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## Burnham Presses Starmer to Address Surge in Rough Sleeping

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Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham has called on Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to confront the escalating homelessness crisis, urging that the issue be treated as both a social and moral priority. A new report reveals a dramatic rise in rough sleeping since the COVID-19 pandemic, with thousands living on the streets across England.

According to findings from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), rough sleeping in England has risen by 94 per cent since the onset of the pandemic, with an estimated 47,000 individuals experiencing street homelessness over the past year. According to findings from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), rough sleeping in England has risen by 94 per cent since the onset of the pandemic, with an estimated 45,000 individuals experiencing street homelessness over the past year. The CSJ warns that these figures only scratch the surface, as local councils are buckling under the financial strain of temporary accommodation costs, pushing some close to bankruptcy.

Burnham pointed to Greater Manchester's use of the "Housing First" model as a successful framework for addressing homelessness. The approach focuses on providing immediate, permanent housing without preconditions, followed by tailored support services. He described tackling homelessness not only as an economic necessity but as a "moral mission." Burnham emphasised that "if you set people up to succeed, they largely do."

The report outlines how the Housing First program has shown significant promise, with 84 per cent of participants sustaining long-term housing after three years. The CSJ estimates that implementing the model nationwide could help lift more than 5,500 individuals off the streets by the year 2029–2030. Furthermore, the program is seen as cost-effective, with every £1 invested saving £2 in temporary housing and emergency services.

Other local leaders echoed Burnham's stance. Steve Rotheram, Mayor of Liverpool, said the trial of Housing First in his region has proven the model's value and called for a national rollout. "We've proven it works. Now we need to match that with ambition," Rotheram said. Businessman and philanthropist Steve Morgan added that stable housing is the cornerstone of a functioning life, stating, "Without one, nothing else works—not your health, not your job, not your relationships."

As councils continue to grapple with rising demand and limited resources, the push for a broader adoption of Housing First is gaining momentum. The approach, backed by data and successful trials, may offer a practical, humane solution to a growing national concern.