



*Guidance on evaluating the
extent of rough sleeping*

2007 Revision



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March 2007

Department for Communities and Local Government : London

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March 2007

Product Code: 06HHS04498

Guidance on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping – 2007 Revision

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is intended to help local authorities, in partnership with other local agencies, to evaluate the extent of rough sleeping by carrying out a count of people sleeping rough in their area. It replaces the guidance contained in *Guidance on Evaluating the Extent of Rough Sleeping and Developing a Strategy*, published by this Department in 1997.

This guidance pack contains updated information on current government policy, on developing a local strategy, and on who to contact for further advice and information. It is important that a consistent methodology is used for carrying out counts both to accurately measure the changing situation over time and to allow meaningful comparisons between different areas. Local authority co-ordinators should now have a good understanding of this information as part of their local strategy, so in view of this we have simplified the guidance on reporting the results of the count, and have included a new standard form for reporting results to the Homelessness and Housing Management Programme Division (HHMP¹).

BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Prime Minister set a target that by 2002 the numbers of rough sleepers should be reduced by at least two thirds from the then level of 1,850. The target was met ahead of time in 2001 and to date is being sustained. The Government is committed to sustaining this target and reducing rough sleeping to as near to zero as possible.

In December 1999 the Prime Minister launched *Coming in from the Cold, the Government's strategy for tackling rough sleeping* which set out detailed plans for meeting the target.

Progress against the target is measured by single night street counts in areas where there is a known, or suspected, rough sleeping problem. Since the last guidance was issued in 1997 counts have taken place in many local authority areas around the country and these have been used to establish robust annual estimates of the number of people sleeping rough across England. These estimates showed that, as at June 1998, there were 1,850 people sleeping rough in England. Latest figures, as reported in the 2006 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA²) return showed that this number has fallen to 502 on any one night, a figure which represents a 73% reduction on the 1998 baseline level. Regular street counts in areas with significant numbers of rough sleepers will continue to form the basis both for updating this national estimate and for monitoring local progress in tackling local problems.

¹ Formerly the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU)

² Formerly Housing Investment Programme (HIP)

FREQUENCY OF CARRYING OUT A ROUGH SLEEPING COUNT

It will not be necessary for all local authorities to carry out a full rough sleeping count. Communities and Local Government recommend that counts are carried out in accordance with the following guidelines:

- If a local authority has identified, through an official count, more than 20 rough sleepers it should carry out regular counts (at least every six months) until the figure has reduced to below 20. This should be supplemented by more frequent hot spot counts.
- If the local authority has identified, through an official count, more than 10 rough sleepers it should carry out regular counts (at least every 12 months) until the figure has reduced to below 10. This should be supplemented by more frequent hot spot counts.
- If a local authority has identified, through a count, a figure of less than 10, but more than 0, a further full count is not necessary, though may be carried out at the local authority's discretion. We would recommend the occasional hotspot count to keep track of the situation.
- If the local authority feels that it has developed a rough sleeping problem – and in particular it estimates that there may be more than 10 rough sleepers in the area, a full count should be carried out to clarify the situation.
- All local authorities carrying out official counts that they intend to submit as formal returns on their HSSA must adhere to this guidance. Any count that has not been notified to Communities and Local Government in advance, and which has not been independently verified by a Communities and Local Government representative, will be disallowed from the HSSA.

Local authorities can gain intelligence about the current street population through outreach workers, the police or voluntary sector. Following receipt of anecdotal evidence the local authority should undertake an informal hot spot or reconnaissance count to verify the situation before arranging a full count. Self-reporting surveys, or surveys carried out over time (ie for more than one night) do not constitute evidence towards deciding whether a rough sleeper count is required. However, they can provide useful information with regards to clients, sleeping sites etc. If a local authority is unsure whether they need to arrange a full count they should discuss their evidence/intelligence with Communities and Local Government (contact details below).

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

The original guidance included notes on how to use information from single night street counts to help develop a local strategy. Since 1997 local strategies have been developed in all areas where a significant rough sleeping problem has been found. In this context, the purpose of counts is to inform the continuing development of strategies, to measure their success and to identify gaps in services.

GOOD PRACTICE

Annexed to this guidance are some case studies from local authorities who have made good progress in reducing and sustaining the numbers of people sleeping rough in their areas which may of use when developing a strategy. HHMP would be interested in hearing from other local authorities who may have adopted other approaches.

CONTACTS

Further help and advice is available from HHMP. In the first instance you should contact Nicki Goddard on 020 7944 5908, or at:

Homelessness and Housing Management Programme Division
Department for Communities and Local Government
1/J10, Eland House
Bressenden Place
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SW1E 5DU

nicki.goddard@communities.gsi.gov.uk

CONTENTS OF THIS PACK

In addition to this guidance note, this pack should also contain:

Notes for counters

Form A: Count of people sleeping rough

Form B: People excluded from count

Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping, and carrying out a single night street count

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of rough sleeping will need a Project Manager responsible for managing the whole evaluation. He or she may also delegate the detailed management of the street count to a Count Co-ordinator.

