

Rough Sleepers

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Managing the Issue

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Rough Sleepers



Figure 1: Rough-sleeper, Central London, July 2016.

Summary

Since 2010, the level of rough-sleeping across the UK has steadily increased. According to the homelessness charity CRISIS, around 280,000 people from all walks of life became homeless in 2015.¹ Not all end up becoming rough-sleepers, but with increasing financial pressure on local-authorities, the level of support to both the homeless and those rough-sleeping is also decreasing, exacerbating the issue.

For retail and commercial centres their built environments attract rough-sleepers. They offer a combination of shelter, access to resources such as public toilets and sources of income in the form of members of the public from which to beg or obtain other support. Such estates are also part of the community; as workplaces, and places to visit for shopping and leisure. However, tenants, employees and customers can find the presence of rough-sleepers intimidating. This can have a negative impact on staff morale and footfall as a centre become less attractive.

¹ 2015 is the last full year for which statistics covering the whole of the UK are available; each nation in the UK has different methods of counting and reporting.

Approaches to deal with rough-sleepers can be controversial. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and Dispersals Orders to ban rough-sleeping in designated areas have led to accusations of “criminalising the homeless.” Some organisations used short spikes on flat surfaces (the so-called homeless spikes) as a deterrent to them being used as sleeping surface. In other instances, rough-sleepers have been “discouraged” by being hosed down, or physically assaulted by security staff. Such approaches have resulted in protest activity, bad publicity and loss of reputation.

In addition, homelessness and the treatment of rough-sleepers is becoming more and more politicised; the issue being used to attack the government on its welfare policies and by extension, to criticise businesses over their lack of community and social responsibility as well as the “immorality” of major business organisations, especially when there is adverse publicity.

To avoid these risks, a more proactive strategy, such as adopting a “soft” humane approach when moving rough-sleepers on, reinforced by measures such as signposting to assistance, supporting charities etc., will help counter-balancing the negative aspects.

The strategy should also include measures to be adopted for when things do go wrong, dealing with such occurrences quickly and in an open and transparent manner. This way, the organisations reputation is protected, is ethical, and can be seen to be part of the local community.

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Aim

The aim of this brief is to outline issues associated with (homeless) rough sleepers. This is in order to inform on practices and procedures that can be used to manage this issue within a retail and commercial estate environment.



Figure 2: Rough Sleeper Manchester, February 2017. The rough sleeper is bedded down on a side-street, next to a ventilation vent for extra warmth.

Rough Sleepers – Definition

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has used a working definition of rough-sleeping as:

- “People sleeping or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets or in doorways, parks or bus shelters), people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation, such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or ‘bashes’” (a ‘bash’ is a makeshift shelter often comprised of cardboard boxes).²

² Whilst outside the DCLG definition, there is an increasing trend of homeless people establishing organised tented camps.

A rough sleeper may be homeless, but a homeless person may not be a rough sleeper.³

Outline

Rough-sleeping is a feature of life in the UK and is affecting retail and commercial properties, especially those in the centres of our major cities. The number of people who resort to rough-sleeping is increasing just as cuts to local government services, which would normally manage the problem continue. This negative impact is further compounded by increased pressures on health and social services, stretching these resources even further.

- In October 2017, the National Audit Office (NAO) reported a 134% increase in rough-sleeping since 2010.

The longer someone sleeps rough, the greater the risk that they will become trapped on the streets, making their situation more desperate, leading to a collapse of any personal and social inhabitations; factors that will have a detrimental effect on their ability to find any employment that would help them to get off the streets.

For retail and commercial properties, the presence of rough-sleepers within the estate footprint and the often-associated begging, drinking and anti-social behaviour, can be intimidating to staff and members of the public. The places they bed down often leads to an accumulation of rubbish, and in some cases, items left over from drink and drug abuse, represent potential health hazards. An additional factor is that if a location becomes known as a place where people can bed down, the greater the risk of the problem escalating. This can make the estate an unwelcoming place for tenants, workers and members of the public.

³ For example, homeless people living in temporary accommodation such as in hostels, B & B, sofa surfing etc.



Figure 3: Health Hazards. Figure 3 shows urine stains as well as a bottle containing urine on a fire-escape of a multi-storey car park. The fire escape, normally accessed only in an emergency and controlled by a push-bar lock, was being used by rough-sleepers.

Local Government Priorities

The Housing Act 1996 and the 1977 Homeless Persons Act place a duty on local authorities to make an offer for suitable settled accommodation for those deemed eligible. However, this duty applies only to those with a local connection and who are to be found to have made themselves un-intentionally homeless.

This safety net does not extend to securing accommodation for homeless people who are assessed as not to be in priority need; there is no duty on councils to secure accommodation for all homeless people. At the moment councils have a duty to find temporary accommodation for groups who are seen as vulnerable, such as those with children, but single people, especially men, are usually seen as “non-vulnerable” and are typically sent away with just some advice. This results in this group being the most likely group to sleep rough.

In addition, each authority can set its own priorities. In very general terms major cities are far more likely to have the capacity and resources to manage rough-sleepers, including access to social and health services, charities and the police. However, due to financial

constraints, many have cut back on what they can or are willing to provide, including applying very strict criteria. Moreover, due to the underlying issues, rough-sleeping as a social issue is spreading to smaller towns which have more limited resources to deal with the problem.

The charity CRISIS has reported that local authorities across the country have different approaches and priorities, leading to inconsistencies. Research by other charities are also often critical of many local authorities describing their assessment process as being aimed to find reasons why someone is ineligible for support, rather than finding ways to provide help.

