

**Homelessness Statistics September
2007 and Rough Sleeping -
10 Years on from the Target
Policy Briefing 20**

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Policy Briefing 20

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This policy brief is the latest in a series that has covered issues such as providing more settled homes, homelessness prevention and tackling youth homelessness. The series offers advice to local authorities and their partners on the Government's homelessness agenda and its key policy issues and priorities.

Second Quarter 2007 Homelessness Statistics

In March 2005, ODPM published *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives* – a strategy for tackling homelessness. The strategy acknowledged the significant achievements of meeting challenging targets to reduce rough sleeping and to end the long term use of Bed & Breakfast hotels for families with children. It also set out policies and priorities for preventing homelessness over the next five years.

Statistics published today demonstrate the effectiveness of homelessness prevention services. Acceptances during the April to June 2007 quarter were 18 per cent lower than in the same period in 2006 and represent the lowest quarterly level since the early 1980s.

A total of 34,040 homeless decisions were made on homelessness applications during the quarter, 18 per cent lower than in the same period last year.

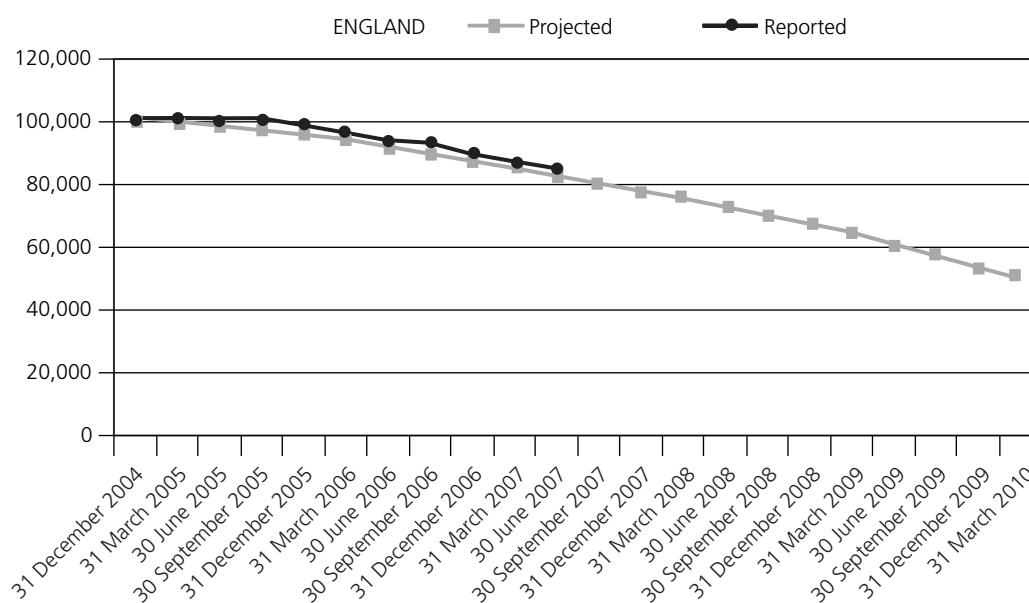
Households who are owed a housing duty under the homelessness legislation are often provided with temporary accommodation (TA) by local authorities, where a settled home isn't available immediately. The latest statistics show that there were 84,900 households in TA on 30 June 2007, representing a reduction of 3 per cent at the end of the previous quarter and 10 per cent lower than the same date last year.

The vast majority of households in TA (87 per cent) have been provided with homes which are self-contained and provide sole use of kitchen and bathroom facilities and 92 per cent of families with children are living in this type of accommodation.

Of the 64,020 households with children in TA, 940 (1.5 per cent) were in B&B accommodation and of these only 100 had been resident for more than 6 weeks. Just under a third of these were housed under local authorities' discretionary powers.

