

# **Rough Sleeping**



**July 1998**

# Rough Sleeping - Report by the Social Exclusion Unit

Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty July 1998

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This report meets the Social Exclusion Unit's remit to report to the Prime Minister on reducing to as near zero as possible the numbers sleeping rough.

The unit was greatly helped by the many organisations and individuals who it met or visited or who responded to its consultation exercise.

This report covers England only and the action plan it sets out is specific to England. The issues of rough sleeping are being addressed separately in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Contents

| Foreword by the Prime Minister | Chapter 1: Who Sleeps Rough - Backgrounds and Contributory Factors | Chapter 2: What Happens to Rough Sleepers - Hostels, Resettlement, and Access to

Services

| Chapter 3: A Joined Up Problem

| Chapter 4: A Joined Up Solution

| Chapter 5: How Should the New Approach for London Work?

| Annex A

| Annex B: Questions for Consultation

| Annex C: Action Plan

Social Exclusion Unit Homepage Cabinet Office Homepage

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## Foreword by the Prime Minister

The sight of a rough sleeper bedding down for the night in a shop doorway or on a park bench is one of the most potent symbols of social exclusion in Britain today. It is a source of shame for all of us that there are still about 2,000 people out on the streets around England every night, and 10,000 sleep rough over the course of a year.

There are good reasons for aiming to end rough sleeping. It is bad for those who do it, as they are intensely vulnerable to crime, drugs and alcohol, and at high risk of serious illness, and premature death. And rough sleeping is bad for the rest of society. The presence of some rough sleepers on the streets will attract others - often young and vulnerable - to join them. Many people feel intimidated by rough sleepers, beggars and street drinkers, and rough sleeping can blight areas and damage business and tourism.

Anyone who has ever spent any time talking to rough sleepers knows that making a real impact on this problem will not be easy. The longer people spend on the streets, the harder it is to return to anything like normal life. Many have severe problems with drugs and drink, or untreated mental illness. Others despair of finding a way back to family or friends - or no longer want to. But these are not reasons for doing nothing. Instead, they are reasons for launching a much more concerted drive to tackle this problem once and for all.

That is why I made rough sleeping one of the first priorities of the Social Exclusion Unit which I launched last December. I asked them to find out how to reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible. The report sets out what they have found and the decisions we have made about the way forward.

The report makes sobering reading. It shows that many rough sleepers dropped out of school early, that a third have been in care, a quarter in the Services, and half have been in prison or remand at some stage. Many start rough sleeping when family relationships break down.

Only five per cent of rough sleepers do so by choice. Once they hit the streets there are not enough beds, and not enough help with drug, alcohol or mental illness problems. A job and a home can seem an impossible dream. Many cannot even get registered with a GP. Responsibility for helping rough sleepers is split between many different bits of central and local government and other agencies. Yet it is a joined up problem.

Without a more integrated approach there is little that can be done to reduce the numbers sleeping rough. Simply putting in more money won't solve the problem if the necessary bits of help never land in the same place at the same time. Nor can the police be expected to clear rough sleepers from the streets if there is nowhere for them to go.

Instead we need a radical new approach across government, that gets to the roots of the problem and works closely with the voluntary sector, local authorities and the police.

First, it needs to be clear who is responsible for tackling the problem. Within government we will give lead responsibility to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, backed up by a Ministerial Committee from all the other relevant departments to ensure that the whole of government contributes.

Second, this Committee will lead a major programme of prevention to tackle the causes of rough sleeping. That means getting better at supporting people on the route out of care, prison and the armed forces, passing on the message that the city streets are a bad place for young people tempted to leave home early, and making sure that housing authorities do all they can to prevent homelessness.

Third, delivery at local level has to be coordinated so there is a concerted effort to get people off the streets quickly, and give them the support they need. Local authorities will be helped to coordinate activity better outside London. And we believe there should be one person clearly in charge in every major city.

Fourth, in London, where the problem is most acute, a new body will take over all the different government programmes currently targeted on rough sleepers, with a remit to spend its money flexibly so the problem is solved. It will ensure that we have enough beds to achieve the Government's objective, and that there is the right kind of help to cope with mental health, drug and alcohol problems. And it will encourage the police to work with homeless agencies to ensure that when the right pattern of help and care is in place, it is used. The Government believes the public will expect hostel places to be taken up as more become available and the police have often said they would be willing to take a more directive approach with rough sleepers if there were somewhere to take them and a coordinated approach.

Fifth, a place in a hostel has to be the start of a process that leads back to the things most of us take for granted. What most rough sleepers want above all is a fresh start in life - a job, a home, and the confidence to re-establish contact with family and friends or start again from scratch. But many lack basic skills and most need intensive support to make the transition from homelessness to a job. The New Deal offers a tremendous opportunity to break the 'no home, no job' cycle, and we will make sure it works for rough sleepers.

Sixth, we will help others to work on the problem. Too many rough sleepers have lost all contact with family and friends and only see other rough sleepers and professional and voluntary agencies. Many ordinary members of the public want to play their part and would do more if they only knew how. The new London body will challenge the business and voluntary sectors, and the worlds of art and sports to make their own commitment to help rough sleepers. And we will look at a new project to help train 'mentors' to support homeless people as they try to find their way back into work.

This report sets the tough target of reducing the numbers of rough sleepers by two-thirds by 2002. Rough sleepers are at the sharp end of social exclusion. The most vulnerable should not be left simply to fall through the cracks in the system or have the odds so heavily stacked against them. This is a problem that has been with us too long and ruined too many lives. It is time to solve it.

[.Back to top](#)

[Cabinet Office](#) | [SEU](#) | [Contents page](#)

# Chapter 1: Who Sleeps Rough - Backgrounds and Contributory Factors

## How many?

- 1.1 Over the course of a year, at least 2,400 people spend some time sleeping rough in London<sup>1</sup>. 1,800 are new arrivals. Many are diverted quickly into hostels or other accommodation, while others drift in and out of rough sleeping for longer periods, and a hard core is out every night for months. The total on any given night (counted by the voluntary sector, in the small hours) averages about 400<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2 These numbers have fallen dramatically from 2,000 a night sleeping rough in central London in the early '90s, following sustained efforts by the voluntary sector, with considerable financial support from government, mainly through the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI). More detail on the RSI and other government help for rough sleepers is set out in Annex A.
- 1.3 Data outside London is less robust. It is estimated<sup>3</sup> that in England perhaps 2,000 sleep rough each night which probably means 10,000 drift in and out of rough sleeping over the course of a year. Single night counts in 1996 showed that the largest concentrations of rough sleepers reported are in Birmingham, Brighton, Cambridge, Manchester, Oxford and Bristol which recorded the highest number of 84.
- 1.4 Many people find these numbers surprisingly low: the counts undoubtedly miss some people who sleep out in more inaccessible places. Public impressions of the extent of rough sleeping are also influenced by the number of people who are seen begging, drinking, or apparently living on the streets during the day. Many people in this category do have somewhere to stay, if only temporarily, and some have flats, but come to the streets for company or begging opportunities. Some are former rough sleepers. One review of street drinker surveys found that only 20 per cent were sleeping rough, with half to two-thirds living in hostels or bed and breakfast hotels.

## Who and from where?

- 1.5 We know less than we should about the backgrounds of people who sleep rough. Rough sleepers are by definition hard to keep track of, and some refuse to cooperate with surveys. Much of the research and survey work that has been done is small scale, and much relates to homeless people in general, of whom rough sleepers are only a small minority. (In the homelessness legislation a person is 'homeless' if he or she has no right to occupy property, for example, as an owner or tenant. Many people in temporary accommodation such as hostels, or those

sharing with family or friends, are therefore technically homeless, but not sleeping rough.)

