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# Rough Sleeper Hub Lavender Hill

Frequently  
asked questions

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**We would like to thank everyone that attended our drop-in session regarding the proposed roughsleepers hub at 201-203 Lavender Hill. The session was incredibly helpful to hear feedback from the community.**

We want to provide reassurance to the community and have prepared a short document to answer some of your frequently asked questions.

We hope that you find this useful.

If you have any further questions, please contact [m.shearon-weller@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:m.shearon-weller@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk)

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## **Q Why is the council planning to open a Rough Sleeper Assessment Hub in Wandsworth?**

**A** There is currently no provision across the borough to bring rough sleepers off the streets. Rough sleepers in Wandsworth are currently placed in expensive temporary accommodation far from the borough and without access to locally provided support services. Efforts to bring people off the streets are significantly hampered by this lack of provision.

A 2021 report by Shelter showed that 1 in 54 residents in Wandsworth presented as homeless and so this is a much-needed service to address this pressing issue.

Through working with the Government's Department of Levelling Up Homes and Communities (DLUHC) and researching what works well in other boroughs that deliver the best outcomes for rough sleepers, we have identified that there is an urgent need for an offer that brings together the range of specialist services providing support, assessments, and advice. A local Hub with the facility for the co-location of key services with some short stay assessment accommodation was proposed to meet this gap and was strongly supported by the Government, who have allocated funding for this building.

## **Q Why has the council chosen this building/ location?**

**A** 201-203 Lavender Hill was previously occupied by the council's Leaving Care Service and has been empty since October 2022. In terms of location, similarly to projects we have visited that work well in other boroughs, the building is on a busy main road as opposed to a quieter residential street, reducing the impact on residents.

This site is also only one minute away from one of London's few remaining

24/7 police stations with an open front desk, providing an added level of public security. The beds available at the Hub would reduce the need to place service users into temporary accommodation, which can be isolating and put individuals at risk of not being able to receive the level of support they need. In addition, having key specialist and support services on site will encourage connection and engagement with services.

People who are experiencing rough sleeping often depend on local support systems and therefore offers of accommodation that may be in far away or unknown areas may not be accepted or are unlikely to be occupied, risking a return to rough sleeping.

The proximity of the building to Clapham Junction, the borough's busiest rough sleeping hotspot, is also a positive as it maximises the likelihood of offers of accommodation being accepted, consequently increasing the chances of the council and partner agencies reducing rough sleeping in Wandsworth.

The building consists of two properties which have been knocked through, and the layout of rooms lends itself well to a mix of short stay bedrooms and office space necessary for an assessment hub. The building has a secure reception area which was in place for the previous occupier and access to areas within the building would be controlled by staff on site and CCTV.



## **How will the Hub be managed/staffed?**



The council will have a set of standard operating procedures to support the efficient and effective management of the Assessment Hub, including an admissions policy for new residents.

During weekdays the Hub would be staffed by specialist rough sleeper workers from 07:30 to 19:30 Monday to Friday, and at all other times (i.e. evenings, nights and weekends) the Hub would be staffed by a minimum of two suitably trained members of staff, with management on-call at all times.

There would also be a 24/7 'hotline' for local residents and business owners to use to report any issues or concerns.

The Hub 'rules and expectations' document that new residents would have to agree to and sign before being offered a bedroom at the Hub would clearly set out a zero-tolerance approach to drug use on site. This would be enforced by Hub staff on site 24/7. Where these rules are not followed, the Hub Manager and Deputy Manager will follow the Hub Eviction Termination Procedure. Having visited other similar schemes elsewhere in London, a successful approach taken which we will look to implement at the Hub involves exclusion orders (e.g. for a certain period of hours) on residents not adhering to rules before permanent eviction orders are issued.

## **Q How will the immediate area surrounding the Hub be managed, namely the wide concrete path in front of the Hub and rear garden alleyway entrance?**

**A** CCTV monitoring would be in place with cameras inside and positioned around the exterior of the Hub. The cameras would be monitored 24/7 by the Hub duty team. This team would also be responsible for ensuring there is no loitering outside the Hub and noise is kept to a minimum to ensure residents are not disturbed, especially late at night.

On duty staff will complete an incident logbook and report any incidents to the Hub Manager and Deputy Manager. The Hub rules document that residents must sign also covers behaviour in the immediate area surrounding the Hub, the Hub Manager and Deputy Manager would follow the Hub's eviction procedure where these rules are not followed by issuing exclusion and eviction orders where necessary.

## **Q Will the council be accommodating 'high risk' individuals at the Hub?**

**A** No. The Hub requires residents to share communal space, kitchen and bathroom facilities. The council and its partner agencies have a strong understanding of the risk factors that need to be considered when providing shared accommodation to service users, either on a long term or short term basis.

Therefore, any service users who would be at risk of having a detrimental impact on the balance of the community, safety, or security of staff and other residents at the Hub would not be considered for Hub based accommodation. In these instances, the council will continue to offer either no accommodation or alternative self-contained temporary accommodation in the same way it currently does.

## **Q How will the Hub be used during the day-time?**

**A** The Hub is not a day centre for people experiencing rough sleeping, service users would be invited to attend services on an appointment basis only.

The co-located partner agencies would offer appointments to service users where they would be seen either in the ground floor meeting booths or the ground floor clinical room for health interventions or private appointments.