However, the temporary nature of this accommodation means that households may find it hard to put down roots in the community and call where they live a home. For these reasons, we have set a target to halve the number of households in TA by 2010 (from a total of just over 100,000 at the end of 2004). All local authorities are expected to contribute to the achievement of a 50 per cent reduction in temporary accommodation use by 2010. We see this target, and effective implementation of the measures needed to achieve it, as milestones on a route towards a longer term minimum level of homelessness and TA use in every area.

Information provided by local authorities in their TA action plans and in response to a survey reported in Policy Briefing 19 – *Local Authority Survey of Homelessness Prevention* – indicates that they are on track to achieve the 50 per cent reduction. The chart below illustrates the progress we expect.



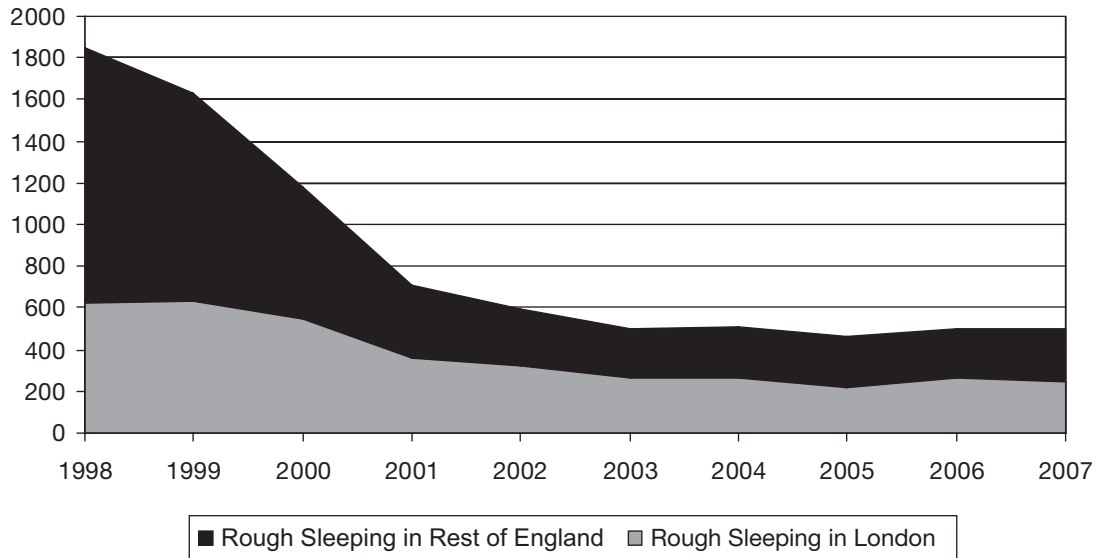
Specialist advisors in the Housing Strategy and Support Directorate (HSSD) will continue to offer support to local authorities as they deliver their TA reduction plans. We shall keep this under review and report on progress against the above trajectory each quarter.

NATIONAL ROUGH SLEEPING ESTIMATE

The most visible form of homelessness is people sleeping on the streets. The number of people sleeping rough is measured separately from the statutory homelessness statistics through local authority street counts which provide a useful snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough on a single night. An annual estimate of the numbers sleeping out in England on any single night is published in September each year.

The 2007 national rough sleeping estimate published today shows there are 498 people sleeping rough in England on any single night – a figure which represents a 73 per cent reduction on the 1998 baseline.

The chart below illustrates the trend in rough sleeping numbers since 1998.



The following policy briefing sets out how the above reductions have been achieved and what the future challenges are on rough sleeping.

Rough Sleeping - 10 Years on from the Target

INTRODUCTION

This year sees the 10th anniversary of the Government's target to address the most visible and unacceptable form of homelessness – that of people sleeping rough on the streets of England. This policy brief has been produced to not only mark this anniversary and reflect on what we have achieved to date, but to acknowledge there is still more to be done to help those in need. We need to plan ahead to meet the challenges of the future and to ensure the reductions we have made in rough sleeping are not only sustained, but that numbers are pushed further downwards and more people are helped to rebuild their lives away from the streets and live independently.