- 1.6 The information we do have <sup>4</sup> tells us that:
- ! there are now very few rough sleepers aged under 18;
  - ! around 25 per cent are between 18 and 25;
  - ! six per cent are over 60; and
  - ! around 90 per cent are male.
- 1.7 Proportions of rough sleepers from ethnic minorities are typically five per cent or less. But voluntary organisations report that there are disproportionately high numbers of people from ethnic minorities amongst the single homeless population who live in hostels.
- 1.8 Geographical origin of those coming to London appears to have changed over the last decade: Centrepoint report that an increasing proportion (now 60 per cent) of young homeless in the West End come from London itself, concentrated in a few boroughs. They now see more people from the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark than from all of Scotland and Ireland put together.

## **Family background**

- 1.9 The single most common reason given for the first episode of rough sleeping is relationship breakdown, either with parents or partner:
- | research by Centrepoint with homeless young people across the country found that 86 per cent had been forced to leave home rather than choosing to <sup>5</sup>;
  - | a study of young homeless people in Staffordshire <sup>6</sup> found that those who had grown up with the same parents (or step parents) for years, were most likely to become homeless because of conflicts about their own behaviour (e.g. exclusion from school, contributing to household expenses, involvement in crime/drugs, or arguments about friends). Those from families where parents had separated were most likely to become homeless because of conflicts with their parent or parent's new partner;
  - | a survey in Scotland <sup>7</sup> found that a quarter of young homeless people had a step parent compared with the four per cent average for Scotland as a whole; and

- | homelessness agencies report that physical or sexual abuse lie behind a significant minority of family conflicts, and one study found that 40 per cent of young women who become homeless had experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence.
- 1.10 Older homeless people also identify family crises as key with the main factor being widowhood and marital breakdown, as well as eviction, redundancy and mental illness. One study<sup>8</sup> showed that:
- | over half the elderly homeless questioned had experienced broken or disturbed homes in their own childhood;
  - | they were about eight times more likely than average for their age group never to have married, and five times more likely to be divorced; and
  - | of those who had children, over half had had no contact with them for more than five years.

## **Institutional background**

- 1.11 A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experience of some kind of institutional life.

### *Local authority care*

- 1.12 Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children<sup>9</sup>. Some young people run away from care repeatedly before they are officially discharged: one survey of young homeless people in London found that half had run away from a previous care arrangement, with a third having done so on more than nine occasions<sup>10</sup>. Early discharge is also common: surveys have found that 60 per cent of those in care at the age of 16 are no longer being looked after by the age of 18. By comparison, the average age of leaving home for the general population is 22.
- 1.13 Unlike other young people leaving home, many care leavers lack any sort of on-going parental support which can act as a back up when a first attempt at independent living goes wrong. Under the homelessness legislation a local authority has a duty to accommodate someone who is unintentionally homeless and has a priority need. Most care leavers would have a priority need because of their vulnerability. However, because the assessment rests with each local authority, different practice has evolved in different areas, and the homelessness safety net works less well in some places than others.



## *Prison*

- 1.14 Around half of rough sleepers have been in prison or a remand centre at some time. Those who have been in prison typically experience serious problems obtaining both housing and jobs, frequently exacerbated by the problems of relationship breakdown, drugs etc. Research in prisons showed that 40 per cent of prisoners were homeless on release. Another study found that less than half of prisoners were able to return to the address at which they had lived before they entered custody. Some find that tenancies have lapsed or rent arrears built up while they were in prison and that as a result they are deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless, and will not be rehoused.
- 1.15 Other rough sleepers only come into contact with the criminal justice system once they have started sleeping rough. One study<sup>11</sup> found that 45 per cent of arrests of people with no fixed abode in one London borough were for drunk and disorderly or begging offences.

## *The Armed Forces*

- 1.16 Repeated studies have found that between a quarter and one fifth of rough sleepers have been in the Services at some stage. But many had left the Services some years ago - a few were ex-national Servicemen before the introduction of comprehensive resettlement advice, and some had been in civilian employment since leaving. Nevertheless, in one survey two-fifths of homeless ex-Servicemen said they had never settled after being discharged<sup>12</sup>.

## **Mental and physical health, drugs and alcohol**

- 1.17 Some 30-50 per cent of rough sleepers suffer from mental health problems. The great majority (88 per cent) of those with mental health problems became ill before they became homeless<sup>13</sup>.
- 1.18 Research does not support the widespread belief that the closure of long-term psychiatric hospitals has resulted in former patients sleeping rough: a number of studies have found that very few rough sleepers who are seriously mentally ill have ever been in long-stay hospitals<sup>14</sup>. However, it has been found that less than a third of single homeless people with mental health problems were receiving treatment (see paragraph 2.19 below).
- 1.19 As many as 50 per cent of rough sleepers have a serious alcohol problem<sup>15</sup> and some 20 per cent misuse drugs<sup>16</sup>. Drug problems are more common amongst younger rough sleepers. Research carried out in 1996 found that 39 per cent of people sleeping rough under 26 had a drugs problem<sup>17</sup>. The 1997 London Street

Monitor estimated that about a third of rough sleepers in central London had multiple needs (most commonly substance abuse combined with mental health problems)<sup>18</sup> .

## **Education**

- 1.20 Rough sleepers are disproportionately likely to have missed school. One Centrepont study found that over three-quarters of homeless teenagers were either long-term non-attenders or had been excluded from school. A study by the *Big Issue in the North* found that ten per cent of their vendors stopped going to school when they were 13 or younger, and 47 per cent at 15 or younger. Another study found that only 38 per cent of rough sleepers have any educational qualifications (compared with 66 per cent of the general population)<sup>19</sup> .

## **The impact of housing and benefits policies**

- 1.21 Generally, single people will only get assistance under the homelessness legislation if they are unintentionally homeless and in priority need. If so, they can expect to have accommodation found or provided for them for two years and will get priority in the allocation of long-term housing through the waiting list. Most local authorities will put other single people on the waiting list, although the chances of being offered accommodation vary widely. In areas of high demand (for example, most of London), there is little prospect of a single person obtaining social housing unless they have special needs, and the alternative is the private rented sector. In some areas outside London where demand is low local authority accommodation is easier to come by for single people. Preference is usually given to those who already have a connection with the area.
- 1.22 Researchers generally agree that a number of changes in social security policy (e.g. the abolition of grants for rent deposits and furniture, and of board and lodging payments) in the late 1980s were closely associated with a squeeze on the ability of single people on low incomes to gain access to suitable housing. Many of the people we have consulted have cited past benefit changes as one of the key reasons for the increase in rough sleeping in the late '80s. However, all these benefit changes affected far more people than ended up on the streets. One of the common aims of these policies has been to discourage young people from leaving home to set up on their own.
- 1.23 More recently concern has been expressed about the possible effect on rough sleepers of the housing benefit single room rent restriction and the Department of Social Security is looking at this aspect in evaluating the effect of the policy. As foreshadowed in the Welfare Reform Green Paper the Government is reviewing the relationship between housing policy and housing benefit. The Ministerial Task

Force on the Utting Report<sup>20</sup> is also looking at the particular problems faced by care leavers who claim benefits.

1.24 The rapid rise in numbers of people sleeping rough in the early 1990s was concentrated in London, and exacerbated by the difficulty of coordinating action across boroughs and other agency boundaries. In response to this the last Government developed the Rough Sleepers Initiative run by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, which cut the numbers of people sleeping rough in central London substantially.