This guide is primarily for the local Project Manager and the Count Co-ordinator. It sets out the methodology for carrying out counts and wider evaluations of people sleeping rough in local areas. There are separate *Notes for counters* in the pack. The guide is based on the extensive experience of carrying out counts across the country. It has two main objectives:

- To enable local evaluations to benefit from the experience of other areas;
- To ensure that evaluations are carried out consistently between areas and according to sound research methods that have been agreed in advance with Communities and Local Government and that produce robust results.

While local circumstances vary it is essential that you follow the methodology here, so that the results of the count can provide useful comparisons over time and between areas.

This section of the guidance covers:

- Who should carry out the evaluation;
- Organising the street count;
- Bringing together key local agencies;
- Setting up a working group;
- The definition of people sleeping rough;
- Identifying areas to be counted;
- Forms and guidance notes;
- Ensuring the count is carried out as thoroughly as possible;
- The safety of counters;
- Reporting the results.

WHO SHOULD CARRY OUT THE EVALUATION

Counts should be co-ordinated by the local authority rough sleeping co-ordinator. It is important however to involve a range of agencies working with people sleeping rough in the area. Their differing knowledge and expertise will ensure a wider range of reliable information.

ORGANISING THE STREET COUNT

This section outlines the key steps in organising the street count.

A single night count is a snapshot. It does not aim to record everyone in the area with a history of sleeping rough, but experience has shown that it is the most effective means of gauging the relative scale of the problem and of monitoring progress over time. In areas where rough sleepers may move across local authority boundaries, particularly urban areas or where there is a shared outreach service, you may wish to consider conducting your street count at the same time as neighbouring boroughs to minimise the risk of distorting the total number of rough sleepers in either direction.

1. **Identify the key local agencies** that are in contact with people sleeping rough in the area. These are likely to include hostels, night shelters, day centres, soup runs, outreach and resettlement agencies, advice centres, housing associations, the housing department, social services, youth workers, probation, the health authority, the police and others. If there is a local forum or network which brings together key homelessness agencies that could be the starting point for bringing the appropriate agencies together.
2. **Set up a small working group.** The count will work best if the working group is limited to the agencies who will be taking an active part in the count. Other agencies can be kept informed by the active participants who should form the working group.
3. **Timetable.** Although it is possible to organise a count in a shorter period, ideally you should allow about two months planning from the first meeting of the working group to carrying out the count. Counts should be undertaken between the 1 September and 30 November (autumn count) and/or 1 March and 31 May (spring count) if they are to be included as official counts in local authority HSSA returns. **Communities and Local Government must be notified by the local authority that they intend to carry out a count, and the proposed date, at least one month in advance of the count.**
4. **Decide on a night.** The count must take place on a single night. If spread over two or more nights there will be doubts about whether some people have been counted twice. Co-ordinate information when choosing a date and avoid any periods when unusual factors might distort the count, for example local events of high levels of police activity in an area, which can lead to people sleeping rough moving elsewhere temporarily. In addition, thought should be given to identifying an appropriate day of the week. It may not be appropriate to carry out a count over the weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) if numbers are likely to be elevated by related factors. Also key days during the week, such as those on which benefits are collected, may also provide a false picture of the average levels of rough sleeping in the area. The count should start at a time when people have actually bedded down, otherwise some will be missed and others, who are on the streets but who do not actually sleep there, may be included mistakenly. The earliest starting time should be midnight, but in many areas such as

busy city centres it may need to be later than this and a start time as late as 3am may be necessary. Local judgement should be exercised as to when rough sleepers bed down in the area - if in doubt, start later. Many street homeless people will get up early and all counts should be completed by 6am at the latest.

- 5. The definition of people sleeping rough.** In order to ensure the consistency of results, it is essential that all participants understand the definition of people sleeping rough which is being used for this exercise. The definition is:

People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes, squatters, travellers, people who were there earlier or who were known to sleep rough on other occasions, but who were not there at the time of the count, people wandering around and sleeping sites without occupants. Research has found that in many areas people seen drinking in the street or begging (even if they have a blanket or a sleeping bag) are not necessarily sleeping rough and they should not be included unless they are clearly bedded down at the time of the count. Bedded down is taken to mean lying down in a sleeping bag, or other bedding.

It has been found that in some areas local groups argue for a wider definition to be used. However any wider definition would seriously undermine the effectiveness of the evaluation because:

- The research methods have been designed only to evaluate the extent of people sleeping on the streets and services for them, not wider groups of homeless people;
- Evaluations have identified the importance of targeting programmes on people with a clear history of rough sleeping; while authorities and voluntary sector agencies may also have programmes for wider groups of homeless and potentially homeless people, this evaluation is designed only to inform programmes aimed at rough sleepers.