BACKGROUND

In 1998 there were around 1,850 people sleeping rough on the streets of England on any one night. In London alone, there were over 600 people sleeping on the streets – a large number of these part of an entrenched population of long term rough sleepers who had been failed by previous initiatives.

Many will remember the much-publicised encampments of the 1980s and 1990s in which large concentrations of rough sleepers could be found in areas of London such as the Bull Ring at Waterloo or Lincoln's Inn Fields. The Bull Ring (commonly known as "Cardboard City") – a shanty-town community of cardboard boxes lived in by up to 200 people – became infamous as a symbol of society's failure to deal with homelessness.

Everyone agreed this was not a situation that could be tolerated in a modern and civilised society – it was time for a change in the way we tackled rough sleeping.

COMING IN FROM THE COLD

In the 1998 Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report into rough sleeping Tony Blair set a target to reduce rough sleeping by at least two thirds by 2002. The report recognised that a new approach was needed – a joined up approach which provided effective services for those on the streets and prevented others from arriving there by tackling the root causes of rough sleeping.

The Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) was set up in April 1999 to take the lead on delivering this challenging new target and later that year the Government published its national strategy on rough sleeping – *Coming in from the Cold*.

The new strategy set out specific proposals for meeting the target and focused heavily on partnership working as the key to the successful delivery of the two thirds reduction – a partnership between central and local government, the voluntary sector and other organisations working with homeless people.

The focus was not only on providing support and accommodation for those on the streets to help them rebuild their lives and move back to independent living – there was also a strong emphasis on prevention, on taking measures to stop people arriving on the streets in the first place. In light of this, one of the key principles of the strategy was to understand the causes of rough sleeping – to understand why people end up on the streets and what could be done to stop this from happening in the future.

The strategy aimed to ensure resources were channelled to those most in need – to those who had been failed by previous initiatives, and to those areas in England experiencing the highest levels of rough sleeping. The aim was to pursue approaches which helped people off the streets and to reject those which helped people sustain a street lifestyle rather than addressing their problems. The strategy also placed the emphasis on encouraging rough sleepers to become active members of the community – to build self-esteem, bring on talent and help individuals to become prepared for life away from the streets.

Positive results soon followed as reductions in rough sleeping were achieved around the country and in December 2001 the target was met a year ahead of time. This was a testament to the hard work and determination of local authorities, voluntary sector agencies, other public and private bodies, as well as the countless individuals working to tackle rough sleeping around the country.

The encampments of the 1980s and 1990s were no more – the residents having been moved on to alternative accommodation when the encampments were broken up – and significant reductions in rough sleeping had been achieved around the country in a relatively short period of time.

Jeremy Swain (Chief Executive, Thames Reach):

“Ten years ago the extent of the country's rough sleeping problem was grimly evident. Visible congregations of rough sleepers slept on the streets of central London, a graphic illustration of one of the most damaging forms of social exclusion.

The Government demonstrated courage and commitment by making the reduction of rough sleeping one of its ambitious early targets, showing faith in the voluntary sector through a significant financial investment in services and the creation of the Rough Sleepers Unit. In response, frontline homelessness organisations exhibited enormous energy and determination to secure, and sustain, a two thirds reduction in rough sleeping, helping thousands of people to escape for good from the humiliation and misery of life under a blanket in a shop doorway.”

Meeting the target was a remarkable achievement but with people still sleeping on the streets there was still more work to be done.

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

While the work on tackling rough sleeping continued there were also major developments in Government policy across the wider homelessness agenda.

In 2002 we published *More than a Roof* – a report which set out a new approach to tackling homelessness – an approach which placed the emphasis on understanding and addressing the personal and social causes of homelessness alongside structural issues such as housing supply.

