

Resettlement for people in emergency COVID-19 accommodation

About this briefing

The initial partnership response to get 'Everybody In' when the COVID-19 pandemic started was a notable success which Riverside contributed to everywhere we work. With the emergency accommodation provided potentially only available until the end of June, there is now a pressing need which to ensure no one has to return to the streets if and when emergency accommodation closes.

We have been working with national partners and interest groups as well as on the ground in locations where we are operationally involved in supporting people who are homeless to achieve this objective. This briefing outlines the principles, models and steps involved. While approaches will need to be adapted and matched for the local context, the aim of this document is to share learning that can help all areas meet the need effectively in the short time available. Additional recommendations from other organisations also go into detail on many of these areas.

Principles shaping your response

The UK Government's response to rough sleeping during the pandemic is being spearheaded by a taskforce headed by Dame Louise Casey, previously advisor to the Prime Minister on homelessness. Riverside [joined with other partners](#) to suggest some principles around which this response and the taskforce should operate. Although some of these points relate to national policy, they can help frame the kind of response you can adopt locally also:

1. We must seize this opportunity and commit to **no-one being returned to the street**;
2. **Leadership** is needed to encourage local cooperation. Local areas need the power and resource to support those currently accommodated and those coming into homelessness and build on the successful partnership working at local level;
3. We must **understand everyone's needs** and what is a suitable move-on option for each one of them and we must act fast to ensure everyone is included;
4. Interventions must be **housing-led** and efforts must be made to understand what housing is available and what can be procured to facilitate rehousing of those who have been homeless;
5. This commitment needs **specific, long-term, earmarked funding** for support, transition, welfare and conversion/acquisition of homes. The housing and homelessness sector will need increased funding to be able to continue providing a service and to make homes available;
6. There needs to be continued, funded provision and community-based **solutions for those who usually come up against legal barriers**, including those currently debarred from benefits because of their immigration status;
7. The **welfare system** must work for everyone and cover the cost of rent and support.

How have we helped people find longer term accommodation during COVID?

The following examples are all from Riverside's services in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, where we provide services meeting the full spectrum of housing need from immediate access emergency accommodation through to supported properties, stand-alone flats and individual tenancies with private landlords based on Housing First principles. These examples demonstrate the range of experiences people have and value of there being a range of options to meet them. This is especially valid during COVID which has presented unique opportunities to get people indoors.

Note: details have been changed and initials used to protect people's identities

1. Aziz – Removing barriers due to 'No Recourse To Public Funds' restrictions

Aziz is a European citizen who was first encountered by the Wakefield Outreach Team sleeping rough in late March. Initially placed in Riverside's emergency hub room, COVID-19 funding provided to the Local Authority was used to quickly move Aziz into hotel accommodation. Aziz had no benefits in place and had recently been told he was not entitled to claim benefits in the UK. The team supported him to demonstrate residence in the UK for the past 5 years, securing settled status and access to housing and benefits.

This unlocked further options for Aziz, and with it was agreed that supported accommodation would be the most appropriate move-on. In mid-April, Aziz moved into a stand-alone flat within a Riverside supported housing scheme so he could have independence but also support. He has been registered with relevant agencies including a GP and drug & alcohol support services to address ongoing needs and be ready to apply for independent housing when he feels ready for the next stage.

2. Phil's Story – Begging and substance misuse

Phil was well known to the Outreach Team due to intermittent rough sleeping and begging in the town centre to pay for his addictions. Previous offers of accommodation had been turned down, but following the lockdown and less people on the streets he was no longer getting enough money for food or substances. He agreed to move into a bed and breakfast as well as access a meal service. After several days in the B&B he was more positive about moving into longer-term settled accommodation, and a supported housing property was identified where he has remained since.

As well as holding down the tenancy, Phil has been working well with support staff and engaging with the drug & alcohol recovery team to manage his use of substances. More people in the town centre as lockdown eases and shops re-open will present opportunities to return to begging, but the hope is the changes Phil has made will be enough to prevent him slipping back into past behaviours.

3. Megan's Story – fleeing a domestically violent relationship

Originally from Wakefield, Megan was rough sleeping in the town having fled a domestically violent relationship in another part of the country. She was quickly found a hotel room while specific women-only accommodation was identified which she could move into. The team worked with Megan to find a suitable property, eventually helping her moving into a home near to her mother's.

This was particularly positive because Megan's children had been living with her mum since she left, and she'd had no contact. The team supported her to get back in touch, providing a mobile phone for regular contact and encouragement to make contact. Megan is thriving in her new place and has started seeing her children (from a safe distance over the garden fence) several times a week.