The 1st floor communal space may also be used to provide workshops such as tenancy training to residents. Appointments would be only arranged during office hours. The only access to the building outside office hours would be the short stay residents and this will be managed by staff who would be on-site 24/7.

## **Q How can I report any issues to the Hub staff/ management?**

**A** There will be a 24/7 hotline number that would be provided to local residents and business owners. The Hub duty team can be contacted on this number to raise any issues, worries or concerns at any time day or night.

## **Q How many rough sleepers will be provided with bedroom accommodation at any one time?**

**A** There would be 9 rooms in the Hub. In some instances, it may be necessary and appropriate to provide accommodation at the Hub to couples who are rough sleeping, meaning that occasionally there may be 10 or 11 people accommodated if one or two couples happen to be at the Hub at any one time.



## **How will residents be booked into rooms at the Hub? Will this be by appointment or at night?**



Service users would be booked in on an appointment basis by the Housing team. Bookings would be arranged during the day.

Although the Hub would be staffed 24/7, new admissions into the 9 available rooms would normally take place during daytime office hours following an assessment of housing and support needs and risk assessment by the Housing duty team.

New residents would be required to sign a range of agreements covering engagement requirements, Hub rules and expectations and disclosure agreements for partner agencies to share information and work collectively to support the individuals.

The Hub's focus will be to achieve rapid turnover via successful long term rehousings. When the Hub is full, the Housing duty team can explore alternative short term housing options off the street such as temporary accommodation.

During periods of severe weather (e.g. when temperatures drop below zero), the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol will be activated and councils across the country have a statutory duty to provide safe and warm spaces at night for people who are experiencing rough sleeping.

It is common for people who have experienced rough sleeping, especially over a long period of time, to have physical health needs which can put them at serious risk of harm during periods of cold weather and in some cases this can lead to fatalities if people are not protected. The Hub may be used in this regard to protect a limited number of rough sleepers from serious danger and the from the impact of extreme cold weather.



## **What is the expected length of stay for service users accommodated at the Hub?**



The principle behind the Hub is based on a short stay assessment model, replicating the approach taken by similar schemes in London, with a target of 28 days stay before move-on.

However, the anticipated stay would vary between residents depending on two main factors: firstly, the complexity of a service user's support needs, where more time may be required to facilitate engagement with various support agencies; and secondly, the rehousing pathway identified for the service user, which may depend on units in various schemes becoming vacant/ properties sourced in the private rented sector.



## **How will the Hub residents be supported whilst they are at the Hub?**



Each resident at the service will have an allocated Housing officer responsible for exploring suitable move on options and a SPEAR worker responsible for welfare and linking in with partner agencies co-located at the Hub such as mental health and drug and alcohol teams. Hub staff will take a person-centred approach which would place the service user at the centre of decisions around engagement and rehousing.

The council is working with partner agencies and the voluntary sector to explore food options for residents at the Hub. Hub residents would also have access to a kitchen and communal space where they can spend time outside of their rooms although these facilities would be closed to residents late at night.



## **Is it likely the Hub will lead to an increase in crime locally?**



No. One of the overall aims of the Hub is to reduce not only rough sleeping in Wandsworth but also behaviours sometimes associated with rough sleepers such as shoplifting, ASB and burglary. Although weight is often unfairly attributed to rough sleepers for such criminal activity, it is in some cases, a consequence of underlying behaviours linked with people in poverty and substance misuse/ mental health issues.

This is perhaps an oversimplification of the issues surrounding rough sleeping, but the Hub aims to provide services which will seek to reduce the need for those experiencing rough sleeping to engage in criminal activity by supplying food, clothes and transport costs as well as taking a person-centred approach to engagement that focuses on outcomes.



## **What safeguarding measures is the council taking with regards to the nursery next door?**



The nursery garden is overlooked by windows at the back of the Hub building as well as from the rear patio and alleyway. The windows at the back of the building would be fitted with frosted glass coverings at eye level, to ensure the nursery garden cannot be seen from the Hub building.

The alleyway and patio area at the rear of the Hub would act as a 'dead zone', with a gate and 24/7 supervised CCTV being installed to manage this.

The Hub staff would be on site 24/7 and would be tasked with ensuring that both residents and service users attending appointments do not congregate outside of the building. This is also made clear in agreements residents sign before being offered short stay bedroom accommodation at the Hub. Bedrooms will not be offered to 'high risk' individuals with complex support needs and the council expects there to be minimal disruption to the local community. Eviction notices would be served if these agreements are not adhered to by residents.

For service users accessing partner agency support at the Hub during the day, this would be conducted at 203 Lavender Hill, with the entrance being at the opposite side of the building to the nursery. These visits would be managed by appointment only, ensuring that there is limit to the number of people attending the Hub for an appointment at any one time.



## **How will local residents and business owners be able to communicate with the council about the development and running of the Hub moving forward?**



At the public consultation event on 6th December 2023, the council made a commitment to set up a 'Local Resident's Forum' for the Hub, if the planning application is successful.

This will present local residents and business owners with the opportunity to have their voices heard and for staff responsible for the running of the Hub to directly respond to any concerns that may arise throughout the project's lifespan. Contact details for the Hub Manager and a 24/7 'hotline' would also serve as a way for the community to communicate with Hub staff outside of the Forum.