We strengthened homelessness legislation to ensure that a broader range of vulnerable groups would be eligible for help, and we required every local housing authority in the country to have a strategy for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support would be available for people in their district who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

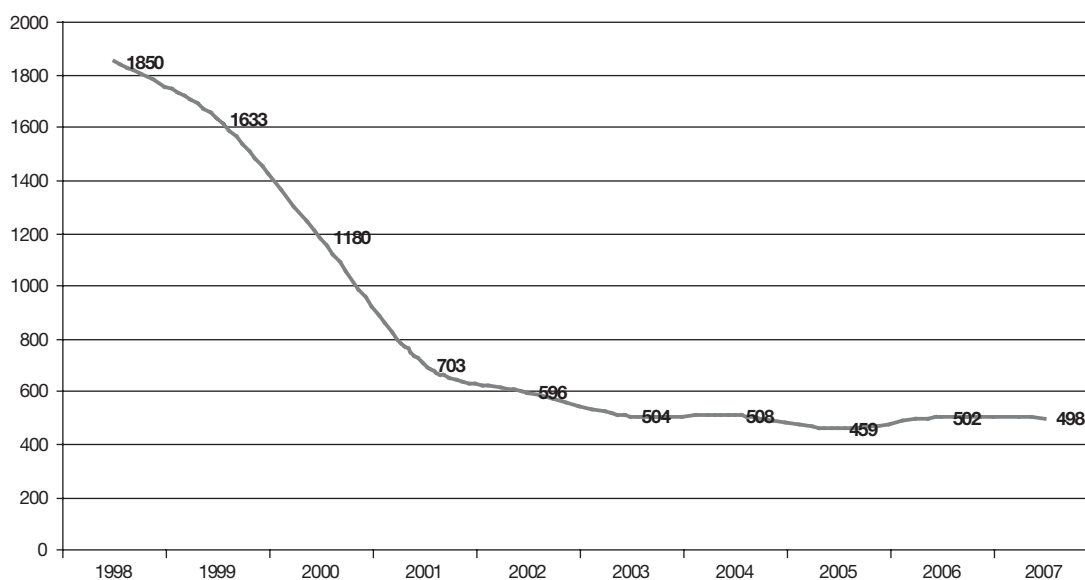
In 2003, we launched the Supporting People programme – a grant programme providing housing related support to around one million vulnerable people across the country.

All of these, and other, wider policy developments have had a positive impact on our work on preventing and tackling all forms of homelessness – reflected in reductions in the number of homeless acceptances (people accepted by local authorities as being owed the main homelessness duty), reductions in the number of households living in temporary accommodation and in successfully sustaining the reductions achieved in rough sleeping.

ROUGH SLEEPING REDUCTIONS

The chart below illustrates the results of the excellent work over the last 10 years in achieving and sustaining the target.

Rough Sleeping: England



There are countless examples of good work from around the country that have contributed to the reductions shown in the chart above. One such example is set out in the following case study which highlights the successful work carried out by Brighton & Hove City Council in reducing rough sleeping numbers.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Brighton & Hove has sustained a 73 per cent reduction in rough sleeping since 1998. A number of factors can be attributed to this success. These are outlined below.

Assertive Outreach:

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

RSSST has been key to the City's success. The team adopt an assertive outreach model to ensure they identify, assess and support all rough sleepers. The approach is characterised by the following principles:

- Time unlimited – service users are not discharged;
- Frequent client contact – daily street shifts target hot spots, new referrals and early mornings;
- An emphasis on building trust between staff and service users;
- Holistic, client-centred approach using creative, flexible methods and interventions;
- Clear formal links with key voluntary and statutory partners;
- A team approach with identified key workers and specialists;
- Joint street shifts with key agencies.

Reconnection:

Three agencies 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) is building based with outreach sessions at a day centre for homeless people.

Access to Supported Housing:

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

Integrated Support Pathway (ISP):

Launched in April 2007, the ISP is a new framework for accommodation services which groups provision into bands based on the nature and level of support. Band 1 is temporary accommodation with reactive support, band 2 is high support hostels, band 3 is services with lower level 'accommodation-tied' support, band 4 is medium to low level floating support in any tenure and band 5 is crisis intervention to prevent tenancy breakdown. The key aim is to foster a strong culture of positive resettlement within services. Work & Learning is embedded within the ISP and service users are offered incentives to attend Life Skills courses and Return to Work programmes. For some who meet the criteria for 'Special Scheme Rules' this can mean getting top priority for re-housing within the council's Choice Based Lettings scheme. Also part of the ISP is the council's specialist psychology team that is training support providers to work with service users on the emotional and psychological problems that can stop them safely resettling into their communities.

