

Resource Pack

Homelessness and health: useful websites and additional sources of information

September 2021(v.3)



Introduction

Using this resource pack

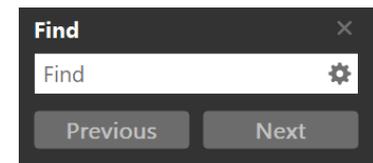
This resource pack is designed to signpost NHS staff and commissioners to a range of resources that can support your work with people who are experiencing homelessness.

You can navigate using the **Contents** page or by searching specific terms using the 'Find' function on Adobe Acrobat. You can select the magnifying glass icon to search the document in this way.

This resource pack is up to date as of September 2021. You can find up additional [Homeless Health](#) resources on the Healthy London Partnership website, including Covid-19 guidance for providers:

- **Covid-19 resource page**
- **Covid-19 vaccination toolkit.**

Using the Find tool on Adobe Acrobat:



This resource pack aims to collate information in one place to benefit both people who are experiencing homelessness and service providers supporting them. This is a framework which can be used to develop your own resource pack of local services.



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Definitions of homelessness

Although the term 'homeless' is often applied in everyday language to people who sleep rough, there are much broader definitions covering anyone who does not have a home. This includes:

- people whose accommodation is insecure;
- those facing eviction,
- living in temporary accommodation,
- squatting,
- people at risk of violence,
- those housed in property potentially damaging to their health and,
- those who cannot afford their current accommodation.

You can find out more about definitions of homelessness from the following websites:

Crisis: www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/

Gov.uk: www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless

Shelter: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/what_is_homelessness

Understanding homelessness in numbers

- The Department of Communities and Local Government publishes [homelessness statistics](#) for England.
- The Greater London Authority publishes data on the numbers of people who sleep rough in London from their [CHAIN](#) database as well as a broader range of London [housing](#) data.
- Homeless Link summarise [‘homelessness in numbers’](#)
- You can visit these sites to get a better understanding of the extent of homelessness in your locality
- Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation publish a [Homelessness Monitor](#) which has information for England.



People who sleep rough in London

The below graph shows the number of people seen sleeping rough by outreach teams in London each year, recorded on the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN).



The number of people seen sleeping rough on the streets of London has more than **doubled** between 2010/11 and 2020/21*.



Visit [CHAIN](#) to find out how many people have been seen rough sleeping in your area.

*The [2020/2021 year report](#) must be read in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which reached the UK in March 2020, shortly before the start of the period covered.



Discharging people from hospital

London's [Commissioning guidance](#) for people who are homeless has a commitment that, wherever possible, people experiencing homelessness are never discharged from hospital to the street or to unsuitable accommodation.

This page gives you some guidance about how you can support this commitment.



- [Homeless Link](#) has guidance and advice on discharge to support NHS staff
- See [Healthy London Partnership](#)'s page on the safe discharge of homeless patients
- Some hospitals have a specialist homeless discharge teams. [Pathway](#) has publications and examples of hospital discharge teams working with people who are homeless
- If a hospital does not have a specialist discharge team, then a patient who is homeless should be referred to the Hospital Discharge Team
- If a person is not registered with a GP practice, please print off and give them the ['My Access to Healthcare Card'](#).
- Look for services in this resource pack and use some of the links to other directories to identify support
- Check if your hospital has a homelessness and housing champion and ask them what steps your Trust is taking to support homeless people who use their services.

Where can I get help with housing for someone who is homeless?

There are many organisations who can help.

The nature of the help available will depend on the detail of the individual or family's circumstances, so please support people to give as much information as they feel able to.



Shelter

A good place to start is with [Shelter](#)'s helpline.

Tel: 080880044

8am-8pm Monday to Friday

9am-5pm weekends



Crisis

[Crisis](#) also publish a list of organisations who can support people to get help with housing.

For emergency housing, get advice from the local council where the person has a connection. www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless



I need to know what sort of help is available locally



If you want to find homelessness and housing organisations that are based in a specific part of London you can use Homeless Link's [interactive search tool](#)

You can also search by Local Authority in The London Housing Foundation's [Atlas](#)



How can I help someone I have seen sleeping rough?

