Making the difference
How day centres are helping to tackle rough sleeping
Day centres are a diverse group of services that can play a crucial role in ending rough sleeping by supporting people to move on from homelessness, preventing tenancy breakdown and promoting employment, education and social networks.

Day centres often work with people facing the most difficult journey from the street to independent living. They welcome people who are not willing or able to engage with other services. They support socially excluded people to sustain their tenancies and break the cycle of repeat homelessness.

Day centres develop flexible, innovative ways of working, including outreach and specialist services, and a large proportion of their clients have very high support needs.

In this paper we’ll show how day centres can play a pivotal role in ending rough sleeping in England.

On any one night in 2013, 2,414 people slept rough in England. The cost to society of rough sleeping is huge. People who find themselves sleeping rough are more likely than the general population to:

- Suffer from mental and physical ill health
- Be involved with the criminal justice system
- Be dependent on welfare benefits.

Sleeping rough ruins lives and places a huge financial burden on the public purse. People need the right support to improve their lives and move away from the streets.

Most people who sleep rough will at some point be supported by day centres. Many of them will work with day centres even while they are not engaging with other local services.

In their strategy, Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide (2011), the Government called on every local authority to adopt the strategy and work to end rough sleeping in their area.

We believe that this vision can be achieved by meeting four core pledges:

1. **No one new to the streets should spend a second night out**
2. **No one should make their home on the streets**
3. **No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off them**
4. **Ultimately no one should arrive on the streets**

The work of day centres underpins each of the No Second Night Out pledges.
Day centres provide a unique opportunity to end rough sleeping

There are more than 200 day centres across England working with around 8,500 clients each day. The support they offer is unique. They do not exclude client groups, meaning they can reach a wide variety of vulnerable people.

This offers a real opportunity for your community. Community-based organisations, like day centres, are well placed to play a more important role in meeting the increasing demand for services.

**Broad client base**

Day centres see on average 41 clients a day who have some form of housing need.

**Low threshold access**

Most centres have some open or low threshold access, which enables them to engage with hard-to-reach clients.

**No time constraints**

Very few centres have time limitations on their services, which enables them to develop trusting relationships.

---

**Prevention**

They are often the first point of contact for those at risk of homelessness. 89% of people experiencing homelessness who visited a day centre after leaving their last accommodation found their advice and support useful.

**Meeting a need**

In many communities, day centres are the only services working with people who are sleeping rough and others at risk of homelessness.

**Sustainable**

Only 29% of centres are reliant on local authority funding. The majority are funded from a diverse range of sources.

**Innovative**

Free from the constraints of public funding, day centres are able to pioneer new ways to meet their clients’ needs.

**Partnership working**

Many day centres operate as a hub for people to access other community services, including health services, drug and alcohol workers, and housing and benefits advice.
How are day centres ending rough sleeping?

The following case studies are just a small selection of the kinds of work day centres are doing to end rough sleeping. To find out more, visit our Day Centres Project web page.

No one new to the streets should spend a second night out

Through early interventions day centres can prevent those experiencing homelessness from becoming entrenched in a life on the streets.

The Whitechapel Centre: Liverpool

The Whitechapel Centre is a well-established day centre in Liverpool that leads the No Second Night Out response to rough sleeping in the Merseyside area.

Using dedicated outreach and day services that respond to referrals made online or through a dedicated telephone service, Whitechapel is able to ensure that nobody who is new to the streets in Merseyside spends a second night out.

This rapid response approach helps to ensure that people who are new to the streets don’t get entrenched in a street lifestyle, which can make moving off the streets much harder in the long run.

The Whitechapel Centre assesses the needs of people – looking at their housing and support, identifying suitable accommodation options, undertaking homelessness prevention work and, where appropriate, helping to reconnect people to places where support is more readily available.

They also offer a weekly GP Surgery, drug and alcohol support services and a structured programme of activities.

Day centres can:

- Offer a rapid response to people who are newly homeless
- Act as a co-ordinating hub for NSNO and local services
- Identify and evidence local needs and emerging trends to help set local priorities.

The Whitechapel Centre leads the No Second Night Out response to rough sleeping in Merseyside - the first initiative of its kind outside London.

The Whitechapel Centre are a key partner of the city. There is only so much that can be achieved with outreach services – people need a safe, unpressured space to form relationships with staff. The Whitechapel meets people’s immediate needs, which improves their basic health and wellbeing but more importantly they can get engaged with classes and interventions.

Kath Wallace, Interim Divisional Manager, Commissioning & Safeguarding, Liverpool City Council
No one should make their home on the streets

Those who make their home on the street are significantly more likely to suffer physical and mental health problems. Day centres can:

- Develop and maintain positive relationships with hard to engage clients
- Use unique relationships to involve clients in identifying personalised solutions to homelessness
- Work in partnership with other services to implement sustainable solutions.

Beacon House: Colchester

Beacon House is a day centre in Colchester that specialises in healthcare services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Mental and physical health problems can present a barrier for people leaving the streets. Beacon House offers drop-in healthcare services, delivered by on-site nurses, operating out of a dedicated clinical area.

Beacon House nurses are skilled in dealing with the kinds of health problems faced by people who sleep rough and their services include flu vaccinations, a sexual health clinic, needle exchange, HIV and disease screening. Other wellbeing services are also available, including showers and a laundry service, a stop smoking service and a foot care specialist. The drop-in style approach enables Beacon House to engage some of the most hard-to-reach people who may otherwise find it difficult to access healthcare.

Beacon House aims to move service users into mainstream services, rather than becoming dependent on the centre. To help with this their healthcare services are complemented by life skills classes, IT skills, occupational therapy interventions and support around cooking and budgeting. As well as helping people to access accommodation by advocating for clients with the local authority and making referrals to local accommodation providers, Beacon House offers pre-tenancy support classes to ensure that move on accommodation is a success.