1.25 The next chapter explains the typical process by which rough sleepers get help on and off the streets.

## **CHAPTER 2: WHAT HAPPENS TO ROUGH SLEEPERS - HOSTELS, RESETTLEMENT, AND ACCESS TO SERVICES**

### **Response on the streets**

- 2.1 Early intervention with new arrivals to the streets is critical. Research shows that there is a “window” of three to four weeks during which intervention is most effective, and after which longer term problems tend to take root. The bulk of those who sleep out each night are long term rough sleepers with perhaps three quarters having slept rough for at least two years.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.2 In most cities, rough sleepers will turn for help to hostels run by a diverse range of voluntary organisations or, in some cases, local authorities. People will be directed to these hostels by local advice services such as those run by Citizens Advice Bureaux and Shelter. All local housing authorities are now required<sup>22</sup> to ensure that there is an advice service in their area concerned with homelessness and how to prevent it. Shelter is currently expanding its freephone emergency service in London to become a national 24 hour service.
- 2.3 In central London help at the end of phone is supplemented by a network of around 40 outreach workers funded by the Rough Sleepers Initiative, as well as specialist mental health workers.
- 2.4 The police often take the initiative in putting rough sleepers in touch with help. They have powers to deal with street behaviour such as begging, drunkenness and public order offences. In a few towns, new bye laws have been introduced to make street drinking illegal, with an accompanying power of arrest: approval for such schemes has to be given by the Home Secretary
- 2.5 Specific police powers in relation to rough sleepers are limited and outdated. It is an offence under the 1824 Vagrancy Act (as amended) to sleep rough. But a person cannot be prosecuted unless he or she has refused to take up free accommodation. The definition of what is meant by “free” accommodation has been the subject of some debate. And in any case the penalty for the offence is a fine of up to £1,000 and therefore largely pointless for rough sleepers.

## Hostel places

### *Number*

- 2.6 In London as a whole, it is estimated that there is a total of some 2,700 places in hostels which are “direct access” (i.e. people can obtain accommodation without long application procedures). This compares with a total of 9,500 in 1981 and 5,000 in 1985. Much of the capacity in hostels is taken up with people who could move into suitable permanent accommodation if it was available or if they had the right support. Very few places are available on a given night: the average vacancy rate is between 10 and 50 bed spaces, and outreach workers very rarely have an allocation of beds available for new arrivals. It is therefore not true that there are beds available if only rough sleepers would take them, and the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) is not meeting its objective of ensuring that there is no need for anyone to sleep rough.
- 2.7 Outside London, the picture varies: a 1996<sup>23</sup> survey found bed shortages in some areas, while others had both vacancies in hostels and significant numbers of rough sleepers. For example, Oxford had 39 rough sleepers with 47 empty beds and Leicester had 20 rough sleepers and 22 empty beds.

### *Suitability*

- 2.8 Hostels are not always popular with rough sleepers. Some see them as dangerous places, where dormitories have to be shared with potentially threatening strangers, who may have drink and drug problems, and where possessions may not be safe. For others, there are too many rules, for example barring pets, partners or drink. Hostel places are funded through housing benefit, and those who are unwilling to claim (e.g. because they wish to remain anonymous) are not usually admitted. Perhaps reflecting these factors, surveys show that three quarters of those who would accept a place say there are some hostels they would not go to<sup>24</sup>. There are very few hostel places available for the mentally ill, or those with multiple problems, the Department of Health funds 150 in London as a whole.
- 2.9 Surveys have found that only about five per cent of those who sleep rough do so by choice<sup>25</sup>. Some voluntary organisations believe it would help to reduce this number if steps were taken to discourage uncoordinated initiatives, such as soup and clothing runs, which undermine efforts to get people into hostels. Outreach workers also vary in the degree of assertiveness they use to persuade rough sleepers into shelter and challenge attachment to life on the streets.

### *Winter shelters*

- 2.10 Between December and March, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), runs a programme of temporary winter shelters which are free and have fewer rules than the permanent hostels. Combined with the cold weather, this tends to attract more longer term rough sleepers, and those with mental health problems. This year just under 500 places in London were provided in winter shelters; this reduced the number of rough sleepers counted on the streets by about a hundred. The difference must be accounted for either by new arrivals, existing rough sleepers using the shelters as free accommodation or drawn by the company.
- 2.11 The winter shelter programme is fragile. Premises have to be negotiated ad hoc each year and planning permission is often not resolved until the last moment. Only at that stage can funding arrangements be finalised.
- 2.12 Two thirds of those who use winter shelters said in a 1996 survey<sup>26</sup> that they would rather stay in the shelter at other times of the year, in preference to other hostels they knew. On the other hand, while the relatively relaxed regime and lack of rules may make it easier to bring people in off the streets, staff tend to say that further resettlement work is hard if people are not encouraged to move on from that stage.

#### *Day Centres*

- 2.13 Day Centres can play an important role in tackling and relieving problems of homelessness. The best centres not only provide practical support and housing advice to people sleeping rough but also offer a range of other services, for example confidence building and education in life skills which will help to foster independence and enhance chances of finding employment and accommodation.

#### **Resettlement**

- 2.14 The aim of most hostels is to resettle residents in permanent accommodation. 4,500 have been successfully resettled by the RSI. Permanent accommodation might mean access to social housing, through quotas of local authorities' usual stock or purpose built. Many rough sleepers can access the private rented sector, though finding deposits can be a problem.
- 2.15 Resettlement is more likely to be successful if housing is combined with help for non-housing problems such as employment, drugs, drink and mental health. Some ex rough sleepers will need accommodation that has support on site. Some may be able to live independently very soon and for others, "floating support" may be enough. Often this help is not available or fails, and rough sleepers have a high rate of tenancy breakdown:
- one survey<sup>27</sup> found that a quarter of rough sleepers questioned had taken on a tenancy since their first episode of sleeping rough but half of those

had stayed for less than a year. Rent arrears, money problems or being asked to leave were the most common problems;

- a study in Leeds<sup>28</sup> found that while 20 per cent of all council tenancies which ended were abandonments, the proportion for single homeless people rehoused from hostels was 57 per cent;
- another survey<sup>29</sup> of rough sleepers focused on the support needs they identified with setting up a home. At least two thirds thought they would need practical help on moving in, for example with furniture and benefits. 30 per cent thought they would need help with depression, nerves or anxiety, and 18 per cent with drinking problems.

2.16 But not all of these problems necessarily need to be solved before a tenancy is taken up. Someone with an address has more chance of getting a job and gaining access to help for mental health and substance abuse problems than someone who is of no fixed abode. If a rough sleeper finds work before they are housed, they will not be eligible for help from the DSS social fund with setting up costs.

### **Access to services**

2.17 This highlights the broader issue of rough sleepers' access to services.

2.18 Help with drugs and alcohol problems, primary care, job help, education and training, and benefit delivery are the responsibility of mainstream services, not the DETR or the RSI. These are often hard for rough sleepers to access, both because their problems are so severe, and because they are generally worse placed to know how to use them.

### Health

2.19 Problems continue to be reported for reported for rough sleepers in trying to get mental and physical health care and treatment to substance abuse. For example:

- surveys have consistently found that homeless people have poor access to primary care, with a 1994 survey<sup>30</sup> finding that only a quarter of GPs (and four per cent of fundholders) would fully register a homeless person seeking treatment;
- one specialist housing association reported during consultation that in 8 months, one of their hostels had 43 admissions to hospital, but had still been unable to arrange a GP for the residents;
- a 1994 report<sup>31</sup> found that less than a third of all single homeless people with mental health problems were receiving treatment;

- consultation responses have reported that in some London boroughs the wait for drugs rehabilitation is four months, whereas many hostels aim to move people on after three months; and
  - a 1992 study<sup>32</sup> found that homeless street drinkers had particular difficulty accessing services, often only received detox treatment when admitted to hospital following an accident, or other health crisis but were then discharged without further support or referral.
- 2.20 In some cases GPs and other health professionals have taken the initiative to offer services to the homeless in hostels and day centres and some voluntary agencies actually employ health staff or provide detox at their own expense. The Department of Health has also addressed the special needs of mentally ill rough sleepers through the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative (HMII) which funds psychiatric outreach teams and specialised accommodation. This amounts to about £6 million a year, delivered separately from the RSI money but increasingly co-ordinated with it.
- 2.21 The health outcomes for rough sleepers are very poor. People sleeping rough have an incidence of a range of physical health problems two to three times higher than average. There are extremes: in one survey, active tuberculosis amongst rough sleepers and those using direct access hostels was found to be 200 times the national notification rate. Rough sleepers between 45 and 64 have been found to have mortality rates 25 times higher than the general population. A study of Coroners' courts found that death by unnatural causes was four times more common than average amongst rough sleepers and suicide 35 times more likely<sup>33</sup>.
- 2.22 Rough sleepers' inadequate access to mainstream services leads to over-use of "crisis" health services:
- rough sleepers are high users of hospital services with a rate of "appropriate use" of Accident and Emergency that is two to three times the national average;
  - homeless mentally ill people are sometimes kept in hospital, at a cost of £900-£1,000 per week, because they do not have any other accommodation;
  - in one inner London district in 1995 up to half the acute mental illness beds were occupied by homeless people<sup>35</sup>.

