

# Resource Pack

## Homelessness and health: Useful websites and additional sources of information

August 2017



# Introduction – who is this resource pack for and how to use it

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 homeless.

If you want to search for specific content please look at the contents page and click on the topic that you are interested in.

Or go to the Find function on Adobe Acrobat and type in a key word. The Find function is on the Adobe Acrobat toolbar with a small magnifying glass.

Please also have a look at the resources on the [Healthy London Partnership website](#), especially the [homelessness resources](#).

## Find tool on Adobe Acrobat



Find

Previous

Next



This resource pack aims to collate information in one place to benefit both people who are homeless and service providers. This is a framework which can be used to develop a resource pack for yourself of local services using similar headings.



# Contents

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	2	<a href="#">Helping people who are homeless to access healthcare</a>	14
<a href="#">Definitions of homelessness</a>	4	<a href="#">Supporting people who are homeless to access General Practice</a>	15
<a href="#">Understanding homelessness in numbers</a>	5	<a href="#">‘My right to access healthcare’ card</a>	16
<a href="#">People who sleep rough in London</a>	6	<a href="#">Accessing other types of health care</a>	17
<a href="#">Discharging people from hospital</a>	7	<a href="#">Advocacy and peer advocacy</a>	18
<a href="#">Where can I get help with housing for someone who is homeless?</a>	8	<a href="#">What should I do if I think someone is unsafe or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect?</a>	19
<a href="#">I need to know what sort of help is available locally</a>	9	<a href="#">Support for frontline staff working with people who are homeless in London</a>	20
<a href="#">I need to know how I can help someone I have seen sleeping rough</a>	10	<a href="#">Additional sources of information</a>	21
<a href="#">Health and Wellbeing</a>	11	<a href="#">Commissioning resources</a>	22
<a href="#">People who are homeless are more likely to experience health problems</a>	12	<a href="#">References</a>	23
<a href="#">Health needs of people who are homeless</a>	13		

# 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 at:



## Shelter England

Website:

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_advice/homelessness/homelessness\\_-\\_an\\_introduction/what\\_is\\_homelessness](http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/homelessness_-_an_introduction/what_is_homelessness)



## Crisis

Website:

[www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/](http://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/)



## GOV.UK

Website:

[www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless](http://www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless)

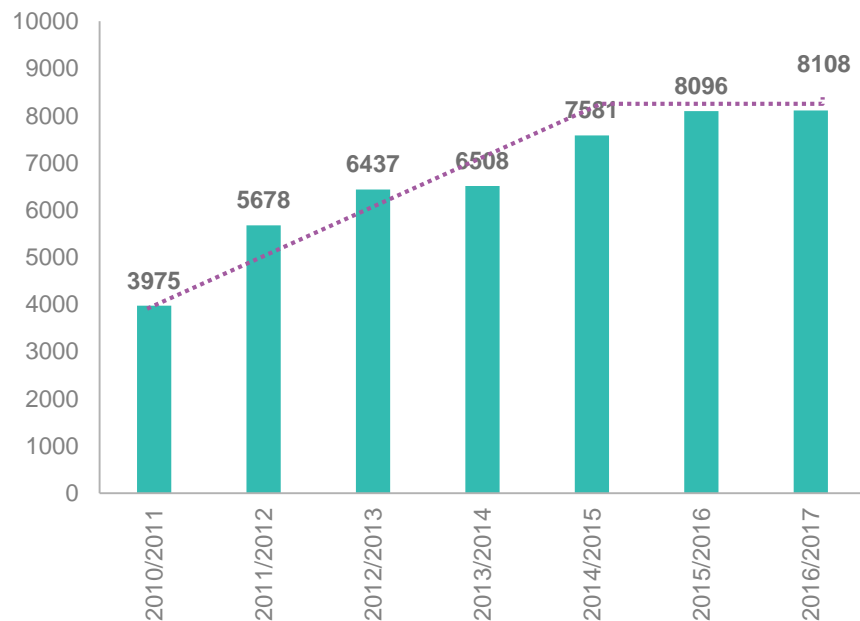
# Understanding homelessness in numbers

- 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.
- 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

This 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 2016/17.