All counters should be thoroughly briefed on the definition of rough sleeping to be applied. If in doubt about the inclusion of an individual, counters should be told to record the person on the separate form provided (*form B*) with details of their circumstances, so that an assessment can be made subsequently of whether to include them. This might include, for example, people sleeping in tents away from campsites that might be homeless but could be tourists, or people sleeping in transport stations without bedding.

Any count carried out on a single night will miss out on some people who drift in and out of sleeping rough. Many of these will be staying in hostels on the night of the actual count. Although information concerning hostel provision and occupancy is not required by Communities and Local Government as part of the formal rough sleeping return, local authorities may find it useful for planning purposes to understand levels of provision on the night (see hostel provision and occupancy).

- 6. Agree on the boundaries of the area and identify segments of the area where people sleeping rough are likely to be found.** You should not aim to cover every street, or even every neighbourhood, in your area. If you try to cover areas with no history of people sleeping rough it will spread resources too thinly. It is much more effective to concentrate on a thorough search of areas known to be used by people sleeping rough. Getting this stage right is critical to the success of the exercise and depends on making maximum use of local knowledge. If necessary, draw on the knowledge of agencies that are not on the working group. You will then need to divide the areas being counted into segments to be covered by separate teams of counters. Agree exact boundaries to the segments, identifying individual streets and parts of streets, and draw them on a map. It is important to be precise about boundaries in order to avoid either missing areas or double counting them. Notify the police and, if any of the areas are in non-public places or are closed at night, make arrangements with the owners to gain access. Ideally, it should not take more than three hours to cover an area on foot.
- 7. Allocate segments to area teams.** Each agency on the steering group might take on one or more areas for which they will undertake to co-ordinate the counts. Wherever possible, they should be areas well known to the teams and individual counters should also, if possible, be familiar with that particular area. The most effective counters are those with a knowledge of where people are likely to be sleeping rough in that area, for example workers from local outreach teams, night shelters, day centres or soup runs. If it is necessary to recruit a wider range of volunteers, try to team them up with a worker with knowledge of local rough sleeping.
- 8. Forms and guidance notes to be used.** This guidance pack contains standard forms and guidance notes. These can be photocopied, preferably onto different coloured paper for each form for ease of later distribution and collation. The standard forms should be used to ensure comparability with other areas. **It is essential that counters record each individual person on a separate line on Form A and that the record of each individual is verified by the counter.** There is a temptation for counters simply to write totals on the form. This is impossible to verify as an accurate record. Information about each rough sleeper may be recorded from previous knowledge of the person and their sleeping site. If an individual is not known, and where it is safe to do so, the counter should attempt to wake each individual to record their details. If it is not possible to do this at the least, gender, broad ethnic origin and an estimate of age can be recorded from observations where people sleeping rough are visible. Even if the counter cannot observe, or establish, any details about the individual (for example because they are unable to wake them and they are covered up) they should still record them individually. It may be helpful to request the assistance of the local police in waking individuals who counters are unable to wake. It is important to try and establish the identity of a rough sleeper on the night of the count as this will help with follow-up and referrals following the count. Communities and Local Government would like to be aware of any individuals sleeping rough who do not have recourse to public funds and are therefore unable to be moved off of the streets, in particular those from EU Accession States³. Form A has been updated to include these ethnic groups. All people recorded and verified on Form A will be included in the total outcome of the count. Details on individuals should be kept strictly confidential and not revealed to

³ referred to as A8s (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia & Slovenia) and A2s (Romania & Bulgaria)

anyone outside of the project team. It is also important to give as much information as possible on the location of people sleeping rough, as this may help with the future planning of services. Forms A and B must be completed on the night of the count and returned to the count coordinator on that night.

9. **Do not publicise the count until after it has taken place.** Publicity can worry some people sleeping rough and they may avoid their usual areas on the night if they know a count is taking place.
10. **Brief the counters and carry out a reconnaissance.** Counters should understand the purpose of the project and how to go about it. (There are separate *Notes for counters* in this pack). **In particular they should understand:**
 - **The definition of sleeping rough**
 - **The importance of recording each individual separately**

Counters should be provided with the *Notes for counters*, a supply of *Forms A and B* and maps of the exact area they are covering. Counters should also be provided with an identification letter describing briefly what they are doing. You should also arrange a reconnaissance of the area over a period of a few days, to identify possible sites where people might sleep rough. This exercise might identify non-public areas such as hospital or college grounds where it will be necessary to liaise with the owners over gaining access. While making the reconnaissance, you should not tell people sleeping rough about the count unless asked, as this can arouse suspicion and discourage people from sleeping in their normal places. If asked, you should stress the confidentiality of the count. Counters should be briefed to respect the privacy of those sleeping rough and not to pass on any information to people not involved in the count.