### *Benefits*

- 2.23 Similar problems are reported in accessing other public services. For example, although there is guidance to Local Authorities urging them to take account of the problems faced by rough sleepers in claiming housing benefit, and there is a legal



requirement for authorities to pay housing benefit within 14 days, experience on the street suggests that this is often not the case. This can cause delays both getting into hostels and cause potentially permanent tenancies to be lost. There can be particular problems claiming for people who have left home suddenly - e.g. in a row - and brought no proof of identity. Delays in processing income support or Job Seekers Allowance have also been reported.

### *Employment and training*

- 2.24 There is also evidence of unmet demand from rough sleepers for employment and training help. A quarter of winter shelter residents surveyed in 1995<sup>36</sup> said they would like help finding work but only 40 per cent of them had received any. Hostel regimes can act against residents who want to work. The reasons might include meal times and opening hours which are inconvenient for people in work, or late socialising in hostels. Also, the high level of hostel rents increases dependence on Housing Benefit and reduces work incentives
- 2.25 Both voluntary agencies and TECs have been trying to improve the employment help available to rough sleepers, not least through the *Off the Streets and Into Work* project. Foyers are another avenue of help, combining accommodation with employment and training for young people. DETR and Department for Education and Employment are currently evaluating the effectiveness of Foyers and Foyer-type schemes in addressing the housing, training and employment needs of homeless young people.

### *The New Deal*

- 2.26 Rough sleepers are one of the vulnerable groups identified in the New Deal for under 25s for early access without waiting six months. But this is at the discretion of local managers. Some Big Issue vendors have no access to the New Deal as they either earn too much or work too many hours to claim Jobseekers Allowance. Some rough sleepers prefer not to claim JSA because they want to remain anonymous, have no evidence of identity or are put off by the system.

## **CHAPTER 3: A JOINED UP PROBLEM**

- 3.1 The introduction of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) had a significant effect in terms of cutting the number of people sleeping on the streets. Successive evaluations have commented favourably on its record and led to steady improvements in its design and operation.
- 3.2 But the RSI is not achieving its objective of ensuring that it is unnecessary for anyone to sleep rough:
- hostels have too few places available, or not enough of a kind rough sleepers will use voluntarily, and there is too little provision for those with high support needs;
  - even if there were enough beds, there is no one in charge of making sure that places are taken up;
  - resettlement is slow and fragile because of lack of move-on accommodation, problems accessing benefits, or lack of support to help ex rough sleepers maintain a tenancy;
  - the net result is that large numbers of rough sleepers never get into hostels in the first place, and some go in and out of hostels and resettlement without solving their problems.
- 3.3 Underlying this is a wider joined up problem:
- no department has overall responsibility for the total impact of Government policies on rough sleepers;
  - so no-one has a remit to prevent the causes of rough sleeping, or make sure that perverse policies, gaps and service shortages are addressed;
  - as Annex A sets out central government has four targeted programmes for rough sleepers, run by three different departments, channelled by different routes (some through the local authority, some direct to the voluntary sector) and subject to different rules. Despite some attempts at alignment they do not always match up sensibly at ground level; and
  - these problems of fragmentation are most intense in London, where central government services have multiple delivery arms (for example, 18 benefits agency districts, 14 employment service districts, 16 health authorities) and there are also 32 London boroughs to deal with.
- 3.4 In the consultation run by the Social Exclusion Unit, voluntary organisations have been highly positive about the Government's targeted help to rough sleepers.

- 3.5 But many of those consulted also made clear their feeling that both they and the government could do more and do it better if measures were put in place to prevent rough sleeping and if there were a more integrated approach. Their comments bear out the problems identified above

“It is our contention that without either a continuing supply of new accommodation, or a significant reduction in the flow of newly homeless people into London, we are likely to see the numbers of street homeless people increase sharply over the next 18 months.”

*Homeless Network*

“Any action designed to end street homelessness must address both the push factors (such as leaving care, discharge from prisons or the armed forces) that bring people into homelessness, and the additional factors that mean that individuals fall in and out of the single homelessness system and into street homelessness. A seamless strategy for providing the wide range of accommodation/and other intervention is required”. *National Homeless Alliance*

“We are firmly of the opinion that there needs to be at least an equal if not greater emphasis placed on prevention as well as cure which, historically, has not been the case. [...] This is a national problem with its roots firmly entrenched across the Kingdom: [...] Sufficient energy and resources need to be directed to the sources of the problem not simply attempts made to cure or contain them as and where they surface” *The Strand, Aldwych and Trafalgar Square Association Limited*.

“Earlier intervention must be the pre-requisite for reducing rough sleeping.....A national programme of education in schools and colleges is essential to help stem the flow of new people onto the streets” *Bristol Cyrenians*

“Crisis believes that social exclusion is not really just a result of homelessness. It is also a very significant cause of street homelessness. The exclusion of single homeless people begins in most cases before they reach the streets [...]. We would argue that any real progress in reducing the numbers of rough sleepers must begin before people reach the streets” *Crisis*

“More emphasis should be given to work with young people, for example in schools, providing information about the difficulties involved in leaving home and in coming to London. Far too many young people move out into society on their own without the necessary emotional maturity and

skills to secure and maintain the accommodation suitable to their needs, to budget income, to pay bills, or to secure employment”. *Corporation of London*

“The twin problems of claiming benefits and lack of spaces at the appropriate moment can undermine months of patient work with an individual. [...]“Although monitoring has tightened, the temptation for housing associations and hostels to avoid potentially difficult people remains acute. [...] Boroughs are inevitably territorial in deciding for whom they will or will not provide services, and are reluctant to allow the development of services that may attract street homelessness into their area.”

*Thames Reach*

Defensive funding arrangements have often resulted in fragmentation of service provision.”

*Crisis*

“The revenue funding mechanisms for drugs, alcohol and mental health support need to be improved for flexibility, speed and cross agency objectives.”

*Centrepoint*

“Thousands of pounds worth of capital investment by one Government department can be undone by the workings of another. Some way of helping us overcome the local financial and decision making inconsistencies would be a significant step forward.”

*London Connection*

“Too often the RSI, HMII and ‘Off the Streets and into Work’ give the impression of being parallel programmes - they never meet. Departmental responsibilities are too rigidly formulated to assist small crossovers, but one of the clear lessons to date has been that people’s needs are not so neatly compartmentalised, and that if there is to be a focus on meeting these needs, some of the rules need to be relaxed.

*St Mungo’s*

“We have examples of older people with alcohol and mental health problems where cases have been batted around between budget holders; in fact they usually die before a decision was reached.”

*St Mungo’s*

“When a young person achieves the home they have been planning and struggling for in the months gone by, it is often the most difficult time of all. It is then that they let down their defences, so crucial to survival on

the streets and now no longer needed. Most are overcome with intense and conflicting feelings of elation, fear of failure, feelings of isolation, loneliness and guilt. We feel that continued support and home visits at this point are absolutely vital and may be needed for a year to alleviate these teething problems, to protect young people against failure and a return to the streets”

*London Connection*

“Our experience has shown that action is required in a systematic and determined way to ensure people are found the “right” route for them off the street [...]. This can be a frustrating and time consuming exercise but is crucial to effective working [...]. A thorough and detailed knowledge of the street homeless people is necessary and a regular monitoring of the profile and needs of the group so important”.