Charities also criticise local authorities for not providing those who have been made homeless with sufficient information on what support is available. As a result, those seeking help do not know what to ask for or what questions to ask. Many homeless interviewed by the charity St Mungo's (No More: Homelessness through the eyes of recent rough sleepers (2013)), described this approach as being passed from pillar to post until eventually they gave up.

There are also anomalies. An article in the Big Issue (July 2016) highlighted a case where someone who was homeless and staying in a council run hostel, was told to leave because he had found a job, and as he was now in employment was ineligible for accommodation. This was before he had received his first wage packet, forcing him to sleep rough until he got paid and was able to find found other accommodation. To add insult to injury, the council had been taking a contribution from his job seekers allowance; a payment that is only provided if someone can show that they are actively seeking work!

To address these shortcomings, in late October 2016, a private member's bill brought by Conservative MP Bob Blackman was introduced in Parliament. The "Homeless Reduction Bill" will oblige councils to start assessing someone at risk of being made homeless 56 days before losing their home, instead of the current 28-day period. This change in the timeframe is designed to allow earlier intervention for those in need of help; for example, the current 28-day period would fall inside the one month's notice period in most tenancy agreements, with the new, longer period aimed at helping to avoid eviction.

The Bill also sets out a number of set priorities that local authorities should apply, a move that will help standardise the approach taken by authorities. Under the Act, a local housing authority must, in particular, ensure they meet the needs of groups at particular risk of homelessness, including but not limited to:

- People leaving prison or youth detention accommodation.
- Young people leaving care.
- People leaving the regular armed forces of the Crown.
- People leaving hospital after medical treatment for physical injury or illness or mental illness or disorder as an inpatient.

- People with a learning disability.
- People receiving mental health services in the community.

These priorities reflect those groups most vulnerable to becoming rough-sleepers. However, enforcing the bill will still come up against the barrier of cuts in local government funding, and the increasing number of homeless/rough-sleepers.

Charities

Charities are increasingly taking up the short-falls in local government provision. There are numerous charities working with the homeless and rough-sleepers at a national and local level. The level of support they provide and the approach they take varies, from those giving direct support such as hostel accommodation, soup kitchens etc., to those who provide work training and material support such as clothing.

The national charities also undertake and publish research into the issues in order to advise and pressure local and central government. Details of the main charities involved in helping the homeless and rough-sleepers can be found at Annex A.

Pressure Groups

An increasing feature in the homeless/rough-sleeper debate has been the emergence of local pressure groups. These are typically made up from a mix of concerned citizens as well as more politically motivated activists, usually drawn from the left wing of politics.

These groups will typically organise protest activity, direct actions, squats and tented camps, provide material support or undertake direct actions:

- In June 2014, an anarchist group calling itself the “London Black Revolutionaries” claimed responsibility for covering pavement studs outside a Tesco store in Regents Street in London with cement. The stunt followed criticism of the spikes by local people who claimed the spikes were victimising the homeless. Within 24 hours of the stunt, Tesco had removed them stating it would find another solution to the problem.

The Scale of the Problem

An overall picture of the number of individuals rough-sleeping is hard to determine as counting methodology differs between each nation in UK and within individual local authorities. According to the DCLG⁴ and the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN),⁵ in 2016, the average number of rough-sleepers was:

⁴ DCLG: Rough-sleeping Statistics Autumn 2016, England.

⁵ CHAIN is a multi-agency database run by CRISIS and sponsored by St Mungo's.

- 4,134 rough sleepers in England (1,768 in 2010).
- In Scotland 1,787 (2015 figures).
- In Wales the estimate is 240 (2015 figures).

In the case of England, for which more consistent statistics are available, the figures have shown a steady rise since 2010, a rate of increase which has increased steeply from 2014 onwards (see figure 4 below):

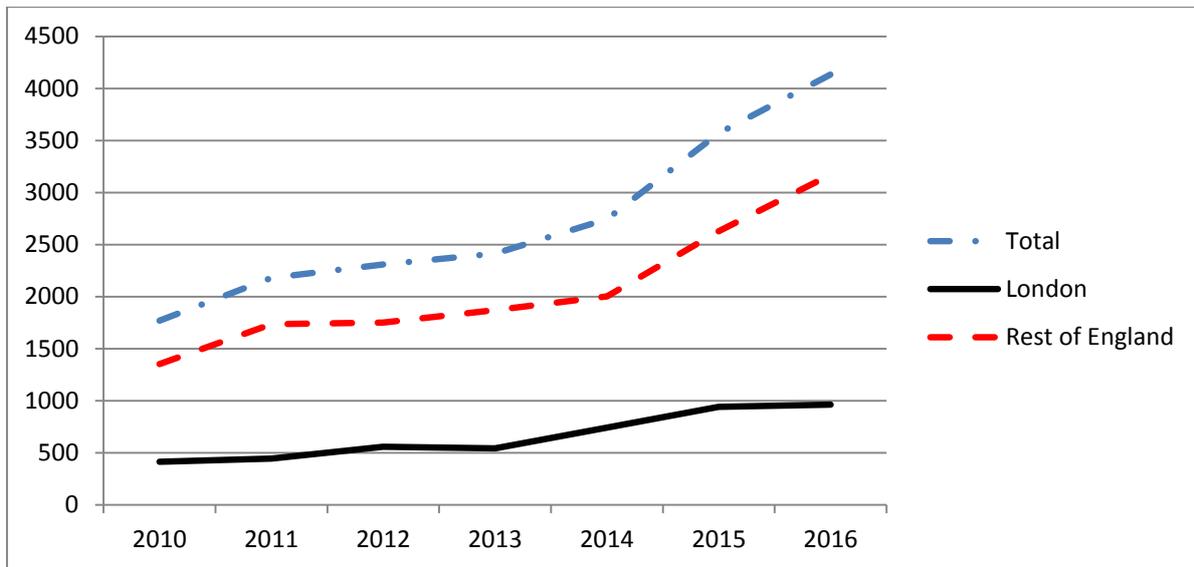


Figure 4: Rough-sleeper Figures for England (2010 - 2016).

A similar upward trend in the other parts of the UK is reported.

Charities believe that these are under-estimates as many rough-sleepers remain hidden and as a result don't get counted.⁶ There are also seasonal variations with numbers increasing in the autumn as summertime casual work falls away. This factor particularly affects low-skill/low-pay labour from outside the UK.

⁶ CHAIN estimate that the true figure could be 2-3 times higher.

Hotspots

Not surprisingly the majority of rough-sleepers will be found in major towns and cities. This is due to access to shelter, services (formal and informal), food and members of the public for financial and other support (i.e. hand-outs, begging etc.).

England: According to the DCLG, in England, the main concentration for rough-sleeping is in London and the South, followed by the North, the Midlands and the South-west. Some reports show that in the South, a high proportion of rough-sleepers are transient, for example some travel to the coast in the summer months, before returning to the capital and other major cities in the autumn.

Average Rough-Sleeper Figures 2016			
Borough	Number	Borough	Number
Westminster	260	Bristol	74
Brighton & Hove	144	Croydon	68
Cornwall	99	Redbridge	60
Manchester	78	Bedford	59
Luton	76	Birmingham	55

Table 1: Rough-Sleepers in England – Top Ten

Scotland: The main concentrations for rough-sleepers in Scotland are Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Wales: In Wales, the main hotspots are Cardiff and Wrexham.

Note: There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that many home-less in Scotland and Wales move to the major cities in England due to the perception of better support and opportunities to make a living. This is especially true for London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Nationality

The nationality of rough-sleepers varies considerably across the country. London has the greatest mix of nationalities, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the capital. Outside London there will be a slightly higher proportion of UK nationals, although rural locations, such as Ipswich, Norwich and Peterborough buck this trend due to the high number of seasonal immigrant workers in the agricultural sector.

The breakdown for the UK is shown below (see figure 5 below):

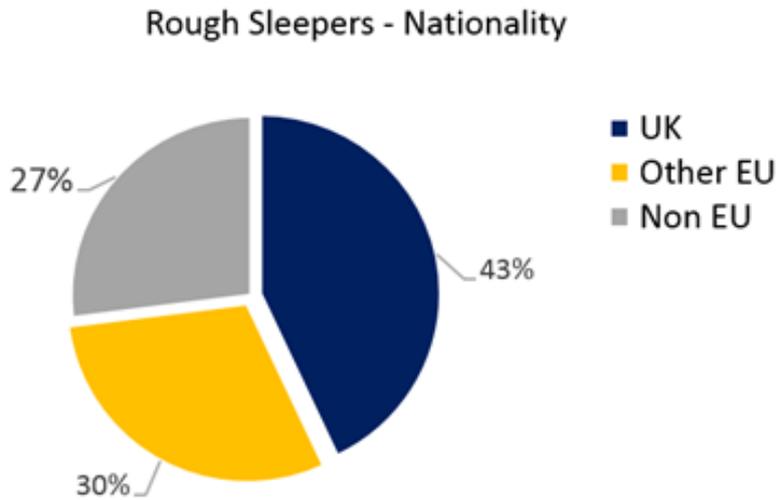


Figure 5: Rough-sleepers – Nationality: With the uncertainty of Brexit, the number of EU nationals, especially those in the casual labour market who sleep rough is expected to rise as uncertainty over employment rights increases. The number of non-EU rough-sleepers will include illegal migrants who will also run the risk of arrest by the UK Border Service and deportation. This group also face exploitation, including being at risk of modern slavery.

Why Rough-Sleeping?

Based on research undertaken by the charity St Mungo’s, the main trigger events leading to rough-sleeping are as follows (see figure 6 below).

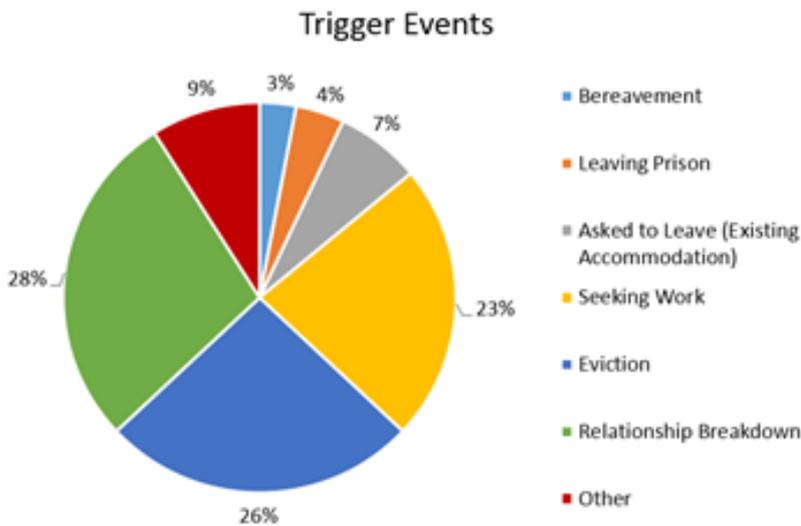


Figure 6: Rough-sleeping – Trigger Events: The three most likely trigger events leading to rough-sleeping are relationship breakdown, eviction and moving to an area in order to

seek work. For homeless women, the most common causes were physical or mental health problems and escaping a violent relationship.

