



Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the streets to
independent living and opportunity

Analysis of responses to discussion paper Ultra Executive Summary



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Introduction

Seventy seven responses were received from a wide range of organisations and individuals. This document distils the several hundred pages of detailed observations and suggestions down to a few core messages. There was overwhelming appreciation of the achievements of the existing strategy and its impact in reducing the numbers of those sleeping rough, although there was concern at the recent slower progress. Proposals for a new strategy were greatly welcomed.

“Rough sleepers and other single homeless people need coordinated strategic interventions from all commissioners to ensure that their usually complex needs will be met much more effectively.”

[Local authority]

Five core strategic messages

1. Strong Communities and Local Government leadership is essential, with a body to oversee delivery of the strategy, led by Communities and Local Government and involving other government departments, local and regional authorities and voluntary agencies. Robust monitoring of implementation of the strategy is important.
2. Greater buy-in across all government departments and agencies is required, with budgetary support, and possibly as joint signatories/sponsors of the new strategy. Establish a comprehensive framework of statutorily funded local services for vulnerable adults with access to high quality interventions for drug, alcohol and mental health services.
3. Effective co-operation at regional and sub-regional level is essential, with Multi-Area Agreements to ensure effective cross-authority planning, commissioning and delivery of services.
4. Ensure the strategy does not lose impact at the local level. Consider incorporating homelessness more explicitly in LAAs. Address issues of “priority need”, “vulnerability”, “intentionality” and “local connection” in local authority responses to those presenting as homeless.
5. Strong support for a new London Delivery Partnership and also a central control team to work at a more operational level. Tackle cross-authority issues through these, sub-regional strategies and Multi-Area Agreements. Address the failure of some out-of-London authorities to provide effective responses to homelessness, leading to migration to the capital.

“There is a pressing need for clear pathways, through appropriate supported housing, support services, drug and alcohol treatment, physical and mental health care and so forth, through to independent living and tenancy sustainment.”

[Local authority]

Ten core messages on implementing the new strategy

1. Rough sleeping is not a single problem and requires a range of responses tailored to individual needs. Responses must address structural, as well as personal factors. Ensure service user involvement in both the development and implementation of the new strategy.
2. Prevention is key. Trigger points, such as discharge from prison and hospital must be addressed. Some rough sleepers are often missed by outreach teams and counts; especially women, young people, lesbians and gays, ethnic minorities. Rough sleeping amongst migrants must be tackled. It is not acceptable to refuse support to destitute people who have no recourse to public funds.
3. Assertive outreach with more varied and effective pathways off the street, and more building based activity to complement street work. Speedier access to hostels is vital. Drop the need for "verification". Fast-track arrangements are needed for those with low or no support needs.
4. Mental health, substance misuse and, in particular, multiple needs and dual dependency require special attention. Improve access to physical and mental health services. More effective integration into mainstream health services.
5. More targeted, co-ordinated and holistic action to assist the most entrenched rough sleepers, with individual care plans.
6. More specialist hostels in London, with more medium/high-support move-on, underpinned by cross-authority co-operation. More effective responses for substance users, especially rapid access to alcohol treatment. Ensure accommodation is available for people at all stages of substance misuse. Do not accommodate those not using drugs with users.
7. More move on accommodation and reduce the length of stay in hostels. Increase medium and high support move on accommodation, as well as affordable housing. More engagement of the private rented sector, but with support to ensure it does not increase vulnerability.
8. ETE is important. Extend Places of Change, with both capital and revenue funding. On-site services for Pathways to Employment. Revise housing benefit rules that act as a disincentive to work. Increase social pursuits and meaningful occupation. Strong support for an increased focus on workforce skills development and for a special training programme to achieve this.

9. Street counts provide useful information. They should be retained but the methodology amended and more strictly enforced. Consider regionally co-ordinated counts and/or one national count each year. Count all those sleeping rough, including A10s and others without recourse to public funds; record numbers below ten. Supplement this with 'deeper' investigations that should inform local homelessness strategies. Extend the use of CHAIN.
10. Maintain a broad coalition: engage churches, the private sector and the public, as well as statutory and voluntary agencies.

“Key to the effectiveness of the strategy is the signal given from the top of Government about political commitment to change. The Rough Sleeping Strategy launched by the then prime minister 10 years ago achieved results beyond most expectations. It is one of the Government’s signature achievements in the field of social exclusion and social justice. It is seen as a model across the world and our next steps are eagerly awaited.”

[Voluntary organisation]

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