

Working Together

Our vision to end homelessness

Executive summary



This report is a combined project between Community Works, Justlife and the Brighton and Hove Frontline Network and YMCA DownsLink Group.



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That includes:

- Brighton & Hove Street Pastors
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- Brighton Women's Centre
- Deen Relief
- Diversity and Ability
- Emergency and Temporary Housing Residents Action Group
- Galvanise Brighton & Hove
- Homeless Link
- Justlife
- Kennedy Street CIO
- Metropolitan Community Church Brighton
- Purple People Kitchen Food Bank
- Social Enterprise Complementary Therapy Company
- St Peter's Church
- St Luke's Church, Prestonville
- Sussex Homeless Support
- Sussex Nightstop
- The Clock Tower Sanctuary
- The Village Metropolitan Community Church
- The Whitehawk Foodbank
- YMCA DownsLink Group

A further 23 voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) members completed the survey anonymously.

Additionally, thank you to the VCSE Homeless and Rough Sleepers Network¹ who generated the idea for this audit and helped design the questionnaire.

A huge thanks to the audit steering group whose commitment and collective knowledge have informed the production of this report: **Kate Standing and Harriet Morris** from the Brighton & Hove Frontline Network² and Justlife; **Greg Headley**, Homeless Link; **Chas Walker and Jamie Guest** from Downslink YMCA; **Rachel Marshall**, St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity; **Laura Williams, Magda Pasiut and Jayne Ross** from Community Works; Design Team at Downslink YMCA

The report was written by **Laura Williams, Jayne Ross** and with contributions from **Rachel Marshall, Kate Standing and Harriet Morris**.

¹ The VCSE Homeless and Rough Sleeper Network is coordinated by Community Works. Members include commissioned and non-commissioned groups and organisations providing services to people experiencing homelessness in Brighton and Hove.

² [The Brighton & Hove Frontline Network](#), hosted by Justlife, brings together staff supporting people experiencing homelessness. It exists because collaboration creates a better chance for those they are all trying to support. It brings together frontline workers to harness ideas, energy and experience through regular meetups with discussions, workshops and resource sharing.

Executive summary

Working Together – Our vision to end homelessness – A snapshot of the VCSE homeless and rough sleepers sector in Brighton and Hove (Spring 2021) sets out to develop a cohesive understanding of the scale, scope and impact of the VCSE sector’s work and contribution towards preventing and reducing homelessness in Brighton and Hove.

Why do this now?

Brighton and Hove City Council has a dedicated Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy (2022–2025)³ which states that ‘there isn’t a single intervention that can tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, [and] there needs to be a citywide partnership approach in the context of the national approach’. This implies the need for the VCSE sector to take an active role under the umbrella of this strategy, to know ourselves better and understand our own value as an essential component of this partnership approach. In seeking to understand the breadth and depth of our collective resources, we can identify our strengths and opportunities to develop and respond as a sector to the shifting landscape of homelessness.

It is predicted that *‘the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping’*⁴. The Homeless Monitor captures the key categories of homelessness as being people sleeping rough, staying in places not intended as residential accommodation (e.g. cars, tents, boats, sheds), living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast hotels, out of area placements), and sofa surfing (i.e. staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions). The 2021 Monitor reports that in 2018–19 the largest element of core homelessness was sofa surfing, followed by hostel and similar accommodation and unsuitable temporary accommodation/other unconventional accommodation. The least numerous group comprised those sleeping rough at a point in time.

³ [Brighton & Hove City Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025](#).

⁴ [The Homelessness Monitor 2021](#) Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Beth Watts, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Jenny Wood, Mark Stephens & Janice Blenkinsopp. Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales; School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow March 2021.