However, these “triggers” can be more complex with a number of underlying issues leading to the reason. For example, drink or drug abuse or unemployment leading to a relationship breakdown or inability to pay rent.

Eviction is often cited as a “Catch 22” situation. For example, those evicted by a landlord through an inability to pay rent due to an increase will often be seen by social services as having made themselves intentionally homeless, and as a result not eligible for support. This then leaves them little other option than to rough-sleep.

The changes in the benefit system by the current government, including the introduction of the Universal Benefits system, and the controversial six week wait until the first payment, has exacerbated the situation; an increasing number of people on benefits are unable to pay rent, or end up in rent arrears and then face eviction.

Two other emerging trends are:

- The number of single people who are in low paid work but are homeless.
- The increased number of people over 60, on low or fixed incomes which are not matching increased rents in the private sector.

For both groups, the inability to pay rents in the private sector resulting in eviction, are the most common routes to homelessness and rough-sleeping.

Issues Affecting Rough Sleepers

Rough-sleeping can lead to:

- A rapid deterioration in a person’s health (physical and mental).
- Loss of skills leading to un-employability.
- Lack of personal security.
- A sense of shame at their inability to provide for themselves.
- No-where to keep personal documents and possessions safe.
- Inability to maintain personal hygiene, keeping clothes clean.
- Nowhere to keep and prepare food.
- Social exclusion, including being excluded from public spaces.
- Damage to personal resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Loneliness, isolation, de-humanisation.
- Lack of choice about where they can live, compounded by inability to move to a new area.
- Extremely vulnerable to being a victim of crime, especially violent crime.
- Extremely vulnerable to substance abuse.

Hostels

Local government and charity run hostels do offer the homeless somewhere to bed down for the night. They are usually supported financially by a combination of local government funding and by the homeless person handing over their benefits. Many, but not all, provide additional support, for example in the form of work training, access to medical support, counselling etc. However, they have also faced criticism.

A resident who finds employment and as a result loses benefits are often refused accommodation as they no longer meet the criteria for help. In addition, many do not offer accommodation during daytime; residents having to take to the streets regardless of the weather.

Hostels can also have a reputation for being places of violence, drug abuse and petty crime. Due to this many homeless, especially for those in, or seeking work, will often prefer to sleep rough, or go to the homeless camps which often offer better security through self-policing.

Areas Used for Rough-sleeping



Figure 7: Rough-Sleepers – Pimlico: Two rough-sleepers using the underpass at Pimlico Underground Station, April 2017. It was discovered that the couple had been made homeless the previous week, just before the Easter Bank Holiday and had been unable to get support from the local authority.

Any area that provides shelter and is accessible can be used by rough sleepers. However, the following will be common themes:

- Archways, under bridges, subways, under flyovers and (dry) culverts.
- Fire escapes.
- Derelict or unoccupied buildings.⁷
- Entrances, under stairwells and passageways.
- Loading areas, rear entrances/alleyways (includes sleeping in large rubbish skips).
- Basements.
- Under air vents (for warmth – but with a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning).
- Camp under bushes, on derelict land or parkland.
- Homeless are increasingly setting up tented camps, the tents often donated by members of the public. The camps provide a greater sense of community and security for the occupants. Tented camps have also been formed to support protest activity. In addition, these camps are frequently near major retail centres due to the access to public toilets and other facilities.

Social and Crime Issues Connected to Rough Sleepers

Not all rough-sleepers create problems. The majority will simply wish to survive as best they can, or hide away and not draw attention to themselves. However, some of the social and crime issues associated with rough sleepers and the areas they use include:

- Leaving rubbish.
- Defaecation, urination and vomiting in the areas they use.
- Having sex.
- Begging, including aggressive begging and pestering passers-by.
- Drug and alcohol abuse:
 - Aggressive or violent behaviour whilst under the influence of drink and/or drugs.
 - Leaving drug related paraphernalia behind (foil, lighters, butane canisters, syringes).
 - According to CRISIS, 43% of those rough-sleeping are alcoholics and 31% use drugs.
- Leaving litter.
- Blocking entrances and passageways.
- Leaving behind material used for rough-sleeping (bashes: sleeping bags, cardboard used as insulation, bags of clothing etc.).
- Anti-social or other behaviours that passers-by find intimidating.

⁷ The use of derelict or empty buildings will include the establishment of squats.

- Some will commit crimes in order to be arrested and be sent to prison (sometimes described as getting “three squares and a bed).”



Figure 8: Street Beggar – Manchester, February 2017

Approaching the Issue

Any approach adopted to manage the issue will inevitably depend on the scale of the problem. At the lower end of the scale, simple proactive security patrols, good lighting and housekeeping will be sufficient. Where the issue is more problematic, teaming up with charities and social services may be an approach, and at the higher end, the use of the legislative tools such as Public Space Protection Orders, and police intervention could be required.

What measures are adopted will be influenced by right of access; for example, the ability to move rough-sleepers on may be constrained by public rights of way. In addition, the measures adopted by the organisation will be largely restricted to within the floor-plan of the estate, unless support from external agencies is sought.

Approaches can also be divided into those that are routine and that would fit in with normal security measures, and those that are more specifically designed to tackle the issue.

Routine Measures

Routine measures that would fit in with day-to-day security provision including regular security patrols, lighting, reacting immediately to any suspicion of rough-sleeping, and clearing away bedding material. This will help make areas unattractive.