11. **Carrying out the count and safety.** Counters should work in pairs both for safety and to verify the accuracy of the records made. They should record each individual person sleeping rough on *Form A*. In addition to a supply of forms, maps and pens, they may need torches. The safety of counters should be the overriding priority. If there are any areas in which they feel unsafe, they should be told not to enter them, but to make a note of these areas. Local police may be willing to assist in some areas. A meeting, and debriefing venue must be arranged, such as a local authority building or day centre, where counters can meet and return to once they have completed their section. Arrangements should be made in advance for the safe transport home of counters, by taxi if necessary. If any areas are not counted then no estimate should be included in the count, but details may be included on *Form B – people and sites excluded from the count*
12. **Checking the returns.** A debriefing meeting should be held immediately after the count and counters should return the forms to their team co-ordinators, including those where a nil count was returned. The debriefing meeting can be used to check that all areas were covered, that there was no double counting and to add any information about individuals recorded on the count forms that may be known to other workers.
13. **Verifying the count.** In order to ensure the robustness of counts and that they are carried out in accordance to this guidance Communities and Local Government have recruited a pool of independent verifiers from the voluntary sector. When you notify

HHMP of the date of your count an independent verifier, or a Communities and Local Government official (depending on availability), will be allocated to attend your count. Their role will be to ensure, at the debrief, that forms have been completed correctly, that the definition of a rough sleeper has been adhered to and that the count has been carried out in accordance with this guidance. As verifiers will be experienced in either organising and/or undertaking rough sleeping counts they can also act as counters.

HOSTEL PROVISION AND OCCUPANCY

Although it is at the local authority's discretion, it may be useful to also collect information on occupancy of hostels and night shelters potentially available to people sleeping rough during the period of the count. The purpose of this is to assess:

- The number of people with a history of rough sleeping in the area who were staying in hostels;
- The extent to which existing hostels are providing or could provide for rough sleepers, or whether different or additional provision might be needed.

The initial focus is on direct access hostels rather than on all hostels in the area, as these will be the ones which people sleeping rough may be able to access from the streets. The suggested definition of direct access is:

A hostel for single homeless people that will accept individual self referral and /or a referral from any agency working with single homeless people, does not operate a waiting list and can offer vacancies on at least a weekly basis.

If there are hostels in your area which are not direct access but to which street outreach workers have referral rights then these should also be included.

It is recommended that hostels are contacted by telephone on the day of the count and the day after for information on occupancy on that night, as this is the most important figure to record. You may also find it helpful, in assessing appropriate provision, to have an analysis of hostel provision and occupancy for a longer time period around the time of the count.

Other information on the provision made by hostels includes rules on age, gender, special needs (including alcohol, drug and mental health problems), access times, referral arrangements and any additional services such as wet provision, detoxification, medical and support services. This enables an assessment to be made of whether the current provision is meeting, or could potentially meet, the needs of rough sleepers in the area.

REPORTING THE RESULTS OF THE COUNT

The results of the count should be reported to HHMP as soon as final figures are available i.e. once the debrief has been held. As well as reporting the numbers recorded on *form A* and *form B*, it would be helpful to include the number of hostel vacancies on the night of the count, and any other observations which might be relevant. This could include severe weather on the night of the count, any inaccessible areas, or any local events (such as a football match or carnival) which may have affected the numbers of people found. Copies

of both *form A* and *form B*, including any where a nil count was returned should be submitted to HHMP within one week of the count so that the outcome can be recorded for the HSSA return.

GOOD PRACTICE

Case studies, which may be of use in developing a strategy to respond to the outcome of a count, are attached to this guidance.

Reducing rough sleeping – Brighton & Hove Case Study

Brighton & Hove has sustained a 60% reduction in rough sleeping since 2001. A number of factors can be attributed to this success. These are outlined below.

ASSERTIVE OUTREACH

In 2001 Brighton & Hove City Council commissioned CRI (Crime Reduction Initiative) to develop a Contact and Assessment Team (now Rough Sleepers & Street Services Team (RSSST)) with the aim of reducing levels of rough sleeping in the City.

The team has been highly effective in fulfilling this aim and are key to the City's success. The team adopt an assertive outreach model to ensure that they identify, assess and support all rough sleepers. The approach is characterised by the following principles:

- Time unlimited – service users are not discharged
- High frequency of client contact – daily street shifts that are targeted towards hotspots and new referrals
- An emphasis on building trusting relationships between staff and service users
- Holistic, client-centred approach using creative and flexible methods and interventions
- Clear and formal links with key voluntary and statutory partners
- A team approach, with identified key workers and specialisms
- Joint street shifts with key agencies, including the police

RECONNECTION

The council has commissioned three agencies to provide relocation services to move people out of the City, where they do not meet the criteria for access to accommodation services or where they choose to move. Relocation is only undertaken once a package of support is in place in the new area. Two of these services have adopted an assertive outreach approach (CRI, Hove YMCA), whilst the third (Brighton Housing Trust) uses a building based approach. The teams have close links with providers nationally.