Rough Sleepers Casework Forum:

This is a multi-agency meeting co-ordinated by RSSST. The aim of the group is to identify all rough sleepers and ensure a co-ordinated approach to managing their cases. The forum meets monthly, increasing to fortnightly in the summer.

Consultation:

Consultation across all services is currently being carried out on a number of key strategies, including the Single Homeless Strategy, which will be launched alongside the City's Homelessness Strategy in 2008.

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Brighton & Hove Service Users

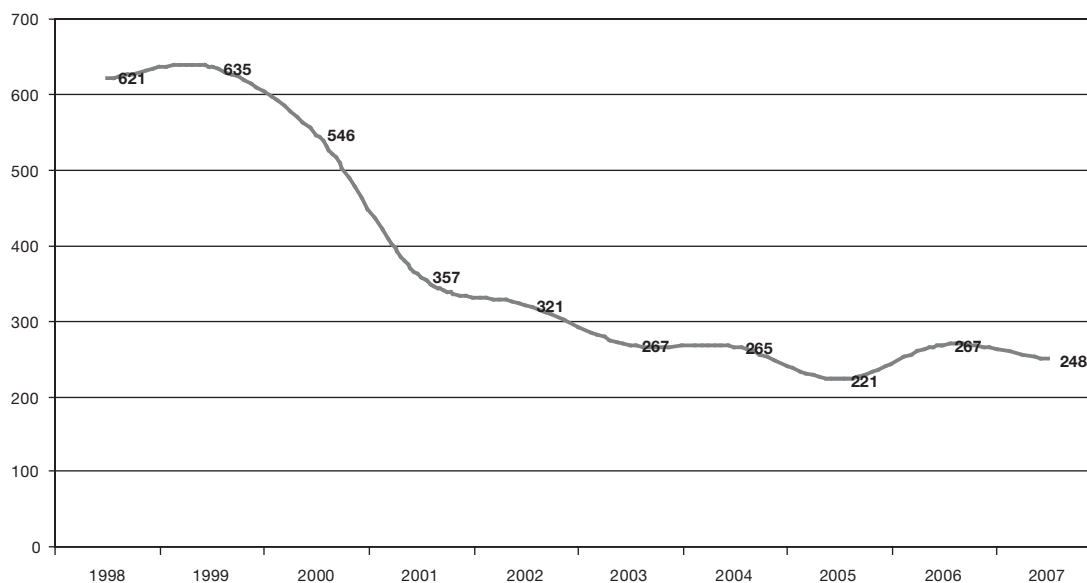
“I slept on the streets for years and if it wasn’t for the Rough Sleepers & Street Services Team supporting me I would still be there now. I now have a job and a flat.”

“It was good that the Rough Sleepers & Street Services Team made the effort to find me, make dates to meet me and support me until a hostel place was found.”

“I really appreciated the Rough Sleepers & Street Services Team helping me to return to Wales as I now know how difficult it is to establish yourself in Brighton. If I do come back looking for work I will ensure I have money behind me and accommodation available.”

In London – where rough sleeping numbers have always been highest – substantial reductions have been achieved but this is a key area in which we recognise there is more to do.

Rough Sleeping: London



Westminster City Council – the local authority area in which the highest rough sleeping numbers in the country have always been found – has achieved significant reductions in rough sleeping numbers, culminating in their lowest street count to date of 112 earlier this year.

Westminster City Council

Building Based Services Model:

In July 2005 Westminster adopted its current Building Based Services (BBS) model for rough sleeper services. The intention was to provide services for rough sleepers exclusively within buildings such as their three day centres, so that the full range of Westminster's services were 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 hot spots and work with the small number of vulnerable, entrenched people unwilling to come into day centres. By creating dedicated, quiet time indoors, more of this group have been encouraged to go into day centres and the BBS are steadily achieving positive outcomes within this group.