Figure 9: Fire Exit Used For Rough-Sleeping. The cardboard shown in figure 9 has been used as a makeshift sleeping mat. Note that the site is next to an air vent, giving the rough-sleeper some warmth, albeit at the risk of carbon-monoxide poisoning. Clearing the material away (and making sure it remains clear), use of lighting, using strong smelling disinfectants and proactive regular security patrols would all help to make the platform an unattractive place to sleep.

Physical Measures

The overall aim of physical security measures is to make rough-sleeping an unattractive option. Measures include:

- Good access control including ensuring all accessible doors and windows are secured when not in use.

- Use of bright lighting, especially in areas where there may be shadows or “cubby-holes” or other places where a rough sleeper may go unnoticed. Lighting can be combined with light-coloured paints to increase their reflectiveness.
- Use of hydrophobic (splash-back) paint or coatings on walls in areas prone to urination.
- Using public address (combined with CCTV) systems to inform potential rough sleepers to move on.
- Proactive intervention by security staff (see below).
- Using benches with individually divided seating spaces to discourage their use as makeshift beds.
- Barrier planting to discourage camping/bashes, or removing vegetation that can be used to hide-away.
- Denying areas by closing off or obstructing cubby-holes/sheltered places.
- Proactive clearance of any material that can be used to aid rough-sleeping (such as abandoned bedding, cardboard used as a sleeping surface, etc.).
 - Note: Any items that could be described as property should be bagged and tagged as “lost-property” (see Annex B).
- Use of strong smelling disinfectants in non-public areas used by rough sleepers, urination and defecation.

Surges

Moving up the scale of measures and where the issue is more problematic, consideration may be given to surge periods of zero-tolerance combined with extra security patrols, acting as a deterrent. Surges can also be used at times when there is peak activity, such as the start of autumn. However, such a high-profile approach should be combined with organised external support, for example coordinating the surge with additional support to the charity sector.

The increased numbers of staff required for a surge could be achieved by teaming a security guard with a member of a charity/volunteer group (notwithstanding insurance issues), overlapping shift patterns, or teaming with members of the management.

Controversial Approaches

There are a number of measures that have been adopted recently that have led to protests, bad publicity, and damage to an organisations reputation. Whilst they have a role where there is a serious or persistent problem, when adopting them full consideration should be given to the negative aspects, including preparing for any adverse reaction.

Measures include:

- The use of so-called home-less spikes, often attracting the attention of protest groups.
- The use of noise generators such as the “mosquito” (high pitch/high frequency). Whilst these have been widely employed, they can be indiscriminate and annoy more than the intended target audience.
- Playing repetitive or annoying music (such as Marvin and the Chipmunks or whales singing). This has been used in public areas which are free of people during specific hours, such as bus stations during the early hours. Their use requires care in order to avoid upsetting residents and members of the public.
- Physical/forced removal by security staff. Whilst using reasonable force to remove somebody from private property is legal, the image of security guards “bundling” someone off the property is more likely to have a negative impact.
 - In January 2016, a security guard at a shopping Centre in Norwich doused homeless people with water. The activity was reported to the shopping centre management by a local charity that helps the homeless in the city. Following an internal investigation, the security guard was suspended. To counter-balance the bad publicity, the company providing the security guards to the centre apologised and pledged to donate to a local homeless charity.
- Anti-vagrancy/rough-sleeping/begging publicity campaigns that demonise rough-sleepers.
 - In early 2016, Nottingham Council started a hard-hitting poster campaign stating that giving money directly to beggars risked fuelling drink and drug addiction. The campaign was opposed by local activists, who claimed that the campaign demonised the homeless. Following complaints, the campaign was also banned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for "reinforcing negative stereotypes".
- Local authorities giving rough sleepers a one-way ticket out of their area.
 - For example, in 2016, Bournemouth Council gave tickets to those sleeping rough from outside their area in order to help them return home, and that this was part of an overall strategy, the authority’s approach still grabbed the inevitable negative headlines. Other authorities have adopted similar strategies.

Public Space Protection Orders

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) have been used by local authorities to deal with specific issues, including rough-sleeping, vagrancy, and begging. They allow local authorities to place an area under protection in order to deal with a specific nuisance or problem by imposing conditions on the use of a specified area. PSPO’s can also be used to deal with likely future problems. The order is made in consultation with the local police commander,

the Police and Crime Commissioner and any representatives of the local community the authority consider appropriate. This would include commercial and retail landlords and property managers.

PSPO's have been used by several local authorities to deal with persistent use of an area by vagrants, begging, use of drink and drugs in public areas and rough-sleeping. Failure to comply with a PSPO can lead to arrest, prosecution and a fine.

Whilst they can be seen as an effective tool in dealing with anti-social behaviour, in the case of rough-sleeping they have been criticised as "criminalising the homeless." Moreover, rough-sleepers are not in a position to pay any fine, currently set at not exceeding £1,000, an issue highlighted by protest groups.

Unless backed by support measures, the use of PSPO's could also face criticism for simply moving the problem on. Poorly worded orders have also faced criticism; in one notable case, which made it illegal to sleep in a public park, had the potential of catching out people dozing off whilst enjoying the sun.

Dispersal Orders

Dispersal Orders came into force in October 2014 as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These replaced dispersal powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006.

