



Rough sleeping 10 years on:
From the streets to independent living and opportunity
Discussion paper



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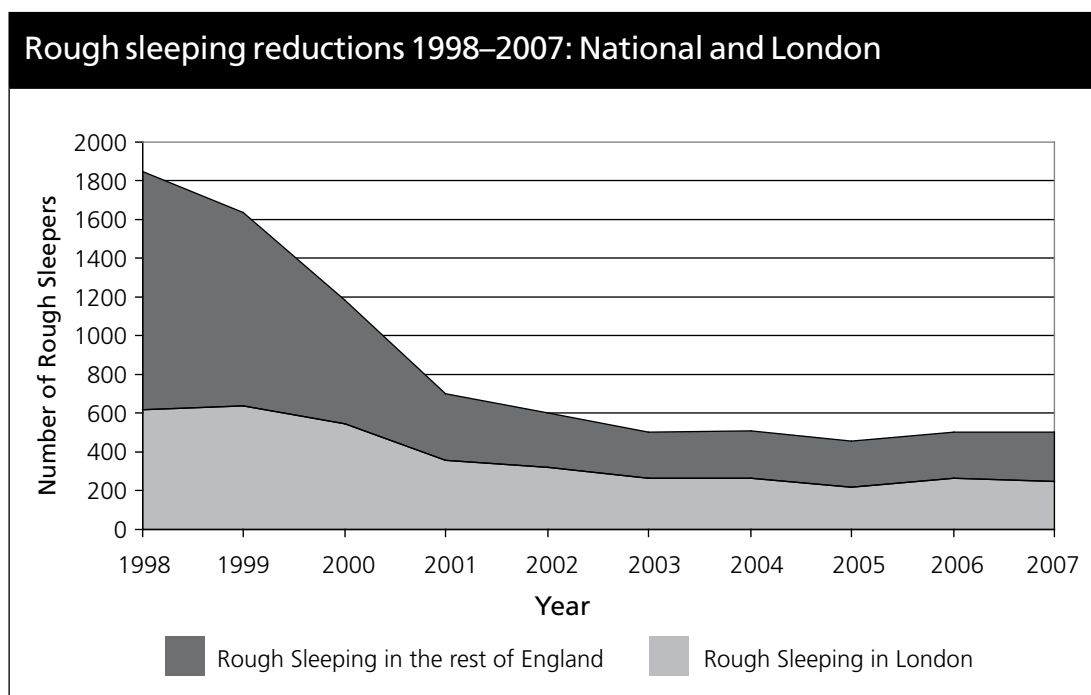
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Introduction

1. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Social Exclusion Unit report into rough sleeping, which set out the government's original strategy to reduce rough sleeping by at least two thirds. In 1998 there were an estimated 1,850 people sleeping rough on the streets of England on any one night. In London alone there were over 600.
2. Ten years on, we have an opportunity to build on real success in tackling this most visible form of homelessness. We met the target of a two thirds reduction early in 2001 and this has been sustained. The estimate for 2007 showed 498 people sleeping rough on any single night – a 73 per cent reduction on the 1998 baseline. We have moved away from an ad-hoc, reactive approach – just finding a bed for the night – to a holistic response that emphasises the provision of training and skills to get people off the street permanently.



3. The government is committed to sustaining the reductions in rough sleeping and to further reducing numbers, particularly in London which accounts for around half of today's rough sleeping. We want to review what more needs to be done to drive rough sleeping down to as close to zero as possible, and to prevent those most at risk from ending up on the streets in the first place. It will be equally important to deliver improved opportunities and outcomes for former rough sleepers, with a particular focus on employment, skills and health.

4. We intend to publish an updated rough sleeping strategy later this year which will set out our plans for the next three years. This will build on the approach set out in *Coming in from the Cold* (1999). It will set out how we can best renew our drive to tackle rough sleeping in today's context, taking account for example of the greater freedoms and flexibilities local government now has and the introduction of the Supporting People programme.
5. The updated strategy will sit firmly in the context of our wider housing policy and our drive to increase housing supply with an emphasis on affordable housing and social housing. We know there is a lack of settled homes, particularly in London and the South East, and it is the most vulnerable in society that suffer most from housing shortages. In last year's Housing Green Paper *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*, we set out plans for the delivery of three million more homes by 2020. In particular, we will be providing 70,000 new affordable homes a year by 2010-11, investing over £8 billion over the next three years.
6. To support implementation of the updated strategy, it will be important that we continue to have robust data on the number of people sleeping rough, and also that we monitor the progress made by former rough sleepers. The current methodology has been developed in partnership with the voluntary sector and has enabled us to measure trends over the last decade in a consistent way. Prior to this, levels of rough sleeping were not systematically monitored, as continues to be the case in many countries. The methodology reflects that rough sleeping is concentrated in certain places. It provides a snapshot on a single night, and it is recognised that no approach can ever capture every rough sleeper. Scrutiny by the National Audit Office and Select Committee has concluded that street counts are the most effective way to evaluate the changing levels of people sleeping rough. In developing the updated strategy, we will consider further with our partners whether there is a case for making any changes to the current methodology, if this would improve our evidence base.
7. It is important that we fully reflect the views of our stakeholders who have helped deliver the original target, and that we take account of what rough sleepers and other service users feel would make a difference. This short discussion paper sets out our initial thinking, and we would welcome views to help inform development of the updated strategy.

