

# Identifying barriers

## Why are people still on the streets?

Our SWEP survey for 2017-18 asked the providers of SWEP who responded (a mix of local authorities and homelessness charities), “What were the barriers to getting people off the streets?” with a free text answer.

Some responses focused on the immediate issue of getting people off the streets and into SWEP, while others have focused on moving people out of emergency provision and off the streets for good.

This is a sample of the free text responses, grouped into four themes. We hope that this will help to inform service planning by highlighting common barriers that could be designed out and other factors to be considered to improve the provision. The responses also highlight a range of reasons why, even when SWEP provision is open, some people might still be sleeping rough.

For advice on how to anticipate and overcome barriers, see our SWEP guidance: [www.homeless.org.uk/swep](http://www.homeless.org.uk/swep)

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## Theme 1: SWEP Provision

### Location, opening times & facilities

- *The usual barriers or for people refusing our assistance is that they may have to go out of area where there is provision*
- *Clients not wanting to leave their town/local support network*
- *Clients not using SWEP because of 10pm curfews*
- *Provision could have been made available during the day time*
- *Perhaps our conditions, e.g. no late evening arrival/early morning departure (although in the event we were flexible, especially leaving early to work); sometimes distance/travel expense*
- *Lack of bed spaces in SWEP*
- *Unrealistic expectations of what we can provide*

### Pathways into SWEP

- *Not enough outreach workers available to go and find people*
- *Unable to find/contact known rough sleepers to make the offer*
- *Although allocated SWEP bed spaces some rough sleepers were not aware of bed space being available under SWEP as communication with them was difficult (some not having a phone or credit, the outreach team had been unable to locate them)*
- *Some services not accepting self-referrals or presentation from individuals claiming to be rough sleeping not on the SWEP list and making people wait out in the cold weather*
- *Organisations' awareness of the SWEP protocol*

### Wider organisational support

- *Keeping SWEP venues stocked up with towels, toiletries etc. The provisions were there, but communication could have been better between the SWEP providers and the organisations with stock*
- *Organising volunteers at the weekends*

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### Shared accommodation

Communal SWEP accommodation is a barrier for some people:

- *People's reluctance to sleep alongside other service users.*
- *Feeling unsafe (due to others been accommodated at that time).*
- *Lack of self-contained provision*
- *Some clients reported feelings of being intimidated by permanent residents of hostels*

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## Theme 2: Individual characteristics

### Needs of individuals were thought to be too high or complex

Complex support needs became a barrier to accessing SWEP:

- *People under the influence of drink and drugs.*
- *Pressure on staff time made it difficult to give concentrated input to high needs individuals.*
- *Criminal history or issues surrounding drugs/alcohol.*
- *Mental health issues.*
- *Some individuals just refusing the offer as unable to take substances whilst inside the accommodation on offer.*

### Substance use

- *Rules about alcohol*
- *Some of the clients were turned away from the night shelter due to alcohol/drugs so they were not happy. Some of them were also not happy being in a room.*
- *Issues with increased alcohol and drug consumption proved to be a major issue*

### Service providers' concerns about risk

- *History of violence*
- *Risk to staff and other service users*
- *Clients that had been excluded by all accommodation providers*
- *The high risk that some individuals pose. It is getting more difficult to find any place of safety for some people and there is a risk that agencies will begin to drop away*
- *Some information gaps between street outreach team and SWEP providers, including risk information*

### Demographics

- *The service does not have women-only provision which acts as a barrier to some women*
- *Communication barriers with rough sleepers from eastern European countries*
- *People with limited solutions such as NRPF spend long times in the shelter as there are no accommodation options for them to move on to*
- *EEA Migrants with no recourse to public funds.*

### Pets

- *No provision for dogs in night shelters and some of the men/women would not go in without their dogs*
- *There were a limited number of SWEP places for those that were accompanied by dogs. Some people did not access SWEP facilities due to their dogs. This was despite the fact that rough sleepers were informed that kennel spaces could be provided for dogs*