Under the Act, a Police Superintendent or above may make a specified area subject to a Dispersal Order. This has to meet the criteria that there are reasonable grounds for believing that members of the public have been intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed in public places in the specific area, and that anti-social behaviour is significant and a persistent problem. The order is made with the consent of the Local Authority, and allows Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers to disperse groups of more than two people. Recently Dispersal Orders have been used to deal with tented camps, and the persistent use of an area for begging etc. Failing to comply with the dispersal order can lead to arrest and prosecution and with this the accusation that they "criminalise" the homeless.

Soft Approaches

The biggest complaint from rough-sleepers is that the majority of the general public avoid any contact with them, making them invisible, dehumanising them. To avoid this, charities that work with rough-sleepers advise acknowledging their presence, even a simple gesture such as a nod is far better than avoiding eye contact or hurrying by. This treats the rough-sleeper as a fellow human being and helps to avoid provoking a feeling of resentment and confrontation, and is more likely to encourage cooperation.

Charities also advise not to give money to rough-sleepers, although they recognise that this is a matter of personal choice and conscience. Their belief is that it is better to donate to the charities who help them as in that way any money raised can be more focused. There is also the concern that in some cases, money given to a homeless person will be spent on drink or drugs or stolen from the recipient. Giving food, a hot drink or clothing is often more practicable.

In addition, charities ask those concerned about a rough-sleeper to inform them so that they can respond (for example by using www.streetlink.org.uk).

Any strategy used to deter rough sleepers can cause controversy, including negative publicity and protest activity. Much of this criticism will be politically driven with groups exploiting the issue for their own advantage. A simple example is the linking of rough-sleepers to the cuts in local government funding, or the “un-ethical” and “un-caring” behaviour of “big business.”

To overcome this, a softer approach is advised, balancing the negativity of having to move on a rough-sleeper, with a more positive or supportive act. For example:

- Joint patrols between security team and outreach workers from home-less charities. In this approach, outreach workers would take the lead, with site security staff in support.
- Facilitating third sector or social services support. For example, by providing office or even retail space, use of facilities etc.
- Informing charities of the presence of rough-sleepers (www.streetlink.org.uk)
- Proactive signposting to charities and support services by staff, such as handing the rough-sleeper with relevant information as they are moved away.
- Allowing welfare facilities in a complex to be used by those living on the streets. This can be achieved by using fixed time periods (i.e. outside normal business hours), or for a specific purpose (before a job interview) and in cooperation with the charity sector.
- Support for charity fund raising, such sponsorship and giving regular space for charity collectors.
- Allowing Big Issue collectors.
- Encouraging businesses in the complex to provide material support to charities.
- Offering work experience to the homeless.
- Offering help in seeking work, such as providing spare clothes, haircuts, interview skills training, help with CV's, safe custody of documents and other practical and moral support.
 - In Edinburgh, a restaurant is providing paid work-experience and training for homeless people to help them get back into employment

- In London, and in other cities, hairdressers have been providing free haircuts as part of the #DoSomethingforNothing initiative.
- In Colchester, a volunteer set up a clothes rail outside the main library. People donate outer garments onto the rail, which are then given to the homeless.

The key will be to make these approaches scalable, combining them with more regular security measures, increasing their tempo or number to match the level of the problem. Moreover, their positive nature can be used as a counter to any adverse publicity.

Security Staff

Due to their work, security and facilities management staff will often be the people in most contact with rough-sleepers. In order to manage the risk of a confrontation with rough sleepers and others, these staff should adopt proactive measures, anticipating any aggressive reaction. For example, staff should be trained to:

- Avoid any aggressive approach.
- Use conflict management training.
- Use a positive approach, offering assistance such as signposting or enabling help and advice (making an offer not a threat).
- A sympathetic and polite approach regardless of any confrontation, but remain firm (zero tolerance with a smile).
- Offer comforts when moving on rough-sleepers, such as a hot drink or food.
- Only escalate measures when it is absolutely necessary. Moreover, if escalation is required, consider asking for the assistance of a charity or the police.
- Work in pairs for mutual support but with one person taking the lead whilst the other stays slightly back in support.
- Where practicable monitor potential hotspots and interactions with rough sleepers using CCTV.
- Document all incidents (for use as evidence in case of any complaint or to counter any adverse reaction).

Issues Faced by Security and Other Frontline Staff

The main issues that security and other frontline staff such members of the facilities management team when dealing with rough-sleepers can include:

- Rough sleepers may be under the influence of drink or drugs (including the risks associated with drug paraphernalia such as sharps and needles).
- They may be carrying weapons.
- They may have mental health issues.
- They may be a non-UK citizen and could present language difficulties.

- Rough-sleepers are likely to have low self-esteem and as a result may not react in a socially acceptable way.
- Rough-sleepers will be at a low ebb physically.
- The security team only have authority to act within the boundaries of the property they are protecting. This can restrict what they can do, unless they are cooperating with other security providers.
- Statistically, security staff are more likely to have to confront adolescent to young adult males. This will be due to many factors; they are more likely to have recently left some form of institution, are the group less likely to have received support from social services, or have left home due to some form of dispute. Unfortunately, they are also a group more likely to seek solace in the use of drink or drugs and more likely to be confrontational.

Due to these issues, frontline staff should be trained on how to deal with any rough-sleepers they come across. In addition, members of the security team should be trained in conflict management, with any training focused on dealing with people who may have a drink or drug abuse problem, or suffering from mental health issues.

Lost and Abandoned Property

Managing the issue of rough-sleepers will inevitably mean having to deal with any property they leave behind. Notes on lost and abandoned property can be found at Annex B.



Figure 10: Abandoned Property. Property abandoned by a rough-sleeper outside a supermarket, west London. This unsightly pile of property should be removed, bagged and tagged, with reasonable steps taken to identify its owner (see Annex B). Note the whiskey bottle shown by the red arrow.