4. Dean's Story – Leaving care and 'elastic tolerance'

Dean has struggled with inappropriate and challenging behaviour since before he was asked to leave Care prior to his 18th birthday. Also experiencing ADHD, autism and learning difficulties, Dean first became homeless in autumn 2019, and had been evicted from multiple hotels, supported housing, and shared accommodation since then. Riverside started working with Dean early in the lockdown, and have stayed with him through each of these evictions or withdrawal of support from other mainstream services. Working with him to explore new options in three different Local Authorities, our support workers have practiced 'elastic tolerance' to adapt to the multiple and complex needs he has.

The result of continuing to believe in Dean and offer him more chances has been finally finding a placement which works for him. He's now been accommodation for over a month in a shared house in another part of the area, accepting his responsibility in the previous tenancies breaking down, and taking on part time work – which he's hugely enjoying and benefiting from the focus it brings.

5. Alfie's Story – aligning support across agencies

Alfie had lost his property with supported housing for breaking visitor rules during COVID. He was booked into a hotel instead so he could still keep himself safe, and the Outreach Team used the respite to explore what Alfie wanted to do next. He was keen to have a fresh start, and so Riverside identified suitable properties in a neighbouring town through another housing provider.

To help Alfie resettle in his new accommodation, the team sourced a radio so he had some entertainment and a weekly food parcel to limit how much he needed to go out. Contact was also made with the drug & alcohol team who were providing him with medication to manage his substance use, and the location as well as timing was switched to match his new circumstances. Aligning all the agencies involved in providing the right support around what Alfie wanted for his future has helped find a stable tenancy where he is still housed six weeks later.

Case Study: Continuous Support in North London through our 'Engage Model'

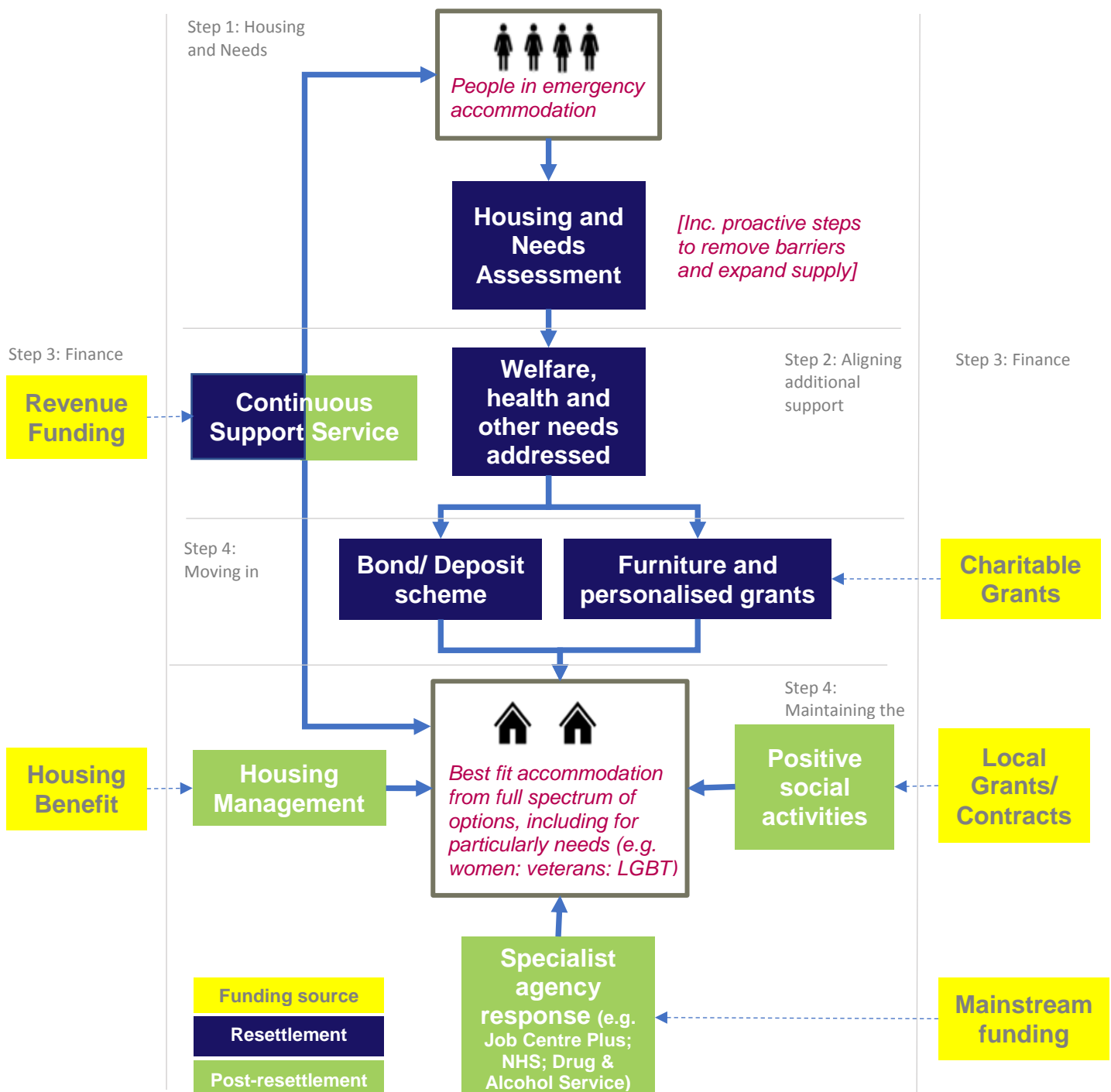
Riverside deliver our 'Engage' enhanced floating support model in the neighbouring London Boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Hackney. When people sleeping rough in Enfield and Haringey were moved into emergency accommodation, we worked quickly with the local commissioners to recruit an additional 5 workers across the two boroughs for resettlement support.