ACCESS TO SUPPORTED HOUSING

The RSSST has 100% allocation rights into four supported housing projects in the City. This allows for timely placement of service users and strong links between the team and accommodation providers. Specialist supported housing provision ensures that accommodation is tailored to the needs of service users with complex needs.

INTEGRATED SUPPORT PATHWAY

Brighton & Hove City Council is about to launch the ISP. This is a new framework for accommodation services which groups provision into Bands based on the nature and level of support. Band 1 equates to temporary accommodation with reactive support, Band 2 services are high support hostels, Band 3 services are self-contained units with lower level support, up to Band 5, crisis intervention to prevent tenancy breakdown. The key aim of this approach is to foster a strong culture of positive resettlement within services.

LOCAL CONNECTION POLICY

Brighton & Hove adopted a local connection policy in 2001. The policy has been instrumental in reducing levels of rough sleeping in the City and is a tool for prioritising scarce resources for single homeless people.

ROUGH SLEEPERS CASEWORK FORUM

This is a multi agency meeting, coordinated by the RSSST. The aim of the group is to identify all rough sleepers and ensure a coordinated approach to managing their case. The RSCWF meets monthly, increasing to fortnightly in the summer.

KEY CONTACTS

For further information please contact:

Brighton & Hove City Council

Vanessa Gray – Single Homeless Strategy Officer – 01273 293186

Steve Bulbeck – Head of Single Homeless, Rough Sleeper and Support Services – 01273 293120

CRI

Bec Davison – Area Manager Brighton & Hove – 01273 265672

The tasking and targeting framework – Camden Case Study

The partnership work undertaken in Camden to reduce street activity is facilitated through the Tasking and Targeting (T and T) framework. The T and T is designed to ensure a joint and consistent approach to the street population and street management issues, between the Safer Street Team (SST), other service provider agencies, the Camden Street Wardens and the police.

The T and Ts are regular multi-agency, geographically specific meetings, bringing together all agencies involved in street management and or the provision of services to the street population. Thus a typical attendee list will read as follows:

1. SST management, project worker and Anti-Social Behaviour section rep
2. Police Sector Team/Safer Neighbourhoods rep
3. Local hostel manager(s)
4. Local day centre manager(s)
5. LBC Street Warden rep
6. LCB Street Population Services rep
7. LBC Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group rep
8. Other specialist service provider reps (egg: mental health, drugs, young people and Criminal Justice)

The framework is flexible, and responds to the demands of local circumstance, thus other members such as Housing, Town Centre or Parks management officers can be accommodated as appropriate.

Some departments/agencies may provide written updates rather than attending the meeting.

There are five T and Ts operating across the borough.

1. Holborn and Bloomsbury (West End)
2. Kings Cross
3. Camden Town
4. North East (Gospel Oak and Hampstead)
5. North West (Kilburn, Swiss Cottage and West Hampstead)

The North of the borough meetings happen monthly, all other T and Ts are fortnightly. The SST management rep chairs all the meetings. The T and Ts feed in to the street management hot spot and other locality meetings (such as The Camden Town Operational Group and The West End Drugs Partnership) through the Head of Street Population Services.

The central remit for the T and Ts is to agree a case-plan for all individuals coming to notice engaging in street activity in the locality. All agencies can bring clients for discussion. This is a simple point but an important one. Historically, the amount of energy expended in discussing whether specific clients should be part of the process if not known to all agencies, has been a major stumbling block to successful partnership work in this area.

The vast majority of the case-plans will be very traditional, in terms of agreeing service interventions such as targeting the client for the next appropriate hostel vacancy. This decision can then be consistently applied by all agencies coming into contact with the client. This guards against clients playing off service providers and the police against each other, and gives the police knowledge of the interventions available and being offered. In some cases projects have set up referral protocols, which allow the police or street wardens to refer clients as part of their identified T and T case plan.

The case-plans are recorded and then distributed to all attendees and other appropriate stakeholders, so that resources can be allocated accordingly.

A key decision within each case-plan is the agreed time scale for the client accessing the identified service interventions. The time frame facilitates the other major function of the T and T, which is the recommendation of appropriate enforcement options for clients such as Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs) or Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Enforcement options will be considered against clients who have consistently refused services or those who have accepted them in such a way as has not reduced their anti-social street activity. The partners will offer all services within this delivery structure. Thus the T and Ts are also responsible for overseeing the continued provision of appropriate services during the enforcement process.