*Shelter*

“The lack of a strategic body for London in dealing with street homelessness issues is acutely felt.”

*Thames Reach*

“We feel that there is a genuine opportunity to make a remarkable impact to reduce rough sleeping to virtually nothing, if the existing initiatives are put on a more permanent footing, and relaunched with a determination to point different Government departments in the same direction.”

*St Mungo's*

## **Chapter 4: A Joined Up Solution**

### **Why integration matters**

- 4.1 Responses from the Social Exclusion Unit's consultation hammer home the message that without better integration at both policy planning and delivery

levels, there is little that can be done to reduce the numbers sleeping rough. So, for example:

- | simply putting more money down the same fragmented channels won't solve the problem, if the necessary bits of help never land in the same place at the same time;
  
- | nor would a 'zero tolerance' policing approach achieve anything while there is nowhere suitable for many rough sleepers to go. The result would simply be to fill up police cells with people who were mentally ill or had drug and alcohol problems.

## **Principles for a solution**

- 4.2 The Government has therefore concluded that to achieve its objective of reducing rough sleeping to as near zero as possible, a comprehensive policy is needed, made up of the following eight elements:
- i Whitehall departments' policies and special initiatives for rough sleepers need to be joined up and given sustained political priority;
  - ii more attention needs to be given to preventing the flows into rough sleeping, particularly from prison, the Armed Forces and people who have been looked after by local authorities;
  - iii delivery at local level needs to be intensively coordinated;
  - iv priority needs to be given to what works in helping people move off the streets and into suitable accommodation;
  - v services for people who have been sleeping rough need to be focused on returning them to training, employment and independent living;
  - vi we need better information on the effectiveness of interventions to help rough sleepers;
  - vii where rough sleepers are being denied access to public services, action needs to be taken;

viii everyone - business, the voluntary sector and individuals - needs to be engaged in helping to solve the problem.

## **i Joining up Whitehall**

- 4.3 Joining up needs to start in Whitehall, where departments need to be made to coordinate their efforts, and work to consistent objectives. The Social Exclusion Unit project has helped to engineer this, but in the long-term someone needs to be responsible for maintaining it. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions has the strongest interest in the issue of rough sleeping and by far the most knowledge and experience of tackling it. The Government has therefore decided that DETR's responsibilities will be expanded to cover the coordination of the overall strategy for England on rough sleepers including housing, of course, but also health, access to training, employment and benefits.
- 4.4 Hilary Armstrong, as Minister for Local Government and Housing, will lead and chair a Ministerial Committee involving the key interested departments. The Committee will be responsible for overseeing delivery and development of the action plan set out below to reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible.

## **ii Better prevention**

- 4.5 The Ministerial Committee will supervise a programme to improve the prevention of rough sleeping, focusing on steps to improve preparations for independent living amongst care leavers, and people leaving the Services and prisons, better coordination of housing authorities' approach to people at risk, and the need to educate young people about the risks of leaving home young. The programme will have a number of elements as set out below.
- 4.6 In the response to the Utting Report<sup>20</sup>, the **Department of Health** will announce changes to improve local authorities' support to young people in care beyond the age of 16 and to make better preparation for independent life a priority.
- 4.7 The **Prison and Probation Services** will have a new focus on preventing homelessness. The **Home Office** will make this a key element of their monitoring regime and both services will have this as a new performance indicator from 1999-2000.
- 4.8 The **Ministry of Defence** will introduce improved education and training for current Service personnel to aid their transition to civilian life together with a telephone advice helpline for ex-Service personnel. Service charities will also develop a programme of rehabilitation/resettlement for those with substance misuse or mental health problems; set up a specialist London hostel for ex-Servicemen; and work more closely with homelessness charities.

4.9 The **Department for Education and Employment** will issue guidance to Local Education Authorities setting out practical examples of schemes that have worked to give young people a clear idea of what homelessness means, targeted at high risk groups or high risk areas. This should pick up the lessons being learnt from the 'Safe in the City' initiative to prevent homelessness among young Londoners, to which the Government is contributing through the Single Regeneration Budget.

4.10 The **Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)** will issue guidance to housing authorities making clear that:

- care leavers with very few exceptions should be regarded as 'vulnerable' and considered under the homelessness legislation;
- homeless 16 and 17 year olds who have no back-up support should also normally be regarded as 'vulnerable', and housing authorities should always consult social services departments on the position of 16 and 17 year olds, with their consent;
- housing authorities should have a clearly-defined contact point for other agencies on the issue of rough sleeping/single homelessness; and that
- local authorities should develop effective strategies for preventing single homelessness, for example by implementing good practice in tenancy support, or rent deposit guarantee schemes, which have often proved cost effective.

4.11 Related to this, the DETR has also launched a Youth Homelessness Action Partnership to bring together representatives of central government (DETR, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment), local government and the voluntary sector. The Partnership aims to produce an agreed definition of youth homelessness and an estimate of the numbers involved; identify what works in tackling and preventing youth homelessness and disseminate good practice; and contribute towards the evaluation of the impact of government policies on youth homelessness.

4.12 The Ministerial Committee should be responsible for monitoring the success of the overall prevention strategy and commissioning research on its effectiveness.

### **iii Coordinated delivery**

4.13 If we are to reduce rough sleeping to near zero we need to make sure that all the resources being aimed at the problem are as closely coordinated as possible. This means tackling both the fragmentation of central government funding and making sure that in all towns with a significant problem there is a clear lead to coordinate action in a single strategy.



4.14 Different solutions will be required in London and in the rest of the country. For outside London, the natural answer is to look to local authorities to fulfil a coordinating role. In London, the scale of rough sleeping and the extent of administrative fragmentation have persuaded the Government that new institutional arrangements are required in central government itself. Local authorities will still have a key role to play in delivering services and facilitating action.

#### *Outside London*

4.15 The 1996 Housing Act already requires local housing authorities to ensure that there is an advice service in their area to cover homelessness and how to prevent it. The Government believes local authorities should build on this to provide a clearly defined contact for rough sleeping, who should coordinate work more closely with other local agencies. DETR will support this through an enhanced programme of grants under the “Section 180 programme”.

#### *A new coordinating body for London*

4.16 Within London, the problems are much more intense, because of borough and district fragmentation and the larger number of rough sleepers. The Government therefore believes a new approach is needed which:

- puts a single body in charge of the objective of reducing rough sleeping in London to as near zero as possible;
- equips it with funds to do this including the many different central government funding streams for London (the RSI, Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, Drug and Alcohol Specific Grant and DSS Resettlement Programme);
- allows it to run these as a single budget that can be used flexibly and effectively to deliver the overall objective, either through the direct purchase of central services, or by letting area contracts to voluntary or private sector providers or consortia; and
- the body would become the centre of a strategic framework to link the work of central government departments and agencies, local authorities' services, the voluntary sector and business.

4.17 More details on how the body might work and options for setting it up are set out in Chapter 5. The aim of the new approach is to address the overwhelming view in the Social Exclusion Unit's consultation that a more integrated approach was needed. It is a response not an imposition. The practical details will be developed in close partnership with all involved in the field, local authorities and the police, other central government services, business and residents groups, and above all the voluntary sector on whom any approach depends for success.

#### **iv What works in helping people off the streets**

- 4.18 More effective solutions to get people off the street should include a number of different elements, of which effective outreach and the right type of hostel places are the most important.

##### *Outside London*

- 4.19 Outside London, the DETR and Department of Health will intensify and improve the coordination of grants under the 'Section 180 programme' and the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, and the Department of Health intends to make rough sleepers bids from outside London a priority in the bidding round for the Drug and Alcohol Specific Grant in 1999-2000.