- In response to the issue of rough-sleepers leaving belongings outside properties, Oxford Council have imposed fines of up to £2,500. However, this measure has been heavily criticised by local charities and pressure groups.

Developing a Strategy

The built environments of retail and commercial properties offer rough-sleepers shelter, as well as access to facilities such as public toilets, sources of income (for example from begging), or other support from members of the public. Such estates are also "part of the community" and as a result, careful consideration must be given to how to deal with rough sleepers; in simple terms, does the estate management want to be seen as a good or bad neighbour?

Taking the wrong approach can quickly lead to protest activity and damage to reputation.⁸ However, a more humane approach based on collaboration with other stakeholders and in particular, with those who can provide help and assistance to rough-sleepers, will help mitigate this risk, and can also present the estate in more positive light.

Before developing a strategy to manage the issue of rough-sleepers it is important that the organisation has clear aims of what needs to be achieved, for example:

- **Deter:** The application of normal good security procedures and practices will go a long way to deterring rough-sleepers from using an area, and help prevent the issue developing.
- **Detect:** CCTV and security patrols, plus reporting from tenants and other stakeholders will allow early detection and intervention.
- **Removal:** The moving on of rough-sleepers by asking them to leave, or escorting them off the estate. If handled badly, this can quickly escalate into a confrontational situation. However, if handled with care, removing rough-sleepers from premises can be achieved without causing controversy, and if combined with providing some form of support, can be seen as a positive action.

The organisation will also need to identify:

- How big is the problem/what is the level of risk (is rough-sleeping an issue in the area)?
 - Is it likely to increase?
 - Are there seasonal variations?
 - Are there areas within the complex that are vulnerable to being used by rough-sleepers, such as empty units, fire escapes, cellars, basement stairwells, etc.?

⁸ Loss of reputation can also lead to failing foot-fall, and for retail, the consequent loss of income.

- What time of day is this an issue? An approach to deal with rough-sleeping during the daytime will be different to that used during the hours of darkness.
- Assess the possible impact of not addressing the issue, such as:
 - Loss of income.
 - Additional costs.
 - Loss of footfall.
 - Loss of tenants.
 - What is the appetite or level of tolerance of the issue?
 - This must include assessing the level of tolerance of tenants, staff and members of the public.
- What control measures are practicable?
 - What capacity and capabilities are available?
 - Will they impose additional costs or manpower requirements?
 - What training and preparation is required before any strategy to manage rough-sleepers is launched.
 - Are they acceptable to stakeholders?
- What support is available?
 - Internal resources (security team, maintenance team, tenants, etc.).
 - External resources (local authority, charities, the police, other security providers).

Stakeholders

Any strategy aimed at managing rough-sleepers will have to take into account the need to engage with other stakeholders. The amount of effort afforded to this process will depend on the level of the problem; the bigger the problem, the greater the level of effort and the greater level of engagement with stakeholders.

Is the problem transitory and can be dealt with from within the resources of the management team; or where it has a more direct impact, for example rough-sleepers bedding down in the doorways of a tenant, where a higher level of collaboration is required?

Stakeholders can be broadly divided into three groups (these can overlap):

- Those directly affected by the issue.
- Those who potentially could assist in dealing with rough-sleepers.
- Groups or individuals who are likely to comment (positively or adversely) on the approaches and strategies used.

Consulting with the stakeholders will help inform and shape whatever strategy is undertaken. It also helps identify potential short-term and long-term partners and those who could be potential obstacles to any strategy to deal with the issue.

Selecting Control Measures

Selecting the measures to form a strategy to deal with the risk of rough sleepers will be influenced by the level of risk and what resources are available. The approach should be scalable, not only to enable it to deal with the current issue, but in addition to allow scaling up or down to meet any changes in the situation.

Information Campaign

Given the often-fickle nature of public opinion, the strategy should consider what information support is required. This will range from what information is provided to stakeholders, and to members of the public, including responses to the media. Care must be taken in this, balancing the desire to manage the issue, with the social and humanitarian aspects of the problem, whilst also avoiding any political commentary. A poorly presented information campaign could be vulnerable to misinterpretation or deliberate manipulation by interest groups. Notwithstanding this, any information campaign should promote a positive message, for example

- Express sympathy for those forced to sleep rough.
- Promote good news, such as the humane approach and support to charities etc.
- Providing positive help to those in need.
- Supporting the community.
- Improving safety and security for the benefit of the general public.

The information strategy should also prepare for any adverse publicity, for example the response to unacceptable behaviour by a member of staff towards a rough-sleeper.

With any information campaign, it is important to have a system in place to receive feedback. This can help gauge the reaction of stakeholders and others to the campaign, allowing for any adjustments or changes in approach. This can be achieved by:

- Opinion polls.
- Informal feedback through staff, managers and supervisors, tenants.
- Questionnaires.
- Media/Social media monitoring.

Plan for a long-haul; a continuing campaign with peaks and troughs, not a “flash in the pan”.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of the control measures and counter-balances will need to be monitored in order to identify their effectiveness. This should be viewed from the perspective of:

- Rough-sleeping decreasing (or preferably not occurring).

- The level of engagement by stakeholders.
- The effectiveness of counter-balance measures.
- The impact on the reputation of the centre/organisation.

Monitoring will help identify where measures have, or have not been effective and where adjustments need to be made. This can include increasing the level of engagement if the issues persist or for that matter reducing them if the problem recedes; not forgetting that maintaining good basic security measures acts as a deterrent not only for rough-sleeping, but also other forms of anti-social behaviour, as well as criminality.

