The Clearing House
Finding homes for rough sleepers
for a quarter of a century
Foreword

G15 members, along with other Housing Associations, are proud to have worked with the Clearing House for the last 25 years to provide a response to rough sleeping. We believe it’s been a truly successful partnership, in that 92% of rough sleepers housed via the Clearing House have never returned to the danger, hardships and uncertainties of rough sleeping.

This is an achievement only possible through collaboration, understanding and a shared vision. It is this vision which drives this multi-agency pan-London project.

As the number of people sleeping rough in London continues to increase, and the economic climate remains challenging, having a pool of social housing reserved for those who are or have been street homeless remains a critical need.

This report highlights how working together to seek solutions and ensure that our communities are for everyone, including the most marginalised, can achieve incredible results. There is strength through partnership, through the impact of dedicated, respectful staff and through embracing a clear, compassionate vision. Together this helps people to transform their lives.

It has been a privilege to provide housing for this critical service for the last quarter century—and to be looking ahead together to continue to transform more lives.

David Montague, Chair of the G15

Clearing Housing – 25 years in key stats

I would probably be dead without Clearing House. It gave me security; it put me back in society; it helped me in so many ways. [...] Without the programme, with no exaggeration at all, I’d probably be dead. My mental health was ridiculous; I was self-harming; I was an addict. It saved my life.

Gary

G15 represents London’s 15 largest housing associations

92% of people never return to rough sleeping.

3,750 flats ring-fenced for rough sleepers

7,689 people supported since introduction of Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TST)

13,500 tenancies signed
The service

In 1991 the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI), established by central government, set the objective of making it “unnecessary for anybody to sleep rough on the streets of London”. The initial funding programme ran for nine years and the Clearing House is one of its legacies. The initiative put in place provision to support those who have slept rough and who struggle to live independently in their own home.

The Clearing House was established at the outset to coordinate the lettings and for the last 25 years has been ensuring fair and far reaching access to those homes. It is run by St Mungo’s on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the properties are generously provided by housing associations throughout London who are signed up to the goals of the programme.

During its 25 years, the Clearing House has been responsible for more than 13,500 tenancies. It is a truly pan-London service, working across every London borough and in partnership with hundreds of organisations including homelessness services, support teams and housing associations.

As nationwide rough sleeping numbers continue to rise and the sector faces increasing challenges due to the funding environment and changes to legislation, this report seeks to highlight the successes of the service, learn from the past and consider ways to improve the response to this growing challenge.

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I was a wreck before [I moved into my flat] and I was doing loads of different things like prison, hostels, sleeping rough, sleeping in stairways, messing around, meeting different junkies and sleeping at their places. But since I’ve got my flat, I’ve cut all that out.

— Duo

Dignity. You’ve got dignity and self-respect. As opposed to living like an animal. I’m a human being with values. And you can’t live like that if you’re living nowhere.

— Seamus
The people

The Clearing House goal is to best meet the needs of each individual. There is no single profile for people who are referred to the Clearing House, however, all require some support to live independently and have spent at least one night sleeping rough.

Based on average data, we estimate that Clearing House tenants spent more than 110,000 nights on the streets of London before moving into an RSI property. Once housed, 92% never returned to rough sleeping.

As well as the thousands of individuals helped off the streets and out of hostels, the Clearing House has helped almost 300 clients who were considered among the most entrenched rough sleepers.

These individuals would typically be considered too difficult to house because of prolonged periods of rough sleeping, often combined with multiple support needs and where traditional approaches have been unsuccessful. Workers provide a personalised approach to complex support needs around drugs, alcohol, mental and/or physical health. By working innovatively with housing providers and initiatives such as the SIB1 and Housing First2, Clearing House has successfully challenged that view. We have successfully placed clients from the RS2053 and other high needs groups.

Of the 291 ‘hard to reach’ clients housed since 2009, more than half are still living in their RSI homes. For this group there was a 22 fold reduction in episodes of rough sleeping after they moved in (5,740 instances before and 252 after).