##### *London*

- 4.20 Within London the new body will be responsible for a major audit of the scale and type of hostel places, and will have the flexibility to alter the pattern of provision to tackle the problem better. The body will also be responsible for ensuring there is enough move-on accommodation, some supplied through local authority quotas, housing associations and the private sector, and that there is suitable resettlement support to help former rough sleepers sustain tenancies. Its initial resources will be identified in the Comprehensive Spending Review. The figures identified will be subject to review as experience develops.
- 4.21 As Chapter 5 sets out, the body will need to develop funding mechanisms for its contracts with the voluntary sector and other providers so that they are focused on delivering the objective of reducing rough sleepers to as near zero as possible. This is likely to mean awarding contracts for defined geographical areas, and measuring success by what happens on the streets rather than funding inputs such as hostel places which may or may not achieve a reduction in numbers on the streets.
- 4.22 To achieve this aim, providers who win contracts will have to work closely with all concerned with the management of the streets in their zones. This will include the police, but also business communities, and those who currently help to maintain rough sleepers on the streets, such as those who provide street-based soup runs. The police have often said in discussion that they would be willing to take a more directive approach with rough sleepers, if there were somewhere to take them to, and if it was in a context that made clear that they were not the sole or primary owners of the problem. The police will have to consult on strategies on local crime issues such as street drinking and begging anyway as part of the 'Crime and Disorder Audits' required under the Crime and Disorder Bill.

4.23 The Government has no present plans to change the powers in respect of rough sleepers or make it an offence to sleep rough. But since the explicit intention of the policy is to deliver clear streets, the Government believes that the public will feel they have a right to expect hostel places to be taken up as more become available. The new body should monitor this closely and if new powers are needed to ensure places are taken up the Government will reconsider the matter.

## v Supporting a return to employment

4.24 The New Deal represents an enormous opportunity to break the 'no home, no job' cycle. But as paragraph 2.26 above pointed out, early access to the New Deal for under 25s is not guaranteed for rough sleepers and many are not on JSA in the first place.

4.25 To address this the **Department for Education and Employment** will ensure that rough sleepers<sup>37</sup> can always access the intensive help under the New Deal Gateway the moment they sign on for JSA rather than waiting six months. And for over 25s the Department for Education and Employment will develop in London an intensive programme of help suitable for rough sleepers. The aim will be to consult on and pilot with the voluntary sector specialist providers, and employers, a product that offers the basic skills that rough sleepers may not have, and the intensive support they may need to bridge the gap between life on the streets and the prospect of a job.

4.26 If a successful programme is developed, it may be possible also to open this to some who are not on benefit but are supporting themselves by other means such as selling *The Big Issue*. This project could also offer a focus for employers who want to give homeless people a chance of a job, and continuing support for employers and ex rough sleepers if problems arise.

4.27 It makes sense to link the help available through hostels in London with participation in employment and training programmes. Once the New Deal for under 25s or the over 25s programme is up and running, the London body, with hostel providers, might want to look at making participation in a programme a condition of the hostel place.

## vi Better information

4.28.1 etter information will help to improve effectiveness and plug service gaps for rough sleepers.

4.29 One of the key tasks for **the London body** will be to develop a comprehensive information system on clients passing through the London system.

- It should closely monitor where rough sleepers have come from. If

disproportionate numbers have come from particular places or institutions, the body will be able to challenge why this is happening, draw any service failures to Ministers' attention and recommend action where necessary.

- And it should track where rough sleepers go to and how fast, so as to identify problems in the system, e.g. excessive delays in processing housing benefit, or problems in sustaining tenancies.

4.30 The **DETR** will encourage local authorities outside London to develop similar information systems.

## **vii Access to health care**

4.31 The **Department of Health** will sponsor a research project to identify areas where rough sleepers and homeless people are having persistent problems gaining access to GPs. This report will be completed and published by summer 1999 and the Ministerial Committee will consider what action needs to be taken to address any continuing weaknesses.

4.32 The **Department of Health** has also set up Primary Medical Services pilots to give GPs, NHS Trusts and other NHS Family Practitioners more flexible ways to provide care services that better meet the needs of patients. A number of these pilots are specifically aimed at providing services to homeless people. A programme of central evaluation is being carried out throughout the three years of the pilots that will include research on how well they are addressing the needs of homeless people. The Department will consider how to disseminate the lessons learned.

## **viii Involving business and individuals**

4.33 Government's ability to tackle rough sleeping will be greatly enhanced if others also take responsibility. The public has a role to play through volunteering, and business can help by providing job and other opportunities for daytime activities.

4.34 The Government would like to see business, the voluntary sector and the worlds of arts and sports challenged to make their own commitment to helping rough sleepers. The new London body will provide an obvious focus for this and should work closely with representative organisations.

4.35 More focused daytime activities provide one way of helping to reintegrate rough sleepers into social networks: too many homeless people have lost all contact with friends and family and only see other rough sleepers and the professional/voluntary agencies. But this is also an area where individual mentoring could have a big impact.

4.36 Some homeless people are already beginning to benefit from the support for mentoring in the New Deal, and the Chancellor announced extra funding in the Budget as an element of the £50 million which he made available to support particular disadvantaged young people through the New Deal Gateway. Like all mentoring schemes, a specific mentoring scheme for rough sleepers and ex rough sleepers would need vetting, rules and good training and supervision: this would be best run by organisations with experience in the field. But there is a plentiful supply of people who would like to help and many who need it. *The Big Issue* provides a ready made publicity network. The Government would be willing to provide start up funding for a mentoring initiative if the voluntary sector can come up with a suitable pilot proposal.

### **Next steps**

4.37 The Ministerial Committee will oversee the results of consultation on the form of the new body and any other issues raised in this document. The questions for consultation and details of how to respond are set out in Annex B. The Ministerial Committee will also be responsible for the London body's budget in future public expenditure discussions.

4.38 Initial resources for the new approach set out in this report are being identified in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

4.39 The Ministerial Committee will monitor progress in implementing the action plan summarised in Annex C. The overall objective is, by 2002, to reduce the number of people sleeping rough to a third of its current level. The Committee will report publicly on progress in delivering the action plan each year. The effectiveness of the new London body will be reviewed in 2001.

[Back to top](#)

[Cabinet Office](#) | [SEU](#) | [Contents page](#)

## **Chapter 5: How Should the New Approach for London Work?**

- 5.1 This chapter describes in more detail how the new approach for London might work and issues that need to be resolved in setting it up.

### **Key functions**

- 5.2 The new body will be able to draw together funding from a range of different departmental sources, and use this as an integrated budget. It will contract with the voluntary or private sector to provide comprehensive services to reduce rough sleeping. The target should be to cut the numbers by two-thirds by 2002.

### **Area contracts**

- 5.3 The new body will probably need to divide most of its allocated budget into contracts for defined areas of London. There should be no gap between the areas covered, so as to minimise the risk that problems are displaced rather than solved.
- 5.4 Contractors would be given the money to spend as they wished (i.e. they need not necessarily buy from the public sector) but subject to specific targets to reduce numbers in each area. They could use the money in many different ways, for example: to purchase or reserve bedspaces; to buy effective 'outreach' services to get people into hostels; and to fund resettlement programmes to ensure hostel spaces are not blocked by people who should be able to move on.

### **Central services**

- 5.5 The central body might find it cost-effective to centralise some services, for example, focusing special primary care or employment help for rough sleepers, or employing a housing benefit 'untangler' to work in consultation with local authorities. Where the body's work uncovers 'opting out' or service failures from mainstream agencies it should challenge these, if necessary drawing them to Ministers' attention. The central body might also want to work up better systems to encourage people from outside London to go back home with help from their local social services or housing department if necessary.
- 5.6 The central body should also be responsible for:
- leading an audit of hostel provision and using funding to alter the pattern of provision as necessary;
  - liaising with other central and local government services to ensure that they are doing their

bit, and drawing Ministers' attention to any 'opting out';

- maintaining the information system described in paragraph 4.29 above and tracking back to any
- prevention failures this throws up;
- monitoring effectiveness of the area contracts and advising the Government if there is a need for new powers or other measures to ensure hostel places are taken up; and
- helping to focus other contributions from business, the voluntary sector and the worlds of arts and sports to make their own commitment to helping rough sleepers.