By extending the existing contract, we were able to use emergency COVID funding to cover the cost of new team members to build relationships with customers and link into local support structures so resettlement was as smooth as possible. Our Engage Haringey and Engage Enfield services have then been able to pick up contact when people move into their longer-term accommodation.

Models for resettlement

Organisations such as Homeless Link have gone into depth on how models for resettlement and support of people in emergency COVID accommodation, so for more info follow [this link](#).

Tailoring the offer to local context is vital, and every area will have different strengths and needs. The following suggested model is drawn from the multiple locations Riverside are involved:



What partners might want to be involved?

The most effective resettlement will likely involve the same partners who were needed for an effective response initially. Take a look at the [Groundswell Listen Up! briefing](#) for further ideas.

Who	Why
Local Authority allocations and Housing Options teams	Assessment of appropriate housing and support needs for those in hotels type accommodation. Financial help supporting move on to PRS. Statutory provision of temporary accommodation.
Supported housing providers	Provide accommodation for people with high needs
Social Housing providers	Provide accommodation for Housing First type responses or people with low needs
Day service/day centre providers	Maintain a connection with individuals and a place for them to go for basic needs and social connections
Voluntary and Faith Partners	Source for additional ongoing support and encouragement so people stay in their homes long term
Rough Sleeper Outreach teams	
Night Shelter and Emergency Accommodation providers	Speedy referral routes for people who haven't been able to get into accommodation or subsequently leave
Drug & Alcohol teams	Appropriate medication and prescriptions to effectively manage addictions
Job Centre/DWP	Line up welfare benefits so tenancies can be maintained
Housing Benefit team	Agreement to make additional supported accommodation Housing Benefit exempt
Probation and Criminal Justice system	Assistance with any issues related to probation licenses or offending history
NHS, primary care and mental health	Alignment of support for varying health needs, including staying safe from COVID-19
Personalised Grant Funders	Cover additional costs for items which people need to move in/stay in their homes
Refugee & Migrant Support Groups	Support with solutions for people who have no recourse to public funds
Private Landlords	If student and 'Airbnb' type rentals reduce private landlords may have an increased motivation to look for other tenants

Case Study: Cambridge full spectrum of housing needs

At present, there are 118 people housing in temporary accommodation as a result of a genuine multi-agency approach rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A working group of caseworkers and managers was formed to assess housing and support needs for the 118. All available desktop info was considered. A judgement was made not to invite customers to the assessment due to the requirement for speed.

Customer needs were categorised into:

1. Low support needs: able to maintain shared or self-contained accommodation independently with minimal/no support.
2. Moderate support needs: able to maintain shared or self-contained accommodation with some support.
3. Significant support needs: unlikely to be able to maintain shared accommodation. Able to maintain a license in supported accommodation or self-contained accommodation with regular support.
4. Complex support needs: Likely to need intensive support to manage their accommodation. Likely to have a history of failed hostel stays.

Options were then identified as follows:

- **Housing First** – self-contained accommodation for individuals with multiple and complex needs (particularly those with a history of unsuccessful hostel stays), with intensive wrap-around support (ratio one caseworker to six tenants)
- **Pods** – new, self-contained modular homes in the city, for individuals who would struggle to access shared or supported accommodation, with regular, tailored support (ratio 1:10)
- **‘Hostel Route’** – existing, traditional supported accommodation
- **Supported Shared** – shared houses (usually 2-bed) for people who would be capable of sharing with others but would struggle with ‘mainstream’ accommodation. Support provided (ratio 1:10)
- **Statutory Route** – assistance under existing homelessness and/or social care duties, resulting in a social tenancy or a social care placement
- **Private Rented Sector** – shared accommodation for individuals with low to moderate support needs. Support provided (ratio 1:10)
- **Reconnection** – assistance with moving to another part of the country (or another country)

Once the numbers of vacancies in each option are available, a mapping exercise then take place to transition customers across to the appropriate vacancies within the appropriate option. A plan A and a plan B option was worked through for each individual. Where the move on options do not contain enough units for the numbers, work has been instigated to develop those areas.