Refocusing resources from the streets to the BBS means that rough sleepers are now aware that a street lifestyle is more difficult to sustain, and that the services they require are to be accessed through BBS and will not be provided on the streets – 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. 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 reconnections protocols have also been drawn up to ensure 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. The team has been very successful in assisting to disperse large groups of rough sleepers, either directing them to BBS or just ensuring that large groups do not form.

Impact of Reforms on Street Counts:

All of the measures above have had a significant positive impact on the numbers seen on recent street counts. At the latest count in March 2007, numbers had fallen to 112 – Westminster's lowest ever official count.

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Westminster Service Users

“The staff at Passage House support you to find the services you need to help you move on with your life away from the streets”

The achievements to date have been widely recognised and everyone involved can be proud – central and local government, the voluntary sector and all the other organisations working on tackling homelessness around the country.

ODPM House of Commons Select Committee (2005 report on homelessness):

“We welcome unreservedly the reduction in rough sleepers. The achievements to date have not been overstated and we congratulate the Government on meeting its targets ahead of time.”

Colin Glover (Chief Executive, Connection at St Martin’s):

“Working with Central Government to reduce rough sleeping has been exciting, challenging and rewarding. Exciting because the Government was taking the issue seriously and making it a priority. Challenging because as voluntary sector agencies who had previously led a relatively target free life, we were clearly expected to up our game and to deliver; and rewarding because we were not only able to argue and campaign for the resources we needed but also for the policy and strategic changes which were necessary to ensure that the causes of rough sleeping were addressed along with its obvious symptoms. This was partnership in action as well as in theory.

For the London Connection there was also a real sense of achievement especially as the target became ours as well as Government’s. We were able to make a difference to the lives of hundreds of individuals but also to have a substantial impact on the expectations of young people for whom sleeping rough had become an acceptable option. For the sector as a whole there has also been a lasting cultural shift with it increasingly recognised that our job is to solve not sustain homelessness, and that to do this we need organisations and buildings which are capable of delivering change. The increased emphasis on meaningful occupation, on employment and training and on move on are lasting testaments to this changed approach.”

HOSTELS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

In March 2005 the Government published *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives* – a strategy for tackling homelessness. The strategy contained a commitment to “*sustain the reductions in rough sleeping and to further reduce numbers in London*” but highlighted concerns over the effectiveness of hostels.

The strategy recognised that many people who are helped off the streets find a bed in a hostel as the first step in the transition back to independence and a settled home. It was therefore clear that ensuring a high quality of hostel provision, which offered the appropriate level of support to match an individual’s needs, was a key factor in achieving sustainable positive outcomes for rough sleepers and in making further reductions in the numbers on the streets.

In the Government’s 2004 Review of the Voluntary and Community Sector it was agreed that improving hostel provision was a key public service priority. The review raised a number of issues that needed to be addressed:

- People staying in the hostel system for too long, silting up the supply of bed spaces and failing to move on to independent living (it was also recognised that there was a high degree of churn – people repeatedly returning to the streets and re-entering the hostel system – which needed to be addressed);
- Inability of ageing stock and outdated services to deal with the increasing number of residents with complex needs such as drug dependency;
- Poor physical design of hostels with dormitory style accommodation and a lack of suitable space for key working and training;
- High numbers of residents leaving for negative reasons such as abandonment or eviction rather than positive reasons like training or employment.

In January 2005 the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) was launched – an ambitious £90 million programme to enable hostels to become places of change. The overarching aim of HCIP was to change hostels from being places of last resort and transform them into centres of excellence, which positively change lives.

The key outcome of HCIP is to increase the number of people who move on positively from a hostel into independent living. This will be achieved by encouraging hostels to:

- Engage residents in meaningful activity and with the community;

-
- Involve their residents in the development of services;
 - Develop well trained, motivated and supported staff;
 - Provide a quality physical environment.

Services which engage residents, provided by well trained and motivated staff in welcoming buildings will end the stagnation that has occurred in some hostels and create places of change for people who have experienced homelessness.

Over the last 3 years we have invested over £90 million on around 175 projects around the country. Around 30 of these projects are now completed and as more come online we anticipate a new era of optimism for those going through the hostel system – an era of high quality hostel services and increased positive outcomes.

There are already a number of projects that clearly illustrate what can be achieved. Two such projects that are already making positive changes to peoples lives are the Dawn Centre in Leicester and the Shekinah Mission in Plymouth.

The Dawn Centre provides an integrated service from multiple partners including homeless people. The centre has 42 en-suite bedrooms in a local authority run hostel, a YMCA run day centre complete with training rooms and a medical centre run by the local Primary Care Trust. The medical centre is staffed by a full-time GP offering permanent registry, practice nurses, community psychiatric nurses and psychologists supported by drug workers and chiropodists, working 5 days a week and with a 24 hour out of hours duty rota.

The Shekinah Mission runs a drop-in centre for people who are homeless and embeds education, training, employment and volunteering opportunities for clients throughout all of their services. An example of this is the 13 week “Steady Work Programme” in which participants are able to work with professional trades people to learn practical work skills for use in the construction, horticulture, retail and craft related industries. Although the skills are mainly learnt for the building trade, clients often move into other jobs having gained confidence and self belief.

Another such project is Cedars Road in Lambeth, due to be completed in October, which is described below.

Cedars Road

St Mungo's hostel at Cedars Road provides accommodation for 120 homeless men and women, aged 17-65. As well as meeting the basic needs of food and shelter, the hostel also provides on-site healthcare services. Mental health and substance use workers run services in the building including a needle exchange, referrals to prescription services, counselling and group work and complementary therapies. A detailed activities programme is also provided on site, from literacy and basic life skills training to IT skills courses and arts workshops. Cedars Road will also be piloting a new occupational resettlement scheme from the autumn, which will see dedicated employment workers on site helping residents to access employment.

Residents are initially referred to Cedars Road either from other St Mungo's projects (such as the temporary shelter in Rushworth Street, Southwark or from their street outreach team in Lambeth) or from other homelessness agencies. There are 20 beds reserved for women, 10 of which are reserved for sex workers who have issues with crack use. There are also five beds reserved for Portuguese drug users and a Portuguese-speaking key worker is assigned to those residents. Four rooms are also available for homeless couples.

The recent HCIP funded building extension has prompted a reconfiguration of the entire project to create a clear pathway of progression for residents. Depending on his or her need, a resident might begin that pathway in the rooms assigned to more dependent residents, where two meals a day are provided. Once that person has stabilised a little he or she can move on to the wing that has been assigned to self-catering "cluster" accommodation, where a few residents share a kitchen and where they are able to prepare for a more independent life. Finally, residents may be referred to the new building, which houses six residents who are preparing to move on from the hostel to independent living. This accommodation takes the form of studio flats on the first floor which provide all the basic amenities for independent living. The ground floor houses a new dining area, an activities room for the work and learning programmes, and modern decking which provides an attractive outside space.

With the first residents in the process of moving into the new flats, it is a time for optimism at Cedars Road. The new project now has all the modern services and facilities necessary to deliver the key aim of HCIP – to transform hostels into centres of excellence and choice which positively change lives.

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Cliff Dymond (Manager, Cedars Road):

“HCIP funding has enabled us to transform Cedars Road into a place where people can start to think about a new life away from the streets. By providing a clear ‘pathway’ from the streets towards independent living, St Mungo’s helps homeless men and women to rebuild their self-esteem and consider their future aspirations.”

Charles Fraser (Chief Executive, St Mungo’s):

“We are very proud of the work being carried out at our Cedars Road hostel. St Mungo’s work is all about enabling our clients to eventually leave our services. Our hostels provide a safe place where homeless people can get the healthcare they need and take the first steps on the road to employment and independent living.”