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



# 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
- 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
- When you record the details of a person's GP, if they are not registered please print off and give them the 'My Access to Healthcare Card' that can be found on the London Homeless Health Programme [webpages](#)
- 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,  
8am-5pm weekends)



## Crisis

[Crisis](#) also publishes 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](http://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 locality you can use Homeless Link's [interactive search tool](#)

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



# I need to know how I can help someone I have seen sleeping rough

Streetlink, a street outreach service, can be contacted either by people sleeping rough, or by anyone who is concerned on their behalf. If you are a front line 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](http://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



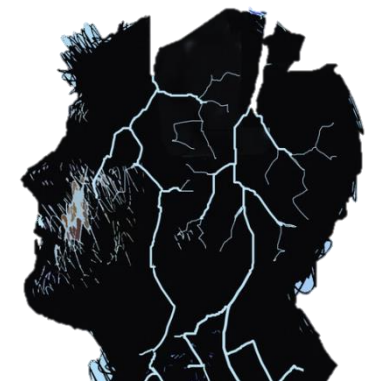
47yrs 43yrs

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



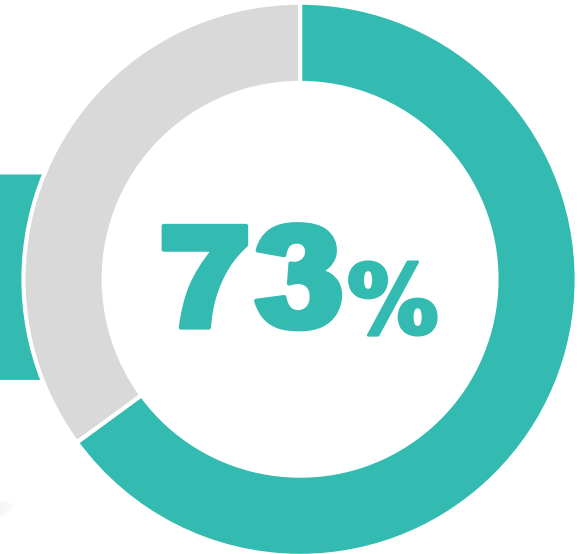
9x

Read the [Crisis report](#) here.



# People who are homeless are more likely to experience health problems

73% of people sleeping rough in London in 2016/17 whose needs were assessed had an alcohol, drug or mental health problem, and many had all three.



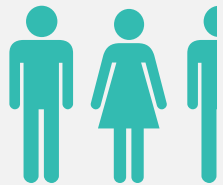
See [CHAIN reports](#) for more information about the needs of people sleeping rough in London



# Health needs of people who are homeless

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

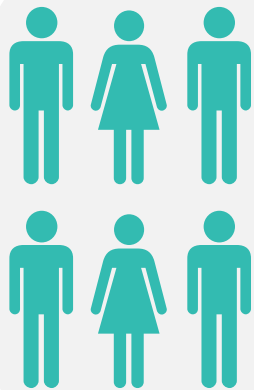
They are:



**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

For information about these statistics please see the references section at the end of the resource guide.

# 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: 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.

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

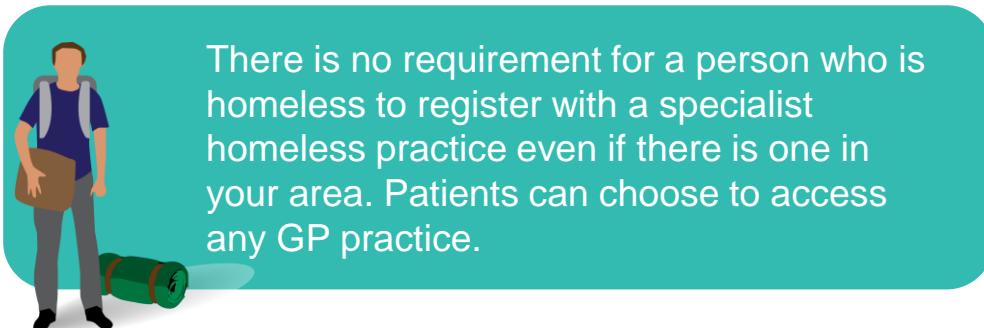
The London Homeless Health Programme, in collaboration with [Groundswell](#), produced a '[My Right to Access Healthcare Card](#)'.

40,000 of these cards are being distributed widely in London.

The plastic 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.

If you would like to order some cards, you can email us at [lhhp@nhs.net](mailto:lhhp@nhs.net).