The fundamental service intervention and enforcement balance, means that the T and T is the management mechanism for all the partnership work undertaken by the police and the SST. The specific areas covered are:

- 1 Begging Reduction Trailblazer** – Facilitating the joint shifts and client targets for enforcement in each police sector.
- 2 Controlled Drinking Zone** – Facilitating CDZ enforcement specific case plans in appropriate T and T's and the monthly CDZ joint patrol.
- 3 Operation Oxen** – Facilitating joint work on estates as the request of district housing officers.
- 4 Rough Sleeping** – Joint work to target specific clients with regards to clients to them accessing services they have previously refused.
- 5 Pentonville Project** – Joint work to agree service options for identified individuals leaving prison.

- 6 **Street Surveys** – Monthly multi-agency and community surveys of street activity in the West End and Camden Town.

Terms of Reference

Tasking and Targeting Framework

AIMS:

1. To provide a joined up, multi-agency approach to street management.
2. To work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to minimise the impact of street activity and the community safety concerns it creates.
3. To work with service users targeted by the framework, in order to address their street based lifestyles.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To provide information to attendees about the street population, and the sites where street activity.
2. To progress the identification of the street population where this is not already known.
3. To agree a case-plan pathway for all service users that will address their street based lifestyles.
4. To provide updated information on any sites or service users who are on the T and T target list.
5. To monitor the progress of all service user case-plans and to recommend the use of enforcement measures as appropriate.
6. To share information and ideas and to act proactively to facilitate interagency cooperation with regards to progression of case-plans and facilitation of case conferences, when appropriate.
7. To agree the logistics and specific aims of partnership operations.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES:

1. To meet fortnightly.
2. Chaired by SST Manager or Team Leader.
3. Members to inform the SST if unavailable to attend.
4. To promote an environment of anti-discrimination and diversity.

5. To acknowledge and work in partnership with the different perspectives of attendee agencies.
6. SST will facilitate the recording and distribution of T&T information.
7. LBC will facilitate the recording and distribution enforcement update.

MEMBERS OF THE FRAMEWORK:

The Framework is aimed at agencies in the voluntary and statutory sector working to reduce the level and impact of street activity, defined as:

- Street based drug use
- Street based begging
- Street based sex working
- Street based drinking
- Street based rough sleeping

THE ROLE OF THE T&T MEETING:

- To agree a case-plan for each individual, for this to be consistently applied by all members of the T and T framework.
- To discuss and recommend enforcement actions where appropriate.
- To discuss street activity sites, to agree and plan joint operations where appropriate.
- To share information with regards to the reduction of street activity in Camden, within the “Information Sharing” policies of the attendee/stakeholder agencies.

CONTACT DETAILS:

London Borough of Camden:
Tom Preest – Head of Street Population Services
tom.preest@camden.gov.uk

Crime Reduction Initiative:
Helen Arnold – Manager Safer Streets Team
harnold@crinet@co.uk

Rough sleepers case study – Plymouth

In December 2005, an official rough sleeper's count of 17 provided Plymouth with a loud wake-up call and the impetus for doing things differently.

Twelve months on, after adopting new ways of working, we found only 3 rough sleepers at the thirty sites we visited during our latest official count.

Plymouth's rough sleepers' strategy reflects this fresh approach, builds on the excellent work that had already been done and provides positive outcomes for rough sleepers. Its focus is on smarter working and early intervention, and it asserts the fact that rough sleeping is not a lifestyle that the city will sustain.

To ensure that all agencies were signed up to this new way of working, we invested a lot of time in talking to stakeholders about the size and nature of the problem and what we hoped to achieve by doing things differently.

We sought advice from the government's specialist advisers, visited Bournemouth (our Regional Champions) and learned from good practice. We also used the film on Camden's Street Services Team (featured in the CLG's 'Tackling Homelessness' DVD) to help us describe the outcomes and level of co-ordination we were hoping to achieve in Plymouth.

Although there is still much to be done, we have already made significant progress in increasing the options and life chances of rough sleepers, and reducing the number of people sleeping rough in the city.

We have achieved this by developing a new rough sleeper's strategy in partnership with all of the agencies working with rough sleepers, and by being a lot clearer about the contribution that each agency is required to make to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping in Plymouth.

During the past year, the Outreach Workers have become more assertive, assessing rough sleepers' housing and support needs, challenging them to think about where they are going to live, preparing them for moving off the streets, and helping them to access suitable accommodation.

A spreadsheet (containing full details of all move-on work undertaken with every rough sleeper contacted by the Outreach Workers that day) is produced, for monitoring purposes, at the end of every outreach session. This is monitored by the Council's Housing Options Manager who will intervene, as appropriate, to remove any barriers to move-on.

As part of the city's fresh approach to rough sleeping, the Council's Housing Advice, Homelessness and Housing Needs teams are working more closely with local hostels to maximise move-on in order to free up the necessary bed spaces to enable rough sleepers to come off the streets.

