

Winter pressures: funding for hospital discharge and integrated approaches for people at risk of rough sleeping

People experiencing rough sleeping:

- experience much poorer health than the general population and multi-morbidity is common; mortality rates are eight to twelve-fold higher than the general population
- use acute hospital services four times and access A&E seven times more than the general population and are more likely to be admitted to hospital as emergencies, which costs four times more than elective.

The government has announced a £10m Cold Weather Fund, available until March 2020, to accommodate and support people at risk of or experiencing rough sleeping during the winter period, with the aim of enabling them to move into more suitable and sustained accommodation, and to improve their health and wellbeing.

This is the second year of the Cold Weather Fund and is part of a package of government funding to reduce and end rough sleeping. We are keen to encourage joint working between the NHS, Adult Social Care and local housing authorities to reduce winter pressures by enhancing services that prevent hospital admissions and support safe, timely transfers of care from hospital to the community for people at risk of rough sleeping. *Conversations at this point may also inform local housing authority funding proposals for 2020/21.*

The use of the Fund must support the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 'Duty to Refer'](#) which requires social service authorities (adult and children's), emergency departments, urgent treatment centres and hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local authority homelessness/housing options teams. Additional [guidance for NHS staff is found here](#).

What can the Fund be used for?

The Fund can be used to:

- Enhance services to encourage rough sleepers who have previously rejected support so that they engage and accept longer-term support: this could include homeless hospital discharge schemes that support safe, timely transfers of care and reduce the risk of readmission
- Improve access to accommodation eg, bed and breakfast, No Second Night Out services, supported housing and the private rented sector

More specific health and care interventions that might meet the criteria are:

- Interventions in A&E/mental health crisis teams and/or in early discharge planning, eg, identification, support, advocacy to meet housing needs (these needs may have arisen before or during admission)
- Specialist discharge co-ordination and/or advocacy, eg, in-reach by clinicians, Occupational Therapists, housing advisors, including in acute mental health inpatient wards
- Housing in-reach to community services eg, Community Mental Health Teams, Liaison and Diversion
- Step-up and step-down beds to enable full assessment of health, care, support and housing needs
- Access to/move-on bed and breakfast accommodation, temporary or supported housing
- Reablement in temporary/settled accommodation and/or spot purchase aids and adaptations
- Personal budgets
- Additional staff capacity to allow flexible working patterns eg, in-reach to A&E, or other out-of-hours

Key criteria are that interventions must:

- Make a difference during the cold weather period and therefore can't have a long lead in time
- Make it clear how people can be supported and moved on into longer-term sustainable solutions.

How can funding be accessed?

Colleagues in the NHS, public health, and adult social care will need to work with the local housing authority to develop proposals or to ensure that existing proposals join up to meet the needs you have identified (please email HAST@communities.gov.uk if you need a contact). Funding proposals can be made at any point during the winter period; LA claims will be reimbursed after support has been delivered and evidence provided.

Can the fund be used to support people who are ineligible for statutory support?

You should discuss this with the local housing authority/authorities you want to work with.