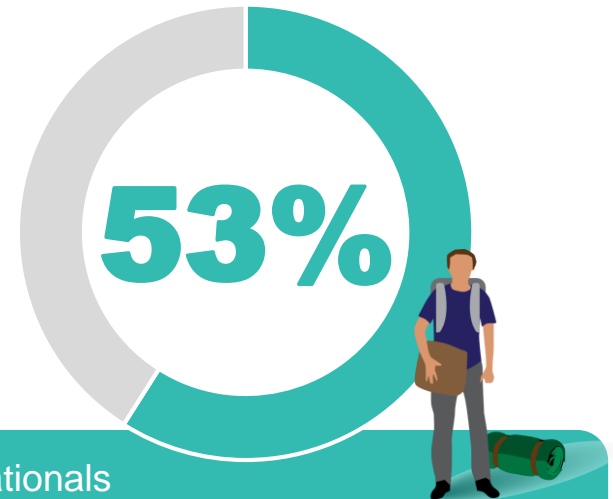




# Accessing other types of health care

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.



In 2016/17, 53% of people sleeping rough in London were non UK nationals and many had no recourse to public funds. 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:

[No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#)

[Guidance on overseas visitors hospital charging regulations](#)

[Summary of changes made to the way the NHS charges overseas visitors for NHS hospital care](#)

# 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.

Here are three websites that give general information about advocacy:

## NHS

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/advocacy-services.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/advocacy-services.aspx)

## SCIE – Social Care Institute for Excellence

[www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/advocacy-services/commissioning-independent-advocacy/duties/independent-advocacy-care-act.asp](http://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/advocacy-services/commissioning-independent-advocacy/duties/independent-advocacy-care-act.asp)

## Mind

[www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/advocacy/what-is-advocacy/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/advocacy/what-is-advocacy/)



# 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.



- [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](#)



# Additional sources of information

There may be times that you need information about more specialist areas of help and support.

Here are links to three useful websites:

## Homeless Link

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

## The Pavement guide

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

## The London Housing Foundation

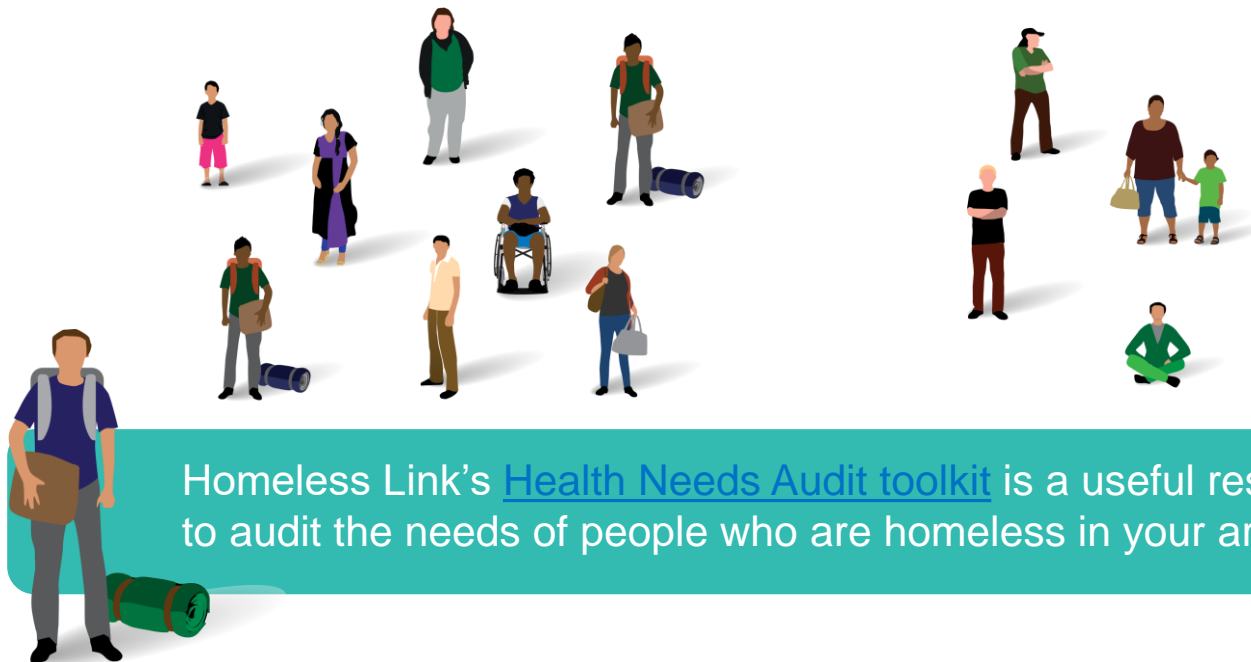
The London Housing Foundation's [Atlas](#)



# 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.

# References

These are two recent articles on the health needs of people who are homeless:

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.

There are a number of additional references in our publications at London Homeless Health Programme [webpages](#).

