

## Homeless get first point of contact to get them of streets of Newham

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A contact point for rough sleepers is being set up to tackle Newham's growing numbers of people on the streets.

It is being opened at the Anchor House charity in Canning Town, which has been given £150,000 from Whitehall.

The hub is one of 30 such projects up and down the country being set up under a government pledge to prevent anyone finding themselves on the streets having to spend even a second night sleeping rough.

The charity secured the grant with Thames Reach to run the scheme as the first point of contact for the homeless.

"This is an opportunity to develop a new approach to tackling homelessness," said its director Keith Fernett.

"This is an area at the wrong end of every measure—poverty, homelessness, health and employment—

"The investment is to provide as comprehensive a service as possible to meet the needs of those on the street."

Rough sleepers making that first contact at Anchor House will be put in touch with services that tackle issues such as mental health and drug misuse, as well as education, training, employment support and referral onto accommodation.

The centre itself provides shelter for up to 220 people a year—but the numbers becoming homeless continues to rise year on year.

Some 30 homeless charities including Anchor House are getting a slice of the £3.5 million that Whitehall has put in the kitty to boost the work they are already doing to help those on the streets.

Housing minister Kris Hopkins said: "I am absolutely clear that homelessness has no place in the 21st century."

"Every effort must be made to tackle rough sleeping and support given to vulnerable people to get their lives back on track."

The cash is the latest instalment from the Department for Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Transition fund.

The aim is to make sure anyone on the streets gets help quickly—so they don't spend a second night sleeping rough.

Sharon Allen, who chairs the panel handing out the cash, said: "We know how damaging spending a night on the streets is to someone's wellbeing. The grants we have awarded so far have helped thousands of people escape homelessness and move towards independence."

There are an estimated 6,500 people sleeping rough each night across London, a shock rise of 13 per cent on last year. The increase is partly because many were not aware that help is available, the Anchor House charity believes.

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Anchor House director Keith Fernett

"I am absolutely clear that homelessness has no place in the 21st century"

Housing minister Kris Hopkins

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