

## Rough Sleeping - Key Facts

### Introduction

Homeless Link supports the new rough sleeping strategy. We are committed to turning the vision of ending rough sleeping into a reality.

Since the Social Exclusion Unit report on Rough Sleeping was published in 1998 there has been substantial progress towards the aim of ending rough sleeping.

So far...

- The total number of people found rough sleeping by local authority street counts has fallen by nearly three quarters - from 1,850 in 1998 to 483 in 2008<sup>1</sup>
- Over 9,000 people have been helped off the streets of London since 2000<sup>2</sup>, so while there remains a constant flow of people onto the streets, most people do not remain on the streets for the long term.

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, but despite this, there is limited data available. We have set out below some key statistics.

### 1. How many are sleeping rough?

In the 1990s, the voluntary sector and the Government agreed the 'street count'<sup>3</sup> - a consistent way to measure rough sleeping. This method reveals the absolute minimum level of rough sleeping rather than the full extent.

#### England

- Last year, 74 street counts were carried out. They found a total of 483 people sleeping rough in England on any given night, a reduction from the previous year's figure of 498.

#### London

- The total of local authority street counts in London last year was 238 (49% of the total for the whole of England).

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<sup>1</sup> Data from Communities and Local Government

<sup>2</sup> CHAIN (Combined Homeless Action and Information Network) (2008)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/housing/guidance>

- The counts found the highest number of rough sleepers in the London boroughs of Westminster (111), City of London (48) and Kensington & Chelsea (12).
- Figures from a London-based recording system<sup>4</sup> show that 3017 people were seen rough sleeping in the Capital last year.
- Over 9,000 people have been helped off the streets of London since 2000<sup>5</sup>.

## 2. Profile

Profiles of people sleeping rough differ in different parts of the country. Information in this section refers to London, for which the most comprehensive data is available.

### Gender

- 87% of people contacted were male and 13% were female.

### Age

- 62% were aged between 26 and 45. Thirty percent were aged over 46 and seven percent were under age 25.

### Ethnicity/nationality

- 50% were 'white British' and 14% were 'black or black British'. Eight percent were white Irish and 4% were Asian or Asian British.
- 61% were of UK nationality, and a further 11% were nationals of recent EU accession states<sup>6</sup>

### Support needs

- Of those whose support needs are known, 41% had drug problems, 49% had alcohol problems and 35% had mental health problems. (People may be counted in more than one category). Fifteen percent had neither drug, alcohol or mental health problems. These proportions have remained consistent over the last four years.

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<sup>4</sup> CHAIN (Combined Homeless Action and Information Network) (2008) 'Street to Home' Annual Report for London 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

<sup>5</sup> CHAIN (Combined Homeless Action and Information Network) (2008) 'Street to Home' Annual Report for London 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

<sup>6</sup> These are the 'A8' (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and Romania and Bulgaria (the 'A2')

### 3. Where have rough sleepers come from and where do they go to?

- Approximately 40% have been in prison, 12% in care and 7% in the armed forces at some time in their lives. (Some people may have experience of more than one of these).
- There is a constant flow of people onto the streets, but most people are not on the streets for the long term. Last year, 55% were new to the streets. 10% were first seen rough sleeping in the year before, and 15% were first seen rough sleeping more than five years ago<sup>7</sup>.
- Last year, of the rough sleepers that were seen, 26% were in accommodation (mainly temporary), by the end of the year. This does not include people who were helped off the streets in other ways or who found their own solutions.

### 4. Facilities for rough sleepers<sup>8</sup>

- Nationally, there are 187 day centres serving an estimated 10,000 people per day.
- There are an estimated 50,000 bed spaces in direct access hostels and second stage accommodation for non-statutory homeless people in England.
- There are 246 direct access hostels in England, provided by 148 different organisations and at least 958 second stage accommodation projects.

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<sup>7</sup> These people have not necessarily been rough sleeping continuously since they were first seen.

<sup>8</sup> Homeless Link (2008) Survey of Needs and Provision