Beacon House was given the target to see at least 150 new homeless people each year and to register them and get them engaging with mainstream services. They have met and surpassed their targets each year.

The fact that the nurse is there at the same time as the client means that they can just get on with delivering the service without having to make appointments. Clients know nurses will be there and the immediacy of the service is crucial to the success of the project.

Debra Wyrill-Ryan, Senior Commissioning Support Officer, Essex County Council

The work of Beacon House day centre demonstrates the positive impact that can be made to the lives of homeless people when healthcare providers and day centres work together.
No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off

Interventions and solutions need to have a lasting impact. Day centres can:

- Offer meaningful activities to prevent homelessness
- Identify warning signs of those at risk of homelessness.

Spires Day Centre: London

Based in Streatham, south west London, Spires is a day centre that each year helps over 750 homeless and disadvantaged people in the community to access services and activities that promote the skills, health and wellbeing needed to ensure they don’t return to the streets.

Other homeless prevention activities at the day centre include drug and alcohol support, benefits and employment advice, housing advice and advocacy, and tenancy support.

Spires specialises in offering adult learning opportunities for people in the community who are often excluded from conventional learning. The Spires Adult Learning Centre, funded by the London Borough of Lambeth, aims to ensure there are no barriers to learning. Even people with the most vulnerable and chaotic lifestyles can still participate. They deliver easily accessible courses, while also offering an opportunity to learn in a positive and supportive environment. They help people to acquire skills that will enable them to progress further with either more training or employment opportunities.

To complement this approach, Spires offers an Access to Volunteering course and a Volunteer Training Programme, which has helped people to move into volunteering and employment opportunities in the homelessness and social care fields.

“Working with Spires is great because we can reach out to support and engage some of the more disadvantaged people in the borough. Spires as a specialist organisation is well placed to help us do that.

Spires have a deep understanding of their client group and have shared this expertise with other adult learning institutions across the borough. As a result, other institutions have expanded their engagement of homeless people and set up partnerships with other homelessness charities in their own right.

What is good about working with a day centre is that they are able to offer progression opportunities. Some of the learners from the volunteer course have gone on to work at Spires.”

Lesley Robinson, Head of Adult Learning, London Borough of Lambeth
No one should arrive on the streets
Preventative work saves future costs and lives. Day centres can:

- Signpost to most appropriate services
- Identify trends which require a specific local response
- Provide an open access service.

St Petrock’s: Exeter

St Petrock’s has used its position as a day service working with homeless and disadvantaged people to identify opportunities for preventing homelessness.

St Petrock’s identified the need for a service targeted at offenders returning to the community from local prisons.

In 2010, it took over the Prolific Offender Resettlement Through Co-ordinated Housing project, which aims to reduce re-offending and contribute to safer communities by providing sustainable accommodation and support to offenders.

It offers an intensive package of support, in conjunction with police, probation and public health partners.

The aim of the project is to motivate offenders, support them to change and to lead a pro-social lifestyle, thus reducing the likelihood that they will re-offend. Helping people to access suitable, stable accommodation immediately upon release from prison is a vital part of PORCH’s work. In 2012/13, the centre supported 138 individuals and provided accommodation to a further 89 individuals. Support continues for as long as it is needed.

In Exeter, PORCH takes on the role of finding accommodation for offenders and in 90% of cases they manage to find people somewhere to reside. Last year saw an 8.9% reduction in re-offending in the Devon area and I believe this is in no small part down to the contribution from PORCH. I cannot speak highly enough of the work of St Petrock’s.

Nariman Dubush, Operation Manager of Devon & Cornwall’s Integrated Offender Management Service

The work of St Petrock’s PORCH Project demonstrates the difference day centres can make to homeless prevention when working strategically with statutory services.
Day centres can make a huge difference in local efforts to end rough sleeping. Policy makers, service providers, commissioners and funders can all help them to overcome the challenges and make the most of their opportunities.

If you are a service provider:
- Identify day centres in your area and arrange to visit
- Establish shared aims and concerns with local day centres and develop joint working practices, particularly around a No Second Night Out response for those new to the streets
- Offer training, satellite services and joint working protocols.

If you are a commissioner or funder:
- Use day centres as a source of evidence to identify emerging local trends
- Identify and promote the innovative working practices of local day centres.

If you are a policy maker:
- Involve your local day centre in consultations and working groups on homelessness
- Use day centres as a source of intelligence on single homelessness issues
- Recognise the contribution day centres make towards ending homelessness and include them in local homelessness strategies.

How can Homeless Link help you?
- Provide examples of good practice
- Work locally with you to develop effective strategies and partnerships
- Provide support to day centres to help them improve practice.

Homeless Link Day Centres Project
Visit our Day Centres Project web page

How day centres can help to end rough sleeping
See our webinar

Find the right support for someone who is sleeping rough
Contact StreetLink

The Whitechapel Centre, Liverpool
Beacon House, Colchester
Spires Day Centre, London
St Petrock’s, Exeter

Notes
4. PROMPT figures, Homeless Link
5. www.homeless.org.uk/day-centres-project
6. www.homeless.org.uk/day-centres-project
8. www.streetlink.org.uk
9. www.whitechapelcentre.co.uk
10. www.beaconhouseministries.org.uk
11. www.spires.org.uk
12. www.stpetrocks.org.uk
What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. With over 500 members, we work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let’s end homelessness together

Homeless Link
Gateway House, Milverton Street
London SE11 4AP
020 7840 4430
www.homeless.org.uk
@Homelesslink
www.facebook.com/homelesslink

Homeless Link is a charity no. 1089173 and a company no. 04313826.