## **Getting the incentives right**

5.7 Getting the incentives right at all levels of the system is critical:

- it is essential that contractors have the incentives to pitch their services at the right level: not so skimpy that they are ineffective, but not so attractive that they draw in more clients for whom London becomes a more appealing destination. The London body, with hostel providers, might want to look at making participation in the New Deal for under 25s or the new over 25s programme a condition of the hostel place; and
- the contracts and targets need to be designed to focus on the ultimate goal: this implies a more rigorous approach than the current RSI which funds a means (hostel places) rather than an end (empty streets).

## **Key principles for the new body**

5.8 Five key principles need to be reflected in the way the coordinating body is constructed:

- it should build on what has been achieved in the past, but needs to be determined to make a step change and be willing to innovate to achieve this;
- it needs to be 'streetwise', and able to tap into existing expertise;
- it should have good links with Whitehall and other government agencies, so that it can engage in joint planning and influence departmental policies;
- it needs to be accountable to Ministers and Parliament for its actions and spending; and

- it also needs to have sufficient independence to deliver tough messages within the Government and champion the rough sleepers' issue.

### **Next steps**

- 5.9.1 The new approach needs to be put in place as quickly as possible and at least by March 1999 when the current phase of the Rough Sleepers Initiative is due to come to an end.

### **Options for the new body**

- 5.9.2 There is no obvious precedent for how a body of this kind should be structured or where it should be located. Discussion within Whitehall has focused on three main options, set out below. The Government would welcome views on the choices or suggestions for alternatives.

#### **Option 1: A new central government unit**

- 5.11 This is the simplest option to implement. It involves the establishment of a new Unit attached to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) based on models such as the Social Exclusion Unit, or the Anti Drugs coordinator.
- 5.12 The advantages of this approach would be: it would build on the existing successful relationships between DETR and the voluntary sector and local authorities established through the RSI; it could be set up quickly and with minimum bureaucracy; there would be flexibility if the approach needed to be modified in the light of experience; and there would be good links into departments and therefore back into their policy processes.
- 5.13 The disadvantages may be that the approach could be thought to lack sufficient independence from government; it might not be (or be thought to be) sufficiently different from existing arrangements to signal a step change; and locating it in one department could be seen as an excuse for others to switch off. Staffing the unit from in and outside Whitehall and ensuring good links with the Ministerial Committee could tackle this. Strong and public leadership would be essential but that is true of any option.

#### **Option 2: A 'not for profit' company**

- 5.14 This option would involve the creation of a new company limited by guarantee, possibly one with charitable status. The Company could potentially be jointly owned by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and Health (and perhaps other departments). They would then be responsible for appointment of the Directors of the Company who could include representatives



of the voluntary sector giving the Company more of a partnership or joint venture approach.

- 5.15 The Company would be governed by a Financial Memorandum, issued by the DETR on behalf of the Ministerial Committee, as agreed by the Treasury. This would govern the Company's financial relationship with government through the setting of a framework of controls. The Company would also be governed by normal company legislation and, if it were to become a charity, charity law. A separate finance department would therefore be a crucial part of the structure.
- 5.16 The Chief Executive would be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Company and the economic, efficient and effective organisation of its staff and management structure.
- 5.17.1 The advantage of this option compared with option 1 is greater arm's length from government, a clear new start, and the possibility of wider ownership through the Board of Directors. Against that, the procedure for setting it up seems bureaucratic and would probably be expensive; there would be duplication of effort with the finance function mirrored in the sponsoring department and the need to act in accordance with company legislation (and charity law if it became a charity); and by being less close to departments it might find it hard to influence policy development at very early stages.

### **Option 3: An independent body attached to the Housing Corporation**

- 5.18 The third option is to ask the Housing Corporation to establish an off-shoot organisation as it did for the creation of the Housing Association Tenants' Ombudsman Service. This would be operated at arm's length from the Corporation's main activities, possibly directed by an advisory panel.
- 5.19 This would have the advantage of some efficiencies of organisation as the Corporation would continue to deliver the capital accommodation building programme sponsored by the new body, and the Housing Corporation has expertise in supported housing and existing links with the RSI and the HMII. The Corporation could be seen as more independent than a unit in a department. And setting up time should be fast as it would make use of existing structures.
- 5.20 However, this choice could be thought to be focusing the new body too much on housing; it is not clear that the Corporation has the powers to finance non-housing related functions such as the purchase of drug-related services; other departments might feel loss of ownership because of the clear existing links with the DETR; and this option could be thought to lose the close links into departments without giving full independence either.

## Options considered and rejected

- 5.21 The Government has considered whether the new body should be attached to the new Greater London Authority (GLA). It was decided that this option should not be pursued as Ministers have decided the GLA should be a strategic body, not one with day-to-day frontline service delivery. Responsibility for delivery of a range of central government policies on rough sleepers would not sit easily with its other responsibilities.
- 5.22 However, given the focus of the new body on London, links with the GLA will need establishing to ensure effective coordination of policies.
- 5.23 The option of establishing a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) was also considered. An NDPB would almost certainly need legislation, which would slow the process down, and diminish flexibility if changes needed to be made in the light of experience.
- 5.24 Whatever constitutional option is chosen, the body will need strong and public leadership, and a good mix of skills from different Whitehall departments, local authorities, health and other delivery agencies, and from the voluntary sector. Some of these interests might best be taken on board through representation on an advisory group.
- 5.25 A number of questions for consultation are identified at Annex B.

[Back to top](#)

[Cabinet Office](#) | [SEU](#) | [Contents page](#)

## **Annex A**

### **Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: Rough Sleepers Initiative**

The best known programme aimed specifically at rough sleepers is the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) run by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). The RSI has cut the numbers of people sleeping rough in central London back from the highs in the early 1990s, and kept the totals low ever since. Run in close partnership with the voluntary sector and local authorities, it funds hostel spaces, a Winter Shelter Programme, permanent accommodation to move on to, outreach workers who work with rough sleepers on the streets, and the resettlement services. It has recently been extended to cover outside London. It has an annual budget of roughly £24 million, almost all of it spent in central London.

### **Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: Section 180 grants**

DETR administers a stream of grants to the voluntary sector under Section 180 for the prevention of single homelessness generally, amounting to some £8 million a year.

### **Department of Social Security: resettlement programme**

DSS continues to maintain a (separately administered) resettlement programme, funding some 4,300 bed spaces in hostels and move-on accommodation and costing about £18 million a year.

### **Department of Health: Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative**

The Department of Health runs a special Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative which funds psychiatric outreach teams and specialised accommodation. This amounts to £6 million a year. It is delivered separately from the RSI but increasingly coordinated with it.

### **Department of Health: Drugs and Alcohol Specific Grant**

The Drug and Alcohol Specific Grant has also been used to develop substance misuse services for rough sleepers. In 1997-1998, 20 schemes attracting £720,000 of Department of Health funding were approved. This money cannot be spent unless local

authorities provide 30 per cent of the total cost.

[.Back to top](#)

[Cabinet Office](#) | [SEU](#) | [Contents page](#)

# Annex B

## Questions for Consultation

We would welcome views from anyone on any aspect of this document. But we would particularly welcome input on the new approach for London, which needs to be in place by March 1999.