Streetlink is a street outreach service who can be contacted either by people sleeping rough, or by anyone who is concerned on their behalf using their website, app or calling the number below.

If you are a frontline service, you can help by allowing people to use the phone or the internet in your service.



Streetlink:

Telephone: 0300 500 0914

Web: www.streetlink.org.uk

If you call on behalf of someone it will help if you can give:

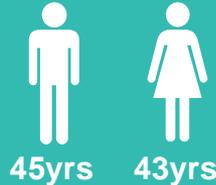
- A description of the person and their belongings
- Their sleep site location and description
- Times of day they are at that location
- Risks to the person
- Contact details (if possible).



Health and Wellbeing

The wellbeing of people who live and sleep on the street is at significant risk. Homelessness may be a consequence of health problems, and is very commonly a cause of worsening health. Many people who sleep rough will have significant needs in relation to physical health, mental health and substance misuse. Research carried out by Crisis found that:

The average age of death of men and women sleeping rough



People who are homeless are nine times more likely to take their own life



- Further research on health and homelessness can be found on the [Crisis health and wellbeing hub](#).
- Research is also undertaken by [#HealthNow](#), a UK wide campaign led by Groundswell and delivered in partnership with national charities Crisis and Shelter.
- Pathway carries out [health and homelessness research](#) and collaborates with other health and homelessness organisations in this arena.



People who are homeless are more likely to experience physical and mental health problems

44% of people seen rough sleeping in 2020/21 reported support need for mental health.

29% of people assessed had a support need relating to alcohol, while 31% were found to have a support need around drug use.

Just under a third (30%) of those assessed were found to have more than one of the three support needs.

44%

- For guidance on working with clients who have experienced trauma, see Groundswell's [toolkit](#) on trauma-informed care.
- Look Ahead offer specialist [mental health support services](#) across London and the South East.

See [CHAIN reports](#) for more information about the needs of people sleeping rough in London.

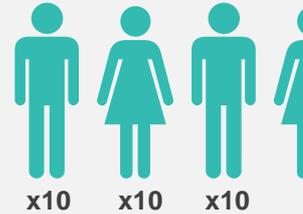


Health needs of people who are homeless

People who are homeless suffer more health problems than housed people.



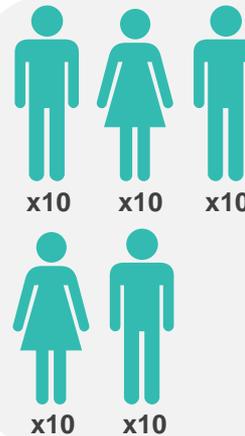
2.5x
more likely
to have asthma



TB rates are
34x higher



6x more likely
to have
heart disease



Hepatitis C
rates are
50x higher

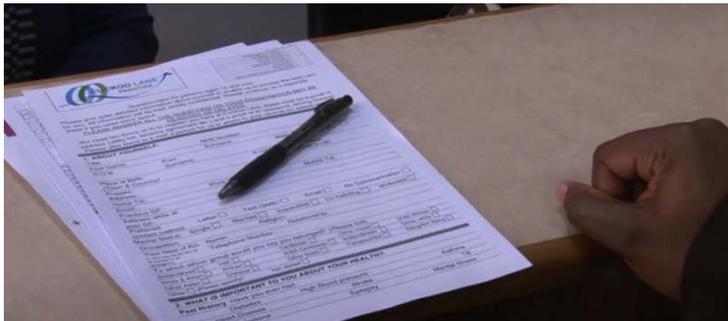
Sources:
Story, A. (2013) Slopes and Cliffs: comparative morbidity of housed and homeless people. The Lancet. Nov 29. Volume 382. Special issue. S1-S105.
Beijer, U et al (2012) Prevalence of tuberculosis, hepatitis C virus, and HIV in homeless people: a systematic review and meta-analysis. The Lancet Infectious Diseases; 12:11, 859-870.

