

ROUGH SLEEPING

KEY FACTS – MARCH 2011

INTRODUCTION

Homeless Link supports the government's rough sleeping strategy, which was announced on 8th November 2008. The No One Left Out¹ rough sleeping strategy signals the government's intention to work with partner agencies to end rough sleeping by 2012. The strategy sets out fifteen actions that the government will take to reduce rough sleeping to as close to as zero as possible. We are committed to turning this vision of ending rough sleeping into a reality.

So far...

- The CLG has overhauled the rough sleeping count methodology to ensure that we have a complete picture of rough sleeping across the country (see section below on Rough Sleeper Evaluation).
- New estimates show that the number of rough sleepers could be as high as 1,247². This is because for the first time, all councils have been asked to submit estimates of the number of people sleeping rough on the streets in their area. In contrast, the total number of people found rough sleeping by local authority street counts was 464 in 2009.

ROUGH SLEEPERS EVALUATION

In autumn 2010, the government published a guidance incorporating a wider definition of rough sleeping. Individuals who fall into the category below should be included in the count in order to maintain consistency:

“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or

¹ CLG, (2008). *No One Left Out – Communities Ending Rough Sleeping*. Retrieved from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingstrategy>

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/>

other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).”³

1. HOW MANY ARE SLEEPING ROUGH?

Rough sleeping counts and estimates are single night snapshots of the number of people sleeping rough in local authority areas. Local authorities decide whether to carry out a count or an estimate based upon their assessment of whether the local rough sleeping problem justifies counting.

England

The autumn 2010 total of rough sleeping counts and estimates in England was 1,768. This is a 42% increase of the 2009 figure of 1,247, breaking a long trend of declining numbers. This could be in part due to the new methodology that has been applied (estimates as well as counts being used), but also shows that rough sleeping is still very much an issue that needs to be tackled.

London

- London has the highest number of rough sleepers, with a total of 415. 12 Local Authorities in London conducted street counts between October - November 2010, finding 262 people sleeping rough. The other 21 Local Authorities submitted rough sleeping estimates with a total of 153 rough sleepers.
- The counts found the highest number of rough sleepers in the London boroughs of Westminster (128), Kensington & Chelsea (32) and Southwark (29).
- The CHAIN database, a London-based recording system that records figures on rough sleepers, show that 3'673⁴ people were seen rough sleeping in the Capital last year. This is 201 more than the previous year.

2. PROFILE OF ROUGH SLEEPERS

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.⁴

Gender

- A large majority of rough sleepers are males. The latest CHAIN figures suggest that only 1 in 10 people contacted were females.

Age

- 61% were aged between 26 and 45, 29% were aged over 46, and 9% were aged under 25.

Ethnicity/Nationality

- 46% were “White British” and 13% were “Black or Black British”. 23% were “White Other”, 6% were “White Irish” and 3% were “Asian or Asian British”.
- 52% (a 6% drop from last year) were of UK nationality, and a further 26% (8% increase since last year) were Central and Eastern Europeans.

³ CLG. (2010). *Evaluating the Extent of Rough Sleeping: New Approach*. Retrieved from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1713784.pdf>

⁴ CHAIN (Combined Homeless Action and Information Network) (2010). “*Street to Home*” *Annual Report 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010*.

Support Needs

- Of those whose support needs were known, 33% had drug problems, 48% had alcohol problems, and 30% had mental health problems. Some individuals may be counted in more than one category).
- 21% had neither drug, alcohol or mental health problems. These proportions have remained consistent over the last five years.

3. WHERE HAVE ROUGH SLEEPERS COME FROM AND WHERE DO THEY GO TO?

- Approximately 32% have been in prison, 10% in care and 6% in the armed forces at some point in their lives. Some individuals 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. In 2009/2010, 61% were new to the streets. 26% were also seen rough sleeping in the year before, and 13% of people had slept rough in the past but not within the previous year.

4. FACILITIES FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS⁵

- There are 198 day centres in England serving an estimated 10'000 people each day.
- There are an estimated 43'000 bed spaces in direct access hostels and second stage accommodation for non-statutory homeless people in England.
- There are 267 direct access hostels in England and 1'174 second stage accommodation projects.

⁵ Homeless Link (2011). Survey of Needs and Provision 2011.