THE FUTURE

There are, however, still around 500 people sleeping on the streets of England on any one night. We must continue to work together to drive these numbers down, particularly in London, and to move people off the streets, address their needs and equip them with the skills and desire to rebuild their lives and sustain independent living.

As more HCIP projects near completion we are entering what we hope will be a time of opportunity for rough sleepers – a time in which we move closer to eradicating warehouse style hostels, full of long term residents – and a time in which people who find themselves sleeping rough can access high quality hostel accommodation and services and receive the help and support they desperately need.

MOVE ON PLANS PROTOCOL (MOPP)

One of the biggest challenges we face is the lack of suitable move on opportunities for hostel residents who are ready for the next step in their lives.

Last year Homeless Link undertook work on behalf of Communities and Local Government to tackle this challenge. Working with homelessness officials and the voluntary sector in nine pilot areas they developed and tested a strategic approach to the problem. The result was the Move on Plans Protocol.

Implementation of the protocol will provide local authorities with a better understanding of move on need and allow them to overcome a range of barriers through formal partnerships with the voluntary sector.

The protocol will help local authorities to:

- Develop formal partnerships to tackle move on;
- Collect and analyse numerical data, leading to a better understanding of specific move on needs in the area;
- Have a full and clear discussion about move on barriers and options;
- Translate the knowledge into a jointly owned, solution focused action plan with associated targets for increasing move on.

Jenny Edwards (Chief Executive, Homeless Link):

“Our country has inspired the rest of the world in the way it has tackled rough sleeping, with the Government, the voluntary sector and local authorities working together. Thousands of people, many who had been written off by society, have come off the streets and rebuilt their lives. The key has been to make sure their aspirations are at the heart of this journey. The progress so far inspires and encourages us to redouble our efforts over the next few years, to get rough sleeping as close to zero as possible in all areas of the country.”

ADULTS FACING CHRONIC EXCLUSION (ACE) PILOTS

In October 2006, the Social Exclusion Task Force published *Reaching Out, An Action Plan on Social Exclusion* which announced £6 million of cross-government funding for 12 pilots to offer new ways to change local service provision in order to improve outcomes for adults with chaotic lives and multiple needs.

The current system does not always best serve adults with complex and multi-faceted needs, often leading to chaotic adults seeking to access chaotic services. The pilots will examine the system and implement changes that will positively affect both the determinants of chaos within adults' lives and also improve the structure and accessibility of the services they use.

The accompanying evaluation will establish the impact on outcomes which has been made for service users, services and assess the cost effectiveness of the interventions.

The pilots were announced on 18th June 2007 and will begin their work this Autumn.

EMERGING CHALLENGES

As always, there are new challenges to be met.

Since the expansion of the European Union we have seen an increase in the number of accession state migrants coming to England to find employment. Whilst the vast majority of people arriving have managed to find work and accommodation, there remains a minority for who things do not work out as they planned. For some, this has led to them sleeping out on the streets.

Work is underway across Government to find solutions for those affected. To date, numbers have largely been confined to London and the Government has therefore made available over £600,000 to London Boroughs to support their work in helping this group of rough sleepers. Westminster City Council, for example, are providing a dedicated Job Centre Plus worker to help members of this group find work and, in some cases, are providing coach fares home to reconnect people to their country of origin. We have also embarked on comprehensive information campaigns in the accession countries to enable prospective migrants to make informed and realistic decisions about coming to England.

We also need to maintain our focus on sustaining the reductions in rough sleeping numbers achieved over the last 10 years and stretch ourselves to make further reductions, to push the numbers as close to zero as possible – just as Tony Blair envisaged when he introduced the target 10 years ago.

This can only be achieved by continuing to work as a partnership, by building on the excellent work achieved to date and working together towards the vision set out by Tony Blair in 1998:

“...a vision of a society where no one needs to sleep in doorways, and where rough sleeping has become a thing of the past.”