Conclusion

The upward trend of the number of people sleeping rough in our cities and towns is expected to continue. This will have an impact on inner city commercial and retail estates as they offer shelter and due to the presence of members of the public, sources of income from begging, handouts, and for some rough-sleepers, opportunities for petty crime.

The continuing financial pressures on local government will continue to restrict their ability to manage homelessness, and consequently the level of rough-sleeping. This will place additional demands on the charitable sector.

Approaches by the private sector to deal manage the issue have at times caused controversy, putting many organisations reputation at risk. “Hard” approaches such as using the so-called homeless spikes as a deterrent, the use of PSPO’s or Dispersal Orders, and more physical approaches have resulted in negative publicity and protest activity.

The issue is also becoming more politicised. Groups from the left of the political spectrum have used the number of people rough-sleeping to criticise the current governments’ policies. Some have also used the issue to criticise the business community, especially when some of the more controversial measures have been used, projecting them as uncaring and un-ethical.

Any strategy adopted by a commercial or retail organisation to manage the issue requires a careful approach. Much can be achieved with good day to day security practices. However, any measures are likely to attract attention and risk being seen as unsympathetic. Due to this, it is advised that any strategy is counter-balanced with more positive measures, such as supporting charities, providing assistance etc.

Finally, much of the opposition to the strategies used by various organisations has centred on the perception of rough handling, and treating rough-sleepers in a less than respectful manner. The key to any approach will be the need to promote a caring, humane image, especially by those in the frontline, such as security and facilities management staff. Abusive and aggressive approaches rightly bring condemnation. However, anecdotal

evidence has shown that softer approaches earn gain the cooperation and respect of rough-sleepers, and from members of the public, protecting the landlord's reputation.



Figure 11: Rough-sleepers – Manchester: Rough-sleepers sleeping on the street, taking advantage of the overhang of an office building, September 2017. In October, it was announced that Fire Stations in Greater Manchester were to be used to provide accommodation, as well as access to health and other services for rough-sleepers. This is part of an initiative announced by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

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Annex A – Charities

The main charities involved in helping rough-sleepers are shown below. However, there are many others, especially those operating at a local level (a check with Charity Choice can help identify them).

Charity Choice: This is a web based service that lists charities by what type of service they provide and by region. A simple search of its database can be used to identify charities involved in helping the homeless/rough-sleepers: www.charitychoice.co.uk/charities/housing/homeless

Centrepont: One of the best known charities in London, but also active in Bradford and Sunderland. Centrepont focuses on support to homeless between the age of 16-25, providing supported accommodation, as well as individual mental and physical health, and helping homeless young people on the path to employment. <http://www.centrepont.org.uk>

Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN): This is a service run by St Mungo's. CHAIN is a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. The system, which is commissioned and funded by the Mayor of London and managed by St Mungo's Broadway, represents the UK's most detailed and comprehensive source of information about rough-sleeping. <http://www.mungos.org/chain>

CRISIS: This is a national charity for the homeless. They undertake a wide range of work from research, lobbying, advice on housing, providing education and training, as well as outreach work. www.crisis.org.uk

Help The Homeless: This charity, established in 1975, focuses on fundraising which is then distributed in the form of grants to charities and voluntary organisations throughout the UK. Typically, such organisations may operate small or medium-sized residential or training facilities to assist homeless people in rebuilding their lives and finding their way successfully back into society. www.help-the-homeless.org.uk

Salvation Army: One of the largest and best known charities involved in supporting the homeless. The Salvation Army provides hostels, street level outreach workers and volunteers, as well as their well-known mobile canteens. www.salvationarmy.org.uk

St Mungo's: Another well-known charity who provide emergency, hostel and supportive housing projects, advice services, specialist physical and mental health services and skills and work services. Their work is mainly focussed on London and the south of England. St Mungo's are also involved in CRISIS and are the sponsors of CHAIN. www.mungos.org

StreetLink: This is a web-based service that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about people sleeping rough in their area. This is designed to be a first

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step that someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. StreetLink is funded by grants from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority and the Welsh Government and is run in partnership between Homeless Link and St Mungo's. www.streetlink.org.uk

Annex B – Lost and Abandoned Property⁹

Managing the issue of rough-sleepers will inevitably lead to having to deal with any property they leave behind. Notes on lost and abandoned property can be found at Annex B. Property is generally deemed to have been lost if it is found in a place where it is more likely that the true owner did not intend to set it down and where it is not likely to be found by the true owner. In common law, the person finding a lost item could claim the right to possess the item against any person except the true owner or any previous possessors.

Property is generally deemed to have been abandoned if it is found in a place where the true owner is likely to have intended to leave it, but is in such a condition that it is apparent that he or she has no intention of returning to claim it.

Note: If the item is found on private land, the property owner has a greater right of possession, except for the true owner or any previous possessors.

There is a legal responsibility for anyone finding lost or abandoned property to make reasonable efforts to find the owner. This could include asking people nearby, enquiries in nearby premises or leaving a note with the details of the finder and the whereabouts of any property.

For unidentifiable or low value property, such as empty handbags, bags, cases, wallets, purses, used clothing, soiled clothing, perishable goods, rubbish, umbrellas, spectacles, etc. if still unidentified, the property can be disposed.

For more valuable and identifiable items such as mobile telephones, jewellery, MP3 players, cash, keys, computer or electrical equipment, drugs or medicines or any other items of value; these should be handed into a police station, police officer/PCSO.

⁹ Source: Metropolitan Police. <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/Lost-and-Found-Property/1400026020816/1400026020816>