Particular issues you might focus on are:

1. Do you think the new London body is the right approach? Yes/No\*
  - If not, why not?
2. The role of the new London body:
  - Is there anything else it should do that we have not covered? Yes/No\*If yes, please explain
3. How much of London should it cover?
4. Which of the options [new central government unit, 'not for profit' company, independent body attached to the Housing Corporation] do you think would be most effective and why?
5. Is there an alternative you would like to propose?
6. What do you think the key success factors and risks are?
7. How can we ensure co-ownership by others who are involved, such as the voluntary sector, local authorities and central government agencies?
8. Have we set the right target for the overall approach (i.e. reducing the average number of people sleeping rough per night by two-thirds by 2002)? Yes/No\*
  - If not, please say what you think the target should be.

\* Delete as appropriate.

Please send your answers to these questions and any other comments you would like to make to Chris Brinklow, DETR, 2/B2 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU, by **Monday, 21 September**. Please say if you wish your response to be treated as confidential.

[Back to top](#)



# Annex C

## Action Plan

### Joining up Whitehall

- 1 The responsibilities of the **Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions** will be expanded to cover the coordination of the overall strategy for England on rough sleepers, including not only housing, but also health, access to employment, training and benefits. **Paragraph 4.3**
2. To oversee this work, a **new Ministerial Committee** should be created involving the key interested departments, chaired by the Minister for Local Government and Housing. The Committee will be responsible for overseeing delivery and development of the action plan below. It will supervise a programme to improve prevention of rough sleeping and commissioning research on its effectiveness. It will report annually on progress in implementing the action plan set out in this report. **Paragraphs 4.4, 4.5 and 4.39**
3. The overall objective is, by 2002 to reduce the number of people sleeping rough to a third of its current level. **Paragraph 4.37**

### Better prevention

4. The **Department of Health** in its response to the Utting Report will announce changes to improve local authorities' support to young people in care beyond the age of 16 and make better preparation for independent life a priority. **Paragraph 4.6**
5. The **Prison and Probation Services** will have a new focus on preventing homelessness. The **Home Office** will make this a key element of their monitoring regime and both services will have this as a new performance indicator from 1999-2000. **Paragraph 4.7**
6. The **Ministry of Defence** will introduce improved education and training for current Service personnel to aid their transition to civilian life together with a telephone advice helpline for ex-Service personnel. Service charities will also develop a programme of rehabilitation/resettlement for those with substance misuse or mental health problems; set up a specialist London hostel for ex-Service personnel; and work more closely with homelessness charities. **Paragraph 4.8**
7. The **Department for Education and Employment** will issue guidance to Local Education Authorities setting out practical examples of schemes that have worked to give young people a clear idea of what homelessness means, targeted at high

risk groups or areas. **Paragraph 4.9**

8. The **Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions** will issue guidance to housing authorities making clear that:
  - care leavers with very few exceptions should be considered as 'vulnerable' and considered under the homelessness legislation;
  - homeless 16 and 17 year olds who have no back-up support should also normally be regarded as 'vulnerable' and housing authorities should always consult social services departments on the position of 16 and 17 year olds, with their consent;
  - housing authorities should have a clearly-defined contact point for other agencies on the issue of rough sleeping/single homelessness; and that
  - local authorities should develop effective strategies for preventing single homelessness, for example, by implementing good practice in tenancy support, or rent deposit guarantee schemes, which have often proved cost effective. **Paragraph 4.10**

## **Coordinated delivery**

9. *Outside London.* The 1996 Housing Act already requires local housing authorities to ensure that there is an advice service in their area to cover homelessness and how to prevent it. The Government believes **local authorities** should build on this to provide a clearly-defined contact for rough sleeping, who should coordinate work more closely with other local agencies. **The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions** will support this through an enhanced programme of grants under the 'Section 180 programme'. **Paragraph 4.15**
10. *London.* A wider and more integrated approach should be established in London under the direction of a new single body. The body would:
  - be at the centre of a coherent strategy to reduce rough sleeping in London to as near zero as possible;
  - be equipped with funds to do this including the many different central government funding streams for London (the Rough Sleepers Initiative, Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, Drugs and Alcohol Specific Grant and Department of Social Security resettlement programme). It will be able to use its budget flexibly and effectively to deliver the overall objective;
  - be responsible for a major audit of the scale and type of hostel places in



London and ensuring there is enough move-on accommodation and support;

- develop funding mechanisms for its contracts with the voluntary sector and other providers so that they are focused on delivering the objective of reducing the number of rough sleepers on the streets; and
- would have the target of reducing rough sleeping by two-thirds by 2002.

The form of the new body will be subject to consultation. Its initial resources will be identified in the Comprehensive Spending Review. The figures will be subject to review as experience develops. **Paragraphs 4.16 and 4.20**

11. The new body will encourage providers to work closely with the police, business communities etc. The new body should monitor closely whether hostel places are taken up, as more become available. If new powers are needed to ensure places are taken up, the Government will reconsider the matter.

### **Supporting a return to employment**

12. The **Department for Education and Employment** will ensure that rough sleepers can always access intensive help under the New Deal Gateway the moment they sign on for Jobseeker's Allowance rather than waiting six months. For over 25s the **Department for Education and Employment** will develop in London an intensive programme of help suitable for rough sleepers. **Paragraph 4.25**

### **Better information**

13. The London body will develop a comprehensive information system on clients passing through the London system to monitor where rough sleepers come from. If disproportionate numbers have come from particular places or institutions, the body will be able to challenge why this is happening and draw service failures to Ministers' attention. **The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions** will encourage local authorities to develop similar information systems outside London. **Paragraph 4.29**

### **Access to health care**

14. The **Department of Health** will sponsor a research project to identify areas where rough sleepers and homeless people are having persistent problems

gaining access to GPs. This report will be completed and published by summer 1999 and the Ministerial Committee will consider what action needs to be taken to address any continuing weaknesses. The Department of Health will evaluate and disseminate lessons from those Primary Medical Services pilots which are focussed on the homeless. **Paragraphs 4.31 and 4.32.**

### **Involving business and individuals**

15. Business, the voluntary sector and the worlds of arts and sports will be challenged to make their own commitment to helping rough sleepers. The new London body will provide a focus for this. **Paragraph 4.34**
16. The Government would be willing to provide start up funding for a mentoring initiative if the voluntary sector can come up with a suitable pilot proposal. **Paragraph 4.36**

[.Back to top](#)

## NOTES

- 1 HSA, 1998.
- 2 Homeless Network, 1997.
- 3 Shelter, Scothern, 1997.
- 4 Homeless Network, op cit.
- 5 Barter, 1996.
- 6 Smith et al, 1997.
- 7 Evans, 1996.
- 8 Crane, 1997.
- 9 Anderson et al, 1993; Randall and Brown, 1996.
- 10 Craig et al, 1993.
- 11 O'Leary, 1997.
- 12 Randall and Brown, 1994.
- 13 Craig et al, 1995.
- 14 Craig, ibid; Crisis, 1997; House of Commons Health Committee, 1994.
- 15 Gill et al, 1996.
- 16 Randall and Brown, op cit.
- 17 Randall and Brown, op cit.
- 18 Homeless Network, op cit.
- 19 Anderson, op cit.
- 20 Sir William Utting's Report, *People Like Us: the Report of the Review of the Safeguard for Children Living Away from Home*, 1997.
- 21 Homeless Network, op cit.
- 22 Housing Act, 1996
- 23 Shelter, 1996
- 24 Randall and Brown, op cit
- 25 Anderson et al, op cit; Randall and Brown, op cit
- 26 Randall and Brown, op cit
- 27 Randall and Brown, op cit
- 28 Dant and Deacan, 1989
- 29 Randall and Brown, op cit.
- 30 NHS HAS, op cit.
- 31 Bines, 1994.
- 32 Wake, 1992.
- 33 Grenier, 1996
- 34 Hinton, 1992.
- 35 HHS HAS, op cit.
- 36 Randall and Brown, op cit.
- 37 The DETR define the term rough sleeping to cover those people sleeping in the open

air (such as doorways or parks), or places not designed for habitation (such as sheds or stations).

[Back to top](#) [Cabinet Office](#) | [SEU](#) | [Contents page](#)