The hostels are also working more imaginatively and collaboratively to reduce the number of people who are excluded because of their behaviour. They have also adopted a ‘snakes and ladders’ approach to sanctions, moving residents to other hostels, rather than back onto the streets, where residents are in breach of the hostel’s rules but a ‘demotion’ is deemed to offer a better and more appropriate solution.

Plymouth’s rough sleepers strategy provides clear direction for the way in which services are to be delivered over the next three years, including the development of a ‘unique ID’ system for assessing, recording and monitoring not just the needs of people who are sleeping rough but also the nature, impact and effectiveness of any interventions.

Our long-term aim is to develop a fully-integrated multi-agency advice, assessment and support service that helps rough sleepers off the streets, assists with resettlement and tenancy sustainment and keeps to an absolute minimum the number of people returning to the streets.

Good practice in Westminster contributing to low street counts

BUILDING BASED SERVICES MODEL

In July 2005 Westminster adopted its current “Building Based Services” model for rough sleeper services. The intention of this change in emphasis was to provide services for rough sleepers exclusively within buildings such as our three day centres, so that the full range of our services are then available to clients. Rapid and needs led assessment and support planning is carried out within the BBS’.

Whilst the focus is on provision of services from these buildings, there is still an element of street work to undertake verification, tackle hotspots and work with the small number of vulnerable, entrenched people unwilling to come into day centres. However, by creating dedicated, quiet time indoors, more of this group have been encouraged to come into day centres, and the BBS’ are steadily achieving outcomes with this group.

The refocus of resources from the street to the BBS’ has meant that rough sleepers are now aware that a street lifestyle is more difficult to sustain, and that services that they require are to be accessed through our BBS, and will not be provided on the street - except to the most vulnerable clients.

RECONNECTIONS

An important strand of the move to BBS has been a commitment to reconnection of rough sleepers whose last settled address is not Westminster (it rarely is).

BBS assessment workers are aware that the most satisfactory outcome for all concerned is the reconnection of a rough sleeper new to London to his or her ‘home’ area, so long as it is safe to do so.

A 10-bed Reconnections Unit pilot was established in a hostel to provide short term accommodation for people needing help to link into services and support in their home area.

Local and national reconnection protocols have been drawn-up to ensure that there is a consistent policy across Local Authorities.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

Westminster is able to call upon the services of a dedicated police team to assist in managing its rough sleeping and street population. This team have been very successful in assisting to disperse large groups of sleepers, known as hotspots, either directing them to BBS’ or just ensuring that large groups do not form (eg through designing out). This has the effect of making it easier for workers from the BBS teams to engage with clients and achieve positive outcomes.

IMPACT OF REFORMS ON STREET COUNTS

All the above measures have had a noticeably positive impact on the numbers seen on recent street counts. In the latest count in November 2006 numbers had fallen to 131, our lowest ever official count.

Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping

Notes for counters – 2007 Revision

INTRODUCTION

This guide is for people carrying out counts of people sleeping rough. **It is essential that everyone taking part should read these notes.**

WHY WE ARE COUNTING PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH

The Government is committed to sustaining the target to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in England by two thirds and to as near zero as possible. Local single night street counts help to monitor progress against that target, and to inform strategies for tackling rough sleeping in local areas.

WHO IS CARRYING OUT THE EVALUATION

The key people carrying out the count are:

- A **Project Manager** who is responsible for gathering together contextual information about rough sleeping and ensuring that local homelessness agencies and other relevant organisations are kept informed and involved in the evaluation;
- The **Count Co-ordinator** who will be the main contact for the teams carrying out the head count of rough sleepers, and who will be responsible for ensuring counters are fully briefed and equipped for the count and that a consistent approach is taken in completing the count documents;
- An **Independent Verifier** who will be responsible for verifying that the count has been carried out in accordance with Communities and Local Government's guidance, form As and Bs have been completed correctly and that the definition of people sleeping rough has been applied uniformly. They will also act as a counter.
- A **Working Group** of local agencies who work directly with rough sleepers who will be taking an active part in the detailed planning and carrying out of the count, including defining the geographic areas of the count and providing volunteer counters;
- **Team Co-ordinators** who will each be responsible for a defined geographic area of the count and for supervising counters in that segment on the night of the count;
- You, the **counters**, who will work together in pairs within a defined segment and systematically make a record of each person found sleeping rough on the designated night, using the forms and briefing notes enclosed with this document.

CARRYING OUT THE COUNT

Each evaluation will consist of a single night head count and an analysis of hostel provision and occupancy in the three week period during which the count is carried out. A single night count is a snapshot. It does not aim to record everyone in the area with a history of sleeping rough, but experience has shown that it is an effective means of gauging the relative scale of the problem and of monitoring progress over time. The main elements are described below.

1. *The definition of people sleeping rough.* In order to ensure the consistency of results it is essential that all participants understand the definition of people sleeping rough which is being used for this exercise. The definition is:

People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”).