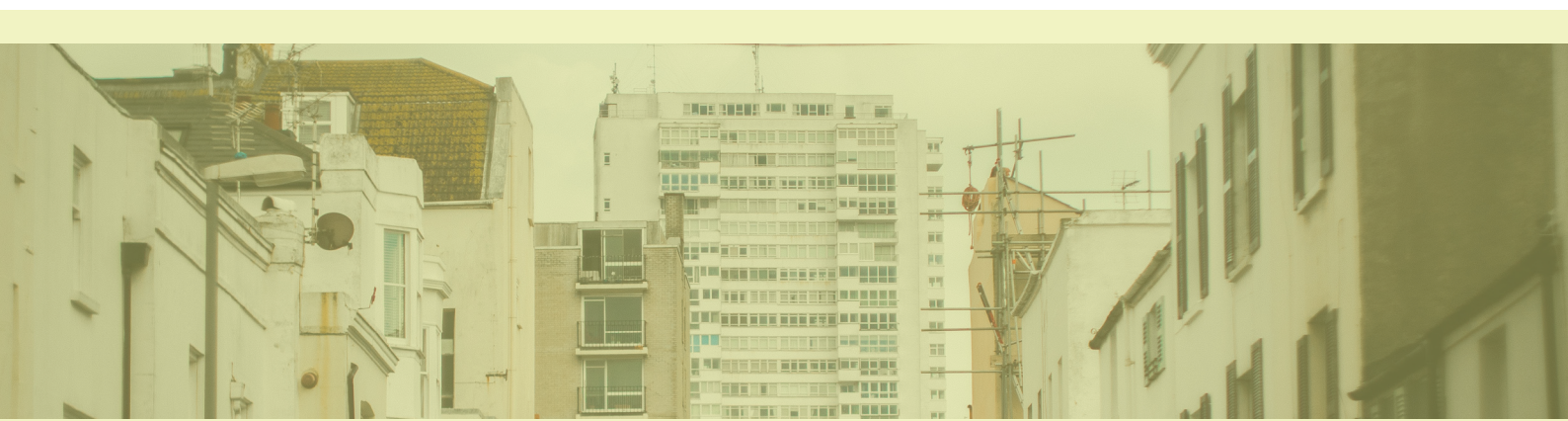
Simultaneously, at the time of writing, we have seen the launch of pandemic-related funds which have a focus either on local authorities working in partnership with the VCSE or funds being devolved exclusively to the sector to strengthen and reinvigorate the national response (Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), Protect and Vaccinate, Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), Cold Weather Fund and Winter Pressures Fund)⁵.

The timing creates an imperative for the VCSE to ensure that stakeholders – the VCSE itself and statutory sector partners – understand the scale and scope of the VCSE contribution to tackling homelessness (its leadership, buildings, people and financial assets), and to identify opportunities to work together strategically and operationally to amplify these resources in the local and national response to homelessness.

Who participated in the survey?

The findings in this report are drawn from a survey of VCSE sector organisations working to support people experiencing homelessness in Brighton and Hove over the spring of 2021. The 44 organisations which completed the survey included large professionalised housing charities, small and medium-sized charities, social enterprises and small volunteer/ community-run organisations and groups.

They comprised commissioned and non-commissioned organisations. The respondents represented a diverse cross section of the sector, including street-based outreach and food provision, night shelters, supported accommodation, day centres, and a wealth of projects and services geared towards supporting people to reconnect to, and stay rooted and healthy in, their communities.



⁵ [Push to protect and vaccinate rough sleepers with £28 million government boost](#) Published 20 December 2021 From: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and [Eddie Hughes MP](#).

[Rough Sleeping Initiative: 2021 to 2022 funding allocations](#) Published 15 May 2021 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

[Government announces support for rough sleepers over winter](#) Published 29 October 2021 From: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department of Health and Social Care, [Eddie Hughes MP](#), and [Gillian Keegan MP](#).

Key findings

The report shines a light on the significant contribution of the VCSE in responding to homelessness. For example, respondents participating in the survey reported that a range of £10-20m (a likely underestimation) was invested by the VCSE sector in the previous financial year in the provision of services for people experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough in the city. The launch of the Street Support Network website for Brighton and Hove coincided with the survey, and this tells us at the time of writing that there are 110 organisations offering 204 services offering a range of support to people experiencing homelessness, either exclusively or as a key part of their delivery. The report also highlights the myriad of ways that the VCSE connects with statutory providers in areas such as health, housing, criminal justice, and social care. However, the report also points to the prevalence of extreme poverty, debt and social isolation – as well as ‘hidden homelessness’ – leading to a concerning increase in the complexity and scale of need that presents challenges to homelessness prevention and relief.

Our easy-to-view headline messages and key findings illustrate more fully the scale and scope of the contribution of the VCSE.

Conclusion

The landscape of homelessness is clearly complex and requires a considered response. Respondents called for collaboration and strategic involvement in developing ‘*a citywide partnership approach*’.

The snapshot of the VCSE contribution provides a springboard for collaboration between the VCSE and statutory partners to build and shape the future with a clearly defined shared purpose, each working to their strengths – while acknowledging and understanding their respective limitations – to end the dangerous and isolating experience of homelessness in Brighton and Hove.

Key findings

VCSE infrastructure

204
services



In the snapshot, there were an estimated **110 VCSE organisations offering 204 services** to people experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough in Brighton and Hove on 'The Street Support' register.

£10-20m
investment



Based on survey responses there was a (likely underestimated) **investment range of £10-20m** by the VCSE in the provision of services for people experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough in the city.

People

A total of **2026 people** were employed in the VCSE by organisations responding to the survey, working the equivalent of **37,632 hours**.

314 staff members worked specifically on the issue of homelessness, contributing to a total of **8,325 hours** per week.

Volunteers donated **2,220 hours** per week within the VCSE in the city. Their contributing hours amounted to the equivalent of just under **£1.1m a year** when calculated using the Living Wage.

Through volunteering, the VCSE provided a significant opportunity for members of the wider community to connect with, and offer support to, their neighbours experiencing homelessness, thereby becoming part of the solution and embodying the concept of a 'citywide partnership approach'.

2026
people
employed

2,220
volunteer
hours



ACCOMMODATION



772
housing
units

An estimated **772 units of accommodation** (commissioned and non-commissioned provision) were provided in the last financial year, generating over **£5m a year** in revenue through housing benefit which is reinvested in providing homelessness support.

Demand for services is high

Survey respondents observed an increase in people living in food poverty, struggling with debt, and with greater complexity of needs, particularly from young people and those with additional health and social support needs.

Support services

The local VCSE sector offers people experiencing homelessness a breadth of accommodation and other essential services such as food, basic provisions, life skills, training and employment support to address the underlying complexities of homelessness and to secure sustainable, safe accommodation.

Healthcare and wellbeing

50%
of providers
offered mental
health support



A range of healthcare and wellbeing services are delivered to support people who are rough sleeping or homeless. Nearly 50% of providers offered mental health support and over 30% provided substance misuse services alongside a plethora of wellbeing services.

IMPACT

426
positive
move-ons



408
private rental
agreements secured



VCSE organisations took differing approaches to monitoring and evaluating their impact depending on the nature of the support they offered. Participating organisations shared that **426 people achieved a positive move on** from their accommodation in the last financial year and **408 people secured accommodation through the private rental sector (PRS)** in the last financial year.

The differing approaches to monitoring and evaluating impact highlighted opportunities for further research to inform the development of approaches to sharing and capturing data.

Policy and influencing

The sector played a significant role in raising awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness and campaigning for change as well as seeking funding to implement solutions in the prevention of homelessness.

Organisations regularly attended 50 different inter-agency meetings and networks contributing to the wider city strategic plans.



Headline messages



The VCSE sector generates and contributes significant income alongside local commissioning to support people experiencing homelessness in the city. This is realised through assets such as buildings providing accommodation, people, funding, and expertise to develop holistic approaches that help to prevent and relieve homelessness.



The scale and complexity of homelessness means that demand for VCSE and statutory services exceeds current capacity, leading to significant risk being held within the system. Collaboration leading to co-production between the VCSE and the statutory sector may relieve pressure on resources by ensuring duplication is avoided and impact maximised.



A one-system response (involving statutory sectors and the VCSE sector) characterised by a focus on collaboration and co-production in the development of aligned strategies or shared ownership of strategies could further amplify the future success of the city's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Collaboration and coordination of support services, data and local insight could inform further understanding of services, gaps and duplication on offer in the city.



There is a need to coordinate provision to maximise support for people experiencing homelessness and thus avoid the risk of revolving door experiences when accessing support, which can be created by siloed support services, increasingly challenging threshold barriers and diminishing statutory services.



There is a particular lack of a cohesive strategy and adequate services to address the urgent and acute needs of young people (16–25 year olds).

The VCSE identified an opportunity to develop services dynamically through shared learning, training and collaboration within the VCSE sector in order to grow sector expertise and create alignment in approaches. Coordination across existing networks can facilitate this wider information sharing to increase capacity.

There is value in further research to understand more fully the scale of investment in accommodation by all contributing sectors and how this may lead to solutions that can alleviate the existing pressures on commissioning funds available for housing support and address the currently perceived over-reliance on temporary accommodation.



The full report can be found here: [Working Together to Tackle Homelessness: A Collaborative Insight Project](#)

If you have any questions on this report please contact Kate Standing from Justlife on kate@justlife.org.uk or Jayne Ross from Community Works on jayne@bhcommunityworks.org.uk.