Aims of the updated strategy

8. It is proposed that the updated strategy will have two main aims:
 - **to drive rough sleeping down to as close to zero as possible**, in line with the original strategy's commitment, through renewed effort to bring and keep entrenched rough sleepers in, and prevent rough sleeping among those most at risk.

- equally importantly, **to improve opportunities and outcomes for former rough sleepers**, to move people permanently from the streets, with a particular focus on employment, skills and health.

Who is still on the streets?

9. Analysis of the data available in London suggests that the main groups still on the streets are:
 - a continuing **flow** of 'new' rough sleepers
 - **entrenched** rough sleepers resistant to service provision
 - **migrants** without recourse to public funds, including Eastern Europeans not in work (estimated to account for at least 15% of rough sleeping in London)
10. We also have information about the characteristics of rough sleepers in London who:
 - are predominantly male (88%) and usually White (77%), though more likely to be from ethnic minorities than 10 years ago
 - are usually aged between 25 and 45 years (only 7% under 25, 28% over 45)
 - have a range of support needs (48% alcohol, 41% drugs, 35% mental health)
 - often have an institutional history – 39% have been in prison (though not necessarily recently), 12% in care and 5% in the armed forces
11. To support our work to update the strategy, we are developing our evidence base so that we have a clearer picture of the characteristics of the people who continue to flow onto the streets. This will enable prevention work to be effectively targeted. We are also developing a more detailed picture of the entrenched group and what it would take to bring them in.

What works?

12. Evaluation suggests that the success in reducing numbers of rough sleepers was largely due to a very focussed and targeted approach with high-profile central leadership, assertive outreach to get people in, and investment in accommodation specifically for former rough sleepers. The Department of Health was effective in helping to target the most entrenched people with severe mental illness.
13. Supporting People services are making an important impact in enabling former rough sleepers to progress towards independent living. More recently, the

Places of Change programme is showing positive outcomes in engaging former rough sleepers in training and employment and preventing churn back onto the streets. We can also build on learning from the Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) pilots.

Updating the strategy

14. At this stage, we envisage the updated strategy setting out an action plan covering four main themes. These go wider than simply achieving further reductions in overall numbers, to make sure rough sleepers are able to complete the journey from the streets and into independent living.

(1) Further reducing numbers on the streets

This section would include:

- a new drive to bring and keep the most entrenched rough sleepers in, designing innovative solutions around their personal needs – to include piloting a new model of provision for older drinkers who refuse to use standard hostels
- implementing agreed good practice in outreach services, and practical steps to prevent migrants from sleeping rough
- targeted prevention work with those most at risk of rough sleeping, to further reduce the flow onto the streets linking to implementation of the Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement
- measures to free up bed spaces by moving people from hostels into settled housing, including the private rented sector where appropriate, as soon as they are ready

(2) A better future for former rough sleepers

This section would include measures to:

- improve opportunities for education, training and employment
- address mental health and substance misuse needs.

(3) Delivery

To secure effective delivery of the updated strategy, this section would cover:

- arrangements for a new London delivery partnership to renew the drive to bring and keep entrenched rough sleepers in, work with those most at risk to prevent rough sleeping, and improve opportunities and outcomes for former rough sleepers
- promoting effective delivery at local level – in particular, we are strongly encouraging local authorities to ensure that measures to tackle homelessness among single people feature prominently in their updated statutory homelessness strategies, to maintain or work towards the goal of keeping rough sleeping down as close to zero as possible

- joining up services across sectors and administrative boundaries to meet the complex, multiple needs of this vulnerable group more effectively
- measures to develop and strengthen the sector's workforce

(4) Better information

This final section would cover:

- arrangements for monitoring employment training and health outcomes for former rough sleepers, alongside the rough sleeping count figures, and feeding the findings back into policy and practice
- new analysis of the data available to understand which interventions are most effective in helping people stay off the streets

Your views

15. We encourage you to have your say to inform development of the updated rough sleeping strategy. There are four questions in particular on which we would welcome feedback:

- 1. Have we identified the right issues for the updated strategy to address, and which are the most important?**
- 2. What new actions would have the biggest impact in delivering the proposed aims of the updated strategy?**
- 3. As well as action by government, what can other partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors contribute to the updated strategy?**
- 4. Do you have sources of evidence or examples of good practice that it would be helpful for us to draw on?**

16. Please send your feedback to:

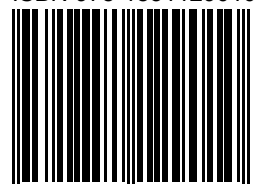
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