(Bedded down is taken to mean people lying down in a sleeping bag or other bedding.)

Only people fitting this definition should be recorded on FORM A: COUNT OF PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH

The definition does NOT include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes, squatters, travellers, people who were there earlier or who are known to sleep rough on other occasions, but who are not there at the time of the count, people wandering around and sleeping sites without occupants. Research has found that people seen drinking in the street or begging (even if they have a blanket or sleeping bag) are not necessarily sleeping rough and they should not be included unless they are clearly sleeping rough at the time of the count. If you have any questions about the definition please ask your Team Co-ordinator or the Count Co-ordinator.

If in doubt about the inclusion of an individual, counters should record the person on the separate form provided (FORM B: PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT), with details of the circumstances, so that an assessment can be made subsequently of whether to include them. This might cover, for example, people sleeping in tents away from campsites who might be homeless but who could be tourists, or people sleeping in transport stations without bedding.

It is recognised that any count carried out on a single night will miss some people who drift between temporary accommodation and sleeping rough. Many of these may be staying in hostels on the night of the actual count. These will be separately recorded.

2. *The areas where people sleeping rough are likely to be found.* The count will not aim to cover every street, or even every neighbourhood, in the local authority area. It is much more effective to concentrate on a thorough search of areas known to be used by people sleeping rough. The Working Group will divide the areas being counted into segments to be covered by separate teams of counters.

3. *Do not publicise the count until after it has taken place.* Publicity can worry some people sleeping rough and they may avoid their usual areas on the night if they know a count is taking place.
4. *Before the count.* The Project Manager or Count Co-ordinator will arrange a meeting place for counters – this may be in a local authority building or day centre but should not be outside, e.g. in a car park. You will be given a map showing individual streets and parts of streets that you will be covering. You will also be provided with an identification letter describing what you are doing. Your team co-ordinator will arrange for a reconnaissance of your segment to be carried out over a period of a few days, to identify possible sites where people might sleep rough. This exercise might identify non-public areas such as hospital or college grounds. Your team co-ordinator will arrange to liaise with the owners over gaining access. Areas that are not readily accessible on the night of the count, whether public, or non-public, should not be counted.

While making the reconnaissance, you should not tell people about the count unless you are asked, as this can arouse suspicions and discourage people from sleeping in their normal places. If asked you should stress the confidentiality of the count and do not tell them the date on which it will take place.

Forms and guidance notes to be used. A supply of standard forms (headed FORM A: COUNT OF PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH) for recording the information on people found sleeping rough and guidance notes will be issued by your team co-ordinator. The standard form must be used to ensure comparability between areas. **It is essential that counters record each person on a separate line and that the record of each individual is verified by the counter.** There can be a temptation for counters simply to write the total number on one line of the form. This is impossible to verify as an accurate record. Information about each rough sleeper may be recorded from previous knowledge of the person and their sleeping site. If an individual is not known, and where it is safe to do so you must attempt to wake each individual to record their details. The count coordinator may have arranged for the local police to assist you with this. If it is not possible to wake someone information must be recorded either from observation at the least gender, a broad definition of ethnic group and an estimate of age can usually be recorded from observation, if people sleeping rough are visible. Even if you cannot observe any details about the individual (for example because you are unable to wake them and they are covered up), you should still record each person on a separate line of the form. Details of individuals should be kept strictly confidential and not revealed to anyone outside the project team. Counters should be careful not to intrude on the privacy of people sleeping rough, to respect their dignity and not to pass on any information to people not involved in the count. It is also important to record as much information as possible on the location of people found sleeping rough, as this may help with the future planning of services.

Carrying out the count. The count will take place on a single night. If spread over two or more nights there will be doubts about whether some people have been counted twice and the results would not be valid. The count will start at a time when people have actually bedded down, otherwise some will be missed and others, who are on the streets but who do not actually sleep there, may be included. The count will start at midnight at the earliest, although there may be a later start in some areas. It should be completed by 6am at the latest. You will be told the date and start time of the count by your team co-ordinator.

Safety. Counters should work in pairs. In addition to a supply of forms, maps and pens, you may need a torch. Your safety should be the overriding priority. If there are any areas in which you feel unsafe, do not enter them, but make a note of the location and enter the details on the separate form (headed FORM B – PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT). At no time should pairs separate. Arrangements should be made in advance for safe transport home, by taxi if necessary.

Checking the results. A debriefing meeting will be held after the count and counters should return the forms to their team co-ordinators, including those where a nil count was returned. The debriefing meeting will be used to check that all areas were covered, that there was no double counting and to add any information about individuals recorded on the count forms that may be known to other workers.

HOSTEL PROVISION AND OCCUPANCY

Information on occupancy of hostels and night shelters potentially available to people sleeping rough during the period of the count may be collected separately. Information will cover the nature and number of vacancies and numbers of people turned away.