Looking forward, the Clearing House, housing providers and the support teams will work collaboratively and creatively to house and support the hardest to reach individuals. It will be possible due to the specialist, personalised support available from Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs) and thoughtful matches to the most suitable properties by the Clearing House.

I’ve managed to get myself enrolled in a Master’s programme to finish social work training; that’s pretty much due to the stability of having accommodation and support.

Eric

There’s an assumption that once you’re homeless that’s it – you’re finished, you’re the bottom of the barrel.

Lloyd

More than

110,000 nights on the street (prior to Clearing House)

92% of those housed by Clearing House never return to rough sleeping

291 hardest to reach housed since 2009

1 Social Impact Bond (SIB) was a GLA initiative to assist approximately 180 named individuals with histories which involve prolonged or repeat episodes of rough sleeping as well as complex issues around alcohol, drug use, mental illness and/or physical health, off the street.

2 GLA Housing First was an initiative which housed people as quickly as possible regardless of whether they would be considered ‘housing ready’ and then supports them with challenges they may face.

3 The RS205 list was first established by the Mayor’s London Delivery Board in 2009. The project identified 205 rough sleepers who were considered to need a targeted response because of the amount of time they had spent on the streets.

4 Based on statistics from CHAIN, made up of 2,671 Clearing House tenants.
The home

As a result of the combined effort of over 40 housing associations, there are now more than 3,750 flats across London ring-fenced for rough sleepers. Without housing associations providing decent homes, these astonishing results would not be possible.

For those living in Clearing House properties the accommodation represents so much more than just a roof.

The security of a stable home is one of the first steps in helping people to transform their lives, to increase confidence and to begin leading a more fulfilling future, often reconnecting with family or returning to training or work. We know that 15% of tenants who moved in to Clearing House properties since 2008 are now in paid work. It is calculated that the fiscal saving to the Department for Work and Pensions per person per annum for somebody no longer claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance is £9,090.00 – £10,320.00, and more to the wider economy.

This is just one of many examples of how a stable home has a positive impact not just on the individual but also on our wider society.

I’ve been living there for longer than anywhere I’ve ever lived in my whole life. Everything’s nice and chilled out and happy. It’s also a nicer kind of accommodation than I’m used to having.

Seamus

Actually getting a flat like this would have been virtually impossible. I wouldn’t have the financial means or the references.

Michael

Anything that you do want to do, the first thing they ask is if you have an address. If you don’t have one of those, everything becomes difficult. The only thing you can plan is where you can have your next shower or next wash and where you can get your next meal. You can spend your whole day doing those things.

Lloyd


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Lloyd

The support

In 2000, coordinated support from Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs) was introduced to all new tenants and those already in tenancies who required support. Since that time the teams have supported more than 7,500 people.

The TSTs empower people to lead fulfilling lives by supporting them to address their needs and to develop the confidence and skills to live independently. The teams offer critical support to individuals when they move into often new, unfurnished flats, to help tenants:

- achieve financial independence
- learn crucial living skills such as budgeting, cooking
- access training or employment opportunities
- work towards digital inclusion.

Around 8 in 10 people accepted for Clearing House accommodation have needed support around drugs or alcohol or mental health.

The TST support is tailored to the needs of the individual. They continue to develop their teams’ specialist skills to work creatively and in a personalised way with tenants with the most complex needs.

[My support worker] is absolutely amazing, without her I would have gone back to bad things. The way she has dealt with me, you know firm and fair. She hasn’t pushed me, she has encouraged me to stay strong and healthy.

Mark

When I was in the hostel I was diagnosed with osteocytes and osteoarthritis; the bones in my knees were crumbling and eating themselves away. When you’re on the streets you’re carrying a huge rucksack with your life in it. It does hurt the back and it’s hard on the joints.

Duo

Well I’ve learnt how to pay bills properly now. I’ve learnt how to deal with just normal mundane stuff. Instead of having someone point me in the direction, I’m doing it by myself now. I’m more self-sufficient now.