In Cambridge it was identified that Private Rented Sector move on provision was too low for the cohort available. Instead, work is ongoing to create a model which will utilise non-filled Student lets for the next academic year.

Steps to take in your area

Follow these steps to apply the model in your local area. This list is certainly not exhaustive, and you will come up with many of your own questions while working through them.

Step 1: Housing and Needs Assessment

- How many people are in emergency accommodation?
- Where were they living prior to COVID-19?
- What is their preference for move-on accommodation?
- How many people are still sleeping rough? What are the remaining barriers and what would remove these?
- How does this align with the available accommodation?
- How many additional spaces could be freed up if appropriate move-on options could be found for existing tenants (e.g. from supported to independent housing)
- How many more would be required from other sources?
- What alternative options are available? (e.g. unused student accommodation)

Step 2: Aligning additional support

- Who has been their primary Support Worker since moving into emergency accommodation? Is it possible to maintain this relationship during their transition?
- What additional support would help them get into and stay in this accommodation?
- Who have they already been in contact with at the relevant agencies who could continue to support?
- How could access be adapted to match their circumstances and resettlement?
- Can support be aligned by other forums (e.g. Case conferences; Making Every Adult Matter Coalition's) to avoid people falling through the cracks?

Step 3: Agreeing finances

- How much additional Capital (for expanding supply) and Revenue (for support) funding might be required?
- How much of this can be covered by the relevant existing budget?
- How much can be allocated from COVID funding made available to the Local Authority?
- How much resource can be allocated from other pre-existing projects (e.g. Rough Sleeper Initiative)?
- Will accommodation provided qualify as Supported Exempt Accommodation?
- Are there additional local or national sources that can support the additional support being provided by Voluntary, Charitable and Faith organisations?

Step 4: Moving in

- Is there eligibility criteria which might prevent individuals accessing their preferred accommodation?
- Are the right finances in place for people to move in?
- Are all individuals able to get everything they need for it to be a proper home when they arrive?
- Are they able to get to the location safely on the date they are due to move in?
- Will they have sufficient food and safe social contact when they move in?
- What would help smooth their move to the new property?

Step 5: Maintaining the tenancy

- Who is responsible for housing management?
- Who is responsible for ongoing support?
- What options are there for safe, constructive activities to help the person maintain their tenancy?
- What options are there for safe social interaction to help people avoid falling back into negative habits and behaviours?
- What ongoing support is available from other agencies for additional needs? e.g. Job Centre Plus for employment and benefits; NHS for health and mental health needs; Drug & Alcohol Service for substance misuse
- How long would individuals like to stay in this accommodation? Is there a further move they would like to make when they are ready?
- How regularly would it be worth reviewing support needs with the person?

Case Study: Manchester local housing gateway

Riverside are managing a 45-bed Holiday Inn in East Manchester as part of the 'Everybody In' initiative. An initial assessment is completed when people first arrive at the hotel, helping guests get the right benefits, health and drug & alcohol support in place early on. This has also allowed for a good understanding of what ongoing accommodation may be suitable. Although the circumstances and scale differ, the team has sought much as possible to make the most of existing routes and systems. In Manchester, this predominantly involves use of the 'Mass Gateway' allocations system, in which people staying in emergency accommodation are given Category 1 status and prioritised for any social housing voids. Working with guests at the hotel through this system enabled 19 move-ons in the first 6 weeks:

- 8 x Reconnection to family
- 2 x Reconnection to another authority
- 7 x Supported accommodation (positive move)
- 2 x Return to own long term tenancy (previous recent abandonment, support now in place)

All offers are based on client needs following an assessment completed by the support team. A suggestion of the most appropriate accommodation is then made which the individual can take up. Many moves have been into local properties, including Riverside supported housing, and where people have moved to other Local Authorities or back into tenancies which had been abandoned additional work has been required on behalf of the Support Workers to identify relevant Housing Officer's in the area and facilitate a return. With those who have reconnected with family, a softer approach of encouragement to make contact where it is safe and appropriate has led to excellent results.

Across the City Region, Riverside are working with the Greater Manchester Housing Providers partnership of 25 housing associations to assist in the rehousing of 311 guests directly from hotel accommodation and other temporary accommodation. This includes a pledge of all void properties to people who are homeless for the next 4 months, and frontloading of properties for Year 2 of Greater Manchester's Housing First programme, one of the Government's three national pilots.