



March 2019 update - Stroud Green Road

We would like to update you on the work being undertaken to engage and support the vulnerable people under Stroud Green Road (SGR) railway bridge, since our last briefing in December 2018.

What are we doing to help?

Our priority is getting people into safe, secure accommodation and giving them the support they need to move off the streets permanently, where they are at significant risk. Islington and Haringey Councils have worked together with partners and taken a number of steps to achieve this. This includes:

- Both councils commission specialist outreach services (St Mungo's and Thamesreach) who visit this location regularly to offer routes off the streets. Other specialist agencies, including substance use services and Greenlight medical, visit this area to offer specific support around substance use and physical health.
- Over the last two years, outreach teams have supported 34 people into accommodation who were bedding down at this site.
- During the recent cold weather spell, everyone rough sleeping at this location was offered immediate access to accommodation via the severe emergency weather provision. Sadly, few people took up this offer. Our outreach teams cannot force people to accept offers of accommodation and support, but will continue to offer this.
- We trialled a floating hub in September 2018, which accommodated 24 individuals rough sleeping in this area and we continue to look at innovative ways of supporting people.
- We are working with the local neighbourhood police teams, safer transport police and British Transport police to ensure co-ordinated efforts in addressing drug-related activity and criminality.
- Islington and Haringey Council, along with relevant partners meet regularly to review support for individuals and wider approach.
- We carry out regular cleans of the area, engaging with people in advance to make arrangements to protect their belongings and we ensure outreach support is available at the same time to assist them.

Issues this brings

- Few people took up offers of accommodation during the recent severe weather, putting themselves at significant risk by choosing to remain on the streets.
- Some individuals, despite having access to accommodation and wrap around support, continue to return to SGR – being drawn back due to substance use.
- We are concerned that the vulnerable people here are being exploited by drug dealers, taking money in exchange for Class A drugs and that this area is becoming hostile as a result. One rough sleeper was recently the victim of serious physical violence.

- We also believe one of the draws to this location is that people are being given large sums of money by generous and well-meaning members of the public which is funding their substance use. This is why some people are reluctant to engage with support on offer to move away from the streets.
- The temporary structures obstruct the highway putting pedestrians at risk and are a health and safety hazard to those that sleep in them.
- There are some people, who despite continued offers of accommodation and support, remain at this location and their health and wellbeing is deteriorating placing them at risk of harm.
- Both councils have had increased contact from members of the public, local residents and the business community, raising concerns for their safety and the significant detrimental impact the associated anti-social behaviour is having on them. This includes open drug use, criminality, health and safety issues including cleanliness of the area and pedestrians being forced to walk into the cycle lane.

Going forwards

- Islington Council had lodged an application to prohibit anyone from taking part in anti-social behaviour, begging or causing an obstruction under the railway bridge next to Finsbury Park station on Stroud Green Road but this is adjourned whilst we consider our available options.
- Those currently using the area will continue to be offered support and all have a key worker to lead on their options.
- The regularity of deep cleans will be increased.
- Further to agreement by Network Rail, Islington Council will shortly be carrying out improvements to the lighting under the bridge, changing the existing ones to brighter, white lights which will improve the appearance and also increase feelings of safety, by helping to address anti-social behaviour.

Islington Council is committed to preventing homelessness and is investing in vital support for rough sleepers. As part of a pioneering new scheme, the council has also recently opened a 15 bed shelter in partnership with Camden Council, which is focused on providing accommodation and intensive support for rough sleepers to help them to move away from the streets permanently. For more on the support we offer visit www.islington.gov.uk/roughsleeping

What can I do to help?

- Talk to the person. Being kind and interested can be invaluable.
- Consider donating to a homeless charity or a night shelter in Islington or Haringey (details below).
- If you see someone new rough sleeping, report this to **Streetlink** giving as much detail as you can on their location and a description of the person to help the team identify them.
- Buy a copy of The Big Issue magazine from a registered vendor.
- Signpost people to relevant services and day centres (see below) where they can get help.
- Consider volunteering your time with a local organisation to help those on the streets.

- If you see drug dealing/drug related activity – please report this to the Police via 101 as this helps police to build up an intelligence picture and target their resources.

Contacts:

- Streetlink: www.streetlink.org/ 0300 500 0914
- Thames Reach: www.thamesreach.org.uk/ 020 7702 4260
- St. Mungo's: www.mungos.org/ 020 3856 6000
- Women at the Well: www.watw.org.uk/ 020 7520 1710
- All People All Places (Haringey), all-year round casework with overnight respite in winter: www.allpeopleallplaces.org
- The Margins Day Centre – held at Union Chapel, 19b Compton Terrace, N1 2UN on Wednesday from 11am until 2pm.
- The Manna Day Centre – held at St Stephen's Church, 17 Canonbury Rd, London N1 2DF on Tuesday from 7pm to 9pm, Wednesday 1pm to 3pm and Friday 9am -11am.
- Housing Aid centre at 222 Upper St, London N1 1YA for advice on housing options available to you - there is a drop in service on Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm.
- Report any aggressive begging/anti-social behaviour to the local policing team by e-mailing NI-Finsburyparkward@met.police.uk or telephoning 0203 276 3030. In an emergency always call 999
- Report any non-crime related anti-social behaviour occurring to your area housing office or Islington Council's out-of-hours ASB line: 020 7527 7272, Haringey Council's ASB line: 020 8489 1335
<http://www.haringey.gov.uk/community/community-safety-and-engagement/anti-social-behaviour>

We know we cannot do this alone. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions on how we can tackle this harm, please contact sarah.turley@islington.gov.uk or maddie1.watkins@haringey.gov.uk