

## Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	Rough Sleeping Encampment Policy
Directorate and Service Area	Communities
Name of Lead Officer	Kurt James

### Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

#### 1.1 What is the proposal?

The proposal is to extend the rough sleeping encampment process currently in place in Bristol parks to all Council Land.

#### Background

The city council has a statutory duty to meet the needs of homeless people who meet the criteria set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. People facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are referred to Housing Advice through partner agencies or through our customer service points. Many homeless people never seek the council's help, often finding their own (sometimes very unsatisfactory) solutions. Many otherwise homeless people are 'managed' by other agencies (e.g. hospital discharge, prisons, etc.)

A Rough Sleeping Partnership designed to reduce and prevent homelessness has been set up by Bristol City Council. The partnership is led by St Mungo's and includes Avon and Somerset Police, Julian Trust, Crisis Centre Ministries and the Golden Key Partnership to address the problem of street homelessness in the city.

We do not permit camping or sleeping rough within our public spaces as we have a duty to protect these areas to make sure they are available for everyone, in addition to the council's duty to ensure people who are protected under the Equalities Act 2010 get on well with groups who are not protected. The council and its partners understand that sometimes tents or temporary shelters are erected by vulnerable people in need of help and we are working hard to make sure that those who are homeless are supported to access help and accommodation in the city. The approach is now being improved and people will now be offered an unconditional bed for the night when we have to take action to remove tents or temporary shelters from our public spaces after people have not taken up previous offers of help.

### Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

#### 2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

During the period from 1 Jan 2017 – 31 Dec 2017, there were 773 people who were rough sleeping in the city who were worked with by the Rough Sleeping Service. Of the 773 people, information reported from the St Mungo's database gives us the following profile in relation to local connection:

- a. 482 people (62.4%) have a local connection to Bristol;
- b. 173 People (22.4%) had no recorded local connection;
- c. 118 people (15.3%) had a clear local connection elsewhere in the UK.

173 people had no recorded local connection in the UK. There may be a number of reasons for this for example the Rough Sleeping Service were unable to gain this information from that person and might have lost contact with them or that they did not have a local connection anywhere else in the UK. Full details of the breakdown of these figures and where people do have a local connection can be found in Appendix 1.

Of the 773 people who were rough sleeping and working with the rough Sleeping service during 2017, 78% had UK nationality and 22% had non-UK nationality either from EEA countries or the rest of the world. Full information on the breakdown of nationality can be found in Appendix 2.

Disability: Disabled people including those with learning difficulties, and mental health problems are over-represented in people sleeping rough.

Race and nationality: BME people are over-represented in homelessness prevention services. There has been an increase in migrant rough sleeping and 32% of Bristol rough sleeping have a nationality other than UK with over 40 nationalities represented (2017).

Sex: Males are over-represented in rough sleeping and in homelessness prevention services.

## **2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?**

We do not have accurate details of BME representation amongst people sleeping rough in Bristol. We have limited diversity information for some other protected characteristics e.g. LGBT+ based on monitoring data from homelessness prevention services. People sleeping rough who have just had a baby or pregnant, faith groups, marital status, are missing from the data.

## **2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?**

In the process of developing this proposal we have worked with key representatives from rough sleeping and homelessness support groups: Caring in Bristol; St Mungo's; Julian Trust; Bristol Homeless Forum; Crisis Centre Ministries; One25; Golden Key; Feed The Homeless; Help Homeless Bristol; Keep Bristol Warm; and Help Bristol's Homeless.

They have either been involved in the design of the proposal or being consulted on its content. Concerns have been raised and have been incorporated in the redesign of proposals.

**Consultation:** The Rough Sleeping Encampments Policy consultation was open between 29 June 2018 and 26 August 2018 and sought views from the public (including businesses and organisations which represent non-domestic rate payers) about the draft policy. The RSE consultation sought feedback on: Whether the draft policy balances the needs of people sleeping rough in encampments with the needs of other members of the community; and any other comments or suggestions about the draft policy on rough sleeping encampments.

The consultation report provides a full breakdown of the protected characteristics of consultation respondents and highlights differences in feedback from different equalities groups (95% provided at least some diversity info).

The RSE consultation included an online survey. Paper copies of the survey were also available in all libraries and shelters and alternative accessible formats were available on request. Additional survey responses were gathered through face-to-face interviews in the Compass Centre, the Bearpit, City Hall, the Wild Goose and Caring in Bristol's 365 Night Shelter. The consultation was widely publicised through media, social media and communications with the public, including partner organisations and other stakeholders.

545 responses were received to the RSE survey via the online and paper-based surveys, including alternative formats and face-to-face interviews. 12 (2%) respondents completed the survey on paper (including large print and easy read formats), 27 (5%) completed the survey in face-to-face interviews and the remaining 539 (93%) self-completed it online.

464 respondents to the survey gave their postcodes and 81 skipped the question. Of the 464 responses 460 supplied postcode information identifiable to ward level. Of these, 429 responses (93%) were received from postcodes within the Bristol City Council area, 28 (6%) were from North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), South Gloucestershire, or Gloucestershire, 3 (1%) postcodes were from further afield.

A map of response rate by ward for the Bristol responses is available along with the details of age profile, gender and other respondent characteristics.

Of the 545 people who responded to the RSE consultation, 309 (58%) agreed or strongly agreed, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, with 24% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the draft policy balances the needs of people sleeping rough in encampments with the needs of other members of the community (ES1). 214 (39%) respondents made comments or suggestions about the draft policy on rough Sleeping Encampments.

Consultation responses have been used to tighten the language and definitions used in the policy document; ensuring that the offer made to people sleeping rough is clear and distinct and making it clear that the policy balances the need of the wider community.

### Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

#### 3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

Whilst we do not think that the proposal will have adverse impacts we are aware of a number of issues for people with protected characteristics which we will seek to address in the Rough Sleeping Encampment Policy:

All	The policy requires every case to be treated independently and take into consideration the needs of the wider community and the complex needs of the individual or individuals occupying the rough sleeping encampment.
Age	Alongside the Preventing Homelessness Strategy this policy will aim to ensure that the process and services offered meet the needs of all age groups. NB Bristol Youth Maps is a separate service commissioned by Bristol City Council focused on the prevention of youth homelessness.
Disability	People who are sleeping rough may have a learning disability, undiagnosed

	<p>mental health problems or face other psychological barriers to accessing support services. We will ensure that our communication is accessible and includes FAQs which can counter disinformation about services provided.</p> <p>Some people rough sleeping may use dogs as emotional support animals for a mental or emotional health condition<sup>1</sup>. The policy includes provision for people to take their dogs to an emergency night shelter for at least a week.</p> <p>Although not a protected characteristic many people who are rough sleeping have alcohol and substance misuse problems which can be a further barrier to accessing services. This policy is aligned to our Preventing Homelessness Strategy which addresses this issue.</p>
Sex	As men are over-represented in homelessness prevention services we will ensure that the process including referral to support services is appropriate for women.
Sexual Orientation	Some LGBT+ people sleeping rough may be avoidant of support services and temporary accommodation because of real or perceived threat of hate crime and discrimination from others. As above we will address concerns in our communications plan and, as with other homelessness prevention services, we will ensure the service provider has robust safeguarding and equalities procedures in place. We will also work in partnership with Bristol Hate Crime and Discriminations Services to provide community based hate-crime support.
Pregnancy/ Maternity	Individual person-centred case working will help to promote equality and consistency of approach for pregnant homeless women. Although outside the direct scope of this proposal the service provider has produced a Homeless Pregnancy Toolkit to promote positive outcomes for pregnant homeless women and their babies <sup>2</sup> .
Gender reassignment	As sexual orientation above.
Race	<p>Language barriers, lack of knowledge of systems and other factors may mean that migrants are treated differently by the proposal unless these factors are taken into consideration. We will ensure our communications tell people that information is available in alternative languages and accessible formats.</p> <p>The Rough Sleeping service will work with people to assist them off the streets according to their particular circumstances. For example when working with EEA nationals who have no access to public funding (largely due to housing Benefit eligibility changes resulting from Welfare Reform) they will work with them to access employment and private sector accommodation. For some people this may not be achievable so they will work with that person to return to their country where they are able to access accommodation on a voluntary basis.</p>
Religion or Belief	No data
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No data
Marital status	No data

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional\\_support\\_animal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_support_animal)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/StM\\_Pregnancy\\_Toolkit\\_Final.pdf](https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/StM_Pregnancy_Toolkit_Final.pdf)

<b>3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?</b>
See section 3.1 above
<b>3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?</b>
Several protected characteristics are over-represented in Bristol's rough sleeping population. This proposal is likely to improve outcomes for these groups by facilitating their access to support services and accommodation.
<b>3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?</b>
Yes. They can be maximised through reducing rough sleeping.

#### Step 4: So what?

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

<b>4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?</b>
The Equality Impact Assessment has been updated throughout the development of the policy and issues highlighted from the assessment and consultation responses have been used to inform the final policy proposal (see Section 3.1 above).
<b>4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?</b>
We will continue to work with partner organisations to seek the views of people with lived experience of homelessness to further identify and mitigate risks of negative impact on equalities groups. The views of people with lived experience were sought during the consultation and included in the consultation responses.
We will ensure that written advice given to people sleeping rough includes a message in community languages to say "If English is not your first language and you need a translation, we can get one for you." <sup>3</sup> This has been incorporated on letter based communication linked to the policy. In addition to providing information in an easy read format, for those who have a learning disability, or braille for those who have a sight impairment.
<b>4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?</b>
We will measure this in terms of reductions in rough sleeping.

Service Director Sign-Off: 	Equalities Officer Sign Off: Cherene Whitfield 13/03/19
Date: 13/03/19	

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en\\_US/people-communities/the-language-tag-or-block](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/people-communities/the-language-tag-or-block)