Helping people who are homeless to access healthcare

People who are homeless have described many barriers to accessing health services, including:

- Registration policies
- Perceived discrimination and staff attitudes
- Lack of flexibility in services provided
- Communication barriers.

Read the [full report](#) here.



Examples of barriers and challenges:

Rigid systems in **Primary Care**; strict access regulations, appointment slots and short windows for consultations.

Access to **mental health support** is made significantly more difficult by **substance dependency**.

Lack of readily available information on health and healthcare **tailored to the needs** of people who are homeless.

Waiting times and communication styles can compound **stigma**.

Health needs are often overtaken by immediate **survival needs** and/or substance dependency. It is not that people experiencing homelessness do not want good health – they may have more pressing needs to address on a daily basis.

Supporting people who are homeless to access General Practice

Everyone has a right to register with a GP practice. NHS England guidelines state that people do not need a fixed address or identification to register or access treatment at GP practices.

These guidelines are called the Patient Registration Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care (General Practice). They can be found [here](#).

Simple interventions such as using a [health advocate](#), providing information about local GP practices, supporting someone to make an appointment if needed or helping them complete a registration form can all help improve access.

Clients can be signposted to GP surgeries which are part of the [Doctors of the World Safe Surgeries Initiative](#). Safe Surgeries make small changes to tackle the barriers which inclusion health groups can experience when registering and/or accessing primary care.

The London Homeless Health Programme: more information on accessing GP practices can be found in the [e-learning tool](#) we have produced for GP receptionists and practice managers to improve the care and experience of people who are experiencing homelessness in London



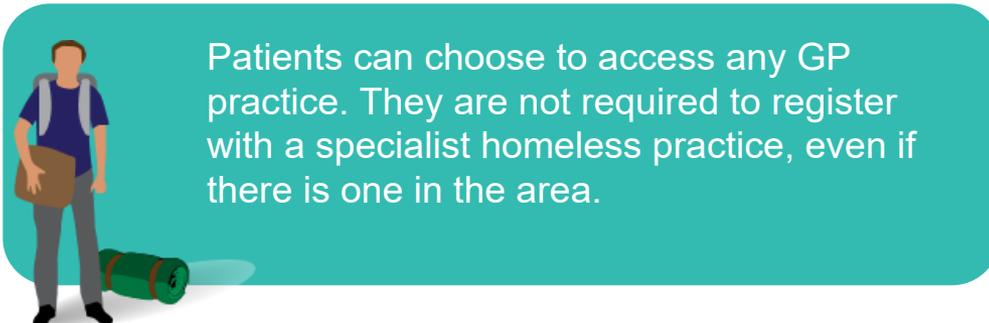
'My right to access healthcare' card

The London Homeless Health Programme and homelessness support charity, [Groundswell](#), produced the ['My Right to Access Healthcare Card'](#).

The cards are designed to be carried by people who are homeless in London to remind GP practice staff of the national patient registration guidance from NHS England.

Patients who have difficulty registering with a GP practice, can also contact [Healthwatch](#) for support and advice.

NHS England has now made the cards nationally available. You can order them using this [form](#) and Groundswell will arrange to send the cards to you for free.



Accessing other types of health care



Some people's immigration status means that they have: 'no recourse to public funds'.

People with no recourse to public funds are at a high risk of homelessness.

Some people's immigration status means that, as "overseas visitors" they are charged for some NHS services.

50%

In 2020/21, 50% of people sleeping rough in London were non-UK nationals. However **ALL** of these people are entitled to register with a GP practice and receive immediate treatment if it is necessary.

If you want to learn more about what the NHS can provide for people who are not resident in the UK or whose status means they have no recourse to public funds, please visit:

- [NRPF network](#)
- [Homeless Link guidance on supporting people with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\)](#)
- [NHS entitlements: migrant health guide](#)

Doctors of the World also produce [translated health materials](#) including how to register with a GP, information on Covid-19 vaccines and ways to keep healthy.



Advocacy and peer advocacy

There are many different models of advocacy and peer advocacy. You can find some examples in [Health care & people who are homeless - Commissioning Guidance for London](#).

Advocacy services are especially helpful in supporting people who are homeless to navigate complex service pathways.

In some circumstances there are statutory requirements to support people with advocacy support.

The following websites offer general information about advocacy:

[NHS](#)

[SCIE – Social Care Institute for Excellence](#)

[Mind](#)

[The Groundswell Homeless Health Peer Advocacy \(HHPA\) support people experiencing homelessness to address physical and mental health issues](#)

What should I do if I think someone is unsafe or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect?

- Adults and children who are homeless face additional risks.
- If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough who is in imminent danger you should alert the emergency services immediately.
- If you think that someone who is homeless is not safe and might be at risk of harm, abuse or neglect, then you need to follow your service's safeguarding protocols. If you are not sure about your services safeguarding protocols, ask your manager.
- You can find more information about safeguarding on the [CQC website](#)
- All of us have a duty to help people stay safe.



“Safeguarding means protecting people’s health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.”

Support for frontline staff working with people who are homeless in London

Several organisations provide support and training for frontline staff on homeless issues.

You can link up with these organisations, make use of their resources and training events to support your own continuing professional development as well as helping people who are homeless to address their needs.



Healthy London Partnership

Homeless Health Community of Practice – Mental Health

Recorded Monday 14 June 2021

Supported by and delivering for:



London's NHS organisations include all of London's CCGs, NHS England and Health Education England



- [Faculty for Homeless Health and Inclusion](#)
- [Frontline Network](#)
- [Homeless Link](#)
- [Housing Justice](#)
- [London Network of Nurses and Midwives Homelessness Group](#)
- [The Queen's Nursing Institute](#)
- [HLP Homeless Health Communities of Practice](#)

London Homeless Health response to Covid-19

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been coordinating the London Covid-19 Homeless Health Response as a multi-agency approach to managing the health needs and minimising the transmission of Covid-19 within the homeless population in London.

Resources and the latest guidance to support frontline staff in homelessness settings can be found on our webpage: www.healthy london.org/our-work/homeless-health/covid-19-resources/

Covid-19 vaccinations

Everyone 16 years of age and older is now eligible to get a Covid-19 vaccination. You do **not** need to be registered with a GP surgery in England to get your vaccines. Vaccination resources for staff working with people experiencing homelessness can be found here:

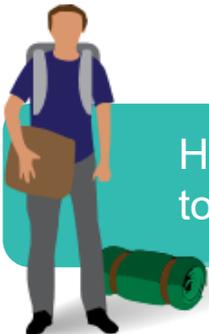
- [HLP Covid vaccine toolkit](#)
- [Groundswell coronavirus and vaccination resources](#)
- Doctors of the World [translated resources](#) and [vaccine confidence toolkit](#)
- [London Social Prescribing toolkit on Covid-19 vaccinations](#)



Commissioning resources

In December 2016 we published [Commissioning Guidance](#) to support commissioners in London's clinical commissioning groups to improve health services for people who are homeless. It outlines 10 commitments for improving health outcomes for homeless people in London. Commissioners can use these commitments as guiding principles in their work to improve services.

- Each commitment includes ideas and practical tips on how to commission high quality, timely and co-ordinated healthcare for people who are experiencing homelessness.
- The London Homeless Health Programme is developing a toolkit for commissioners in London to use when carrying out their local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. We will launch this tool in the autumn of 2017.



Homeless Link's [Health Needs Audit toolkit](#) is a useful resource if you are planning to audit the needs of people who are homeless in your area.

Additional sources of information

Below are links to additional websites signposting to specialist areas of help and support.



Homeless Link

Homeless Link's [interactive search tool](#)

The Pavement guide

The [Pavement's](#) guide to services

The London Housing Foundation

The London Housing Foundation's [Atlas](#)

If you'd like us to include additional resources or have suggestions to help improve this resource pack, please contact the Healthy London Partnership Homeless Health Team on:

hlp.homelesshealthcovid19team@nhs.net

