessness and rough sleeping grants to local and combined authorities in England for 2025/26.

The RSI grant and the Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AfEO) grant has been brought together to form the new **Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG)**, which the WMCA will be a recipient of.

MHCLG are encouraging areas to prioritise delivery on preventing rough sleeping and targeting interventions at individuals at greatest risk of sleeping rough long-term and returning to rough sleeping.

Planning for the WMCA's RSPARG Programme 2025/26 and consultation with partners is now underway and our intention is to build on the work we have already done by continuing investment in some existing work until it becomes fully embedded in regional practice and additionally to invest in new streams of work with an explicit focus on creating and supporting systemic change.

It is our intention to use the findings of this review to continue our focus on working in partnership across the region to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent.

[Read the full report](#)

**Mayor of the
West Midlands**



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**