Anonymous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Client Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>of clients need support around mental health⁶</td>
<td>Becoming abstinent [is my proudest achievement]. It was something that I dealt with for several years. Derek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>of clients need support around alcohol use</td>
<td>I've got variation of clothes now. When I was on the streets I was always wearing the same clothes. I'm more presentable; more human. Kevin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>of clients need support around drug use</td>
<td>When I was in the hostel I was diagnosed with osteocytes and osteoarthritis; the bones in my knees were crumbling and eating themselves away. When you’re on the streets you’re carrying a huge rucksack with your life in it. It does hurt the back and it’s hard on the joints. Duo</td>
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⁶ 54% of clients had need of support around mental health issues at the time of referral, based on a sample of all clients accepted to the service between 01/01/2014 and 30/09/2016.
The future

TST staff continue to work with clients until they are ready to move on. We know 12% of TST supported clients have met their ultimate goal of no longer needing support to sustain their tenancy and are preparing to move on to live independently. This will free up the properties for those currently sleeping rough and in need of a home and support.

Move on from Clearing House is one of the greatest achievements, but also one of the biggest challenges faced by clients. Affordable and available accommodation is scarce. TSTs and Clearing House will continue to work creatively to obtain support-free accommodation which is appropriate for those leaving the Clearing House behind.

With a 30% rise in rough sleeping and a challenging economic climate the decisions we make now for the clients and the service are critical. Remembering the strength of the partnership which drove the Rough Sleepers Initiative 25 years ago we must ask again how we, as a sector, a city, and as a country, provide safe housing for the most vulnerable in our society. We have proven what can be achieved and together we can lead the way in coming up with solutions to this most pressing of issues.

At the moment, I’ve just finished my course and I’m going to register for my social work license. Hopefully, I should be able to get a job as a trainee social worker and then do the final year while job training.

Eric

I have got my independence back. I get to do my cooking, my washing, everything by myself. I feel a lot brighter and happier just because a change of circumstance really.

Peter
Looking to the future
– James Murray

The housing crisis is the single biggest barrier to prosperity, growth, and fairness facing Londoners today. For no-one is this truer than those who end up sleeping rough on the streets of our capital – with devastating impacts on their lives and on our communities.

At City Hall we are committed to tackling the scourge of rough sleeping, and we have already set about making a difference through our new No Nights Sleeping Rough taskforce. Our aim is to provide the focus and the support to do more and go further, working with partners to develop innovative approaches to preventing rough sleeping in the first place and to helping people who end up on the streets.

Our work must build on longstanding successful initiatives such as Clearing House. So I hope that you will join me in supporting the Clearing House into the next 25 years. Together we can support and expand on the vital work that has already been done, and ensure that we live in a city that offers opportunity to all Londoners.

James Murray, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development

Thank you

The following housing associations make the delivery of Clearing House possible by providing the vital accommodation. We are proud to work alongside:

- A2 Dominion
- Ancyx Horizon
- ARHAG Housing Association
- ASRA Housing Group
- Central & Cecil Christian Action Housing Association
- Circle Housing
- East Thames
- ElATYPE Housing Association
- Equinox
- Family Mosaic
- Genesis Housing Association
- Guinness Trust
- Hexagon Housing Association
- The Hyde Group
- Infillfree
- Inquilab Housing Association
- Ilkington & Shore Ritch Housing Association
- L&Q London Housing Association
- Look Ahead Care and Support
- Metropolitan
- Newlon Housing Trust
- Notting Hill
- Housing Octavia Housing
- ODiDu Housing Association
- One Housing Group
- Origin Housing
- Peabody
- Places For People
- Providence Row Housing Association
- Riverside Salvation Army Housing Association
- Sanctuary Housing
- Sapphire Independent Housing
- Shepherds Bush Housing Association
- Shin Housing Association
- SHP
- Soho Housing
- Southern Housing Group
- St Mungo’s
- Thames Valley Housing
- Vindian Housing
- Wandle
- Westminster Housing Association
- Women’s Pioneer Housing

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON
Thank you to all those who have been involved in making the RSI possible over the past 25 years.

Thank you to all the clients, volunteers, and staff whose photographs and comments appear in this publication.

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St Mungo’s
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives