

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

26 September 2023

Improving access to mental health services for rough sleepers in Fenland

Rough sleepers in Fenland are benefitting from better access to specialist mental health support thanks to a new partnership between Fenland District Council and the NHS.

The Council has agreed a new contract with the NHS for a full-time mental health practitioner, to boost existing outreach, accommodation, drug and alcohol, and mental and physical healthcare services in the district.

It is hoped the additional support will help get more rough sleepers on to a path to counselling, medication, or other treatments, and seek out people “who have often been through incredibly traumatic experiences” to ensure they get the help they need.

Cllr Samantha Hoy, Fenland District Council’s Cabinet member for homelessness, said: “It is extremely positive that we’ve secured much needed and better access to mental health support for rough sleepers in Fenland.

“People experiencing homelessness are extremely vulnerable and their situation is often compounded by complex health needs, so it’s vital that this kind of support is available.

“It’s also important that rough sleeper funding is available so we can continue delivering a full range of co-ordinated prevention and recovery services with partners.”

The additional mental health care support in Fenland has been jointly funded by NHS England and through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding the Council receives from the Government’s Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

According to NHS England, common mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and panic disorder are more than twice as high among homeless people, with cases of psychosis up to 15 times as high.

Research shows people are around 50 per cent more likely to have spent over a year sleeping rough if they are also experiencing mental ill health.

Professor Tim Kendall, NHS England clinical national director for mental health, said: “NHS teams working with local authorities will seek out rough sleepers who have often been through incredibly traumatic experiences to ensure they get the help they need – and do not fall through the cracks.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk