

PRESS RELEASE

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Can a city 'solve' homelessness? How Oxford is taking an innovative citywide approach to curb the number of people rough sleeping

Oxford Homeless Movement, an exciting new citywide partnership, is launching on Thursday 10 October. This is an innovative, inclusive Movement aimed at reducing rough sleeping in Oxford which includes local homeless charities, housing providers, Oxford City Council, health providers, funding bodies, community-based organisations and businesses.

To mark the launch, which will be celebrated at [Open House](#) on Little Clarendon Street on World Homeless Day, partner organisations are announcing a raft of new, collaborative measures to ensure that nobody should have to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford. They are also asking residents – including those experiencing homelessness – as well as businesses and organisations of Oxford to come and get involved.

Street homelessness has been on the increase since the turn of the decade and hit record levels in England in 2017, including in Oxford.

“We’re doing more than ever before to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, including more beds and better assessment services to help people off the streets as quickly as possible. But the number of people experiencing homelessness is still too high. We have to undertake street counts every two months and what we’re finding is that a quarter of people are new to the streets. We can’t end homelessness on our own. We need Oxford to join us in the Movement and help beat homelessness together.”

Cllr Linda Smith, deputy leader of Oxford City Council and cabinet member for leisure and housing

“It’s time we all said ‘Enough is enough’. It will take a whole city effort if we are to have a serious go at preventing anybody from having to sleep rough on our streets. Oxford Homeless Movement is an exciting step in the right direction. Getting this far has required huge progress in co-operation and trust and to truly launch the Movement we need you – individuals and Oxford based businesses and organisations – to come on board and get involved. Join the Movement today by signing the charter, raising your awareness and understanding of homelessness and commit to volunteering or to making a donation. We all have a role to play.”

Jane Cranston, chair of Oxford Homeless Movement

Some of the measures delivered so far include:

- a website (www.oxfordhomelessmovement.org.uk) to link those who want to offer their support with the organisations or individuals that are providing support to people experiencing rough sleeping. It also offers guidance to those who need help and may not know where to go
- a citywide [charter](#) to ensure nobody should have to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford, co-created by Oxford’s homelessness agencies, charities, voluntary organisations and the city council, which anyone can sign up to on the website
- the launch of the Oxford Homeless Movement advisory group, made up of people who have experienced rough sleeping and who are either now working for or supported by local agencies, to take a leadership role in Oxford Homeless Movement
- the launch of a collective fundraising effort under the Oxford Homeless Movement banner, which will include a new Impact Fund designed to close the critical gaps in Oxford’s response to reduce rough sleeping.

“We’re doing this properly, tackling the most difficult questions and trialling new approaches, led by people who have experienced this themselves.”

Nikki Aitchison, Programme Manager at Aspire Oxford

Building on the efforts of Oxford Homeless Movement, many local organisations and individuals are also making efforts to lend their support to preventing rough sleeping in Oxford:

- a pilot Housing First scheme has launched enabling people from South Oxfordshire sleeping rough in Oxford to receive local housing and intensive support

- further development of the Housing First model with additional units across the city over the coming months
- more accommodation for those leaving psychiatric wards and needing support.
- a house for people who have been in hospital and require an extra couple of weeks off the streets to help their recuperation
- a new house opening in Oxford for ex-offenders leaving prison to give them the best chance of rehabilitating in the community
- established a homelessness prevention service, to engage and support people in the community at the first signs of homelessness
- commissioned new supported accommodation service at Matilda House, which offers holistic support and shelter for 22 homeless people with complex needs and also provides move-on accommodation and employment and training support for 15 people as they prepare for independent living
- a ‘public talking shop’ for instigating city-wide conversations on housing and homelessness. Open House is a platform for the voices of people experiencing homelessness and insecure housing and is ensuring that this lived experience stays central to the Movement and wider action on housing and homelessness in the city.

Organisers of Oxford Homeless Movement are calling on more organisations and individuals in Oxford to get involved.

“We know how much people in Oxford care. Lots of people want to help. We’ve made it easier. Come and get involved by signing the charter or exploring the [website](#) to see the ways in which you can help. Never before has a city approached this on so many levels with such a broad base for support. Everyone is involved and we think that this is the way to make an impact”.

Jayne Woodley, CEO of Oxfordshire Community Foundation

Notes to editors

The Oxford Homeless Movement website is www.oxfordhomelessmovement.org.uk. It is designed by local digital agency, [Global Initiative](#), including through a generous contribution from their Corporate Responsibility fund.

You can follow the Movement on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The public celebration of the Movement's launch is at Open House, 36 Little Clarendon St, OX1 2HU on 10 October, one session running from 10am to 1pm and another from 3pm to 6.30pm. Further event details will be found on our social media channels.

In 2017, Oxford's annual street count found 61 people experiencing homelessness in the city. Street counts can only offer a partial snapshot of who is sleeping rough and the council's intelligence-led estimate was that there were 89 people sleeping rough on the night. Despite increasing its budget for tackling rough sleeping and winning additional funding that included £1 million from the government's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI), on the night of the November 2018 street count the council estimated that the number had increased to 94 people experiencing homelessness on Oxford's streets.

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For more information

Email info@oxfordhomelessmovement.org.uk or call Oxford City Council Press Office on 01865 252096.