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### Theme 3: Engaging people into SWEP

#### Engaging individuals and supporting them into SWEP

- *Engagement – most were heavy drinkers and did not cooperate at first*
- *Drug and alcohol addiction are barriers to engagement*
- *Some clients preferred to remain at their established sleep sites rather than access SWEP, particularly if the weather wasn't severely cold.*
- *Clients refusing offers of a place of safety*
- *A significant number of people chose to sleep outside during the two periods of cold weather. All rough sleepers were informed of the shelter being in operation via outreach*

#### Short-term provision

- *People less inclined to come in if it was just for a short time (i.e. short cold snap). Those not engaging with services already refused this offer of support too, usually those that are very entrenched and engaged in begging and substance misuse*

#### Trust and engagement

- *Unwillingness to engage – took multiple attempts in some cases*
- *Out of Hours service not being proactive enough*
- *A feeling of being let down by services before*

#### Street-attached behaviour

- *General public taking food and blankets and enabling, rather than encourage engagement with support agencies*
- *People staying out to beg rather than coming indoors*
- *We found that a high number of individuals with drug or alcohol habits now beg. The amount from money earned from begging daily was a barrier to getting people off the street*
- *Those not engaging with services already refused this offer of support too, usually those that are very entrenched and engaged in begging and substance misuse*
- *Some chose not to access any SWEP accommodation despite being referred and space allocated, choosing to remain in other locations to continue street begging or due to their substance misuse habits and rules around leaving the building*

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### Theme 4: Challenges to moving people on from SWEP

#### Engagement with move on

- *When SWEP was only one or two nights, no opportunity to work with them to resolve homelessness*
- *No wish to engage with services for onward accommodation and falling outside of statutory provision*
- *Even after accessing SWEP accommodation some chose not to engage in follow on support to access services to address needs or secure more permanent accommodation*
- *We had one person who did not want to engage with services or claim benefits*
- *We have one long term rough sleeper who refuses to accept assistance from the welfare state and therefore will not claim benefits, which prevents access to permanent accommodation.*

## Homeless Link

### Demographics

- *None of the supported housing providers accept couples*
- *Lack of complex needs services available to people with NRPF*
- *Unstable housing, unstable work, and no access to public resources*

### Lack of affordable and supported housing

- *Lack of affordable housing and supported accommodation in the area. Difficulty in getting clients to engage with drug agency and mental health team (largely due to high threshold of issues required for mental health team to accept referral)*
- *The increasing costs of accessing housing has meant finding solutions for rough sleepers is more challenging than ever before*
- *Lack of support to those most entrenched i.e. multiple and complex needs due to decommissioning of services such as drug and alcohol*
- *Supported housing providers have very few vacancies and generally run a waiting list*
- *Lack of connections with landlords willing to offer rooms to people with low incomes*
- *The housing market does not work for many of these people. Access to social housing is limited, major issues of affordability and huge concerns when Universal Credit is rolled out to full service that it will be incredibly difficult for many to maintain within processes necessary to secure and maintain accommodation.*
- *Not enough places for them to go. Local hostels are nearly always full and, even if guests can raise a deposit and afford the rent, the PRS won't usually rent to those on benefits*
- *All referrals having to go through the homeless prevention team at the council which usually meant that potential candidates had to present at the town hall to be assessed*
- *Finding available accommodation. LHA decision process took too long and offered too little*

### Location of services available

- *Some rough sleepers in our area do not want to access services in the city*
- *Local connection – not wanting to return to their own area*

### Complex needs and multiple disadvantage

- *Service users with multiple exclusions from other services and no move on options*
- *Many of the people were known to services and have been accommodated several times but due to their behaviour lost their accommodation and it gets harder to place them*
- *Long term rough sleepers struggling to adapt back in supported settings*

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For advice on how to anticipate and overcome these barriers while designing your SWEP provision, see our guidance: [www.homeless.org.uk/swep](http://www.homeless.org.uk/swep)